Subversion

Special Jurassic Issue!!

Exclusive!
Union Bosses
Secret Identities
Revealed

Artists impression: note specially adapted fangs for "representing" workers.

Also in this issue:
Burnsall, Timex, Teachers, Bosnia, Prisoners and more!
Industrial News

The first four articles in this issue all deal with different aspects of the class struggle at work.

The first two are about the Timex dispute in Dundee. The article *Cops - Four Different Kinds*, comes from a broadsheet called *Troublemaker*, produced in Glasgow by supporters of the Timex Strike. Unfortunately the broadsheet gave no contact address.

The third article concerns the antics of the Manchester Burnsall Strikers Support Group. The final article is about the ongoing teachers dispute over testing.

**pamphlets**

*Ireland. Nationalism and Imperialism. The Myths Exploded.* Why the British State and the IRA both defend capitalism. 50p inc. postage.

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*Back issues.* Some copies of Subversion 9, 10, 11 and 12 left. Send a donation and 24p stamp.

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**Winter Day School**

We are organising a day school in Manchester on Saturday 27th November, in conjunction with the ACF.

The subject will be: **WORKPLACE STRUGGLES - BEYOND RANK AND FILE TRADE UNIONISM.**

If you want further details write to Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW. Please state if you have any special requirements or need child care for the day.

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**Want to Get Involved?**

If you agree with our basic politics, then why not get involved?

You could:
1. Join Subversion. We have members in Manchester, Oldham and Leeds.
2. Write to us and let us know you're out there.
3. Take some extra copies to distribute.
4. Try writing short articles - we'll happily give you advice if you want.
5. Send us some money! Cheques and POs payable to **SUBVERSION**
6. Arrange to meet us.

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Printed and published by: SUBVERSION, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW.
Burnsall Strike
with friends like these - who needs racists?

For over a year the strikers at Burnsall Ltd in Smethwick, where the conditions workers have to bear are appalling even by capitalist standards, have had to contend with the double enemy of the boss and the unions.

The GMB, to which the strikers "belong", has been sabotaging their strike in the time-honoured fashion. It has now plunged the dagger deep into the workers backs and called off the strike.

Despite this, and despite serious intimidation by the GMB to make the strikers comply, it seems they are determined to continue their fight.

What they need is support from other workers.

The only way forward for workers in struggle is to link up, and gain the active support of more and more workers. The bosses and unions, despite their charades, are in the last analysis united against the working class and we must be united against them, and not be taken in by the unions pretence at being on our side. This is true in all strikes and all struggles. The case of the Burnsall strike, however, reveals another false friend of the workers - left-wing groupings with their own political agenda to superimpose on the strike.

DIVIDE AND RULE

The Manchester Burnsall Strikers' Support Group has produced several leaflets which have been portraying this strike as a black issue (most of the strikers being Asian women) rather than a workers' issue. For instance their leaflets have slogans such as "Black Workers Fighting Back" and "Black Workers Demand JUSTICE" (sic); and hatred between workers.

one of the leaflets relates that on one occasion "the strikers were attacked by three white scab workers from the factory". An approach such as this "support group" is taking is practically calculated to strengthen "racial" divisions and hatred between workers.

If it needs saying, let us say it again - the working class can only free itself from present day slavery by uniting as a class, all workers together, black and white, male and female, whatever the divisions our rulers use to keep us weak. The dead end of "racial" or national identity will always lead workers to perdition, as it has always done in the past (e.g. the anti-colonial movements which have given the workers nothing but more of the same). Only realising our identity as workers with a common interest world-wide, against all capitalist factions, will lead us to victory.

Groups like the Manchester Burnsall Strikers "Support" Group should be roundly condemned. Their politics are a lethal poison for workers, and for the cause of liberation of the whole working class.
The Timex Strike

TIME FOR CHANGE

The courageous resistance of 343 Timex strikers in Dundee to massive cuts in their wages and conditions and the subsequent threat to close the factory has been well documented elsewhere.

They, along with other smaller groups of workers such as those at "Burnsalls" and "Middlebrook Mushrooms" have demonstrated a long overdue militant determination to stand up against the bosses ever increasing demands for cuts in our standard of living and the preservation of their profits.

But courage and militancy on their own aren't enough to win this kind of dispute in the current world economic crisis. If they were, then much stronger groups such as the printers, seafarers and miners would not be in the disarray they are today.

Although Timex strikers rejected the attempts of national union 'leaders' to negotiate shabby deals with their bosses, they were content, initially, to leave the wider struggle, away from the workplace and the locality, to what they felt was 'their' union.

The support for regular mass pickets from workers in Dundee and elsewhere in Scotland and England was indeed impressive and achieved some notable, if passing, victories. But those of us with longer memories couldn't help but listen to the echoes of previous failed disputes, like Grunwicks in London, which relied heavily on picketing as a solution. The calls for "consumers" to boycott Timex products, however valid, also has worrying echoes in the Seamen's Unions efforts to derail the Channel Ferry strikes. Timex workers recognised the need for 'solidarity', as other workers recognised the important knock on effect of a victory for the Timex workers on their own disputes. Support in the form of union resolutions, donations, demonstrations and attendance at pickets has been forthcoming.

What has been missing is the active solidarity involved in spreading the strike, not only to other workers in the multi-national of which Timex is just part, but across both industrial and geographic boundaries. The development of common actions, with common demands, directly under the control of those involved.

This isn't just the responsibility of Timex workers but something which we all need to take on board.

In the current situation 'isolation' means defeat and leaving things in the hands of the union, much less the political parties of all hues means isolation.

Timex workers have begun to organise themselves to seek active solidarity from others both in the multi-national and locally. This may prove to be too little, too late, but the fight certainly isn't over yet.

Whatever the outcome we should take heart from the determination and courage of our class brothers and sisters at Timex and learn both from the positive and negative lessons of this strike in the struggles to come.

For further information, write to: COUNTER INFORMATION: Ph C1, 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh, EH1.

Donations to: Timex Strike Fund, AEEU, 2 Union St., Dundee, Scotland. Tel 0382 22406
COPS—FOUR DIFFERENT KINDS

1 THE BASTARDS IN BLUE

So the cops are driving in wood for the pickets' braziers. So they've only kidnapped a few people and stopped the odd bus. Poor darlings, they must be cold and bored too... Anyone who thinks like this should wise up fast. The cops are the main reason work hasn't been stopped—and for those who want to stop the plant they're the most important immediate enemy. The only reason they're there is to defend the 'right to scab'.

The police force only exists so that Russia like Hall, Olsen, Major and Yetzsa can keep on collecting the profit from forcing the poor to work. So it's obvious that when workers look like reducing the bosses' profits, or preventing extra profits by resisting cuts in wages or conditions, the hill will turn up to protect management's right to manage. We could be wrong, but we have heard much hatred for the cops among the sacked strikers. We hope this changes soon. If the struggle hots up, it's bound to.

2 UNION COPS

Since victory means imagination, escalation, and a physical battle with the cops, rather than negotiations between Hall and a bunch of union bureaucrats, it's clear that the union leaders and structure will fight to stop workers doing the necessary. Already a Timex shop steward, banned by interdict from attending demonstrations, has been banned by the AEEU higher-ups from speaking at a rally held by Albion workers on the Clyde. They've also sent a letter to all strikers demanding that any more trouble on the picket-line could mean the withdrawal of union support, i.e. strike pay. Trade-unionism is thus directly conflicting with workers' solidarity and the escalation of trouble.

What the union leaders want is a drawn-out strike leading to a crappy deal on pensions or severance pay, if anything at all. They have made it very clear that they do not want work to stop, since that could only happen by violence, and they don't want that or any other kind of trouble. That would mean strikers and supporters acting together as a mass, and the union leaders would be left without a role. Indeed, they could easily be seen for the collaborating 'social firemen' that they are.

Of course union money could be sequestred, but one need only remember that if it was in the hands of the workers in the first place, the workers could try themselves to hide it from the authorities, and try to escalate the strike at the same time. The idea of winning by long-term peaceful picketing, maybe extending into a second winter, is simply a fantasy. Of course escalation means solidarity. But it doesn't mean the 'labour movement', any more than it means waiting for parliamentary shitbags to go to committee meetings. Solidarity means standing together on the picket-line, fighting together against the police so as to stop the scab buses, getting support from as many other claimants and workers as possible; it means direct delegations to other workplaces, such as have already gone to Albion and the English coalfields.

3 LEFTY COPS

Everyone's heard about the presence of various extreme leftist parties on the picket-line. Most of them are easily spottable with their bunches of newspapers and their monotonous slogans.

The only kind of 'escalation' these parties want is one subordinate to the politicking of wally Trotskyists on one side, and the leaders of the STUC on the other. 'Get the STUC to call a general strike' they whinge. Maybe we should remember how much the STUC and TUC have supported us in the past... Like at Ravenscraig—remember?

Some details. In the Timex dispute the 'Socialist Workers' Party' (or Student Wallies' Party?) has been very strict in telling its members not to get involved in any trouble. Sell the paper, have a shout, make sure you wave your papers to the media, comrades! Meanwhile Militant have brought down their great leader 'ShopEm' Sheridan, a Glasgow councillor who advocated grassing after the London poll tax riot. We wonder how long the angry youth of places like Pollok will put up with such creeps.

People who encourage others to put their faith in union leaders, particularly TUC leaders, must be either very naive or else just manipulative bastards. For the leftist followers it's usually the first, whilst for the leaders and 'old hands' it's usually the second. Basically they don't think we're able to organise and fight without politicos telling us what to do. That's why we say we should try to get support from leaders of the official labour movement: they want us to bang our heads against brick walls, fail, and hopefully then look to the Trots for leadership.

Of course this won't happen here, but it's still worth remembering that 'workers' governments' have always slashed living-standards whenever they have deemed it necessary, e.g. in Russia after 1917, or Nicaragua after 1982.

Whilst 'preparing for power' the leftists do want things to be stirred up a bit, but only on condition that the working class doesn't get completely out of external control. Then there'd be no need for representatives in union offices, lefty party-sellers and such like. People might even organise themselves to stick the boot in to the very roots of exploitation: money, work, and the State. And that the leftists simply couldn't tolerate.

4 MEDIA COPS

Recently the picket-line has seemed infested with cameramen and journalists, especially when they think there might be trouble. Quite a few journalists have given the impression that they support the strike.

A journalist for the big media is either a spy-cum-disinformationist for a huge company like Murdoch's multinational, or else works directly for State TV. It's a total illusion to think that any kind of coverage by these bastards can possibly benefit the strikers.

Strikers have either been portrayed like near-extinct animals in a zoo, or else as fodder for 'outside agitators' selling lefty papers. Jouno Chris Fisher interviewed 'all sides'—strikers, Peter Hall, scabs, some wally academic from Dundee Uni—for Murdoch's Sunday Times (28 March). Chris liked the women strikers: that's why the bastard described how they bent over and "moved with their hips" when Hall came out, "their bodies turning in perfect harmony with his car."

Women who have refused to be treated like objects by Timex thus get their time and motion studied in the national press.

As for cameramen, we can only say that it's a shame people aren't more conscious of their mentality. These leeches like pictures of trouble. We all know that so far the trouble they've filmed has been exaggerated, but if a big battle breaks out they won't hesitate to hand over their film to the police. Some plainclothes photographers are probably cops anyway. At the very least, anyone taking pictures should be hassled to explain themselves.
A Testing Time For Teachers

Education has hardly been out of the news in the last few years. Schools opting out of local authority control, conflicts over 'parental choice', complaints about 'falling standards', local management of schools and testing have all caught the attention of the media. They have arisen because the Government is in the process of reforming education. The 1988 Education Reform Act is intended to meet industrialists' complaints about the quality of their future workforce. And with even closer integration into line with those on the Continent.

Why, then, is their so much resistance to these changes and what is the significance of this for the wider class struggle?

Before answering this, we need to look at the origins of the current problem which goes back as far as the industrial revolution. Britain was the first country to industrialise. Facing little competition at that time, the ruling class did not see any need for mass education or training geared towards economic advancement in the way that exists today. Indeed the State did not intervene in the education of the masses until as late as the twentieth century when state secondary schools were first introduced. This contrasted greatly with the major European countries, where the need to catch up with Britain involved a considerable degree of intervention to gear education to economic development. The result is a legacy which still persists: in a word, backwardness. Comparatively low rates of 'staying on', lower numbers gaining qualifications, lower numbers going to university. Britain really is the "thick man" of Europe!

The problem for the ruling class today is how to make what they have inherited meet the needs of British capitalism. As things stand this is quite a tall order. Technology has changed, old skills have died, new ones have arisen. Mass unemployment has meant that people are likely to change the type of work they do much more frequently. What's therefore needed today is a malleable, flexible workforce which is prepared to accept any variety of working conditions. Hence the need to modernise the education system.

A start towards modernisation had been made during the 60's and early 70's. Wilson's "white heat of technological change" required that many of the barriers to education for the working class be removed: the 11+ was abolished, comprehensive schools replaced grammar and secondary modern, and the school leaving age rose to 16. Britain, like other European countries, needed an adaptable workforce to cope with the changes. Hence the diversification and liberalisation of the curriculum which occurred during
these years along with mixed ability and child-centred teaching methods. These were real gains for the working class although they also suited capitalism's needs at that time. But these developments (and the money which funded them) were soon cut short.

The start of the recession, by the mid-'70s meant no jobs for thousands of school leavers. And the need to cut costs led to some fundamental questioning about the role and purpose of education in the new economic era. The "fringe" ideas of the so-called 'Black Paper' group, who were concerned about the threat to standards posed by non-selective education, suddenly became respectable. More significantly, Labour PM Callaghan took up the cudgel in the Great Education Debate, attacking the anti-business ethos in schools: ".....some teachers and some schools may have overemphasised the importance of preparing boys and girls for their roles in society compared with the need to prepare them for their economic role". (Guardian 13.10.76)

There is a direct line here between Callaghan's speech and the Tories' modernisation strategy today. The Reform Act is meant to gear education more tightly to the needs of industry. The only problem is that it involves expenditure that capitalism can no longer afford.

The SATS tests boycott is the first major blow against the Government's efforts to implement this legislation. For one thing it has involved teachers in all three main unions. With parents behind them, it seems to have left the Tories in an isolated position, politically. How long the Unions support the boycott remains to be seen. One big problem for the bureaucrats is that a boycott controlled by them, is still infinitely preferable to a strike. An effective pay cut for this year has done much to mobilise the majority of teachers behind the current action. And from Pattern's "Mum's Army" threat recently, there's no sign these attacks will cease.

It's probably true also, however, that the majority of teachers have not perceived the tests issue beyond that of 'workload'. Some unions have highlighted the "educational unsuitability" of the tests. A smaller minority of teachers have become aware that this form of testing, and its links with league tables and performance related pay, is changing how they teach in ways that are not beneficial to their pupils. An even smaller minority are opposed to the national curriculum in principle. It represents State involvement in education on an unprecedented scale with the aim not of broadening minds but of limiting the educational aspirations of the majority of children and at the cheapest possible price! Testing is a way of determining both the method and content of lessons. Child-centred learning goes out of the window. With the heavier emphasis on narrow 'vocational' training for less able pupils, along with industrial schemes like Compact, modernisation in a time of rising unemployment means more social control to keep the lower orders in their place.

How will these developments affect class struggle? The ideology of teaching as a profession is wearing thin as redundancies, pay cuts, deteriorating conditions, etc. take their toll. Teachers are slowly realising that they are only workers, controlling other (younger) workers. The result already is low morale, absenteeism, resignations and industrial action. This will do much to undermine the 'social controlling' function the State expects teachers to carry out. And what about those on the receiving end of all this: the school kids? How long will it be before they see through a system which is only training them for the dole?
Bosnia - Cock-Up or Conspiracy?

INTRODUCTION

We are publishing the following article as a contribution towards an understanding of what has been happening recently in former Yugoslavia, and in particular the role of the US/UN. Not all of our group agree with the article's basic argument, that there has been a conscious policy of support for Serbia. Some of us believe that the US/UN, having no vital strategic interests at stake in ex-Yugoslavia, has tried to have as little involvement as possible in the 'crisis' there, and that it is this which has allowed Serbia, as the region's strongest military power, to largely have its own way. We regard it as a sign of the health of a revolutionary group that differences of opinion on issues such as this are not hidden or suppressed, and invite you to join in the debate.

YUGOSLAVIA: ALL GOING TO PLAN

"We have achieved exactly all our objectives since the beginning of this crisis" - UN commander General Philippe Morillon, quoted on 19 April 1993, after the surrender of Srebrenica.

If actions speak louder than words, let's ignore for a moment all the hot-air about "human rights" and "punishing aggressors", and look at what the West has actually done in ex-Yugoslavia over the past few months.

CONSPIRACY OR COCK-UP?

Newspaper headlines have typically portrayed the West "Wandering into a Balkan Blunderland", with articles describing how a "catalogue of errors has turned a crisis into a tragedy" (e.g. Independent on Sunday 30.5.93).

We on the other hand are not so naive as to believe that the West (i.e. principally the US/UN) could be quite so careless, quite so often. Labour MP, Michael "Shell the Serbs" Meacher, was closer to the mark when he wrote that the UN has acted as "an unwilling accomplice of the Serbian war machine". Leave out the "unwilling" bit, and he's spot-on.

There is certainly ample evidence to support the suggestion, put forward by some of the more perceptive commentators on Yugoslavia, that there has been "an actual policy considered somewhere in Whitehall or Washington" which has reflected "pro-Belgrade leanings" (Balkan War Report April/May 93).

ENCLAVES

This was particularly striking in the way the UN behaved towards the besieged Muslim* enclaves in Bosnia, where UN troops to all intents and purposes acted to put the finishing touches to sieges imposed by the Serbs.

In April, for example, the commander of UN forces, Gen. Morillon, negotiated a deal with the Bosnian Serb army to hand Srebrenica to the Serbs in exchange for the evacuation of its 30,000 inhabitants to Tuzla. But while the town continued to hold out, the Bosnian authorities continually blocked all UN attempts to move out any civilians, apart from the sick and wounded, stating that the evacuation of civilians would make the town easy prey for the Serbs, and that the UN was actively assisting in 'ethnic cleansing'. When UN troops did eventually enter Srebrenica, the 'demilitarisation' they carried out was directed entirely against the Muslims - the soldiers defending the town either had to flee or surrender their weapons and uniforms, while the Serb weaponry surrounding the town was left untouched.

The same thing happened the following month in Zepa, again in the face of opposition from the Bosnian government, which added that the disarming of Srebrenica and Zepa allowed the Serbs to transfer 10,000 troops to tighten the screws on the besieged
town of Gorazde. The two opposing factions were quite clear about the effect of the UN intervention: while the Bosnian Serbs celebrated a victory, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic spoke of "capitulation". Not without good reason did the Sarajevo newspaper Oslabodjenje comment: "General Morillon's dramatic media display in Srebrenica has more behind it than generous sympathy for Bosnians".

ARM'S EMBARGO

There are many other instances where the effect of western policy has been to aid the Serbs. The arms embargo is an obvious example. US Vice-President Al Gore could not have put it more plainly when he said at the end of April: "The international community is, in a sense, already taking sides in the conflict, because the Serbs have all the weapons that they need."

AID

The provision of 'humanitarian aid' is another area where things are not as they appear on the surface. The need to not endanger UN aid workers and their military escorts was frequently cited in the West as a reason for not escalating the conflict by bombing Serb-held positions in Bosnia. For just this reason the Bosnian government more than once requested the entire UN humanitarian relief effort to "pack up and leave". Of course, it didn't.

Not all aid has been provided under UN auspices. There has also been other initiatives such as the 500-vehicle 'Convoy of Joy' which travelled from Split to Tuzla in June. Along the way many of its cars and lorries were ambushed by Croats, their contents looted, and drivers beaten up or killed.

But why take aid by road through hostile territory when it could be flown direct to Dubrave airfield at Tuzla with the protection of the UN's 'Operation Deny Flight'? In April the US relief agency Americares was preparing to do just that. A 38-tonne cargo of medical supplies worth over $2 million lay in Venice waiting to be airlifted to Tuzla. Suddenly the UN told the Italians to refuse flight clearance. Why? Because "Radovan Karadzic [the Bosnian Serb leader] and his sidekick Gen. Ratko Mladic both opposed the opening of the airport...and UNPROFOR was concerned not to upset negotiations with them which had reached a delicate stage". (Balkan War Report April/May 93).

Still on the subject of aid, Bosnian journalist Haris Nezirovic has argued that airdrops of food over besieged Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia

by US planes in March played a significant part in undermining the hitherto successful campaign waged by units of the Bosnian army based in Srebrenica and in turning the tide in favour of the Serbs:

"The United States airdrops that started in March lured thousands more men from their positions and sparked chaos. Commanders lost track of where their soldiers were and how many they had on the front lines. When the Serbs returned to the offensive, Bosnian positions previously held by 100 men were held by only 20 or 30." (Guardian 15.4.93).

VANCE-Owen

Then there was the whole issue of the Vance-Owen Plan - itself a blatant incitement to territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing, as was widely remarked at the time - and the promises made by UN "mediators" to the Serbs in Belgrade and Bosnia in an effort to induce them to accept it.

A key Serb objection to the Vance-Owen Plan was that the province allotted to Serbs in north-west Bosnia (around Banja Luka) would have been cut off from the Serb province in north-east Bosnia bordering on Serbia itself. An area allotted by Vance-Owen to Croats, but actually occupied for the most part by Bosnian Muslims, stood in the way of the Serb ambition to secure a large swath of territory sweeping uninterrupted from Serbia proper through northern Bosnia and the Serb-held Krajina region of Croatia virtually to the Adriatic coast. For a whole year Serb forces based around the town of Brcko had fought to secure this link, but without lasting success.

On 21 April, however, Lord Owen emerged from a meeting with Serb leaders in Belgrade saying that the Serbs should be given a "protected throughway" in this region. The promise of a 6-mile-wide, UN-patrolled
corridor linking Serb-held regions in eastern and western Bosnia was instrumental in persuading Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to finally accept the Vance-Owen Plan at the Athens conference at the start of May. In other words, what the Serbs had been unable to achieve by twelve months of military action, the UN was prepared to hand over for nothing more than a couple of signatures on a piece of paper. Truly the pen is mightier than the sword!

Following the Athens conference, Karadzic and Milosevic both revealed another promise conceded by UN negotiators in exchange for acceptance of the Vance-Owen Plan. To allay the concerns of Serb minorities within the provinces allotted under the plan to Croats or Muslims, it had been agreed that no Croat or Muslim forces (e.g. police or troops) would be allowed to enter these Serb areas, and that this prohibition would be enforced by UN patrols.

In real terms the outcome of this concession would have been to maintain effective Serb control over the 25% of Bosnian territory occupied by Serb forces on top of the 45% allotted to them under the Vance-Owen Plan. In this respect, the promise made to Milosevic and Karadzic closely resembled, in miniature, one element of the January 1992 ceasefire (worked out by Cyrus Vance) which ended the 1991 war between Serbia and Croatia. Under that agreement, the UN moved in to guard the borders of the 30% of Croatian territory in Krajina and eastern Slavonia taken over by Serb forces, forcibly barred the return of refugees, and left the Serbs there free to consolidate their power while working towards unification with Greater Serbia.

THE U.S. AND GERMANY

Looking at all of this as a whole, what is clear is that a whole series of measures have been taken by the US/UN which have worked to the advantage of Serbian aims and ambitions. If this has been the result, not of "diplomatic ineptitude" (Lord Owen's phrase), but, as we would argue, a deliberate policy, the question then arises: what lies behind this strategy?

It is well known that in June 1991, the US Secretary of State, James Baker, on a visit to Belgrade, stated that the US believed that Yugoslavia should remain a single unified state. When, four days later, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence, the Serb-dominated central Yugoslav authorities understood Baker's statement as an invitation to hold the country together by force - which they promptly attempted to do.

Around the same time, recently reunified Germany had begun to reassert its own historic goals in the Balkans, first by making EC economic assistance to Yugoslavia dependent on the Belgrade government's tolerance of "minority rights" (meaning the independence movements in Slovenia and Croatia), and then by pushing its EC partners into early recognition of the secessionist republics.

Although the process of realignment of imperialist blocs in the 'New World Order' has not yet advanced so far that the conflict in Yugoslavia can be seen as an out-and-out proxy war between two superpowers, it is with one eye on the possibility of future German expansionism that the US has by and large stood by its initial inclination to favour Belgrade, as a counterweight to Ljubljana and Zagreb.

SPILLING OVER

Thanks to US/UN complicity, Serbian war aims in Bosnia have been all but fulfilled. "We have what belongs to us, perhaps 10% more", stated the Yugoslav military chief of staff Zivota Panic at the end of April. Serbia also has 30% of Croatia (though at the time of writing the signs were that Croatia's tolerance of that situation was rapidly wearing thin).

In US eyes, however, by far the greatest interest about the whole crisis in former Yugoslavia isn't what happens to Bosnia - which is little more than a local affair, or at most "a European problem" - but concerns, in US President Bill Clinton's words, the need to find a way of "confining the conflict so it doesn't spread into Macedonia, Kosovo and other places...like Albania and Greece and Turkey" (Observer 23.5.93, Guardian 12.5.93).

KOSOVO, MACEDONIA & BEYOND

The Kosovo issue was instrumental in Milosevic's seizure of power in 1987. Because of the famous Battle of Kosovo Polje fought there in 1389 it is regarded as the "spiritual centre" of Serb nationalism. However, the fact that the region was the source of over 50% of former Yugoslavia's overall mineral production, 40% of its energy output, and also contains considerable oil and gas reserves, no doubt explains better why Milosevic is determined to keep it part of Serbia. Unfortunately for him, Serbs in Kosovo are outnumbered by 9 to 1 by 'ethnic Albanians', who are equally determined to leave Serbia and become part of Greater Albania.

A conflict involving Serbia, Kosovo and Albania could well spread to Macedonia, which itself has an Albanian population of at least half a million (25%). The independence of the ex-Yugoslav republic of Macedonia is in itself seen as a
provocation by both Serbia and Greece - two states with very close links. In the worst scenario, wars involving Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Greece and possibly even Bulgaria could hardly be ignored by the state now firmly established as the Balkans' strongest power: Turkey.

CONTAINMENT

Thus it was with good reason that the UN deputy commander in Belgrade warned in June that "The situation in the southern part of former Yugoslavia is still potentially the most dangerous and inflammable in the region" (Guardian 3.6.93). The US's strategy is therefore one of "containment", as embodied in the statement signed jointly in Washington on 22 May 1993 by the US, UK, Russia, France and Spain (Germany was pointedly excluded, much to the fury of its defence minister Volker Ruhe who later railed against the agreement's "morally catastrophic' attitude towards Serbian territorial gains").

While media attention focussed on the declaration of six "safe havens" for Muslims in Bosnia (just how hollow this announcement was, was summed up in the prophetic words of the UN official who commented: "Safe areas do not imply everybody will be safe"), the most important sections of the agreement were what it said about Kosovo - "Human rights should be respected...although we do not support declarations of independence there" - and Macedonia: "It is essential that everyone in the region understands that aggression against the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia would have grave consequences". The seriousness of this threat has been underlined by the fact that Macedonia is the only part of ex-Yugoslavia where the US has sent troops to join the UN "peace-keeping" force.

SANCTIONS

Sanctions imposed in May 1992 after the start of the siege of Sarajevo seem to have hit the Serbian economy hard. Since then (depending on which figures you choose to believe), industrial output has dropped by 40 or 70%, unemployment or short-time working now affects between 40 and 65% of the workforce, and the annual inflation rate is running anything from 4,400 to 9,000%.

Milosevic's attempt, at the end of April, to blame Serbia's economic plight on the insincerity of the Bosnian Serbs wasn't too convincing, given his own role in nurturing that insincerity in the first place, but it did perhaps indicate an awareness that there could be a limit to the sacrifices the Serbs will make for the sake of Milosevic's vision of Greater Serbia.

MILOSEVIC

Can Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic be trusted to pay heed? Already the US has tested his compliance. When at the end of April Clinton gave the impression that he was serious about ordering the bombing of Serb military targets in Bosnia, Milosevic immediately stated: "We choose peace". Overnight in the public perception he was transformed from a belligerent demagogue into the voice of moderation, hero of the "last-ditch" peace talks in Athens, the man who compelled his Bosnian protege Karadzic to admit: "The Serbian side is ready for immediate and unconditional peace".

According to one report, the number of draft-dodgers who evaded the call-up to the Serb army during 1990-92 numbered around 300,000 (Independent on Sunday 23.5.93). There are also many deserters. These are faint glimmers of hope, as was the one day strike organised by trade unions in Serbia on 26 March, "in protest at what, for most workers, has been a catastrophic fall in living standards since the Yugoslav wars broke out in June 1991. The unions estimated that the average Serbian salary had fallen from the equivalent of $350 (12233) in late 1991 to $18 last January." (Independent 27.3.93). The Sarajevo daily newspaper Osllobodjenje has said: "It is wrong to claim that Serbs, Croats and Muslims oppose one another in Sarajevo. Wrong to say that this
is some kind of religious conflict. And wrong too, to call it a civil war. The truth is that the inhabitants of Sarajevo are united against those seeking to destroy a civilisation and to place the Nation above Man” (5.4.93).

Such glimpses of ‘inter-ethnic’ solidarity, still evident even in the midst of the most gruesome bloodletting, offer a few shreds of encouragement for the future - though simple anti-racism should not be mistaken for the working class solidarity which offers the only real escape from the present horrors in Yugoslavia. Even in the midst of Oslabodjenje’s seemingly noble sentiments, the reference to “those seeking to destroy a civilisation” betrays a view of the war as a struggle between cultured urban cosmopolitans and backward rural barbarians. We should not be slow to condemn all ‘solutions’ to the Yugoslav ‘crisis’ which, while appearing to reject one particularly vicious set of divisions, only prepare the way for splitting us up on some other basis.

July 1993

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**Correspondence**

We welcome letters from readers. Where possible we try to print letters and replies in *Subversion*. Unfortunately, in this issue we have had to leave out two letters due to lack of space. We hope to include them in *Subversion 14*.

**Just Workers in Uniform?**

Dear Comrades,

I consider myself an anarchist comunist, but I largely agreed with your criticisms of Abraham Guillen’s pamphlet. I also largely agree with you about Class War’s muddled thinking.

However, I disagree with you about the armed forces. I signed away 5 years of my life to the R.A.F. I did it because of unemployment, boredom, and conflict with my parents. I soon realised I’d made a mistake, but felt trapped.

There are an awful lot of young working class men and women who’ve made the same mistake as me, and for the same reasons.

As a member of the RAF I found that only officers got to fly planes. The huge majority of the R.A.F. are “ground crew” electricians, mechanics, cooks, and so on. Many of them would be glad to do a similar job in “ Civvy Street” if they could find one.

I first came across the idea of anarchism when I found Kropotkin’s article in the Encyclopedia Britannica in an R.A.F. library. Being increasingly mutinous against military authority, and rejecting western capitalist ideology while being repelled by Stalinism, anarchism appealed to me.

As my “bolshie” ideas developed I had some interesting discussions with other members of the R.A.F. and also with members of the Army and Navy (all volunteers like myself). From these discussions I can say that some ordinary members of the armed forces are far from the mindless agents of the ruling class you might suppose.
My view is that it is a mistake to regard all members of the armed forces as "the enemy". If that is how you treat them, that is how they will be; but it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Much more useful to the revolution to see the armed forces as mirroring the class structure of civilian life.

I think that in a really revolutionary situation in Britain, the armed forces are likely to split at least 3 ways.

Some will be ideologically committed enemies of the revolution (We can identify officer training colleges and special forces units as likely to come into this category). Some will attempt to "stay neutral". And some will come over to our side.

There's no point directing propaganda towards the armed forces at present, we have more immediate tasks to perform. But in a revolutionary situation we should be ready to say "Brothers and sisters - don't fire on your own class - turn your guns on the real enemy!"

Dave, Montrose, Scotland.

Subversion reply:

We do not greatly disagree with this comrade, but some points should be made:

Firstly, there is a distinction between coppers and members necessarily in conflict with the working class simply by doing their day-to-day job (the sharpest expression of this conflict is of course to be found on the picket line or other locations of class conflict where the immediate and direct foe of collective working class struggle is, simply, the cops).

Secondly, however, the armed forces are often used in a similar way against class struggle (e.g. scabbing) and in these conflicts the choice is just as stark as in the case of truncheon-wielding cops on the picket line - namely, which side are you on? The principal job of the armed forces is of course to fight wars - slaughter of proletarians for the greater glory of Capital - so here are two examples of how just doing their job puts them on the wrong side of the class line in the here and now;

Thirdly, despite the above, we agree that in a revolutionary situation there will be some who come over to our side. Much more in the case of conscript armies, of course, but even with armed forces like Britain's there are some who, as the comrade says, joined for misguided reasons and regret it.

Such people who come over to our side will have an important role in helping the class to arm itself and neutralise the military advantage the ruling class has over us.

We thank the comrade for writing and welcome further letters on the question of class or anything else.

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.
Prisoner Support

One of the most valuable pieces of political and revolutionary work that is often ignored or neglected is prisoner support for class war and framed prisoners who are in the process of serving state inflicted isolation.

Many cases of wrongful imprisonment have recently come to light; e.g. the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, Judith Ward etc. This prompted a government report which said that due to miscarriages of justice up to 700 people are in prison for offences that they did not commit.

On top of this are many people imprisoned for offences against property and the state, who have done nothing that a revolutionary would consider "wrong".

Isolation for a class war/framed prisoner is a very explosive situation. It creates fantasies, disillusion and paranoia. It can be combatted by groups and individuals writing to prisoners. A letter from somebody they do not know can be a breath of fresh air, a lifeline from the outside world. It shows that somebody cares.

Most prisoners will never ask for money or stamps, just letters, magazines, Christmas and birthday cards. All prisoners are grateful for these items as it keeps them in touch with the world outside.

One of the most disturbing letters that was received by a comrade of ours was by someone wrongfully convicted of murder. This is Stephen Windsor, in prison in Scotland. He has lost his friends, his wife and his children due to this miscarriage of justice.

Because Stephen has served half his sentence he is released from prison once every six weeks for the weekends. He writes, "...I find I cannot cope now outside prison. I cannot handle crowds or loud music, discos are a no go for me. I have many difficulties now. I cannot speak to strangers, especially women, when I am released. I become two people. A prisoner for six weeks and a free man for 48 hours. When out I long to be back inside prison and that says it all."

Prisoner support is a very important political act. Any political, organisation or individual who will not help fallen members of their class are failing in their duty.

Anybody thinking of taking up this work can contact: Manchester ABC, Box 8, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW. They will send you free of charge a magazine of wrongful or political imprisonment at home and abroad and a list of framed prisoners. Another group you can contact is CONVICTION, PO Box 522, Sheffield S1 3PF.

This piece of work will bear fruit and help break down barriers between our two worlds.

Publications

Out Now!

Labouring in Vain - Why Labour always acts against the working class.

Nationalism and Imperialism in Ireland - The Myths Exploded.

Both pamphlets 50p including postage from Subversion.