

Macedonia: on the brink of war?

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Last year was a year of tremendous change in former Yugoslavia. Kosova has become an international imperialist protectorate, Milosevic has been overthrown and arrested.

However, this has not led to the wished for "stabilisation" of the Balkans as the imperialists hoped, despite the fact that all states and protectorates ? from Belgrade, via Pristina, Skopie to Tirana - are governed by puppets of the United States and the European Union.

The revolution in Serbia was successfully derailed by the bourgeois-democratic, pro-imperialist forces. Thacis KLA and Rugovas LDK share power with their US- and Western European masters. The KLA has become a part of the bourgeois state apparatus.

The national wars, the attacks by imperialism and the effects of capitalist restoration have led to a dramatic impoverishment of all the peoples of the Balkans and of former Yugoslavia in particular.

Factories have been closed and destroyed en masse. Unemployment and underemployment are souring, the currencies been inflated. The DM and the Dollar have become the "real" money in these regions.

Whilst the Serbian masses finally succeeded in overthrowing Milosevic and the Kosovars got rid of oppression by Belgrade ? their victories have been robbed by the bourgeois nationalist leaders immediately. The KLA and the Kosovar administration have started their own reactionary nationalist campaigns against the Serbian and Romani minorities, expelled them from their homes and committed atrocities.

They are trampling on women and trade union rights. The Albanian authorities in Kosova tried to ban Albanian miners representatives from meeting fellow unionists from other Balkan countries. A fraction of reactionary Albanian nationalists tried and tries to continue the armed struggle for Greater Kosova and ultimately a Greater Albania.

The foolish and reactionary attempt of the UCPMB (Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac) played in the hands of Kostunica, Djincic and the Serbian military, now Western imperialism most important agents in the former Yugoslavia.

They could themselves utilise the nationalist card in a way, Milosevic never succeeded to do. NATO called them in to secure "demilitarised" border areas near Macedonia.

The systematic of oppression of Serbs and Romani, the oppression of women, the oppression of trade union rights and organisation by the KLA and the Albanian authorities in Kosova are a weapon in the hands of the new Serbian government to further poison the consciousness of the working class and peasantry in Serbia, to derail the workers struggles, occupations etc.

Of course, the deeds of the Thacis and Co must not be an excuse for the wide spread chauvinism of

Serbian, Macedonian and other Slavic peoples. But events show that the nationalists of all nations only offer a dead end to "their" workers and peasants.

Now Macedonia is on the brink of another war in the Balkans. Certainly, the bourgeois Macedonian government is guilty of binding itself to imperialism in the Kosovan war, of manoeuvring as an imperialist puppet.

Moreover, the Albanian part of the population (according to differing nationalist claims between a quarter and a third) is an oppressed minority. The working class in Macedonia and the whole Balkans must support their just democratic aim and their right to national self-determination.

But the workers and peasants of the Balkans and internationally must prevent that the national tensions turn into a civil war in Macedonia itself. This would be another terrible nationalist war, including mass deportations and pogroms. It would threaten the "ethnic cleansing" of towns like Tetovo and Skopje.

Moreover, such a war is unlikely to be contained within the territory of Macedonia, but could rapidly turn into a war to "rescue" and divide Macedonia, bringing in all the neighbouring countries.

Even if it started with the demand for autonomy of the Albanians in Macedonia, it would rapidly turn into a campaign for a Greater Albania. Likewise Macedonia's neighbours Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia will try to support it in order to secure as much as possible of the Macedonian heartland.

The Macedonian question and the Albanian nationalist campaign in Macedonia have to be seen in the wider context of such a nightmarish perspective, which would further increase the tensions between the peoples, which would further alienate the working classes of all nations and also increase the political, economic and trade union atomisation of our class. It would increase the misery of all peoples and it will hit particularly hard the Romanis and Sintis.

Any new national war will not succeed in "solving" any of the national questions. It will only lay the foundation for stimulating nationalist revenge in the next war.

The nationalists of all nations in the Balkans actually share the reactionary idea to solve the question of Balkanisation by one "final victory" in their war? but it only creates the aspiration of one more round by the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois of the other side. The will of all these leaders to bring in imperialism or this or that imperialist power on "their side" is intimately linked to this.

In the end, such a war would also increase imperialism's hold on the Balkans and its ability to divide and rule, even if it induces more instability in the first place. The bourgeois governments and nationalist politics have already led to a tremendous increase of imperialism's influence and direct control of the Balkans.

The strength of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalist forces in all nations is the other side of the tremendous depth of the crisis of proletarian leadership. Capitalist restoration and wars have led to a weakening of the working class as a social force. Moreover, the working class in all countries has no independent class politics.

It can only develop such by resolutely separating itself from the nationalists of all sorts. It has to combine sharp denunciation of the reactionary nature of the nationalists of "their" nation, their subordination to the imperialists and their role in dividing the working class with the defending the democratic rights of all minorities, with defending the right to self-determination (up to and including succession) of all nations.

This includes the right of the Kosovars in Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac to decide whether to join Kosovo or not, just as we defend the right of the Serb majority areas in northern Kosovo to decide whether to join Serbia or not. But defending the right to do so, is not the same as advocating it.

We have to stress that the solution of the national tensions, of Balkanisation does not lay at all in increasing the number of state-lets, of small, more or less "ethnically pure" territories. The creation of a Greater Serbian or Albanian states are ? as we have seen in the war drives of Milosevic ? reactionary nationalist utopias, the working class has to oppose ferociously.

Moreover, the nationalists Guerrilla actions at the moment run against the popular sentiments in many countries. The workers and peasants in Serbia and Kosova are unwilling to be dragged into another nationalist war.

The KLA lost the elections in Kosova which demonstrates the willingness of the Kosovar people not to wage another round of wars. Likewise, the Serbian youth doesn't want to be drafted into another war for Serbian soil. The attempts of the NLA in Macedonia and the UCPMB to start another war cannot be supported, they have to be opposed just was we oppose offensive armed actions by Serbs in Kosova who are nationally oppressed by the new administration.

At the same time the economic struggles of workers against the effects of capitalist restoration and imperialist exploitation have increased in all countries over the last months. Large parts of the public sector workers in Macedonia are on strike since December 2000 fighting for higher wages. Likewise the Serbian government is still faced with important protests by workers and trade unions.

Macedonia is the immediate crisis spot at the moment, but we also have to address the greater framework of Balkanisation, imperialist domination, capitalist restoration and how to fight it. In Macedonia we have to fight to prevent the outbreak of an all out war with the following slogans:

- * For equal democratic rights of the Albanians in Macedonia, the right to speak their language and to it to be taught in schools and universities and to be recognised as an official language! End to all discrimination of Albanians in public life.
- * Immediate withdrawal of the Macedonian army from the Tesovo region; NLA end the offensive. For the formation of soldiers committees inside the army to organise opposition against the war drive and to break the control of the officers.
- * For the formation of workers and peasant councils in all the cities and on the countryside in order to organise public life, secure food and supply for the population. They must be composed of all nationalities and prevent all national and chauvinist attacks and harassment.
- * Arm the workers and peasants, for the formation of a workers and peasant militia under the control of the councils in the towns and villages. Open the barracks to arm the workers.
- * The trade unions have to play a crucial role as organisations of all workers, Albanian and Slavic, to organise arming and defending the class and to secure that the Albanians and Slaves who already fled can return safely.
- * Expropriate the imperialist assets in Macedonia, re-nationalise privatised industries under workers control. For an emergency plan of the working class, to secure a living for the whole population, to reorganise the run down economy according to the needs of the population, for a programme of public work, housing etc. in order to address the oppression of the Albanians in particular.
- * Imperialists out of Macedonia and the whole of the Balkans.
- * Immediate compensation and reparation for the destruction's caused by the NATO war and exploitation by the imperialist countries. For an international of the workers movement for force the imperialists to compensate for the reconstruction of the Balkans without delay and conditions.

- * Expropriate the new bourgeoisie and the "criminal" proto-capitalists who make a living of smuggling, prostitution.
- * Equal rights for women and all other socially oppressed. For a proletarian women's movement. Women must also play a full role in the councils and militias.
- * Most importantly: build a multi-national revolutionary workers party, which fights for a workers and peasants government based on councils and militias and for a united socialist federation of the Balkans.

The working class in Macedonia and the whole of the Balkans has to intervene in the current crisis and the threat of war. All existing political forces in Macedonia ? imperialism, the government and the opposition Slav bourgeois parties, the different Albanian parties and the NLA ? are unwilling and unable to remove the roots of the current conflict, even if it might be contained for the moment.

Only the working class, if it gains the political lead, can prevent the disaster and tragedy of another war . It has to put the question of working class unity across the borders at the centre of its policy. Only so will it be able to act independently of imperialism and of various nationalist factions. Only so will it be able to lead the peasantry, the urban poor and petit-bourgeoisie and break the influence of nationalist and imperialist forces.

Therefore, the workers party slogan is of central importance in Serbia, Kosova, Albania, Macedonia. We call on all workers organisation to build such a party and we fight for it to be based on a revolutionary internationalist programme. We support all attempts to build direct links between the workers and their organisations in all the countries. The workers organisations have to wage a struggle to prevent the intervention of imperialism and of "their" governments into the Macedonian crisis and to fuel tensions and organise mass protests and strikes against this. They have to unite with students, peasants and democratic urban petit-bourgeois in this attempt.

Only so can we fight together and successfully against imperialist control and occupation, for the expropriation of the imperialists and the emerging bourgeoisie, for an emergency plan under workers control, for the arming of the workers and peasants, the smashing of the bourgeois states, the breaking up of their armed forces, the formation of a workers and peasants governments, a socialist federation of the Balkans.

Such a federation is the only means by which the national question on the Balkans can be resolved in a democratic and progressive way, since it is the only means by which the roots of Balkanisation ? belated and uneven development of capitalism, fragmentation and imperialist domination - can be overcome.

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