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NATO's Drive to the East

New Labour & Training

Alex Salmond
and NATO

The Budget

Regular Features

Europe Bows To American Militarism

A Balkan crisis, serious problems about the latest answer to 'the Irish Question', a radical government at Westminster and a decision to make war in Europe. These are common elements between the situation in July/August 1914 and the present situation.

The world was never the same again after the British decision to make war in 1914, and many of the greatest problems of the present day arose directly out of that decision. And it seems likely that the world will be 'improved' for the worse as a consequence of the present war.

The Observer of 4th April contained an indignant rebuttal of a suggestion that liberals are unable to conduct wars. It was high in belligerency but low in reason. The actual conduct by the Liberal Government of the war that it launched in 1914 was incompetent and it led to the undoing of the Liberal Party. The split in British radicalism, which our New Labour Prime Minister bemoans and promises to undo, was not doctrinal or 'sectarian' in origin. It resulted from the inability of the radicals to give effective direction to the war they had started.

The Liberal Party in government from 1906 to 1914 consisted of a Liberal Imperialist head and a radical Gladstonian body. The Gladstonians, following the foreign policy principles of Cobden and Bright, were fundamentally opposed to British military intervention in European affairs. The two party newspapers (*The Manchester Guardian* and *The Daily News*) were absolutely opposed to British involvement in the European war. They argued that Britain should use its power and influence (and in those days it had great quantities of both) to limit the scope of the conflict in Europe and to bring it to a close as soon as possible, instead of using the occasion for an attempt to destroy Germany.

Fighting started in Europe on 31st July. The Liberal

Imperialist group (Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and Foreign, War and Navy Ministers) held all the offices directly involved in the launching of war. They declared war on Germany on August 5th, and the Liberal newspapers and all but a handful of the MPs immediately fell into line in support of the war.

But radicals cannot make war in a comparatively dispassionate frame of mind, on the basis of a calculation of interest. They can only make war as a moral crusade against absolute evil. Whoever they are making war on must therefore be conjured into a manifestation of the devil. Everything is then driven to extremes.

The last British war fought by a residue of the old ruling class which constructed the Empire was the Boer War, which began a hundred years ago. The frankly Imperialist Unionist government—the Unionist Party being a union of the Tories and Joseph Chamberlain's social reform Liberals—decided to destroy two Boer Republics which stood in the way of the expansion of the empire northwards towards central Africa, and in the course of winning the war it invented concentration camps. (The entire populations of large tracts of territory were swept into camps, in which 25,000 died.) One may find both the decision to go to war with the Boer Republics and the means used to win the war entirely reprehensible, but it must be admitted that passions were not whipped up into wild moral hysteria in the conduct of the war, and that a functional peace settlement was made at the end of it. As wars go, it wasn't a bad war, and even the concentration camps policy was mild by comparison with the measures adopted by the restored colonial regime in the Malayan 'Emergency' in the late forties and early fifties, by a Labour Government.

The comparative restraint of the British conduct of the Boer War, and the settlement in which it ended, were possible because it was fought by an Imperialist government for a definite and limited territorial aim, and because it was opposed by the Opposition. The deadly element of moral crusade was not present in it.

Margot Asquith (wife of the Prime Minister who launched the first World War), reflected in her memoirs that it was fortunate for Britain that there was a Liberal government in power when an apparently favourable opportunity to

make war on Germany present itself. If the Liberal Party had been in opposition, the spirit of the time was such that the Tories would either have been unable to start the war at all, or would have been unable to give it the character of a crusade.

The Great War was laid on by the Liberal Party for the Tories. The Tories flourished in the course of it. The Liberals split. And 'the man who won the war' was the greatest of all the radicals, Lloyd George, leading a coalition in which the Tories were the main element.

The partners in that Radical/Imperialist combination had a mutually perverting effect on each other which ensured that a bad war led to a worse peace.

The collapse of the Liberal Parliamentary Party and Press before the accomplished fact of the Liberal Imperialist coterie on August 5th 1914 was in some ways the most far-reaching event in the internal political life of Britain in the 20th century. As a result of it, foreign policy has never since been an issue in party-politics. (Suez in 1956 is only an apparent exception. Labour supported the Tory policy at first, but it was bungled in implementation and subverted by the USA and Labour ended up opposing it.)

The strange thing about the Liberal split during the Great War is that the Liberal Imperialist coterie which launched the war ended up as a half-baked Opposition in the last two years of it, while the anti-war elements of July 1914 became the most thorough warmongers. And R.B. Haldane, the War Minister who had made the secret preparations for war on Germany around 1908, joined the Labour Party after 1918 and was a Minister in the first Labour Government.

We commented in earlier issues that there is much to be said for the view that the emergence of the Labour Party as the second party in the state was the accidental outcome of two World Wars, and that aside, from the Bevin/Atlee period, it has no solid foundation in thought. And we could not see what would be lost if Blair succeeded in merging it with the Liberals. The appalling state of affairs that it has managed to bring about in the Balkans only confirms that view.

Yugoslavia was destined for destruction by Margaret Thatcher and

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by Germany at the end of the Cold War, when the victorious West was faced with the problem of finding its next enemy. That it might exist without a uniquely evil enemy of civilisation was never for a moment contemplated as a realistic possibility. Islam was seen as the major force of evil, but it was politically diffuse, difficult to get at and unsuitable as a target for weapons of mass destruction. Iraq, lured into Kuwait by American diplomacy, served as an immediate target for a display of Western power under the form of the United Nations. But Yugoslavia was a more appropriate enemy.

When the dust raised by the collapse of communism settled, it was seen that one communist state was still standing. Yugoslavia then became Europe's Cuba, an intolerable alien presence within the

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Gwydion M. Williams

Notes on the News

The War of the Kosovo Secession

In the New World Order, an authoritarian leader who has several times been endorsed by free elections is either 'the people's choice' or 'a dictator'. Likewise, a military campaign by the armed forces against armed secessionists is either 'police action' or else 'tyranny'. Nations behaving as nations is either natural or monstrous, depending on short-term power politics.

In 1914, the Serbian claim to Bosnia-Herzegovina was seen as so utterly fair and right that Britain was happy to start the Great War in Serbia's defence. Yet now Serbians are not supposed to be entitled even to lands that are the heart of their ethnic identity. Sovereignty is such an important principle that it would have been wrong to take ethnic-Serb regions away from Croatia, or to split Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines. Yet when it comes to ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, somehow the West finds a loophole in Serb sovereignty. Ethnic Albanians fleeing Serbia indicates that the Serb government is criminal. Ethnic Serbs who fled Croatia in the face of a Croatian army created and trained by the USA indicates something else. (No one cares to say just what, but the two situations are found to be existentially quite different.)

In most of Eastern Europe, existing borders remain just where the Soviet Union drew them in the 1940s. These borders had changed several times within the first half of the 20th century, and could arguably change again. Yet in most cases the borders laid down by Joseph Stalin are treated as sacrosanct. One must assume that any potential secessionists were told they would get no support from the West, that their cause is hopeless and unwelcome to the world's only Superpower. Nothing is allowed to change, apart from the amicable separation of the Czechs and Slovaks.

Eastern Europe's old and overlapping nationalities faced a wholly foreseeable crisis when Leninism faded and socialism was discarded. The only available ideology was nationalism, and extreme nationalism has flourished everywhere. Anti-semitism and hatred of gypsies etc., which was there before Leninism, has re-emerged more strongly now that Leninism has gone. But only in Yugoslavia was there any question of changing existing borders. The pretext was that the constituent members of the Yugoslav Federation were sovereign, and could therefore secede without any obligation to give up minority areas. Only in Former Yugoslavia did secessionists know they would get support from outside powers. Only in Former Yugoslavia has their been war. Kosovo was never sovereign even by Western definitions. Yet a rule that was sacred last year may be discarded the next, and war was made inevitable by a reasonable expectation of Western intervention regardless of the legalities of the matter. Wars happen when people think they can win them.

New World Chaos

I did take note and make my own small protest when Serbian nationalists originally deprived Kosovo of its autonomy. Decisive action then might have preserved the status quo, with Kosovan autonomy respected but secession ruled out. It would have been a sane solution. But the New World Order has never been interested in the status quo. It wants constant turmoil and it generally gets it. In the New World Order, there is no consistency and no true morality. Serbs have been driven out of territories that they have held for centuries, yet Reduced Serbia is still treated as if it were expansionist power. Only in the New World Order can a state be regarded as expansionist because it declines to allow foreign troops from

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unfriendly powers onto its sovereign territory. Nor have the media made much mention of the Yugoslav opinion that the proposed Rambouillet 'peacekeeping' agreement would have created a loophole in Serbian sovereignty and allowed the 'peace keepers' to rule Kosovo just as they wished.

No one seems to remember Lumumba and the Congo war of the 1960s. Lumumba was unwise enough to treat the UN as if it were indeed an International Policeman. But the UN forces under US influence then helped the secessionists whom they were supposed to be suppressing. This created a precedent for the later Biafran secession from Nigeria, a war in which the USA took a different view of eternal moral values and helped in the long slow bitter crushing of the secessionists.

If multi-ethnic Yugoslavia could not

be maintained, then the United Nations should have partitioned it cleanly. But it was easier to let things drift, and then find someone to demonise when this led to ethnic conflict. Sovereignty was upheld for Bosnia, so that a simple and sane separation of three utterly different and mutually hostile populations could not be done. It was done by the people themselves, slowly and unfairly and horrifically.

Now NATO is preventing the Serbs from ruling part of their own sovereign territory. The Gulf War was fought on the pretext of UN power, but it was planned as an Anglo-American war. It just happened that the UN was, in the main, submissive. When they try doing their job, as at present, they are ignored. The Gulf War could end in victory because Iraqis knew their claim to Kuwait was dubious. But all Serbs consider that Kosovo is Serbian and cannot be given up. Also, Iraq was fashioned by Britain out of three unrelated provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Iraqi identity is uncertain and Arabs have had a long experience of losing wars. Whereas Serbs managed, by their own determination, to win themselves freedom from that same Ottoman Empire, and then survive being overrun by the Nazi war machine. Serbs do not lightly admit defeat. Besides, even small victories like shooting down a Stealth bomber make a difference. Do you think Milosevic wants to be remembered as the man who lost Kosovo for Serbia? Or that any other conceivable Serb leader would agree to this?

General Custer, Ethnic Cleanser

Ethnic cleansing is the cry. It comes oddly from the USA, land of the shyster and the home of the last slave plantations in the English-speaking world. A nation which got rid of most of its unwanted people, the original Native-Americans. And which also has been hopelessly bad at integrating its former slaves and other minorities that are unable to blend in with the all-white norm.

Britain's record is very imperfect. But Britain's non-white minorities are not living separately from the white majority, as is increasingly the case in the USA. It took Britain a lot longer than the French to accept a multiethnic identity, but we have done it. Britain's one serious ethnic conflict is in Northern Ireland, where everyone knows that the

border may change eventually, giving way either to incorporation of the province within the Irish Republic, or perhaps an independent Protestant state. As in Former Yugoslavia and as in Kosovo, war is a rational option there. If International Law were a serious and impartial matter, a disintegration of the Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement would presumably be followed by the forcible imposition of a Serbian peacekeeping force—to be followed by Nato bombing of London, if instant harmony between Protestants and Catholics did not result.

The trouble in Kosovo is that Albanians do not want to be governed by Serbs, and would ideally like to live in an extended Albania. But Serbs consider that Kosovo is theirs, and would no more allow its separation than the USA would allow the secession of California or Texas, if these should ever have an ethnic-Mexican majority. California and Texas were taken from Mexico by an expansionist USA in the 19th century, part of a failed scheme for a grand slave-owning empire based on the Southern USA. The US claim to almost all of its territory is much worse than the Serbian claim to Kosovo, or the Chinese claim to Tibet. But such comparisons are never ever made.

The 'peacekeeping' agreement proposed for Kosovo would have meant that Nato would have brought in a ground force large enough to take Kosovo by force, and with a legal pretext under the agreement for doing so. Military opinion is definitely that it would be enormously costly to now capture Kosovo using ground troops. The Serbs considered that the proposed 'peacekeeping' agreement would have destroyed their sovereignty and pave the way for secession or separation. Indeed, there have always been some Western voices calling openly for this, and probably more behind the scenes. If a conflict begun by armed secessionists can then be used as a pretext for putting in an outside force, the US would have a formula for snipping off minority areas from sovereign states, but only when they chose.

I am not against the abolition of sovereignty. But only as part of a coherent world order with impartial judgements. Not a system where identical cases are judged quite differently, according to a not very enlightened understanding of Western

interests. US foreign policy has always been a creator of chaos. Only during the Cold War were they locked into a stable system. The USA has never allowed Latin America to settle into a stable order. It has successfully created chaos in East Asia now the Cold War is over.

Testing times.

If the bombing was meant to help the Kosovo Albanians, then it was a crazy concept. In a crisis, nations must be expected to act like typical nations. The Serbs have rallied round the only available leader. They have hit out at the only available targets.

Do people not remember the Birmingham Bombings, and the wave of anti-Irish feeling that followed in Britain? This was only eased by the arrest of some plausible suspects, the people later jailed as the Birmingham Six, and much later released when it was proved beyond doubt that these were not the guilty parties.

In Northern Ireland, with an unresolved war, there has been a complete separation of the communities, with sectarian symbols on display by both sides to show who owns this piece of soil. In Kosovo, it looks as if the West's decision to try to impose peace with bombs will end ruinously for the people it was supposed to help. The Serbs have concluded that, short of unconditional surrender, their only option is to retake Kosovo and expel its ethnic Albanians. (The process began before the actual bombing, but at the same time as it became clear that bombing was going to happen, and when all of the existing outside observers were withdrawn. Given what has happened elsewhere, in Bosnia and in formerly Serb areas of Kosovo, it was crazy not to anticipate that this would happen. Always assuming that the US military planners really did not to anticipate that this would happen.)

US politics works by an unmentionable, but solid and definite, hierarchy of ethnic and religious groups. Serbs are white and Christian, so it would not be acceptable to treat them as the Iraqis were treated. Ethnic Albanians are mostly Muslims, and the USA is not really very much bothered if they suffer. Was the war ever really meant to help

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Alex Salmond: H.M. Opposition

Andrew Bryson introduces the statement made by Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party, shortly after the start of NATO's war on Yugoslavia

So far there has been precious little public opposition in Britain to the Nato aggression against Yugoslavia. The Church of Scotland and the Anglican Church in Wales have officially come out against it, as have assorted Anglican bishops, though the Church of England supports the Nato war. Alex Salmond MP, the leader of the Scottish National Party is the only leader of a mainstream party in Britain to voice clear opposition; indeed, we know of no other leader of a European political party who has done so. While this journal has reservations about certain aspects of Mr Salmond's statement, we nevertheless salute him for his political courage. It contrasts sharply with the feebleness of William Hague and his party. The Tory leader has largely kept his head down since offering his full support to Tony Blair in an official broadcast. So we have before us the constitutionally unhealthy prospect of Government without Opposition on the most important issue of the day. Flawed opposition is better than none. That is why we have reprinted Mr Salmond's statement.

This journal disagrees completely with many of Salmond's points, especially with his idea of an economic blockade of Serbia—is he not aware of what the Western sanctions are doing to the people of Iraq? We also disagree with his view that, "President Milosovic bears the prime responsibility for the human tragedy in the Balkans". That responsibility lies squarely with the Western powers. Both Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl were making speeches calculated to destabilise Yugoslavia before there was any trouble there. There was the famous deal done between Kohl and John Major at the time of the Maastricht Treaty whereby Kohl was to be given a free hand to encourage Croatia independence and Major would secure Britain's right to opt out of the

Social Chapter and the Euro. This was pointed out at the time by Denis Healy, among others. It is conveniently forgotten now. Once the Germans had started supporting independence for Croatia under Tudjman, the Americans could not be left out, and started to patronise the Bosnian Muslim separatists in Bosnia.

It is true that innocent civilians have been subject to "daily assault, indignity and murder". That has been true on and off throughout the regions that formerly made up Yugoslavia—itsself a creation of the Western powers—for the past nine or ten years. It is a direct consequence of the West's agenda of re-Balkanising the region for its own imperialist purposes. Whatever suffering the Albanian people of Kosovo were undergoing before the Nato aggression, it has been vastly accelerated and intensified since then. The lawyer Tony Blair presumably knows that foreseeability of consequences is a component part of the tort of negligence. But it is hard to imagine that he will ever accept that he personally caused harm to anyone. Perhaps at some point in the future Tony Blair's conscience will prove an inviting subject for Gitta Sereny.

Alex Salmond's statement, 29th March

A few nights ago, the Prime Minister asked us to do the right thing in Serbia and by the people of Kosovo.

This evening, I want to suggest that the right thing to do is not for politicians to pursue a misguided policy and then ask our servicemen to implement it.

Few people are in any doubt that President Milosevic bears the prime responsibility for the human tragedy in the Balkans. He and his supporters have

subjected innocent civilians to daily assault, indignity and murder.

However, if we are to sanction intervention in Serbia then the policy must be capable of achieving two things. It must be capable of weakening Milosevic, and helping Kosovo.

A bombing campaign will achieve neither. Indeed, the chances are that it will make both worse.

In virtually every country which has been blitzed this century, the reaction has been to steel the resolve of the civilian population. This is what happened in London in the Second World War. It is also what happened in Clydebank.

Why should we believe that there will not be the same reaction in Serbia?

The evidence from the much respected BBC correspondent John Simpson is that the bombing campaign has effectively silenced the Serbian opposition to Milosevic.

Nor has the bombing campaign helped the people of Kosovo. The atrocities against them have intensified. The Prime Minister claims this is nothing to do with the NATO action. Does anyone at all take that opinion seriously?

General Sir Michael Rose who commanded the UN forces in Bosnia certainly does not. He argues that the Serbian militia, unable to do much damage to NATO forces 20,000 feet up in the air, will exact revenge on people who are much more vulnerable on the ground.

Thus far the NATO action has consolidated the position of Milosevic, and further jeopardised the position of the Kosovo Albanians.

It must be of little consolation to those

being driven from their homes, or worse, to know that the campaign in the skies above is actually meant to be for their benefit.

There are those who call for the intervention of NATO troops on the ground. This would at least have the prospect of helping those who we are meant to be helping. However, the NATO powers have set their face against it for the understandable reason that it carries the likelihood of substantial further loss of life.

What then is the alternative to the present misguided campaign—accepting that there are no easy answers?

Well, we could expend the billions of dollars currently being flung at Serbia in high explosives on stepping up our humanitarian efforts to help Kosovo.

We could turn what has been a

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I am willing to bet my salary for the rest of the time that I am in the House of Commons that no British Government will ever support such a call, but that is exactly what we are doing in the case of Kosovo.

For all the crocodile tears that have been shed in the debate about the need for the Kosovars not to try to exploit the situation, or to push the boundaries out further, the Kosovo Liberation Army has a clear goal. Let me quote the leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Hashim Thaci, in the newspapers this morning: "Independence of Kosovo will not come as soon as we hope. It all depends on our organising and on our fighting in Kosovo in the future." We have allowed ourselves to be hijacked as the air force of the Kosovo Liberation Army in its attempt to win separation for that territory from Serbia, which, in international law, possesses Kosovo.

I do not deal with the extent to which I think the Milosevic Government have grotesquely exacerbated the national tensions in Serbia. When they cancelled—Milosevic himself made the decision—the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo almost a decade ago, they set a clock ticking, and started a process that was bound to lead to the violence and bloodshed that we see today. I merely

partially effective arms embargo into a full scale economic blockade of Serbia, until her leadership comes to their senses in the treatment of the people of Kosovo.

We could also accept that if Milosevic were prepared to sign up to the Rambouillet accord then it could be policed by United Nations and non-NATO forces.

Almost fifty years ago, NATO was formed as a defensive alliance against potential aggression from the Soviet Union.

It achieved its primary purpose without firing a single shot. But now for the first time it is acting in an offensive capacity outwith any specific remit from the United Nations.

It is an action of dubious legality, but above all one of unpardonable folly—an action which thus far has made matters

ask the British Government to take great care, because the arguments that they are advancing for intervening in the civil war in Yugoslavia will be advanced by others in other theatres and will, at best, show the Government to be guilty of double standards and, at worst, lead the Government into ever-more bloody and complicated territory.

... I have lost count of the number of people who have said today, in support of the action, that we had to do it because of what we saw on our television. That is an extraordinary notion. As the hon. Member for Witney made brilliantly clear, when we see something on our television, something must be done, even if that something makes matters worse. It leaves aside the reality that, when appalling suffering takes place in areas where television cameras are disinterested or find it difficult to reach, as in Rwanda—in Rwanda it was both—absolutely nothing will be done....

There are conflicts or humanitarian catastrophes—to use the vogue word—all over the globe and the Queen does not have enough soldiers to address every one of them. If we are to deal only with those that are thought televisual enough to make it on to the transitory editorial choices of the British or other media, we will be drawn into a very selective use of international force.

When I hear that we must do this

even worse for the very people it is meant to help.

All war is evil, but there is something deeply disturbing about warfare which can be so conducted by remote control—missiles and bombing which sanitise conflict—at least on our side.

Our servicemen deserve support, but the politicians who sent them there are not above criticism or responsibility.

Sometimes the right thing to do is to negotiate patiently even with those we find repellent, to recognise that economic influence is more effective than military might, and to accept the moral strength of relying on international law even when it seems frustrating and ineffective.

The correct thing to do is not to substitute folly for wisdom, aggression for diplomacy or might for right.

because we have to show NATO's credibility, I am reminded of nothing more than the arguments for the starting of the first world war in the very place that we are discussing today. The railway timetables were such that there was an inevitability about the need to go to war at that time. One should only take decisions about war and peace after the most serious evaluation and calculation of the effects of that war. It should not be because, if we did not go to war, somebody might argue that we did not have the cojones or the macho attributes referred to by the right hon. Member for Kensington and Chelsea (Mr. Clark). We must have better reasons than that.

...When I mentioned German participation yesterday, it was not just because I wanted my right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister to imagine how it seems to Yugoslavs to see a German aeroplane dropping bombs on them, given the history of that territory in the lifetime of many people there and in this Chamber, but because Germany played a despicable role in the break-up of Yugoslavia. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield was right.

To be concluded in next issue

New Labour's Training Strategy

Christopher Winch

The Labour government's sound and fury about training and education would make some sense if they could explain what training is supposed to be for. As far as one can tell, there are no plans to fundamentally alter the Tories' structure for training. If this seems to be a harsh judgement then it is worth looking at the record.

The UK operates an economy that in many respects is based on a 'low-skill equilibrium'. This means that goods and services are produced by a workforce with relatively low levels of skill and job security. Pay is low and consumers can only afford relatively low-priced and low-quality goods and services. The supply and demand sides of a skill equilibrium require each other and movement out of a low-skill to a high-skill equilibrium requires deliberate government activity. Continental economies are more likely to run a 'high-skill equilibrium', where a relatively highly skilled and highly paid workforce produce goods that compete on quality and individuality. Again it is an equilibrium because a market for highly priced products depends on the existence of a significant domestic demand for them from well-paid workers.

There is some evidence that the Tories' strategy was to run much of the British economy as a low-skill equilibrium. There is sense in such a strategy; it can be profitable in the short to medium term and does not require much in the way of government intervention. Besides, the Tories could not contemplate the move to a high-skill economy, which involves state intervention in determining the overall thrust of sectors of the economy ('picking winners', which is anathema to the right-wing financial press), together with forcing employers to pay for training through a levy. To conceal their lack of a policy they also embraced a bizarre system of accreditation for work-based

learning known as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) which decoupled training from the assessment of skill. You can now become qualified without having to train. The obvious problem with such a scheme is that you are likely to have people certificated for possessing little or no skill or knowledge. It is not surprising that few workers or employers take NVQs all that seriously.

It would be natural to expect a moderately reforming centre-left government to take a look at this strategy and take steps to move Britain onto a more high-skill track. After all, the Labour Party has never ceased proclaiming how important education and training is and how necessary it is to get everyone into work and to upgrade the nation's skills. Put these two together and it would be natural to expect a Labour government to educate children in order to take up jobs which demand education. These would include skilled artisanal and technical jobs which require a good level of basic education on which to build work-based skills and knowledge. High-skill employment is more satisfying and better paid than low-skill employment. Furthermore, firms which have invested in their employees are more likely to use the skills that they have developed as part of their business strategy. Making it more difficult to sack workers also makes it more in an employer's interest to make the best use of the workforce that he has got.

The problem with this for a timid government clinging to neo-liberal views about the 'supply side' of the economy is that it would involve some active intervention, both in economic strategy and in obliging employers to pay for work-based training. It would also mean dismantling the strategy of a flexible workforce (i.e. hire and fire) which the government is so proud of. So what is a poor government to do if it can't take the obvious steps towards adopting a high-

skill employment and economic strategy that would put us on the same route as our continental neighbours?

The answer seems to be that you 'educate and train' without dealing with the issues of workplace training, industrial strategy or employment security. Those young people who don't want to go to university are urged to go to further education colleges instead, while many more are urged to go to university. The Prime Minister now envisages that half of all eighteen to twenty year olds will be in higher education within ten years. What is the relevance of this strategy to improving Britain's economic performance and showing young people that there is some point in continuing with their education?

The new graduates will, presumably, be absorbed into low-level management, the professions and, hopefully, the setting up of small businesses. New skills in media and media technology, computing and information technology and the applied biological and environmental sciences will help generate the new 'knowledge-based' manufacturing and service industries of the future. The problem is that these new industries may arise, but they may not. Many of those countries that have most successfully developed new industries have adopted a two-track approach of providing the skills needed, together with creating the conditions for the creation of new enterprises, doing both through active state intervention. This has been the approach adopted on the Pacific Rim. Other countries have consolidated their position by improving the quality of their industries through upgrading their training and artisanal and professional education, including workplace-based training. Sometimes, as in Germany, this has been combined with the introduction of a considerable degree of workplace democratic decision-making.

The UK has expanded its further education sector, which primarily caters for service industries, without at the same time taking any steps to ensure that there are jobs for young people who take this route, to go into. We have continued to allow work-based training to decay. Nothing is being done to improve the overall quality of training, whether on or off the job, so that those workers at the artisanal, technical and lower managerial levels have the skills to compete with the best that Western Europe can do. Academic studies have been conducted into the hotel, construction, motor manufacturing and biscuit-making industries in Europe, to name but a few. In each case the same pattern emerges: countries like Germany or the Netherlands produce higher-quality products either more cheaply (as in the case of the hotel industry) or in smaller volume at higher cost (biscuits, specialist and luxury cars). Sometimes they use more advanced techniques with better-

skilled artisans and fewer layers of management (construction) and sometimes they employ fewer but multi-skilled workers, which allows for a cheaper service but an expanded industry compared with that in the UK (hotels). Both service and manufacturing sectors benefit from a well-trained and well-paid workforce who have not come through the general graduate route, but have been apprentices or have followed some other work-based vocational education. Even the higher education sector in these countries produce more vocationally-oriented graduates, rather than students who have just followed the latest fad like Psychology or Media Studies, and they do not shrink from challenging the UK in sectors where we have traditionally been dominant, like Leather Technology.

Blair's Government seems bent on pursuing a policy where half our young people will graduate for an ill-defined

job market, which the Government will have taken no responsibility to develop. Those who do not graduate will be offered largely non-workplace based courses for jobs that may or may not exist (in this respect, they will be in the same position as the graduates, but with less room for manoeuvre and fewer opportunities). Most young people are prepared to be educated in the school system if there are realistic prospects of interesting and reasonably well-paid and secure jobs at the end. They are not stupid and they realise that if all that 'education, education, education' amounts to is more of the same after school, levels of achievement are likely to remain the same and disaffection amongst 13 to 16 year olds in school is likely to increase. If one were very unkind, one might be tempted to say that the Government is conning the nation with its education and training policy and conning young people in particular. •

plight is the notion that they have not been compromised in the great ideological dispute between two forms of materialism. The Dalai Lama, despite being prepared to accept some degree of Chinese hegemony, has never compromised with Beijing.

It was assumed that he had not compromised with Washington. Apparently, he did; during the 1970s the CIA (not a charitable organisation) gave him \$180,000 per annum. It has to be said that this is not an outrageous sum of money, especially taking into consideration the fact that the Dalai Lama had responsibilities to a large number of displaced Tibetans. They were, of course, displaced because he put his name to an unrealistic military confrontation with the Chinese Red Army. But it is still peanuts compared with the sort of dough various criminal Latin (especially Central) American military dictators were given.

However, it has taken the shine off Tibetan Buddhism, which is a particularly obscurantist and unthinking tradition within the over-all faith. Buddhism is really an atheistic view of life and the cosmos, but the form practised in Lhasa was heavily encumbered with a crude undertow of superstition and credulousness.

West Coast USA may have to find some other form of religiosity to batten on to. If I were a big wheel in Rastafarianism... •

The Dalai Lama

Sean McGouran

The Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism have experienced a great escalation in prestige over the forty years since he fled Lhasa, the capital of the theocratic state he ruled over.

The Red Chinese were asserting the right of China to hegemony over Tibet—possibly not the most revolutionary action of Mao's Government, but an historically justifiable one, and one based on the need of the central section of the People's Republic for secure borders. (The war between China and India in 1962 was presented at the time in the West as naked aggression by the Maoists. But it is now generally accepted that India was the aggressor—China was entitled to the several hundred square miles of snow and icy mountains being fought over.)

Tibet in 1959, with the flight of the Dalai Lama and much of his 'court' was presented as a virtual Shangri-la, a place of timeless virtue and peace. It was actually an undemocratic theocracy, where a huge proportion of the male adults were part of the non-working priesthood, which leached off the toil of the largely landless peasants (the land belonging to the monasteries or to a feudal aristocracy). It is difficult to say

quite what the attitude of the ordinary Tibetans is to the presence of the Chinese. There does seem to be an element of racist contempt for the locals in the attitude of the authorities—and there certainly has been a very heavy-handed approach taken to expressions of traditional religious feeling. (On the other other hand, traditional religious feeling is bound up with what little there is of national feeling in Tibet.)

The general attitude of people in the West has been a rather cheap sympathy with the Dalai Lama and for the argument of the people around him in his exile in India. ('Cheap' because there is no sign that anybody is actually going to do anything about the *status quo*. There is also the fact that, while some Tibetans want complete independence from China, the Dalai Lama himself seems to favour a large degree of autonomy. Presumably this is based on a distaste for bloodshed—and a rational weighing up of the sheer numbers at the disposal of Tibet and China. Europeans and Americans who think they are Buddhists are hardly the stuff of which International Brigades are made.)

Another aspect of the generally favourable response to the Tibetans'

Kevin Brady

Parliamentary Diary

Due to the war against Yugoslavia, *Parliamentary Diary* is this month taking the form of a reprint of the anti-war contributions from Labour MPs in the Commons debate of 25th March. It will continue in the next issue.

Mr. Benn:...

...If the Foreign Secretary had heard the speech of the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), with which I agreed, he would realise that it was wrong for British troops to be committed to war without the House of Commons discussing the matter. That is not just a constitutional question. The Government could have tabled a motion in support of their action whenever they liked. They did not do that because they did not think that Parliament mattered. I say that with some feeling.

We agree that there is a terrible humanitarian crisis. It is a civil war. For anyone who has any doubts about my view of Milosevic, let me explain. I am bitterly opposed to Milosevic. Why? Because, faced with a political problem, he used force—the same reason why I am against the Government's action. If Milosevic had had any sense, he would not have withdrawn autonomy from Kosovo and he would have realised that the problem had to be resolved by getting round the table with the Kosovars, but he did not do that. NATO has come along and repeated the mistake on a bigger scale.

...When we are told that so many extra thousand people have become refugees in the past few days, we have to recognise that the air strikes have made the situation worse. The monitors have been withdrawn because of the bombing, so there is nobody there to look after the area—and faced with the likelihood of an attack, the Serbs have moved their troops across the country. Whether their troops are there to repress the Kosovars or to defend their border I do not know, but if this country were threatened with a possible invasion, we would send people all over to prepare.

I do not accept for one moment the reason given by Ministers for the war. They say that it is a war for humanitarian purposes. Can anyone name any war in history fought for humanitarian purposes? Would the Red Cross have done better with stealth bombers and cruise missiles? Of course not. War is about power, for the control of countries and resources. The other humanitarian crises that have been mentioned are informative—the Kurds, the Palestinians and the people of East Timor. The British Government are still arming the Indonesian Government when they are repressing the people of East Timor. What is the basis of that? I am not asking the Government to go to war with Indonesia, but do they have to go on arming the oppressors.

Those oppressors create doubts about the credibility of the operation. Up to 5,000 Iraqi babies die every month according to the Quaker Irishman Denis Halliday, who was in charge of the United Nations oil for food programme. Is that humanitarian? When I hear Ministers say that we have gone to war to prove that NATO is credible, by God I shiver. The argument that we have to kill people to show that we are strong does not carry any weight with me or with the rest of the House.

Many people have spoken about the history, including my hon. Friend the Member for North-East Derbyshire (Mr. Barnes). Kosovo has been in Yugoslavia for many centuries. The Yugoslavs were under the Turks for a long time and fought them very hard. Then they were under the Austro-Hungarian empire, which they also fought very hard. The Archduke was killed at Sarajevo by a Serb nationalist. I have been to the spot where it happened.

During the war, the Nazis set up a fascist Croatia and, as the right hon. Member for Kensington and Chelsea (Mr. Clark) said, hundreds of thousands of Serbs died. Forty-eight years ago tomorrow, Prince Paul of Yugoslavia signed a treaty with Hitler. The following day he was overthrown by Simovic. In the House of Commons, Mr. Churchill, who was not talking about the leadership of any particular Yugoslav Government, said: "I therefore turn to the story of Yugoslavia. This valiant, steadfast people, whose history for centuries has been a struggle for life, and who owe their survival to their mountains and to their fighting qualities".—(Official Report, 9 April 1941; Vol. 370, c. 1592.)

When the Serbs took on Hitler, Russia was neutral and America—the great America—had not come into the war because it had not yet been attacked at Pearl Harbour. The Serbs took on the Nazis and until the day that I die I shall be grateful for that.

If I may be allowed one other personal reference, I joined the Home Guard that week. I was 16. I was given a tin hat, a uniform, a gas mask and a rifle and was sent out at night with a bayonet because we were told that the Nazis might land by parachute. We were also told that they might come disguised as nuns. I am glad that I never met a nun on those nights. By God, even if we forget our history, the Serbs do not forget. A Serbian woman of about 85 rang and told me the story. She said that she was in Belgrade when Simovic overthrew Prince Paul.

The House suffers from its lack of knowledge of history. I was in a debate on television with a fellow Labour Member of Parliament who said that he thought that the Serbs had fought with the Germans. I do not blame him for not living through it, but an interest in history is a requirement for credible politics.

My hon. Friend the Member for North-East Derbyshire rightly pointed out that the International Monetary Fund broke up Yugoslavia by imposing such a debt that the richer republics thought that they would do better outside. As the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford said, Genscher helped to break it up. He boasted when he left the German Foreign Office that the disintegration of Yugoslavia was his greatest achievement. Why we went along with that—whether it was as a trade-off for

our Maastricht opt-out—is a matter for speculation, but it is certain that we did and now we are witnessing a war for control of the Balkans.

The Kosovo Liberation Army—some people might call them terrorists, but I do not want to use extravagant language—is armed and supported by the Germans and the Americans. Who did the Americans put in charge of the monitoring forces? Ambassador Walker. And what was he doing 10 years ago? He was financing the Contras against the Nicaraguan Government under the authority of Reagan, for whose actions Clinton has recently apologised. Is it not worth looking back a little before the day that we were born? We have provided the KLA with an air force and called it NATO. That is what it wanted all along. We are told that Kosovo is to be a protectorate. Has international law advanced to the point where, if we do not like a country we can take one of its provinces and call it a protectorate? ...

This is a war of aggression, I regret to say, because the United Nations is the only body authorised to use force, but Britain and America will not go to the Security Council, because they are afraid that Russia would use its veto. Russia has a greater geographical interest than we have. The Americans can hardly use the veto as an argument, as they have used 27 vetoes to protect Israel when the Security Council would have disciplined it for many breaches of resolutions, including when it invaded southern Lebanon.

What this is all about, apart from the domination of the Balkans, is the setting up of NATO to replace the United Nations. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic have been brought in. It seems to me that, with all those countries' problems, the need to rearm would be one of the lowest priorities of all, but the arms industry in America will do very well out of the extension of NATO. NATO is redefining its objectives. Its main objective now is to cut itself loose from the discipline of big power unanimity, which lies at the heart of the UN charter.

It upsets me when British Ministers describe anything that the Prime Minister and the President do as "the international community". That claim does not bear examination. We are in a minority in the world on many issues. I greatly regret the fact that we take our orders from

Washington. That is not because I am in any way against the Americans, as some of the most radical traditions in the world are American.

Six months ago, the Americans bombed Sudan on the grounds that chemical weapons were being made there, and the British Government went along with it, but nobody believes that there were any chemical weapons in Khartoum. We took our orders from Washington. I do not want to be disrespectful, but when President Clinton makes a statement, I no longer feel obliged to believe that it is necessarily the truth.

I do not want to be a scaremonger, because we do not know what will happen, but bombing does not usually achieve its objective, although it may have some marginal influence. The Prime Minister said that it would take 100,000 to 200,000 ground troops to occupy Serbia, and I doubt whether the Americans are ready to put in that number of bodies, because of the Vietnam war. They would be happy for the Europeans to go in, but the Americans would be happier outside in their stealth bombers and behind their cruise missiles.

The Serbs have always fought extremely hard. There is a danger of the conflict spreading. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, if Russia decides to send support to Serbia, will the planes be shot down and the ships attacked? Will it be held to be a breach of the United Nations charter? We are breaching it, but we are told that that is for humanitarian reasons.

People talk of appeasement. Some of the most valiant chairborne soldiers in the country live in the House of Commons, some of them on the Labour side. Anyone who has been in the Army knows what the chairborne troops are: they fight from their office desks. There was no appeasement of Hitler before the war: Chamberlain supported him. That is a much more serious charge.

Anyone who has read the captured German Foreign Office documents will know that Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, was sent to see Hitler in Berchtesgarden—I have the transcript at home—and said, "Herr Chancellor, on behalf of the British Government I congratulate you on crushing communism in Germany and standing as a bulwark against Russia." Like it or not, that was not appeasement but

support. If we had taken a position against Hitler earlier—I am not suggesting a war—we could have stopped the matter there.

We represent our troops. I do not know if there are any pilots from Chesterfield, but their wives or families may well be there. We had no chance to speak for them before they were committed to battle. It is not right to send young men and women into battle and then shield behind them. In the Suez war in 1956, I had a letter from an RAF pilot in Cyprus who wrote, "I am in the RAF and I think this is a war of aggression. What shall I do?" I wrote back and said, "I share your view, but I am not telling you what you should do, because you are under orders as an officer." It is not reputable to shield behind the troops whom we have sent into battle.

I want to say something else, which I hope is not too strong. I wish there were more interest in soldiers who fought in previous wars. What about the Gulf war veterans exposed to depleted uranium? Where is the support from the Government for them? Our boys in uniform are lauded as heroes when they fight, but later they have to queue up at the dole office and try to get a means-tested grant. They are told that we do not have the money. Why? Because it has been diverted to a humanitarian war to kill more people.

... There is great opposition to the war, and not only from a little left-wing clique, as was demonstrated by the speech of the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford. Henry Kissinger is against the war, as are 41 senators. Sky Television had a poll yesterday—although I do not have much time for Murdoch or polls—and 55 per cent. were against the war and only 45 per cent. in favour.

Do not believe that wars are popular. They are marvellous the day they break out and everybody is happy, as they sell newspapers and boost ratings and make commentators into world statesmen but, by God, when the consequences become apparent there might be a very different attitude. I was opposed to the Suez war and spoke against it in the House. Looking back, I have no regrets for issuing a warning on that occasion.

We are asked what should be done. The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford told us: the United Nations should convene a peace conference, without the threat of bombing that came

from NATO. The Russians and the Chinese would support that, the bombing would halt and the humanitarian aid would go in. If we are in a jam, so is Milosevic. He has to find a way of living with the people of Kosovo. For him to be faced with the reality that confronts him is the best chance of peace, but killing people does not automatically solve problems. It did not work in Iraq.

No amendment has been tabled, as that is not permitted, but as in the Norway debate in 1940, we can vote against the Adjournment. I shall do that tonight, with a very heavy heart. I have been in the Labour party for 57 or 58 years and have been a Labour candidate 17 times in parliamentary elections, and I never thought that I would be asked by my party to vote for a war against the charter of the United Nations, in a way that could make the situation that confronts the world far more serious.

...
Sir Patrick Cormack

... The right Gentleman said that he could not remember a time when we went to war for a humanitarian cause. I would say that going to war against Hitler was going to war to suppress evil.

Mr. Benn

In all fairness—this is an important point—we did not fight Hitler because of his persecution of the Jews; we fought because he challenged the power of the west. When Hitler died in 1945, the obituary in *The Times* did not mention the holocaust....

Mr. Galloway

... Tests of public opinion ... and the paucity of Government supporters who will enter the Lobby tonight to vote positively to support this war—all show that this is an enterprise that the British people are very reluctant indeed to support. That is at a time when the bombing has only just started and the action is at the apex of its popularity. ...

It is a funny old world. How things change. Several Conservative Members, notably the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and the right hon. Member for Kensington and Chelsea (Mr. Clark), made clarion, powerful speeches. They argued powerfully for the centrality of the United Nations and for international legality, and against this war.

Mr. Corbyn—

My hon. Friend makes the point

well. Does he believe that, by bypassing the United Nations over this bombardment, the ability of NATO countries to have any influence over the UN in the future will be limited? Perhaps more seriously for the rest of the world, the UN will feel that it is impossible to intervene in any situation because NATO will act unilaterally and ignore its views.

Mr. Galloway

It is my view—which again I share with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield—that one of the main reasons why we are engaged in this operation is that an attempt is being made to substitute NATO for the United Nations. America cannot count on getting its way on each and every issue in the United Nations, but it is the overwhelmingly dominant partner, politically and militarily, in NATO.

If people do not understand the anxieties of Russia about the burgeoning muscularity and expansionism of NATO, I refer them to the wonderful exchange on "Newsnight" this week between Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Paxman. Mr. Gorbachev was being pressed by Mr. Paxman on what he had to worry about from the expansion of NATO. Mr. Gorbachev replied, "Mr. Paxman, if you really don't understand why Russia is worried about the expansion of NATO, why on earth are you working for the BBC?"...

Once upon a time, Liberal Democrats were men who wore beards, sandals and long, woolly jumpers. They believed in the United Nations and they believed in peace. Increasingly, with each campaign, they come before us not in woolly jumpers but in ever-grander military uniforms. ... I have watched with wonder the Liberal Democrats' mounting infatuation with matters Balkan over the past few years. ... "War war" is the Liberal Democrat slogan. ... "Vote Liberal for a European ground war". The Liberal Democratic party is the only party in the House that is openly calling for the insinuation of ground forces, including our own, into the morass that is the Balkan battleground.

... For a short time, I was president of the British Albanian Society. Many years ago, I visited Kosovo with the former Member of Parliament for Epping Forest, Mr. Norris. On our return, Mr. Norris memorably said that most MPs did not know whether a Kosovar was something you ate, drank, licked or drove, and that was true.

I have written a book about the Balkans—about Romania—and I have travelled widely there, so I think I have the right to put the point of view that I am about to put. I am against the operation for many reasons; some are legal, some political, but I wish to dwell on the practical. This is an operation that will not work: it will not achieve the ends that are claimed for it. I believe that it will not only fail to dispose of the age-old—centuries-old—hatreds and enmities of the Balkans, but pour petrol on already dangerous flames. The operation is unbalanced and disproportionate.

Let me deal first with the lack of balance. I made the point to the Deputy Prime Minister last night; he did not deal with it. Everyone has concentrated on the suffering and bloodshed in Kosovo. As I say, as someone who visited it long ago, I am second to no one in my concern about that, but one of the reasons why there is such suffering and bloodshed is that there is an armed separatist war going on in Kosovo.

Let me develop my argument. Armed separatist rebellions are going on in many places. I could deal with them all day and night, but I will deal with just two. An armed separatist rebellion is going on in south-east Turkey. It has been for decades. About 13 million Kurds support, to a greater or lesser extent, the activities of the PKK, the armed separatist rebels in Turkey. Whether any of us support them or not is, for these purposes, irrelevant. No hon. Member is calling for a NATO bombardment of Turkey because it has dealt in the harshest possible way with that armed separatist rebellion, and that is not least because Turkey is a member of NATO and, indeed, its air bases are regularly used by NATO forces to fly punishment missions against other countries.

It is accepted by all Governments, including the British Government, that Turkey has the right to fight to maintain its territorial integrity. I hazard a guess that, no matter how brutal and how bloody the Turkish Government's efforts to quell the Kurdish rebellion in the south-east of its territory become, there will be no international bombardment of Turkey to force it to desist. Still less will anyone call for British and other forces to invade Turkey and to establish a protectorate in its south-east provinces.

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the ethnic Albanians? Or was it just a good excuse to see how the latest generation of weapons make out against a passably strong opponent? Smart weapons are getting a good test. (Weapons that are not smart enough to stay out of a pointless war or fly off to a safe haven, of course.)

It is also significant that the only aircraft lost (as of 2nd April) was a Stealth, was this one of the tests? It may be that the Stealth does not really work under battlefield conditions. Or that there are counters good enough for the Yugoslavs to know. There is also a story that a stealth bomber in cloud becomes very visible to radar. There has been a lot of rain over Yugoslavia during the air war (no one on the Nato side has so far cared to cite the Will of God), the weather had been mostly what a Serb would be praying for. The world has also seen Serbs dancing on the fallen stealth aircraft that was supposed to attack them with no risk to American lives. Seen a Serb holding up a sign saying "Sorry, we didn't know it was invisible." Could an enthusiastic machine-gunner have done the job? No one yet cares to give the details. If the USA military had begun to suspect that the Stealth aircraft was an expensive failure, they have gained a lot by finding out now. Gained an excuse to drop the program, before they build any more billion-dollar aircraft that only work well over the Arizona desert.

It has also been shown that East Europeans cannot be safely pushed around in the way Arabs have been. The same is also probably true of East Asians, certainly the USA seems to be doing no better now against Yugoslavia than they did against North Vietnam. Is it just a coincidence that Russia has now been given a virtual blank cheque from the IMF, agreement that they can borrow money to pay off their existing debts? Or has the air war confirmed that US hegemony is limited and cannot be pushed too far? The war seems also to have used up a lot of the stocks of cruise missiles, more are urgently needed. The military-industrial complex will be crying all the way to the bank. And the very real suffering of the displaced ethnic Albanians is unlikely to worry them. And more than they have a conscience about all the non-white allies who suffered when they ran away from South Vietnam.

Boss of Benevolence

The USA holds out against any US citizen ever being tried by any foreign court. They are refusing to sign up to various treaties that might make them liable. Nato's role is being promoted as being to "upholding international law everywhere". (Mary Kaldor, *Prospect*, April issue). This lady is good enough to call it "A Benign Imperialism"—just as the original 19th century Imperialists saw it, as they exterminated inconvenient natives in North American and Australian, or used the Royal Navy as 'muscle' to stop Imperial China interfering with the free trade in opium from Hong Kong.

International law has been intentionally kept vague and biased, and a US President can do anything he likes. Bush decided that Iraq must be punished, and the rest of the world came into line. The world has seen the US president documented as a liar and adulterer. This does not disqualify him from being US President; indeed, the voters knew what sort of man he was and decided they liked him better than the alternatives. That is their right. But it does make him unfit to be keeper of the world's conscience. Likewise a Congress where they swore to act as impartial judges during the impeachment, and then voted strictly on party lines, and with an eye on opinion polls.

Justice for All

A US pilot who was flying too fast and too low and kills more than a dozen people in a ski-lift is found not guilty of manslaughter. That's why the US don't want a proper system of international law: only courts in the US could be relied upon to deliver a verdict like that. NATO rules were devised so as to stop US service people answering to European courts. Instead they go home to America to answer for alleged crimes committed in Europe, with utterly predictable results. The navigator of the same jet admitted concealing and then destroying a videotape that would have shown just what he and the pilot were up to. A news report on the BBC website from 30th March mentioned that he could be jailed for as long as 10 years for this blatant, and deeply suspicious, obstruction of justice. In fact he ended up jailed for zero years. He was not even fined; he merely lost his job. While the pilot, presumably, might even now be flying

over your own home town.

It is a new development that the mass killing of Europeans can be treated like that. Perverse verdicts and stupid acquittals were the norm where the victims were Afro-Americans, always and down to the resent day, unless guilt is embarrassingly clear. The same would be true of almost anyone in the Third World. But Europeans too? Clearly, there is a shift of attitude.

In the film *Easy Rider*, a lawyer says to the bikers that he can get them out of jail unless they've killed someone. Rather, unless they've killed someone white. It has not changed that much. Reagan stopped it changing, showing he could easily gather racist votes. The whole Republican strategy centres on how to get racist votes without losing those who would refuse to vote for a party they saw as racist. Americans are very good at not seeing what they do not want to see.

Good Muslims

Mr Anwar Ibrahim was trying to play the same game in Malaysia that Slobodan Milosevic did successfully play in former Yugoslavia. He was out to emphasise the rights of the largest fraction of the mixed population. But when the existing Malaysian leadership try to suppress him, he becomes a hero to the West. Mr Anwar Ibrahim pushed an odd mix of Muslim sectarianism and submissiveness to foreign capital. He was supported for much the same reason as Afghanistan's mix of tribalists and hard-line Muslims were supported.

The western media have downplayed the democratic success of Mahathir Mohammed, Malaysia's prime minister. He has maintained a popular secular alliance that balances the interests of the Muslim Malays, 60% of the population, with the non-Muslim ethnic Chinese and various other peoples. The Islamic Party of Malaya, expressing desire of a majority of Malays to take more. But they also oppose the successful restrictions on foreign capital that Mahathir Mohammed imposed during the Asia crisis. In the New World Order, it is OK to be an extremist Christian or Muslim so long as your true God is Mammon. It is OK to spread sectarianism so long as the Rights of Money are respected.

Weaving the Web.

The Bevin Society web site can be found at <http://members.aol.com/BevinSoc/is.htm>.

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heartland of whatever it is that Europe now supposes itself to be. It became by its mere existence a violation of a European counterpart of the American Monroe Doctrine.

But how could it have happened that Yugoslavia alone survived the collapse of the Cold War enemy? The most obvious explanation is that it defected from the Cold War enemy fifty years ago and became in effect part of the West. But that fact somehow fell victim to a remarkable feat of forgetting by the politicians, journalists and academics of the West after 1990.

There is difficulty in understanding how the academics forgot this very relevant fact. The dominant intellectual trend in the West in the seventies and early eighties was Althusserian Marxism, which proclaimed that scientific socialism—or was it social science?—required 'a radical absence of memory' and a correspondingly 'ahuman' conception of history.

Human history is bound up with memory. It is impossible without memory. The Althusserians relegated human memory to the sphere of ideological delusion, and in place of the human subjects of history it elaborated the notion that humans were merely the 'bearers' of modes of production. They themselves have now become the bearers of the ideology of globalist capitalism.

When they preached Althusserianism they supposed that the mode of production of which humans would be the ideological bearers would be socialist. But when the capitalist mode of production won out and immediately set about becoming globalist, they became the bearers of the ideology of globalist capitalism, and they give every appearance of having genuinely forgotten what they were so short a time earlier. So it is no surprise that they do not remind us of how it came about that Yugoslavia survived the collapse of the communist system of states—which was actually only the collapse of one state and its dependent satellites.

Yugoslavia, formally non-aligned after 1948, was actually aligned with the West and was armed against the Soviet Union. That is why it did not collapse in 1989/90. All of the Soviet satellite states fell when their external support was removed. The Yugoslav state did not

fall because it did not depend on Soviet support, but had survived despite Soviet hostility.

The BBC, operating in the conditions of Soviet collapse, imagined itself to be the overthrower and creator of regimes. It had provided a focus for the opposition movements in the satellite states against the flimsy internal regimes of those states when Soviet power was no longer exerted to control and maintain them. A year and a half ago it thought it could do in the remainder of Yugoslavia what it imagined it had done in East Germany, etc. Every day for about a month it gave a world voice to the 'democratic opposition' to Milosevic, in the certainty that the tyrant could not survive its onslaught. But he did survive, and the BBC never explained why the trick had not worked this time.

When the present NATO bombing started a certain Vuk Draskovic was brought on by the BBC to be berated as an apologist for the Milosevic tyranny. We were told that he was a Vice-President of Yugoslavia. But we thought we had surely heard that dame somewhere before. And then we remembered: he was one of the leaders of the opposition movement with which the BBC had attempted to overthrow the Milosevic regime a year and a half ago.

That opposition movement was in its time represented as a democracy movement against a dictatorship. So why had the democracy not triumphed? Had the dictator put it down with great slaughter, and established a military regime? Had Serbia experienced something like Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968? If so why had the BBC not told us about it?

Probing the matter, what seemed to be the case was that the 'democracy' was merely an opposition grouping which had made some gains in local elections, and had tried to make use of its power in a local government area in a way that went beyond its constitutional authority, and that the elected central government had enforced the constitution against it.

The fact that Milosevic was head of the central government by right of election was never mentioned by the BBC in the course of that great campaign to overthrow him as a tyrant. Nevertheless it seems that he was. And the fact that he was, may have some bearing on the fact that an accommodation was reached between

that opposition grouping and the government so that the chief Serbian target for the BBC now—the apologist for the tyrant—in its 'democratic opposition' hero of a year and a half ago.

Serbia evidently lives its own life—as none of the Soviet satellites did. If it was not capable of living its own life it could not have broken with the Soviet system in 1948—and it would never have come into being in the first place, because it was not created by the League of Nations, or the United Nations, or NATO, or even the Concert of Europe. It is its own creation, and it tells us a lot about the quality of contemporary European statesmanship that Serbia has been treated as if it were a flimsy satellite construct.

It is now engaged in a campaign of genocide. At least, that is what we are told by George Robertson and Robin Cook, and by the BBC which echoes them all day and all night. A United Nations agency has protested that it is a devaluation of language to describe forcible population movement as genocide, and that its effect is to devalue the crime of genocide. But who cares about the pedantry of UN Agency do-gooders in this new era when NATO has come into its own. The UN is old hat.

But there is a difference of opinion between Cook and Robertson about this. The Foreign Secretary says that nobody could reasonably have expected that, when NATO began bombing Serbia on behalf of the KLA, the Serbs would have responded by attacking the nearest and most vulnerable part of the NATO/KLA alliance. (What they could reasonably have been expected to do, it seems, is to waste their military capacity in an all-out but absolutely futile battle with NATO war-planes.)

The Foreign Secretary's argument takes it for granted that the expulsion of the Albanians from Serbia was a Serb response to the NATO bombings. But the Defence Secretary denies this absolutely and declares that not only forced population movement, but genocide, was in full flow before NATO started bombing, and was in fact the reason why NATO started bombing.

Clare Short (Secretary of State for general benevolence) chose not to get involved in this argument when asked (Channel 4 News, March 29th) why her Government had not made provision for feeding and housing refugees before it started bombing. Her angry reply was

that looking after refugees was the UN's concern. NATO's business was bombing. It was for the UN to tend to casualties.

(A week later she changed her tune. On April 6th she was in Macedonia helping Albanian refugees off a bus. After all they had been through they would have failed at the final hurdle of stepping from the bus to the ground if she had not been there to assist them.)

On the same day she informed us that she had told the Macedonian Government in no uncertain terms that it would not be allowed to decide who crossed its borders. Its concern to maintain the ethnic balance of Macedonia was barbaric and unacceptable and its border would open whether it liked it or not. This frank imperial overlordship was refreshing after the weasel words of the Foreign and Defence Secretaries. The Liberal MP Menzies Campbell said: "What we are seeing is the kind of thing we went to war in 1939/45 to prevent from ever happening again" (Radio 4, March 29th).

It was said in a BBC I news report on April 1st that the exodus of Albanians from Serbia was "a refugee crisis worse than any in Europe since the fall of the Nazis".

Since we cannot kick the memory habit, we have to say that refugees and forced population movements played no part whatever in the British decision to declare war in 1939; and also that there was a massive, indiscriminate campaign of ethnic cleansing in central Europe in 1945, after the fall of the Nazis. Millions of people were given a few hours notice to leave places where their ancestors had lived for centuries, abandon their property, and take themselves off to wherever they could find to go. Hundreds of thousands were killed or died in that great ethnic cleansing. And it was all done with the approval, or at best the active connivance, of the United Nations.

One of those refugees who made it to England contributed to a Radio 5 phone-in during the early days of the NATO bombing. She said the NATO bombing must have created a social atmosphere similar to that of the terror campaign she experienced as a girl when ordered to leave. In such circumstances people did things they would never have dreamt of doing otherwise. When she heard these stories of rape and pillage it all came back to her. Her people had been raped and pillaged in 1945, but

these things had been done to them by "the good people", as she put it.

Her account of that ethnic cleansing was vivid, but Brian Hayes clearly found it bewildering. And he was no less bewildered when he elicited from her that she had been ethnically cleansed from "Silesia". He tried explaining to her that, whatever Silesia might have been, the Kosovo situation was different and the facts about it were clear. She replied: we hear their propaganda and we hear your propaganda, and it is all just as it was before. Whereupon he declared, prissily, "We don't speak propaganda here", and cut her off.

A more recent ethnic cleansing popped up unexpectedly in another Radio 4 phone-in on March 31st. The studio experts were Mary Kaldor and a military man. Mary Kaldor was all enthusiasm for a ground war against Yugoslavia, as all the seventies socialists, apart from Tariq Ali, seem to be. She made a bit of a splash in the late seventies with a book called *The Disintegrating West* in which her assessment of the comparative durability of the Soviet and NATO systems was about as wrong as it could be. But by our mistakes we learn. The West did not disintegrate, so she has lined up with NATO and joined the London School of Economics.

The Military Man (whose name we missed) was much more cautious about war than the socialist convert to neo-NATO militarism. In this era of New Labour the old ogres of the Tory Right begin to appear wimpish. (On the BBC's Question Time on March 18th, Billy Bragg wanted to know what we have an Army for if we don't use it abroad? Is it just going to sit here and wait for somebody to attack us? And New Labour MP Oona King thought we should go to war not just on our doorstep in the Balkans, but all over the world. While Norman Tebbit was very sceptical indeed about the usefulness of bombing Yugoslavia.)

A caller to Radio 5 suggested that, in view of the reluctance to commit a British ground army against Yugoslavia, the thing to do was to supply the KLA with the heavy armaments needed to take on the Yugoslav Army. The Military Man said that was certainly a possibility, and there was a precedent for it in the Croatian/Bosnian situation a few years ago. The United States had armed and trained the Croats for the ethnic cleansing of Serbs from the Krajina, creating half

a million refugees, and leading to the Dayton Agreement. But it had taken two years to train the Croats for the operation. And in any case he doubted that the KLA could ever have the weight to do what the Croats did.

Mary Kaldor heard all this but never said a word. Since she neither disputed the statement that the Krajina had been ethnically cleansed with Western support, nor denounced the doing of it, we must take it that she accepted that it was done and approved it, and that she therefore distinguishes between good and bad ethnic cleansing—and perhaps good and bad genocide. (In the current discourse of British politics the terms 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide' are often used interchangeably.)

Bianca Jagger has also maintained a determined silence about ethnic cleansing of the Krajina when the fact has been mentioned in her presence.

Our unreconstructed memory comes up with another fact about the Krajina. When that ethnic cleansing was launched, President Tudjman of Croatia sent out a call by radio to Croats all over the world to come home and fill the empty spaces that were being created. (That is the kind of fact that only comes across the airwaves very late at night on the BBC World Service for the purpose of maintaining credibility amongst foreigners.)

We were not presented with masses of pictures of the Serb victims of Croat activity, therefore it is as if the ethnic cleansing of the Krajina never happened, at least as far as we are concerned. We are shown pictures which arouse human sympathy and outrage when the State has some purpose in view, and we are not shown pictures of the same kind from another place when the State does not want human feelings getting in the way of *realpolitik*. And this is very much more the case now than it was twenty years ago when it was being said by many of those who are now in power and are doing it.

Mrs Thatcher injected into British culture a feeling of destiny about Yugoslavia. It had to go because it was a remnant of Communism (which survived because it was not part of the Soviet bloc), and because it was multi-national. Her campaign against Yugoslavia was part of her campaign against the European Union. When determining that Britain should be committed to the pulling apart of

Yugoslavia she explained that this would prove that the project of establishing multi-national states was Utopian.

There are a great many nation-states that might spring into being, given the kind of Great Power support and encouragement that has been given to Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia. Kurdistan is one, but there are many others which are more quiescent in the absence of such encouragement. But the chief oppressor of the Kurds today is one of the would-be NATO liberators of the Kosovars.

The multi-national state of Yugoslavia was a British creation in 1919. It had destroyed the Austrian Empire, of which Slovenia and Croatia had formed a reasonably contented part, and for which they had fought. And it threw these regions together with the Serbian state, which had fought against Austria, and called it Yugoslavia—South Slav Land.

The combination of the Slav

Concluded from back page

don't mind tax increases all that much when public expenditure is apparently increasing on things like health and education.

(New Labour has managed to establish in the public mind a reputation for pouring money into health and education. It is largely undeserved. To quote from the budget debate in the House of Commons:

"Whatever the Government intend to do next year, the fact remains that, by the end of this Parliament, taking the Parliament as a whole, the Government will have put funds into health and education at a lower level than the Conservatives intended."

That remark was made by their friend Paddy Ashdown.)

In any case, the Tories' ability to make the charge of increasing taxes stick is severely hampered by the introduction of a 10% starting rate for income tax. It has been done, like most of what New Labour does, to grab headlines. It is going to cost very little since it is going to be applied to a mere £1,500 of taxable income rather than to £4,300 like the 20% starting rate it has replaced. It makes much more sense to raise the tax threshold, and take people out of income tax altogether, than to introduce a narrow 10% band. But that wouldn't have made such a good headline.

provinces of Austria with the Serb state didn't stabilise. Resentments and antagonism developed within a few years of the construction of the new state.

Early in 1941 the Yugoslav government under non-Serb influence made a Treaty with Hitler allowing passage of a German army through Yugoslavia to Greece. Serbia rebelled, overthrew that government, and set up another government which repudiated the Treaty. Hitler invaded, was welcomed into Croatia as a liberator, and conquered Serbia. A Croatian state was established under German protection, and the Croats and Bosnian Muslims joined the German army, including the SS. Serbia kept up a guerilla resistance after the defeat of its regular army. Some time later a Communist resistance was launched, which drew its main support from the volatile situation in Bosnia and Croatia. It had little support in Serbia, which remained Royalist. In 1943/4 Britain armed the Communist

resistance and launched a black propaganda campaign (through the BBC) against the Royalist Serbian resistance and compelled the King, exiled in Britain, to appoint a new Government-in-exile nominated by Tito. A Communist conquest of Serbia was accomplished in 1943/4 with British arms and British propaganda support. One of the reasons given by the British Government for doing this was the slander that the Serbian Royalist had become Nazi collaborators. Another was that the Serbian resistance did not have the aim of re-establishing the Yugoslav state.

It would have been a reasonable conclusion from actual events that the Yugoslav combination was not functional. But Britain insisted that it must be retained and backed the Communists to retain it. And on the basis of the Communist conquest of Serbia, Yugoslavia worked remarkably well for more than forty years—until Mrs Thatcher decided that because it was Communist it had to go, and her acolytes, Major and Blair set about implementing her wishes.

In the immediate post-war years, when Tito's Yugoslavia was the hardest-line Communist state in the Cominform, Churchill's decision to back the Communists against the Serbs began to be questioned. But, when Yugoslavia broke with Moscow and the Cominform, Churchill's decision was deemed to have been very wise and farsighted.

There are so many skeletons in the British cupboard about Serbia and Yugoslavia that the only safe way of dealing with Balkan history in 1943/5 is to black it out. Only the outlines are clear. Communism was imposed on Serbia with British arms and British political support during the latter stages of the German occupation. A fierce reign of terror was launched against the Serbian royalists in 1945. Yugoslavia functioned on the basis of Communist politics and ideology operating across national cultures. Then came the moment when the Soviet system collapsed and the West had no further use for Yugoslav Communism and set about demolishing it. But Serbia tried to act to preserve the state that was forced on it by Western arms in 1944/5.

One can see why the ideologists of 'the radical absence of memory' are so useful to British foreign policy at this juncture.

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Brown's Budget Trickery

David Morrison

Gordon Brown's third budget was quintessentially New Labour in style and content. He introduced it in the House of Commons with the following classic piece of New Labour verbiage:

"Today's Budget is a Budget for Britain to succeed in the new economy and to lead in the new century. It is a Budget that builds on strong foundations of economic stability, advances a modern framework of efficient public services and encourages a dynamic Britain of enterprise and fairness.

"With this, the last Budget of the 20th century, we also leave behind the century-long sterile conflicts between Governments of the left, who have too often undervalued wealth creation and enterprise, and Governments of the right, who have been too indifferent to public services and fairness.

"In contrast, this is a new Labour Budget built on the central idea that our future depends on enterprise and fairness together." (Hansard 9th March, Col 173)

And there was much more of that ilk in the remainder of his budget speech.

As for the budget content, it is driven by the New Labour fetish for changing things—and announcing the changes several times to give the impression of even more changes and thereby increase the number of favourable newspaper headlines. To that end tax and benefit changes were announced not only for the current financial year but also for the next, beginning in April 2000.

The prime example of this is the various changes to personal taxation. To catch the headlines, a new 10% income tax has been introduced from April 1999. To be more precise, the 20%

rate which in 1998-1999 was applied to the first £4,300 of taxable income is being replaced in 1999-2000 by a 10% rate applied to the first £1,500 of taxable income only, with the rate on the next £2,800 being increased from 20% to the standard rate of 23%. Naturally, Brown didn't go out of his way to make the last bit clear in his budget speech. At the same time Brown announced a series of measures to begin in April 2000: (a) a cut in the standard rate of income tax from 23% to 22%; (b) the abolition of mortgage interest tax relief; (c) the abolition of the so-called married couple's allowance; and (d) the introduction of a new child tax credit.

This practice of announcing measures in advance has another desirable effect from New Labour's point of view: by announcing different tax and spending measures for different time periods it is hard to pin down what is actually going on in any one financial year. This broadens the scope for spin doctors to put a positive gloss on what the Government is doing, that is, to engage in confidence trickery and give the impression that Brown has managed the ultimate trick of increasing public expenditure while decreasing taxes and the public sector borrowing requirement. It has also given rise to arguments about whether taxation has been increased or decreased overall by this and earlier Brown budgets and whether current plans will lead to increased taxation over the lifetime of the Parliament.

The Tories say that Brown has raised taxation both in real terms and as a proportion of GDP in his previous two budgets and in this one and is scheduled to do so over the lifetime of the Parliament. And they are right. For example, the measures announced on 9th March will give rise to cuts of £1.1

billion in revenue for the year 1999-2000, after indexing taxes and allowances for inflation, building up to £1.4 billion in 2000-01 and £3.6 billion in 2001-02. However, these figures do not take account of tax changes previously announced by Brown himself and by Kenneth Clarke which will raise taxes by £3.6 billion in 1999-2000, by £4.9 billion in 2000-01 and £7.6 billion in 2001-02. So the tax cuts announced this year become increases of £2.5 billion, £3.5 billion and £4.1 billion in the next three fiscal years, a total of £10 billion. Of course, this will never come to pass since there will be at least two more Brown budgets before then.

Expressed as a percentage of GDP, the tax burden is also going to increase over the lifetime of this Parliament, from 35.4% in 1996-97, the last year of the previous parliament, to 37.6% in 2001-02.

As we said, the Tories are right: by any measure New Labour is putting up taxes, not by much but by a significant amount. The Chancellor doesn't seem to have told the Prime Minister yet because, in response to William Hague's questioning in the House of Commons, Tony Blair keeps saying that his Government has lowered, and is lowering, taxes—and he seems to believe what he is saying.

Not that any of this matters in the scheme of things because even if it becomes public knowledge it is not going to harm New Labour's standing in the polls one iota, or improve the Tories' standing. The plain fact is that people

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