



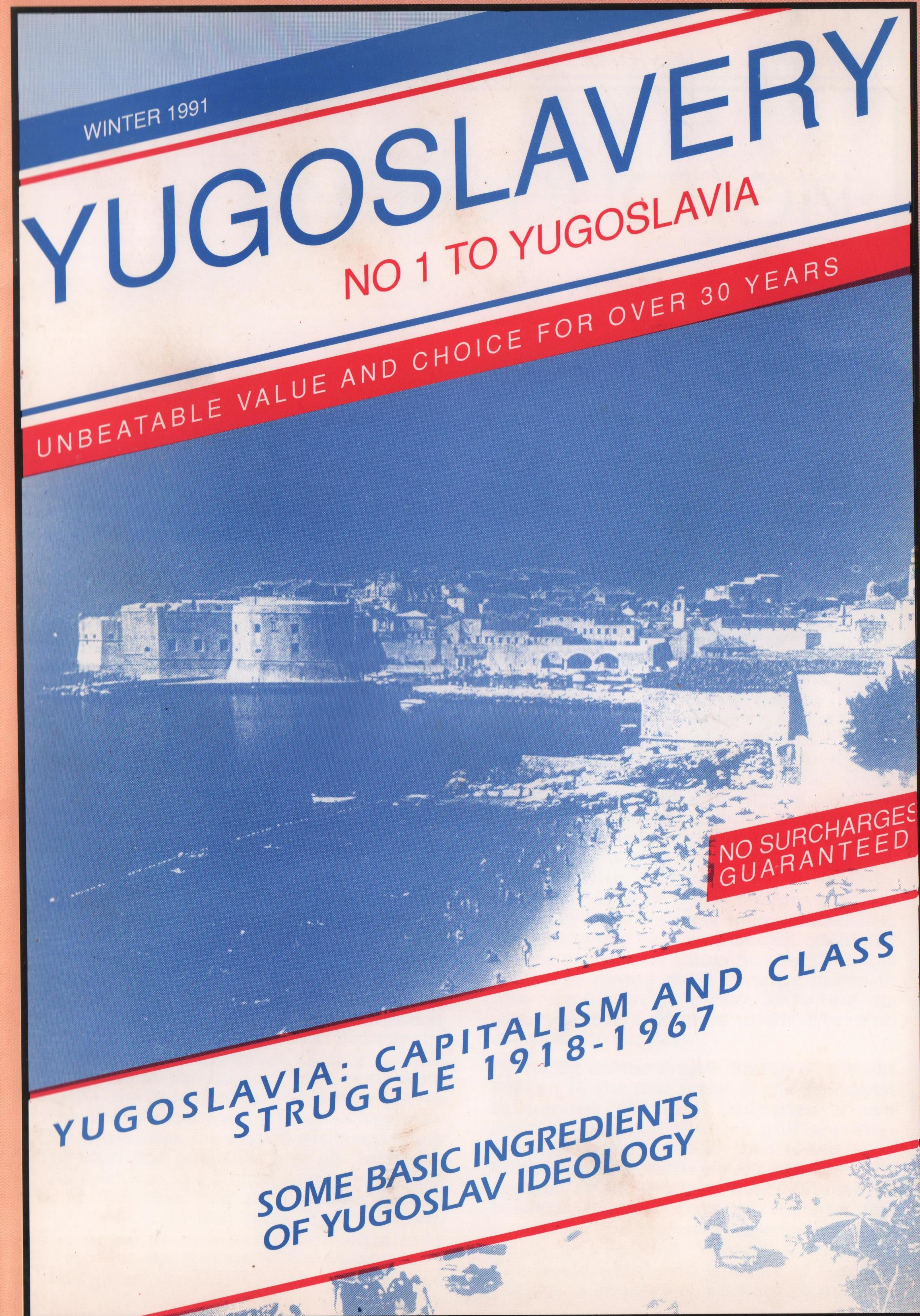
YUGOSLAVIA AND ITS REPUBLICS

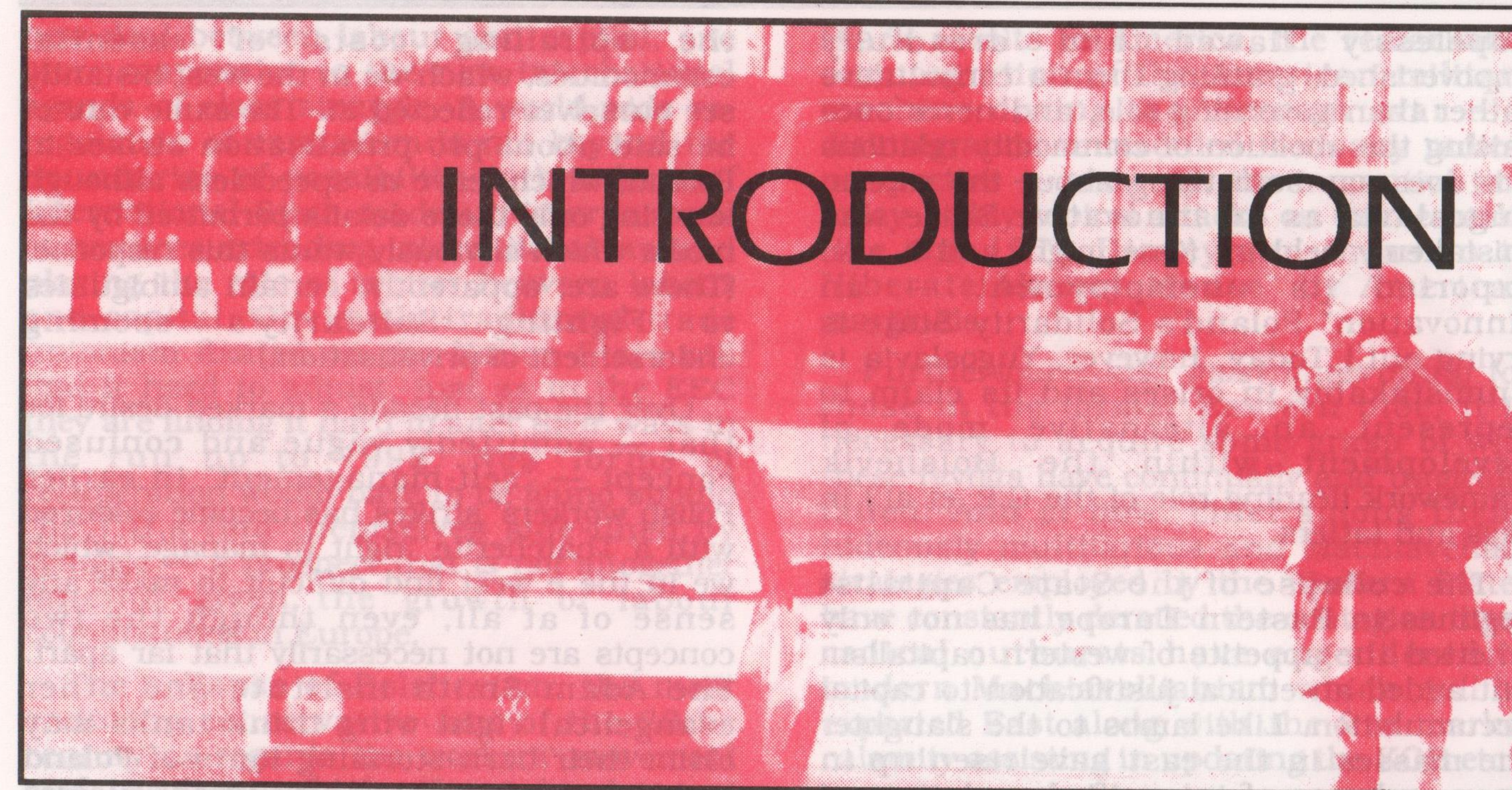
Yugoslavia consists of six republics:
Slovenia, Croatia Bosnia & Hercegovina,
Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia.

Within Serbia there are two
"Autonomous" Provinces: Vojvodina and
Kosovo.

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INTRODUCTION

The following text on Yugoslavia was written by the offspring of Yugoslav and Bulgarian immigrants now living in France. The French version contained a number of newspaper articles on strikes and cartoons which have not been translated here. Originally in Serbo-Croat, too much might have been lost in translation from the French. Instead we have filled this gap by introducing two separate articles, most notably from an Italian language newspaper based in northern Yugoslavia which, only by virtue of its reporting function, provides an insight into working conditions in Yugoslavia. Also it gives a measure of the distrust trade union leaders and self-management cadre are held in.

Amazingly enough, there's almost nothing of any real value on Yugoslavia in the English language. The best by Fredy Perlman ("Birth of a Revolutionary Movement" Black and Red, Detroit) appeared in 1969. But it's limited by too much emphasis on the student movement; although to judge from the text, possibly the best critique of capitalist alienation (east and west) in the Eastern bloc came from within the Yugoslav student movement. Which was hardly surprising as Yugoslav Bolshevism was the most westernised of all. The other text published here on Yugoslavia was produced in a limited supply of 35 or so by an individual from the now discontinued Red Menace. In that sense it is unknown. The same person has produced a long pamphlet on Russia - 'Notes on class struggle in the USSR' - again in limited

supply - which is *the* best so far in English on contemporary Russia situated in its historical context. A further reprint will be forthcoming.

Given the news we receive of the present conflicts in Yugoslavia over the last 3 years or so (particularly Kosovo) is sketchy, this examination of Yugoslavia and its history helps put them within a context. There is an urgent need for texts of a similar calibre on recent events in East Europe. Such texts should help dispel the crap that these upheavals represent a triumph of capitalist democracy over communist dictatorship. What we are witnessing is the collapse of Bolshevism, a particularly tightly regulated, ideologically totalitarian, ultimately backward form of State capitalism which appeared to be virtually unassailable. It is now giving way to a more market orientated version of the same thing. And Yugoslavia is unique in having made tentative moves in this direction years earlier, attracting the admiration of reformers in the West and dissidents in the East.

Writing on the Prague Spring of '68, Jiri Pelikan in the first issue of the Trotskyist influenced "Critique" (subtitled "a new journal of soviet studies and socialist theory" Spring 1973) mentioned that Yugoslav worker management was "carefully studied" even though "Czechoslovakian leaders did not want to imitate and transplant the Yugoslav experiences". The article was entitled "Workers Councils in Czechoslovakia" and in spite of the fact Pelikan's concept of workers councils is

hopelessly flawed and dreadfully impoverished, granting them a consultative rather than governing role, and never once raising the abolition of commodity relations - it does say something about the esteem Yugoslavia as an innovative State was mistakenly held in. (One might add it also exported its unemployment - an "innovation" Poland's Solidarity State is trying out.) Today, however, Yugoslavia is unmistakably in crises and its claim to represent an alternative mode of development within the Bolshevik framework (leading role of the C.P. et al.) in rags and tatters.

The collapse of the State Capitalist regimes in Eastern Europe has not only whetted the appetite of western capitalism but added an ethical justification to capital accumulation. Like lambs to the slaughter the masses in the east have risen up in open embrace of intensified exploitation! The Sinatra doctrine means, to echo Mrs. Thatcher, "there is no other way" just at the moment its home market has not only grown sick of listening to it but where its whole edifice of free market economics, of stylish hype and fictive capital etc. is rapidly collapsing - possibly presaging a worldwide, all encompassing, economic catastrophe not seen for decades. If ever? It is at this moment that a past image of a "successful" (huh?) free market economy has been transposed to Eastern Europe. It's pathetic and can only be realised through a poverty bordering on starvation plus bloody repression.

Beyond introducing a privatisation programme and its inevitable corollary, a stock exchange, dark-hearted Solidarity advisors are studying, for example, how the British steel workers' strike was defeated paving the way for de-nationalisation and Hungarian economists are looking hard at how the British State defeated the coal miners in '84/'85 in expectation of a miners' strike in Hungary.

But this befuddled, disorientated response in the former Eastern bloc satellites cannot last forever. The introduction of a kind of free market planned in Russia could over the coming period be the necessary ingredient to the slow burning fuse among workers and others in these countries.

Even now beneath the surface, there lurks a deep fear over basics, like the recent strikes in East Germany over unemployment and strikes elsewhere over

the spiralling costs of essential commodities, which we in the west instantly see ourselves reflected in. The same cannot be said about pro-privatisation strikes in Poland, which leave us speechless although knowing only those details permitted by the media which obviously wants this response. (There are, apparently, certain ambiguities to Fighting Solidarity's seeming endorsement of privatisation.)

Over the past decade a marked desire for that - admittedly vague and confused concept - "self-management" in earlier Polish workers' strikes has become coloured with a Thatcherite "right to manage" which we in the west find difficult to make any sense of at all, even though the two concepts are not necessarily that far apart. The Adam Smith institute and other evangelical right-wing think tanks may claim their barn-storming tours of Poland and Hungary have been an outright success (and it was sickening to watch it on TV.) but this only because their ideas have yet to take effect in a big way. Already Polish workers are finding their modest "self-management councils" - which don't go much further than employee share-ownership schemes - given short shrift by foreign capital.

There is no way of denying that upto now a near mutual incomprehension has existed between wage-slaves under "free-enterprise" and State Capitalist regimes. But the gap between the two is closing swiftly. The ending of the Cold War and the opening up of East European and Soviet markets is one more step towards the internationalisation of capital and a further reduction in the power of the Nation State, in its present form, to dominate events. The era of financial deregulation, the opening-up of capital markets and the abolition of exchange controls has also been the era of the global firm, not only in manufacturing, but also retailing, (dis)information etc. It has been hell to live with because the class struggle has not been internationalised to anything like the same degree and capital therefore has been able to act in a relatively unfettered manner.

Broadly speaking we are living (or dying) in the interval between the ineffectiveness of past remedial solutions (i.e. nationalisation) to workers' revolts and the birth of a new International. Hopefully the '80s will be shown to have nurtured, in spite of itself, this new seed of revolt. And what happens next could also determine the outlines of a

new deal between labour and capital, one more responsive to the new international agenda of class struggle. A world-wide re-regulation of capitalism is not beyond the boundaries of possibility with a form of International State made up international committees extending international law and playing the rôle of arbiter between labour and capital. Obviously traditional trade unionism fixated on the Nation State will find it hard to adjust, just as in the EEC they are finding it hard to alter their ways in the run up to 1992. New forms of recuperation would have to be found should the T.U.s find themselves side-lined by struggle - a prospect that is not altogether fanciful given the growth of labour coordinations in Europe.

The collapse of Bolshevism, the most enduring conservative fact of the 20th century as regards the workers' movement and the hope of life of any kind, must hasten this shake out of false solutions to real problems. Let's fervently hope the day is not far off when "infantile disorders" break out both East and West. But Bolshevism's dramatic decomposition also inhibits further development of the class struggle in the East because Bolshevism fatally claimed to emancipate the dispossessed. Those who have lived under its tyranny cannot now rise up clearly against the totality of their alienation because they fear a rebellion leading to the abolition of class society must inevitably create another horrific monster which will bear down on them once more.

While we need to know more about the history of subversion in the East, people in the East need to know more about the explosive dreams of freedom that have existed in the West over the past 20 years (eg France '68, Italy in the '70s, Portugal '74/'75, Spain '75/'77, the '81/'85 U.K. riots and the '84/'85 miners' strike, the

Black revolts in America, the remarkable disintegration of the American military machine during the Vietnam war - a disintegration unrecorded from any radical perspective - and, say, the innovative and today highly topical attacks on theme parks like the 1970 Disneyland invasion to "liberate Mickey Mouse" by American marginals.

Furthermore, and *most importantly* for those in the former Eastern bloc, it is necessary to acquire some grasp of why these revolts have continually and tragically failed. And of how, chief among them, hideously multifarious and Machiavellian strategies employed by the Western States have constantly derailed the contagion these radical outbursts have engendered. A modern Machiavellianism which *will* be exported East along with the free market calamity assisting in updating the KGB etc.

In the West, moreover, memories of these imaginative revolts have been crushed by a subtle form of brainwashing more effective by far than the crudities of Bolshevism. The manufacture of sleep is western capitalism's most enduring achievement, and each day the commodity is born-again. Amnesia rules OK. For the moment, the "End of History", today's banal intellectual essay taken up by many apologists for the American State is the most powerful ideology there is, one more total than its mid-60s predecessor (Bell's "End of Ideology") because of its mode of sophistication - death of art, no more heroes, ecology, the monotony of endless technological refinement substituting for discredited utopian dreams. But it is not the last word. A final desperate desire to remake the world has got to burst forth. But time is short. We stand on the threshold of an endless night.

Blob (Winter 1991)

YUGOSLAVIA: CAPITALISM AND CLASS STRUGGLE 1918-1967

This text was the first instalment of an analysis of the development of capitalism and class struggle in Yugoslavia since 1918. Part two, dealing with the period 1967 to the present day was not completed. It originally appeared in 1988 published by *"The Red Menace"*. The author can be contacted c/o B.M.Wild, London WC1N 3XX.

Proletarian Defeat

Having declared the "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" into formal existence in December 1918, its rulers were faced with the need to restore Statist order in conditions of utter chaos and post-war crisis. On another side of the class divide, the misery of the small class of urban proletarians was exacerbated by unemployment, war damage, inflation and shortages of food and housing.

During 1919 and 1920 Yugoslav proletarians fought their enemies by means of strikes and riots which were repeatedly crushed by troops. In November 1919 the government thought that a coalminers' strike might well lead to severe disruption of winter food supplies, and maybe even to a general stoppage. They couldn't allow it to continue, so they reacted by formally criminalising all agitation for working class violence, revolution, or even for a "mere" general strike.

The violent suppression of a countrywide rail strike in April 1920 was followed by a police ban on a Mayday demonstration in Belgrade. The "Communist" Party, despite its original opposition to both Serbian and non-Serbian nationalisms and its refusal to tag along with peasant demands for bigger private plots, was nevertheless more interested in its own electoral chances than in helping to spread

strikes and stir up revolutionary trouble in the streets. In July there were strike, in a number of industries against Allied intervention in the Russian civil war (1), followed by a wave of strikes which continued throughout the summer.

During the winter of 1920-21 there was another strike-wave, but by mid-1921 the ruling royalist autocracy of Serbian military top brass and big banking interests was successful in crushing workers' associations and imposing "White Terror".

Capitalist agrarian reform and its limits

One of the major planks on which the new post-war regime had been founded was land reform. The enactment of this reform varied from region to region. In some of the former Habsburg lands (the northern regions of Slovenia, Croatia-Slavonia and Vojvodina) there were large private estates which generally belonged to Austrian-German and Magyar landowners, while in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia there were remains of feudal relationships. After unification, the new government brought in the principle of the abolition of feudal rights and duties. Another principle it established was the division and redistribution of large estates. In practice the landlords were given time to organise and bargain over varying amounts of compensation.

In the northern provinces, all estates above 100 hectares were subject to redistribution to landless peasants or to those who were less than self-sufficient. The State compensated the landowners by giving them government bonds, and most peasants who received land found themselves liable to repay the State over a period of 30 years. (In modern terminology, the government aimed to reap simultaneous benefits from both nationalisation and privatisation). In Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia peasants won individual ownership of the land on which they already lived and worked, thus being released from feudal obligations. The Muslim landlords- in Bosnia won financial compensation even for the loss of feudal rights, thanks to a political deal struck with the central authorities.

Because of the massacres of the first imperialist world war, the arable land of southern Serbia and Macedonia was relatively sparsely populated, and a government land reclamation programme encouraged land-hungry peasants to rush in from the barren mountainous regions of Montenegro and Herzegovina. Eventually an end was put to the contrast between the large estates of the former Habsburg territories and the small peasant holdings of Serbia and Montenegro.

Despite the expansion of individual land ownership most petty rural property-owners (i.e. peasants) remained too poor and indebted to afford to invest in improved farming methods. The government gave some loan support to peasant co-ops, but this suffered from intrigue and "corruption" on the part of the State bureaucrats responsible for its allocation.

Capitalist agriculture, whose development demands that most peasants are dispossessed of the means of subsistence and (if market conditions allow) turned into wage-workers producing surplus-value for capitalists, hardly moved forward in Yugoslavia during the 1920s. The overwhelming majority of holdings were primarily still subsistence units worked with primitive methods. Agricultural yields rose very slowly, and the rural "surplus population" (2) grew faster than urban employment and capital investment. Between 1919 and 1930 about 250 000 peasants emigrated (including 95,000 who returned), thus becoming wage-workers in countries whose rulers had a greater demand for labour-power.

The State and Croatian nationalism

During the 1920s the main brokers of State power were the Serbian armed forces on whose strength depended the unity of the monarchist South Slav State. The peasants and bourgeois of Croatia were generally in favour of a degree of nationalist independence within the "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes", and some of them were republicans and parliamentary democrats. During 1924-25 the Croat Peasant Party was affiliated to a "Peasant

International", run from Moscow by the urban ruling class which had just reached a major compromise with private Russian peasants and entrepreneurs under the terms of the NEP (3).

The South Slav ruling classes continued to be split into two "camps". On the one side there were the Serbian military officers and State bureaucrats, who had bought the allegiance of the few Muslim ex-landlords and could rely on support from Serbian nationalist interests in Bosnia and Croatia. Their motto was "Unity" :one King, one people, one State. On the other side was the "Zagreb" camp, based in the Croatian capital and consisting of Croatian nationalists and federalists. With "Harmony" as their slogan, they had additional support among Macedonian and Albanian peasants in southern Serbia.

State capital and foreign investment

After the defeat of the post-war proletarian movement, capitalist industrial development continued, with a lot of help from the State. The State itself was the biggest capitalist; it owned and controlled telecommunications and railways, as well as many forests, mines, lumber-mills, spas, sugar refineries and the tobacco and salt monopolies. Its portfolio included a quarter of the coal industry and 90% of the iron ore industry, and it controlled the production of armaments. As is often the case in less developed countries, private capitalism was closely associated with the State, which directed many of its trends. The government invested heavily in transport (so as to integrate the rail network), and also in the State-owned industries. A high protective tariff was introduced in 1925.

But domestic capital was limited. Yugoslav capital was incapable of carrying out the sort of agrarian reform which would have provided a surplus which could have been traded for additional industrial goods; moreover, it had neither colonies nor the military power to carry out a Stalinist-style primitive accumulation of labour-power from the countryside. Foreign capital was attracted with favourable concessions; the indigenous rulers had little choice. French interests in the Bor copper mines and British interests in the Trepca lead mines of pre-war Serbia continued. All of the larger (and therefore, in that epoch, the most modern) enterprises were owned by foreign companies, whether French, British, German or Czechoslovak. Of course it was true that foreign firms were wary of (nationalist) political instability within the borders of the new South Slav State, but nevertheless in 1927 the stabilisation of the dinar encouraged further investment from abroad. During the 1920s most industrial workers enjoyed a growth in real wages and there was no repeat of the strikes and riots of 1919-20.

The onset of crisis: nationalist troubles and state "rationalisation"

In 1927 falling world farm prices began to affect Yugoslavia even before the world depression reached its trough. Trade was hit as industrial import prices rose and agricultural export prices fell. In several areas downright starvation occurred among the peasants.

Meanwhile trouble between Serb and Croat nationalists was boiling over. In June 1928 a pan-Serbian chauvinist assassinated the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party. Four months later the Croatian nationalist leader Ante Pavelic published a separatist manifesto. The Croatian Peasant Party's nationalism became more thorough as it began to take up the claims of urban Croatian bourgeois as well as those of the peasants.

In January 1929 the King decided to step in. He took over as supreme ruler and banned all associations not expressly approved by the government, whose members were to be directly appointed by the Crown. He put himself across as a "Mr.Clean" intent on establishing a cohesive South Slav patriotic unity through propaganda dispensed by the schools, the army and the youth organisations, and bent on ridding his State apparatus of "corruption". In 1926 a "corruption" scandal had forced the PM to resign, and in the following years Serbian liberals had kicked up a fuss about "corruptionists", and much was heard of the "Carsija" clique (a Turkish nickname roughly corresponding to the French "200 families"). The King aimed to "purify" the State by restructuring it and by replacing the "excesses" of Serb chauvinism with a common South Slav patriotism. He even changed the name of the Country to "Yugoslavia" (i.e. South Slav). Legislative power was fused with the executive and transferred to the Crown.

The Croatian nationalists, many of whom fled the country, were in two distinct factions. There were the fascist terrorists, fervently trying to achieve a sovereign Croatian fatherland unconnected with Serbia, who drew their support mainly from students and bourgeois. And there was the Peasant Party, in favour of nationalist autonomy but unwilling to back States hostile to Yugoslavia.

The new government took measures in favour of the peasantry. Even before the war, the shortage of capital had led a section of small-holders in both Serbia and the South Slav Habsburg territories to group together in cooperatives as a shrewd business move. (In particular, this made it easier to acquire credit). Now this was given renewed backing by the State, which intervened to encourage diversification and intensive farming and to stimulate export outlets. But such conditions were short-lived. The world economy was about to slump to ever lower levels.

The 1930s : bourgeois-democratic and peasant opposition.

Relations between government and peasants deteriorated as grain prices fell to starvation levels. Foreign countries turned to protectionism and cut their imports. Emigration also ground to a virtual halt.

Following the return in 1931 of parliamentary-democratic dictatorship, bourgeois democratic opinion underwent a revival. In 1932 the "Zagreb Manifesto" called for federalisation of the State, safeguards for the peasants, and a fully bourgeois political system, "popular sovereignty". The manifesto was signed by the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, and Slovenian nationalists and Muslim leaders expressed their support.

Peasants' loan repayments were postponed during the years 1932-36 and peasants were at long last finding guaranteed markets (in Germany). But a large part of the retail price of agricultural produce failed to reach the small-holders themselves, and they generally remained antagonistic towards the government. Peasant discontent with the authorities was later to be the main impetus behind the Partisan movement of the early 1940s.

State investment and German capital

From 1933 onwards trade with Germany boomed. Germany paid relatively high prices for Yugoslav raw materials and agricultural produce, and met orders for the renewal of machinery which Yugoslavia had received in the form of war reparations. In a limited way the Nazi economic recovery began to supply oxygen to Yugoslav capital. Germany already possessed considerable interests in Yugoslav industry and banking, and after the Anschluss of Austria, the annexed firms gave Germany decisive control even over Yugoslav imports and arms production.

Government investment also stimulated the accumulation of industrial capital, even though 60% of the capital invested in industry was foreign. The Yugoslav economic base was more highly industrialised than those of the other Balkan States. Textile industry boomed. So did the minerals sector. But capitalist development was still unable to absorb the "surplus population" of the countryside.

The lead-up to war: capitalist opposition from democrats, Stalinists and Ustashi

Meanwhile, throughout the 1930s those who managed the State were increasingly under fire from bourgeois democrats and Croatian nationalists. The King's government refused to give way in face of the Zagreb Manifesto, and in 1934 the King himself was assassinated by Croatian fascists (of whom more

later). Prince Paul, who became the senior Regent, was bombarded with reformist demands from bankers, artists, ex-Ministers and leading Croatian Catholic priests.

Croatian nationalism boiled over during the 1930s. Fascist "Ustasha" bands launched armed incursions into northern Dalmatia in an attempt to win support among the poor peasants of that barren region. A few months later some bombs were set off in Zagreb.

In 1935 a government of "national reconstruction" took office. Its cabinet was multi-national, and there followed a degree of Statist federalisation. An attempt to solve the Croat problem via a concordat with the Vatican was strongly resisted by the Serbian Orthodox clergy. (Historically, Orthodox Christianity has been—and still is—the "spiritual" seat of Serbian national identity, and Catholicism has played the same role in Croatia and Slovenia, just as in Poland and Ireland. Thankfully as yet there have been no strikers' assemblies kneeling in front of giant crosses as in Poland or glorying in sectarian racism as in Northern Ireland).

In Croatia the Peasant Party was worried by the "radicalisation" of the students, who were increasingly turning to the ultra-racist and Catholic-nationalist Ustashi. The Croatian Peasant Party and the leaderships of the old Serbian parties agreed that the "Croat problem" had to be solved if Yugoslavia were to survive the coming European crisis in one piece. After 1936 their nationalistic resistance to the political implications of the government's pro-Axis orientation brought them even closer together. A "United Opposition" was declared; it called for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly which would restructure the State and bring back real parliamentary rule.

The so-called "Communist" Party followed the democratic gravy-train. It ditched its former bagful of "secessionist" nationalisms in favour of a broader pro-Popular Front Yugoslav nationalism. In response, party leaders in Croatia and Slovenia stuck to the now-shunned "liberationist" position of pure patriotism.

The expansion of the working class, in the absence of significant proletarian struggle, gave the Stalinists new possibilities for building up their strength, which they did via joint trade union work with the orthodox social-democrats. They also gained strength among the Belgrade students. From a low of 200 members in 1932 they claimed 6,000 by 1939, some of whom had acquired some counterrevolutionary military experience in the defence of the bourgeois Republic in Spain. They were joined by growing numbers of artisans, peasants, students and rich urban youth. By 1940 they claimed 12,000 members plus 30,000 youth. They benefited from an increase of anti-German nationalism.

State policy switches and the outbreak of war

The increasing likelihood of another major bosses' war in Europe, and growing restlessness on the part of the supporters of the exiled Croatian "Poglavnik" (Führer) Ante Pavelic, led Prince Paul to reach agreement with the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party regarding more independence for Croatia.

In 1941, two years after the outbreak of the second imperialist world war, the government was forced to sign a pact with the Axis powers. This was realistic, given that the country was now virtually surrounded by German and pro-German forces. A day later the British secret intelligence service (MI6) helped organise a bloodless military coup by pro-Allied airforce officers, backed by the old Serbian party leaderships, Belgrade academics and students, the Orthodox Church and younger army officers. The Stalinists demonstrated in support of the coup d'état.

Germany invaded ten days later. Amid the agglomeration of forces which rallied to the defence of the national capital (i.e. Yugoslav capital, not Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia or any other constituent nation taken in isolation), the composition of the Post-war ruling class began to take shape.

German victory ensured the disintegration of Yugoslavia as a distinct multinational state. Germany, Hungary, Italy, Albania and Bulgaria all annexed parts of what had formerly been Yugoslav territory; elsewhere various "Vichy"-type regimes were set up.

Croatia : the Ustashi in power

In the newly-formed Independent State of Croatia (ISC), State power rested on German and Italian arms but was exercised by the Ustashi under Pavelic. The new regime was ultra-racist and ultra-Catholic. Ustasha bands carried out mass extermination of Serbs and Jews. Sometimes they relented and offered Orthodox Serbs the chance of mass conversion to Catholicism, almost as a sort of throwback to the Middle Ages. Mussolini extended Italian military occupation to the whole of Italy's "zone" of the ISC,



The Orthodox Church at Hrvatska Dubice, August 21, 1941. Victims lined up before being locked in the church and burnt to death. (Photo taken by Ustasha Official)

in order to put a brake on the massacres. The Nazi military leaders in Zagreb even spoke to Hitler against the huge scale of the Ustasha terror.

Some Catholic priests were openly pro-Ustashi, while others took a more moderate position and denounced the new State's "excesses". Ustashi activists came not only from the priesthood and lay clergy, but also from the ranks of professionals, army officers, urban intellectuals and, above all, *students*.

Like all fascisms, the Ustashi were an aggressively *urban* movement. When they looked to exterminate the Serbian peasants in Bosnia (which had been incorporated into the ISC), the peasants formed bands and looted police-stations and small garrisons for arms. Ustasha terror brought chaos, and order could only be restored with German and Italian help, after which regular ISC army units were no longer considered loyal enough to carry out anti-Serbian action without being accompanied by special Ustasha squads.

Serbia : the new regime and the Chetniks

In Serbia, a collaborationist government was set up under General Nedic following a few months of direct administration by the Nazi military. His primary aim was to maintain the existence of some sort of Serbian (or maybe even Yugoslav) nation-State following the imposition of the "inevitable" Pax Germanica.

Nedic's position wasn't very secure. Many Serbian army officers refused to see the "inevitability" of German victory, and disobeyed the capitulation order. Their leader was General Mihailovic, a pious pro-Allied Serbian monarchist. Their aim was to bide their time and husband their resources, whilst building up a network which could win the confidence of existing local government bodies, eventually being able to coordinate nationalist resistance according to the plans of the exiled royalist government based in London. They were known as Chetniks and were originally based in the Ravna Gora region of western Serbia.

Peasant insurgency and the rise of the Partisans.

The Chetniks were not the only anti-German, nationalist, political armed force. There was also the so-called "Communist" Party. Germany invaded Mother Russia in June 1941, a date unforgettably marked in the Stalinist diary as the metamorphosis of the "imperialist war" (bad) into the "great patriotic war" (good) (4). Tito's own Stalinists (5), who had until then been based in Belgrade, soon set about organising acts of sabotage, armed raids and ambushes of German convoys. Their immediate aim was straightforward: Peasant insurrection to drive out

the Axis forces and overthrow their collaborators- In the summer of 1941 peasants rebelled across Serbia, as if in mockery of Chetnik tactics. Soon a string of smaller towns was in insurgent hands. Chetniks and Partisans launched joint sieges of German-held towns in Western Serbia. Some subordinate Chetnik commanders went over to the Partisans.

In September Hitler signed a reprisals order. A hundred Serbs were to be killed for each dead German. The Chetniks' response was to disperse and lie low; not surprisingly, tension developed between Chetniks and Partisans. In November the Partisans won a major engagement to take a town from the Chetniks. But by December the Partisan units had been forced out of Serbia by a German offensive. Chetniks generally managed to escape German reprisals by passing into the service of Nedic. Mihailovic was left undisturbed in Ravna Gora, and the Chetniks were permitted de facto control over much of the Serbian countryside, where their immediate aim was to hunt down Partisan survivors. Nevertheless, the Serbian rising was the biggest headache for German forces until they lost the battle for Moscow.

The "Communist" Party also took part in an anti-fascist rising in Montenegro, which was defeated by Italian troops by the end of 1941. The party gained some support among Montenegrin peasants, mainly because they were pro-Russian and had suffered from the police. Local Chetnik commanders allied with Italian forces against the Partisans.

Tito established a base in Bosnia. The Partisans recruited on a Yugoslav nationalist basis, and were joined by Serbs as well as Croats, Montenegrins, Muslims, Macedonians and Slovenes. Meanwhile the Serbian Chetniks were reaching ad hoc agreements with Nedic's collaborationist troops.

In November 1942 Partisan leaders met at Bihac to form the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia, which was effectively a national government. It immediately guaranteed national, religious and property rights and proclaimed that it had no intention of introducing any "radical changes whatsoever in the social life and activities of the people except for the replacement of reactionary village authorities." It represented an insurgent peasantry mobilised into an army run by a Stalinist-controlled popular front.

Partisan support grew. Since the Ustashi found their own "Serbian problem" to be insoluble, Pavelic was eventually forced to accept German command of ISC forces. The hinterland between Croatia and Bosnia provided many recruits for the Partisans, especially among those peasants who had suffered the most. The Partisans were also boosted by their successful infiltration of ISC armed forces. German, Ustasha and Italian pillage led many young Serbs to flee to the woods and mountains; many joined the

Partisans, and were later joined by Croats avoiding conscription on the Russian front.

Royalist chaos

Meanwhile the royalists were unable to find real unity. Mihailovic was appointed chief of staff of the King's forces, but the London government-in-exile was riven with constitutional Serb/Croat wrangles and disputes over post-war regional borders. Serbian Chetnik leaders in Croatia tended to take up a pan-Serb position which went too far even for Mihailovic.

In 1943 the war intensified. A British landing in the Balkans seemed imminent, German forces unleashed a ferocious repression, and Partisans fought ferocious battles with Chetniks. By the time Italy changed sides and the Allies landed in Sicily with mafia connivance, both Chetniks and Partisans possessed strong geographical power-bases. Each one was fuelled by a part of the Serbian peasantry, but only the Partisans were able to develop a Yugoslav base. Whilst many local government bodies recognised Mihailovic's authority, and the majority of Nedic's officers backed the Chetniks against Partisan and German forces, the Serbian Chetnik leaders in Bosnia and Croatia stuck to their pan-Serb guns. Mihailovic's project was conceived of as a pan-Yugoslav military movement, but in practice Ustashism and residual pan-Serbism ensured that it remained almost entirely Serbian in composition. Serb/Croat cooperation in the anti-Axis nationalist struggle became more and more exclusively associated with the Partisans.



Partisan victory

Tito's support also grew among Macedonian peasants when his party backed Macedonian self-determination against Bulgarianisation and 'Great Serb' chauvinism. In ISC territory the Partisans picked up support as the Ustashi's autonomy vanished. Many Catholics and Muslims looked to the Partisans for fear of Serbian excesses on the part of "vengeful" local Chetnik commanders.

Another reason for the Partisans' success was their mode of organisation. Unlike the Chetniks, their permanent forces were mobile and non-territorially

based, consisting of Stalinist party-members and uprooted peasants. They also proved efficient at populist propaganda. Among non-Serbs, Chetniks were painted as fanatical Serbian avengers; among Serbs they were painted as British agents (largely untrue) and collaborators with German forces (often true).

The London royalists were hardly political adepts. In effect they were a divided collection of civil servants dependent on MI6 and a twenty-year-old monarch; moreover, their operational clout inside Yugoslavia was virtually non-existent. British political rulers gave increased backing to Tito. The BBC de-heroised Mihailovic and switched to full support for the Partisans.

In late 1943 the Partisans received the Italian surrender in Slovenia and out-manoeuvred the local Catholic political leaders and pro-Mihailovic armed units. In Croatia thousands of ISC troops joined the Partisan army (quaintly named the "People's Liberation Army" or PLA). ISC officers kept their rank if they entered the PLA (6).

Churchill instructed his envoy (a Tory MP) "simply to find out who was killing the most Germans and suggest means by which [to] help them kill more." In December he must have been well pleased when Stalin and Roosevelt met him in Teheran and agreed to give Tito all necessary help. However, Mihailovic's forces were still strong in Serbia. British political rulers tried for a while to unite Chetniks and Partisans, but the fighting between them intensified even despite the exiled King's formal recognition of Tito as sole leader of the nationalist military resistance. The Partisans received some British aid, but Stalin gave greater support when 'Soviet' troops invaded Serbia in September 1944 as guests of the PLA. month later the partisans; captured Belgrade (the capital of Serbia), with only a little help from the 'Soviet' army.

In May 1945 thousands of Catholic-nationalists and pro-Ljotic troops (7) fled into British-occupied Carinthia, to be handed back to the Partisans and summarily executed. By the end of the month only 2,000 troops were assembled under Mihailovic's orders. The Partisans had won the four-year-long capitalist civil war.

"The exploiters have always considered themselves the vanguard of the exploited."

ANTE CILIGA, Croatian revolutionary.



A Titoist statue commemorating the partisans of World War II.
Now Socialist Realism has gone west too!

The Partisans in power

The Partisan movement was an army of peasant insurgency. Its unifying structure was provided by the so-called "Communist" Party, which during the civil war had been joined not only by people suited to become guerrilla NCO's in a nationalist army, but also by large numbers of peasants. By the end of the war, half of the 470,000 party members were peasants, and most party leaders were themselves of peasant origin.

"Fanonism and Castro-Guevarism are the false consciousness through which the peasantry carries out the immense task of ridding pre-capitalist society of its semi-feudal and colonialist leftovers and acceding to a national dignity previously trampled on by colonists and retrograde dominant classes. Ben-Bellaism, Nasserism, Titoism and Maoism are the ideologies that announce the end of these movements and their private appropriation by the petty-bourgeoisie or military urban strata: the reconstitution of exploitative society, but this time with new masters and based on new socioeconomic structures. Wherever the peasantry has fought victoriously and brought to power the social strata that marshalled and directed its struggle, it has been the first to suffer their violence and to pay the enormous cost of their domination. Modern bureaucracy, like that of antiquity (in China, for example), builds its power and prosperity on the super-exploitation of the peasants: ideology changes nothing in the matter. In China or Cuba, Egypt or Algeria, everywhere it plays the same role and assumes the same functions."

M.Khayati, "Contribution toward rectifying public opinion concerning revolution in the underdeveloped countries", in "Internationale Situationniste" No.11. October 1967 (8).

The main planks of the Partisans' platform were as follows: expropriation of big landowners (especially the Catholic Church), State expropriation of collaborators and foreign bourgeois, and the creation of a federal constitutional regime. This was the project of a more modern and independent form of capitalist dictatorship, freed from foreign and big landed interests. Political parties with other policies had virtually withered away; to all intents and purposes their structures were swallowed by the NLF.

Post-war Yugoslavia stood apart from other South-Eastern European countries by reason of the strength of the peasantry. In Bulgaria and Rumania the "C"Ps came to power with a lot of help from the "Red" Army, and by forming coalitions with fascists. The

Bulgarian Fatherland Front included both fascists and Stalinists in its ranks, and the 'Soviet'-installed Rumanian government, which was, similarly a fascist-Stalinist alliance, joined the 'Soviet' Army in successfully crushing a movement of armed peasant guerrillas (9). This was not the case in Yugoslavia, where the Partisans were able to set up a stable and strong apparatus of local government during the later stages of the war.

Nationalisation and industrial discipline.

All enterprises owned by foreign bourgeois had been taken over by the Nazis, and the nationalisation of these firms, together with those owned by collaborators, brought 80% of industry into State hands. The indigenous classical bourgeoisie was thus unable to mobilise a forceful right-wing opposition, for it was the Partisans who owned the State which owned industry- There was not much left for the State to take over when in December 1946 the remaining industrial enterprises and mines, wholesale and foreign trade enterprises, banks and transport facilities, were formally nationalised by the Stalinists. Currency reform and rent controls hit the pockets of the urban petty bourgeoisie, and by 1947 the only large group operating on the free market, apart from the peasantry, was the class of craftsmen and artisans.

The Yugoslav State was only the second to fall under Stalinist control, and not surprisingly the original aim of the new exploiters was to emulate Stalin by means of a rapid accumulation of capital, funded by massive investment in heavy industry and regulated by a system of direct bureaucratic administration. Ministries determined prices, allocated raw materials and set output and investment levels.

Many ex-Partisans were recruited into positions of economic management. Sacrifices were imposed on the workers by the new Party-led trade union organisation, and workers' choice of job was restricted. Shock workers received bonuses, but consumption was kept at a low level for most of the working class. The Partisans' military intelligence organisation became a State security service and ensured a general atmosphere of police terror.

The small size of the Yugoslav proletariat in 1945 can be deduced from the fact that industrial workers numbered only 500,000 out of a total population of 17 million. Urban bosses were starved of capitalist expansion's basic resource: workers. This proved an insurmountable problem. If Yugoslav capital were to have retained a Stalinist form, full-scale capitalist collectivisation of the countryside would have been a necessity. As things remained, though, one result of the sectoral imbalances caused by the new rulers' "teleological" economic plan was a shortage of food in the towns. Peasants thought it safer to stay on the



Tito in Moscow in 1945, between Vishinsky (left) and Molotov (right).

land even despite rural unemployment, and no force was strong enough to dictate to them in such a way as to allow actual accumulation levels were attained via the reconstruction of war-damaged industries, the receipt of war reparations, and the simple mobilisation of unskilled labour. Moreover, the new rulers were unwilling to accept the subservient economic position demanded of them by Stalin as a condition for continued 'Soviet' aid, and the Tito-Stalin split of 1948 was merely the recognition of the fact that the "Red" Army was in no position to retain Yugoslavia as a mere - supplier of cheap goods to the Motherland. The removal of 'Soviet' aid was another nail in the coffin of Yugoslav Stalinism.

The Peasantry and post-war agriculture.

The Popular Front introduced significant measures of land reform. Land taken from collaborators and Volksdeutsche totalled about 4 million acres. Two million acres, half of which was forest land, were kept by the State, and the remainder was distributed among 250,000 poor peasant families. Less than 7% of this land was given to peasant co-ops.

Large estates, whether owned by banks or by rich private individuals, were broken up and redistributed. Popular Front policy was similar to that espoused by the Croat Peasant Party 30 years earlier. Moreover, peasants had their debts cancelled, and they benefited from the division of estates formerly owned by the Catholic hierarchy.

Whilst food was in short supply and peasants' nominal profits were high, the nascent ruling class of urban officials creamed off a high rate of tax. But although compulsory deliveries of agricultural produce to the local authorities kept up the class tension between the peasantry and the new rulers, many peasants had more money in their pockets than they could ever remember.

The crisis of Stalinism

The crisis was twofold. Industrial Stalinism was in poor health due to the impossibility of finding adequate investment funds, the strength of the peasantry, and the irrationality of administrative methods under such conditions. Secondly, in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 Tito-Stalin split, Yugoslav party leaders over-compensated for renouncing their Uncle Joe by trying harder to copy his methods, thus accentuating their problems. Stakhanovism came to the Yugoslav factories (10), foreign currency coupons exchangeable in special shops became far more valuable than the official currency, and in 1949 there was a big drive for rural collectivisation. By the next year 17% of cultivable land was owned by collectives, although collectivised peasants never lost the right to retain small private plots.

In the Spring of 1950 the government was faced with extensive peasant resistance and riots, especially on the borders of Croatia with Bosnia and Serbia, the same frontier district from which so many recruits had flocked to the Partisans in 1941-44. There were a number of fatal casualties in clashes with special armed detachments. Faced with the additional problem of Serb/Croat tension, not to mention the unclear international situation, the urban elite was in such a predicament that it had to reform or die.

The Crisis Solved: capitalist re-organisation

There was no crisis of capital, only a crisis of capitalist economic and political organisation. This is another way of saying that capitalist production and reproduction was not under threat from a thriving proletarian social movement (11). Nevertheless, if the crisis can be seen to have had both an industrial and a rural dimension, we can also identify a structural crisis internal to the bureaucracy, or in other words a crisis of centralism. Capitalist rationality (12) demanded a class recomposition of those who personified capital, which was completed in the early 1950's.

One of Stalin's main political charges against Tito was that the Yugoslav Party was submerged in the Popular Front, which meant in effect that it was incapable of making war on the peasantry. The other reason was, of course, the independent nature of the Yugoslav Party, which was not fully reliant on 'Soviet' 'aid' and could not therefore be forced into a subservient position. The purges of "Cominformists" in Yugoslavia and "Titoists" elsewhere in Central Europe were part of the recomposition of the national capitalist classes according to the structures of the conquering armies and the potential for capitalist development of the productive forces under their control (13).

In the aftermath of the split with the Motherland, the renewed Stalinist drive was inevitable short peasant sabotage was one factor in ensuring that agricultural yields in 1952 were a mere 50% of the pre-war levels. Between 1951 and 1953, the urban ruling class made a number of concessions. Peasants were allowed to withdraw land and livestock from co-ops, and by the end of the year 75% of co-ops were either disbanded or else completely transformed. The system of compulsory purchase at fixed low prices was abolished and rural taxes were slashed.

More economic and political power was assumed by the six republican governments. Several Belgrade ministries were simply shut down, and their functions were taken over by republican authorities. But this was not all, for in May 1949 the district bureaucrats of the "People's Committees" were given increased economic and political weight. This was another outcome of the structural form taken by the Partisan movement during the war.

Industrial reform

Industrial management was likewise de-Stalinised. The famous "Basic Law on Workers' Self-Management" was introduced in 1950. "Workers' Councils" were created to ensure a more democratic and participatory management of capitalist exploitation. Annually-elected councils were given the power to choose a management board. This

delegated the day-to-day running of its enterprise to a professional manager chosen by the local authorities. The list of council candidates was drawn up by the union branch at the enterprise, and often council members also held positions in the union, or in local bodies of Party or State.

In 1951 individual enterprise authorities won limited rights to engage in foreign trade, and by 1953 they were able to decide all questions concerning product range, investment, output, supplies and customers. In most cases they could set their own prices. Soon only the building, transport and targeted producer-goods industries remained subject to the direct influence of central government, which retained the power to set down sums of revenue available to each industrial branch. Enterprises were also affected by decisions taken by district planning bodies and investment bodies, which were no longer subject to federal control but which were given increased scope to impose local taxes.

Wages were set within centrally-fixed limits, but enterprises were free to introduce "profit-sharing" schemes (i.e. productivity bonuses) and their flip-side, unemployment. Numerous workers were sacked by enterprises which were forced to rewrite their "irrational" payrolls. For a time it was usually the women who were sacked first, but many sacked workers were able to find jobs in the "parallel" economy.



Internal Party Reform

Even the Party was decentralised and partly de-bureaucratised. Top-level committees were deprived of the power to appoint nominees to direct regional and local bureaucracies. Party cells within the official State apparatus were abolished. So were many of the perks and special privileges enjoyed by officials; from 1950 onwards it became clear that cash was more important than privilege in determining ruling class consumption. But in 1954 Milovan Djilas, who had been one of Tito's chief henchmen during the war, continued to complain about the absence of puritan morality among the top bosses (or so the story goes), and even went as far as calling for the Party to hasten its own dissolution into the People's Front (renamed the "Socialist" Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia, or SAWPY), which was a broad organisation which ran various "social" and "educational" activities and was therefore more in tune with the needs of capitalist civil society. Djilas represented the extreme liberal wing of the ruling class, associated on an international level with the British Labour Party. His expulsion from the Party bureaucracy preceded his condemnation to a life as the chief Yugoslav court jester, a staunch defender of liberal democracy and capitalist civil society against the "excesses" of those who walk the corridors of the capitalist State.

Nevertheless, the decentralisation of the Party did not prevent tension developing between the new "self-managing class", which comprised not only the enterprise managers but also those in charge of welfare and "education", and the officials of federal, republican and local governments. This tension was primarily evident between the "self-managers" and the political activists of the so-called "Communist" Party (14).

Capitalist Problems and divisions

The mid-late 1950s saw a complex network of relationships develop within and among the various organisations involved in managing the capitalist economy and State. The main role of the trade unions was no longer to mount productivity campaigns, but to act within the "Workers' Councils" as proxies for the local party hierarchy, which led to a certain conflict of bureaucratic interest. At the same time, local and specialised banks sprouted alongside the National Bank branch system, and took part in the organisation of capital flow on a district level. As the decade wore on, the ruling class was hit by macroeconomic problems such as high interest rates, inflation and trade deficits. Central government began to intervene by means of import, price and interest rate controls, and as these controls multiplied the increasing fragmentation of party political power gave increased scope to the regional and local authorities to make use of them as they saw fit.

Workers' use of the strike weapon

Capitalist power is not, of course, a thing in itself. It is primarily power over the proletariat, power expropriated from the men and women who are forced to sell their creative power in order to buy back the means of survival. Thus conflict between capitalist forces always concerns (among other things) differences over how to organise, divide, police and recompose the proletariat. One obvious area is wages policy.

In 1957 the federal authorities decided to lay down a minimum wage for each enterprise, and subject to this the enterprise managers were given the right to work out wage-rates for their "own" workers. Trouble was just around the corner. In December a major strike broke out in the Trbovlje coalfields in Slovenia, and there was a promise of it spreading to other mining districts. In January 1958 a two-day strike brought out all the employees at the Trbovlje mines and was supported by a strike in a nearby town. Three top Party leaders rushed to Slovenia and tried to save the Party from flak by reorganising the trade unions, whose weakness had been shown by the force of the strike (15). In the following years the unions increasingly favoured a greater decentralisation of economic management, and during the 1960s became associated with the reformist wing of the party. On the workers' side, the Trbovlje strike was a watershed. Work stoppages, usually on a smaller scale than Trbovlje, became a fairly common method of struggle, and have remained so until the present day.

Liberals, Conservatives and the North-South divide

By 1960-61 a confrontation had developed within the ruling and middle classes between liberals and conservatives. The main disputed areas were investment, taxation and wages policy. The liberals, who were for lower taxes and greater enterprise independence, even to the point of greater self-management within the departments of single enterprises, naturally had backing from many managers and trade union officials. The leadership of the Trade Union Congress of Yugoslavia (TUCY) was especially liberal in that it fought to have each enterprise's wages based on local productivity. The conservatives, on the other hand, were against the local cliques, which they saw as being closed shops of local State officials, enterprise managers, "Workers' council" members and bank managers, with a tendency towards autarchy which obstructed the efficient flow of capital. They strove to reassert Party centralism, and not surprisingly they were backed by most regional and local Party apparatchiks.

The struggle between liberals and conservatives also had a nationalistic element. Industrialisation policy during the 1950's had been directed as evening

out the developmental differences between the Various republics, which meant that preferential consideration had been given to the construction of plant in the Southern (less-developed) regions: Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Southern Serbia. Value had been continuously transferred from North to South. The liberal-conservative strife thus tended also to be a confrontation between on the one hand rulers who stressed a degree of Croat and Slovene independence along with economic efficiency, and on the other hand those who were concerned with the preservation of the machinery of centrally-directed investment, the all-round development of the national capital, and the pre-eminence of Belgrade and the largely Serb administrative apparatus.

Whereas the conservatives saw liberalisation as a danger to Yugoslav unity and were in favour of high investment rates, especially in the South, the liberals were for a decentralised system of investment and fewer priority subsidies. The liberals were against the elaborate fiscal regime and saw high investment as a disincentive to produce, particularly when the resources for this investment were taken from the North rather than the South. Generally they thought that higher wages would be a more rational incentive for workers to work harder and produce more surplus-value. The conservatives responded by calling for higher rates of investment, even at the price of a lower average rate of profit in the short term.

Early in 1961 the liberals won a partial victory when the minimum wage was abolished and 85% of enterprise income was to remain at the disposal of local managers. But the central State kept the right to distribute the "social investment fund" (the main conduit for the transference of value from North to South), and to control imports and exports. Indeed, later in the same year an economic downturn forced the reimposition of many of the abandoned economic controls, and in 1962 Djilas was reimprisoned.

But the reintroduced controls had little success. Too many enterprise managers were profiting from their monopoly positions, and "political" credits were still being granted for the construction of factories "unnecessary" from the viewpoint of the ruling class as a whole. In 1962 Tito, who as ex-Partisan supremo, head of the Belgrade government and an ethnic Croat, was the supreme representative of the collective interests of the Yugoslav ruling class, spoke of breaking up the little "private groups" which brought together enterprise managers with the chairmen of local State committees. The "unrealistic" Five-Year Plan for 1961-65 was cancelled, and more resources were directed towards the tourist industry.

Liberal economic reform

The years 1963-66 were the heyday of economic reform. The new Constitution of 1963 cut federal budgetary influence and gave more power to the

republican authorities. Over the next two years the "social investment fund" was phased out and its functions were taken over by regional, local and specialised banks. "Aid" to the South depended on a special federal fund and was no longer built into the system. In 1965 the major reforms were introduced, according to which direct State taxes on enterprises were abolished, as were all restrictions on the ratio between each enterprises's accumulation fund and its wages fund. Managers had to finance their own enterprises out of sales and bank loans.

The commercial bank reforms of 1965-66 greatly enhanced the role of the banks. Territorial limitations were abolished, and all banks were entitled to compete for business in any part of the country. Another reform measure made them responsible to the companies which founded them. Local authorities' holdings were subject to a ceiling of 20%, so it is clear that there was also a redistribution of financial power from the local State to the enterprise managers. Bank shares were transferable between enterprises, but capital mobility was still restricted by the absence of bourgeois-style marketable shares in the companies themselves.

We can summarise by saying that the aims of the 1965 reforms were to increase the role of the market, to reduce the role of the political State in investment, to liberalise foreign trade in order to stir up competition within the national economy, and to reduce the administrative role of the Party in the economy. They were-certainly reforms which benefited the economic and commercial managers vis-a-vis the political bureaucrats.

Working class recomposition and struggle

Whereas between 1953 and 1965 over a million workers had moved out of peasant agriculture and into wage-labour, the percentage of proletarians (employed or unemployed) in the total labour force remained roughly fixed from 1965 to 1970 (16). During these years, capitalist economic change did not involve the expansion of the internal waged labour force; it recomposed it whilst making concessions to those who remained peasants or petty bourgeois (17). For the proletariat? The most visible results of the reforms were a growth in redundancy and unemployment, and an expansion of jobs in the tourist sector, particularly in hotels. Workers reacted by finding jobs abroad or in other parts of the country, and by launching an increasing number of unofficial strikes.

1. Unemployment and migration

The devaluation of the dinar in 1965, designed to stimulate international competitiveness, helped cause a high rate of inflation. The deliberate fall in government-financed investment was not offset by

any increase in investment by the enterprise managers. Unprofitable enterprises were shut down, even despite the system whereby wages were calculated after enterprise operations and were therefore easier to cut because they were not fixed by contract.

Unemployment rose, particularly in the South. The axe fell on uneconomic ("political", factories in Montenegro, Macedonia and even Serbia. Local members of the ruling class lobbied the Belgrade authorities in defence of their interests. But the main proletarian response to unemployment was to pack up and move town. During the 1960's, 250,000 people moved from the less developed to the more developed regions, mainly from Bosnia, Kosovo and Montenegro to Croatia, Slovenia and the more developed parts of Serbia.

Internal migration was modified by ethnic and linguistic considerations. Slovenia, with its national language, and Vojvodina, with its many Hungarians, did not attract as high a proportion of migrants as Croatia. And Macedonia, with a strong national culture and language, provided relatively few internal migrants. Prospective migrants from Kosovo, which has a large Albanian majority, faced similar difficulties, but the economic pressures in this backward region were much stronger.

After 1965 the most important immigration regions were the two most developed republics, Croatia and Slovenia. At the same time, large numbers of workers left the North to look for work abroad, especially in West Germany, where the rulers had a strong demand for "guestworkers", but also in Austria, France, Sweden and Switzerland. By 1970, a million Yugoslav workers had jobs abroad.

The removal of restrictions on those seeking employment abroad was a deliberate part of government policy. Like tourism, it brought in foreign currency and pushed up the export figures. It also prevented an even greater increase in unemployment and the consequent trouble that might have been caused for the ruling class.

A large proportion of emigrants were highly-skilled workers from the more developed regions. Of those who left the country to find work between 1965 and 1971, twice as many came from the more developed as from the less developed regions. This was to change during the 1970s, but not without further problems, as we shall see below. Northern emigrants were not only in a majority, they were also twice as likely to be technically qualified than their fellow emigrants from the South. Whilst many workers went abroad with ideas of earning enough foreign currency to be able to buy or build a house, buy agricultural equipment, or even start a business, generally it was the workers from the North who stood more chance.

However, not all Northern emigrants were skilled. Between 1965 and the early 1970's, a total of more than 300,000 workers left Croatia and Slovenia to go abroad, and much of the resulting deficit in unskilled and semi-skilled labour was made up by workers from the South, particularly from Kosovo.

2. Wildcat strikes

The years following the 1965 reforms saw an increased number of strikes. Enterprise union officials were usually against strike action, but often they gave formal "support" to its objectives while trying to bring it to a swift end. Sanctions were occasionally taken against strike instigators after the return to work.

The vast majority of strikes were about pay. Nearly two-thirds involved less than 100 workers, and only 11% more than 300. Most were very short-lived; three-quarters lasted a day or less, and only 5% more than four days. One reason for the average length of strikes being so short was that the managers often made prompt concessions. According to one source, about 60% of strikes achieved their "stated objective", although this is subject to various possible interpretations, since we don't know now or by whom these "objectives" were "stated".

The underlying reason for the increase in the number of strikes was the credit squeeze inflicted on a large number of enterprises. But despite this it is clear that most strikers didn't see themselves as being in the same boat as their managers. Over 7 of stoppages broke out before "available channels for settling disputes" were exhausted. At the same time, however, 85% of stoppages included at least one member of a representative organ, which gives us some idea of the resilience of the Yugoslav recuperative machinery.

The unofficial strike movement had two other major weaknesses.

- 1) It took the form of a number of localised stoppages, and the strikers were unable to centralise their action in order to win greater concessions.
- 2) Three strikers out of four took part in stoppages limited exclusively to manual workers, and so within the proletariat there can't have been much of a breach in the manual/non-manual divide.

Inter-capitalist struggles

The growing power of the managerial class and the political ascendancy of the liberals had various effects throughout the second half of the 1960s. In 1966 party conservatives who resisted reform suffered a major setback when the liberals won Tito's backing and brought about a full-scale purge and decentralisation of the State security service, which had formerly been a bastion of conservatism and Serbian chauvinism. In 1967 a number of seats in the federal and republican parliamentary assemblies were

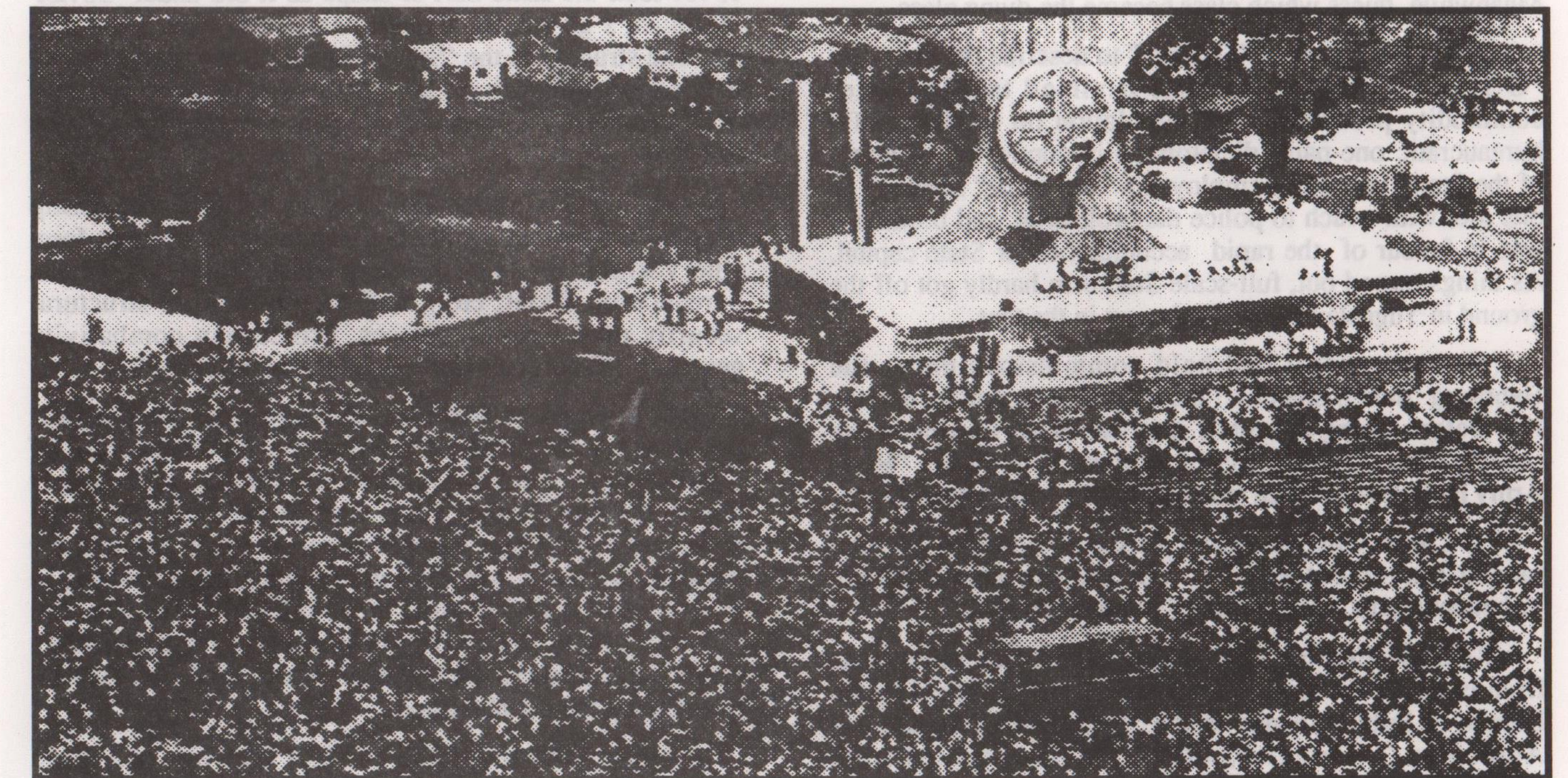
contested by more than one candidate. Liberal hegemony meant the victory of those among the rulers who wanted to concentrate investment in the developed republics, and rulers from the less developed regions fought them tooth and nail. Bitter nationalist struggles shook the party.

After the purge of the security service, the federal authorities gave more leeway to the cultural and religious trappings of nationalism in Macedonia, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This policy met considerable opposition from some of the Serbian party leaders, and Serbs began to flock to Serbia in retreat from Islamic resurgence in Kosovo and Bosnia. Many members of the Serbian intelligentsia rallied to the chauvinist cause, in fond memory of Kosovo as the mediaeval centre of Serbian monarchy and Orthodoxy. Meanwhile in Croatia a group of party leaders were unsuccessful in their fight for a reform package which included more power for the republican authorities. Serb/Croat trouble intensified within Croatia itself.

The complex web of Yugoslav national rivalries began to take on the forms which still thrive today, and which will probably continue to thrive into the 1990s. Nationalism, as an element of modern false consciousness remains a powerful material force within the various social classes. In Yugoslavia it is aimed first and foremost at rival Yugoslav nationalisms, particularly at those associated with a different religion.

Neil Fernandez

Autumn 1988



500,000 Serbs gather at the site of the Battle of Kosovo, July 1989

NOTES.

(1) At this time, of course, information on the Bolshevik counterrevolution was still very hard to come by. The Yugoslav strikers must have launched the July strikes because they wanted to help Russian proletarians by hitting their own bosses, thus simultaneously helping themselves. A fine aim. The working class revolution in Russia had in fact largely been defeated before the outbreak of the official civil war, and the Bolshevik leaders in charge of the "Comintern" were able to call for strikes against Allied intervention because they really were afraid of the Whites and because they weren't expecting much more trouble from their "own" proletariat. But this is not the most important point. What was decisive was that the world proletariat was not strong enough to break out of the national cages in order to act militarily and internationally to reverse local defeats. For the record, we should add that the original proposal of an international strike against Allied intervention came from the West-European Bureau of the "Comintern", which was shut down by the Bolsheviks in May 1920 because it did not tag along with their parliamentarist and trade-unionist positions.

(2) The "surplus population" was by definition "surplus" from the standpoint of the national capitalist class.

(3) The NEP, or New Economic Project, was known by Myasnikov as the "New Exploitation of the Proletariat", although in fact it was only a new stage in this exploitation, which had never been completely overthrown.

(4) World War 2 was both patriotic and imperialist. National capitalist classes needed to intensify internal patriotic unity, i.e. the unity of exploiters and exploited, which demanded even greater acceptance of sacrifice on the part of the exploited. This is called patriotism. And rulers were faced with the need to seize territory in military offensives, in order to profit from capitalist production over a wider geographical area. This is called imperialism. Meanwhile, guess which class became the dying class.

(5) We use the word "Stalinist" to describe the Yugoslav "C"P of this period because it aimed to administer commodity production and circulation on the basis of a bureaucratic one-party dictatorship in control of all levels of the State, because it employed a "workerist" ideology as one tool with which to police the proletariat, and because it was in favour of the rapid accumulation of State capital. As things turned out, full-scale Stalinism hardly got off the ground in Yugoslavia. See further on in the text.

(6) One general had held commissions under the Habsburg 'dual monarchy', the Yugoslav monarchy and the ISC before being accepted into the PLA. Earlier in the century, the officer class of Trotsky's so-called "Red" Army had likewise been stuffed full of ex-Tsarist top brass.

(7) Ljotic was the leader of the indigenous Serbian fascist movement and of the pro-Nazi Serbian Volunteer Corps, a paramilitary political militia.

(8) Good English translations of this and other texts from issues of the same journal have been published by the Bureau of Public Secrets in the "Situationist International Anthology" (Berkeley, 1981). We have quoted from Khayati at length in order to make his position clear. Whilst we agree with him that the post-war ruling class was formed out of the elements who had previously marshalled

the struggle of the national peasantry, we do not think the Yugoslav peasantry has been "super-exploited". Other useful criticisms of the Situationists are made by J.Barrot in his "Critique of the Situationist International", included in the pamphlet "What is Situationism" (Unpopular Books, London, 1987).

(9) See A.Anderson, "Hungary 1956" (Black and Red, 1976), pp.15-18. Our reference to peasant movements in South-Eastern Europe should not be taken to imply passivity on the part of the proletariat of the entire area, for in 1944 Bulgarian workers and soldiers launched a sizable insurrectionary movement. This, however, lies outside the scope of the present text. For more information see the pamphlet "Bulgaria - a new Spain?" (Kulak Press), but ignore the stupid title.

(10) Stakhanovism was a 'Soviet' labour policy first introduced in 1935. Under the ideological cover of State lies about fantastic "records" of production, the ruling class launched an assault on most workers based on speed-up, reduced earnings, a deterioration in safety standards, and a widening differential between the majority of workers and the privileged "record-breakers" (who tended to be young male scabs). Naturally, Stakhanovites were often attacked by less "efficient" workers; sabotage and assault were common, and a few Stakhanovites were killed. The last major pre-war strikes in the 'Soviet' Union had taken place in 1934, and the fight against Stakhanovites was a sign that the proletarian struggle had been forced to adopt new forms.

(11) We use the term "crisis of capital" to mean a period where capital itself is in danger of destruction or collapse. This was clearly not the case in post-war Yugoslavia. We do not have any reliable information on the kinds of struggle engaged in by the proletariat at the time, although judging by the absence of strike reports (at a time when, if there had been strikes, news would probably have leaked out quite easily), we can assume that the struggle in the late 1940s took the same sort of shape as it did under 'Soviet' Stalinism's go-slows, absenteeism, shop-floor sabotage, etc. The struggle in the 'Soviet' Union today is still mainly in this form, although we know that there has been a history of strikes, riots, mutinies and occasional revolts dating back to 1946.

(12) Capitalist rationality rests on a stable relationship between productive capital and capital in its abstract form (the various kinds of money, cash, privilege, perks, bureaucratic diktat, etc.), and on the internal structural security of the ruling classes. Proletarian combativity generally affects capitalist rationality on both levels.

(13) It would be fallacious to suggest that the post-war political recoloration and economic reconstruction of Central Europe and the local ruling classes were simply decided upon at the Yalta conference of 1945. No document signed by Churchill prevented MI6 fighting for the British rulers' interests in Hungary, for example, in league with anti-'Soviet' nationalists. Similarly, the 'Soviet' Union backed Yugoslav support for anti-British Greek nationalists in the Greek civil war, until Tito decided to withdraw his collaboration.

(14) For analysis of the conflict between economic managers and political bureaucrats in China during the 1960's (a conflict which split the ruling class in two and brought the country to the brink of civil war), we

recommend C.Brendel's "Theses on the Chinese Revolution" (1967), and "The Explosion Point of Ideology in China" by the Situationist International. Both texts are included in "China: the revolution is dead, long live the revolution.", published in 1977 by Black Rose Books.

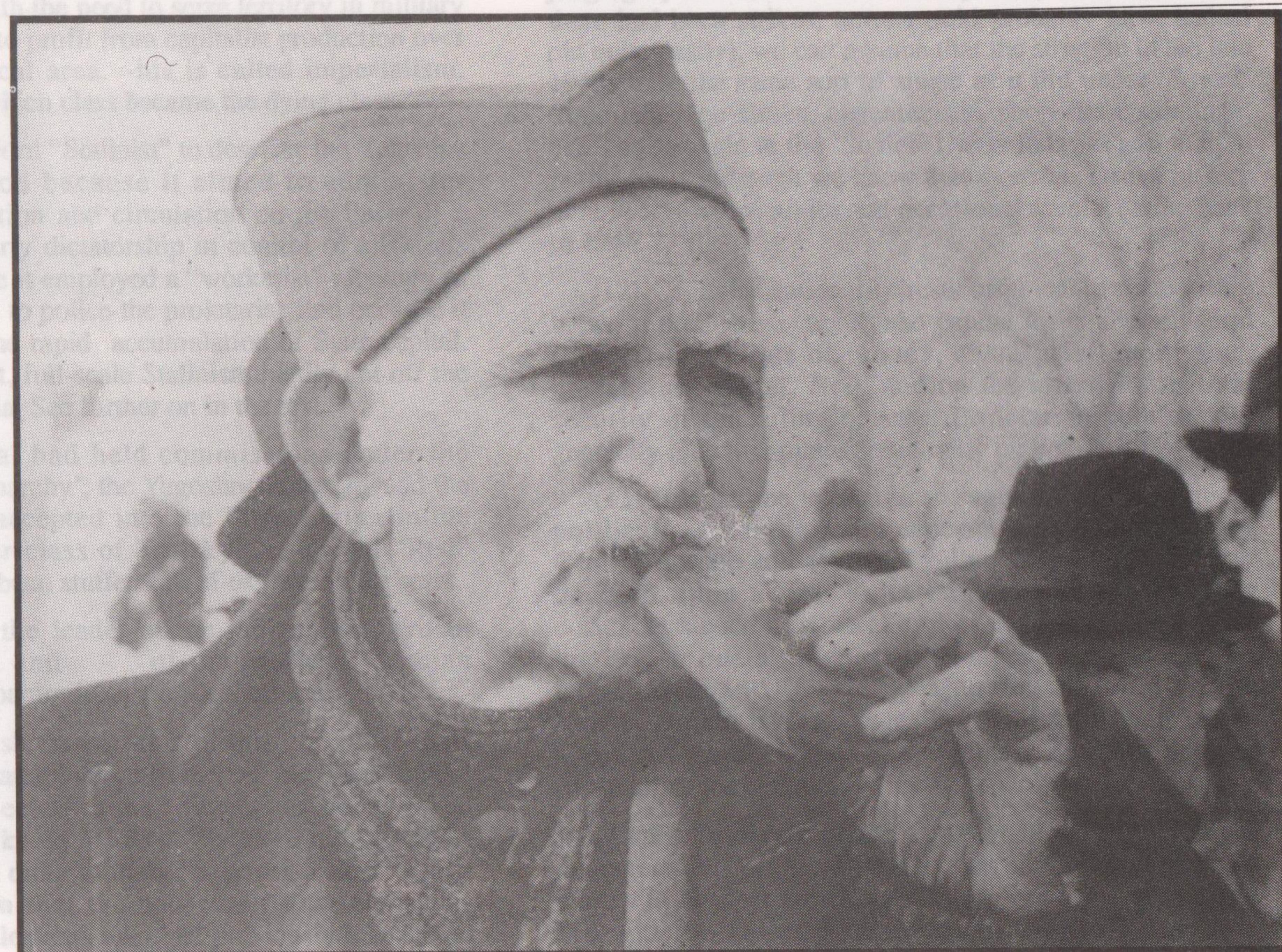
(15) In Britain too governments have tried to ensure legislatively that workers' flak is directed at particular union leaders rather than at the State, although union bureaucrats and residual working class faith in trade unionism as a whole, along with gut combativity, have ensured that things haven't quite turned out as governments have wanted. Barbara Castle's "In Place of Strife" Bill was defeated by striking workers, and Tory trade union legislation in the 1980's hasn't restricted workers to fighting within the union framework; on the contrary, despite the very low level of employed workers' struggle as compared to the 1950's, '60's and '70s, groups of workers such as the printers and miners have still proved willing to go out onto the streets to confront the State... although in the vast majority of cases they have retained trade unionist ideas. Governments would prefer it, though, if dissatisfaction with union leaders were channelled into democratic confrontations within the unions.

(16) Available figures for the composition of the labour force are as follows: Paid Employment: 1965: 43.7%, 1970: 43.6%. Registered Unemployment: 1965: 2.7%, 1970 3.6% Net worker emigration: 1965: 0.2%, 1970: 8.9%. Workers in Peasant Agriculture. 1965: 53.4%, 1970 43.9%.

(17) In 1967 peasants won the right to buy agricultural machinery (such as tractors, and to borrow from banks to do so. Prices paid to farmers rose by 60%. Beginning in 1963 the ruling class made a number of concessions to private employers in the handicraft, hotel and agricultural sectors.



The increasingly schizoid character of post-war Yugoslavia is typified in these contrasting photos: soft porn modernity and a peasant drinking brandy.



Some basic ingredients of Yugoslav ideology

The Historical Context

Yugoslavia emerged from the ruins of the first world war and under the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes and Croats grouped itself around the kingdom of Serbia. In 1929 it became the 'Kingdom of Yugoslavia'.

Utilising it for their geo-political project in the region, the victors compensated their ally in the Balkans by handing over to it large tracts of territory seized from the losers. They handed over to them in particular the rich regions of the north formed from the break up of the Austro-Hungarian empire. This State supported itself ideologically on the pan slavist intellectual current of southern Slavs. This southern Slav entity covered a mosaic of populations and histories essentially but not uniquely Slav which it was concerned to merge into a political entity able to stabilise this heterogeneous zone. This State was organised around directing Serbian cadres traditionally allied to France and Tzarist Russia.

Serbs, Slovenes and Croats represented the three most coherent geographical groups together with Macedonians who were not admitted as such until after the second world war - their recognition cutting the Serbs off from "their" territory in the south. The attempted homogenisation of Yugoslavia was underscored by the appearance of a literary Serbo-Croatian language which although using two alphabets - the Roman in Croatia and the Russian in Serbia - became in fact the dominant language within the Yugoslavian federation.

Supporters of Slobodan Milosevic marching through Titograd with a banner of the late Marshal Tito.

October 1988

Launching the carnage of the second world war, Germany hastened to break-up Yugoslavia for exactly opposite reasons to those which led to the founding of the Yugoslavian State. The Royal Army scattered when the first shot was fired and Yugoslavia was divided between Germans, Italians and Hungarians. The new Croatian State rallied to the Axis leaving only a minuscule Serbia governed by a group of puppets.

The numerous pockets of resistance that arose from the occupation often had clan or communal structures. Two large organised and opposed forces took on the task of conscripting this resistance that had spontaneously developed.

- One the one hand there was the remnants of the royalist army restructured by Mihailovic - a Serb officer faithful to the king - and called "Chetniks".

- One the other the communist party which since the mid 20s had become pronouncedly stalinist through a series of purges within the leadership. It could count on a disciplined base having acquired a certain resonance amongst town inhabitants who had gone back to their villages en masse given the fact there was a war on.

For a period of time the two armies had remained more or less evenly matched militarily and it was above all politically that the C.P. had asserted itself before liquidating its competitors with the connivance of Churchill.

Conforming to edicts from Moscow the C.P. had pursued a patriotic front strategy going so far as to shoot the perpetrators of expropriations. Social change was to take place only after the war with a guarantee of democratic elections. The decisive force of the C.P. lay in the perspective of a federalist state, the sole power that might be able to restore a stable authority to the region, especially after the humiliating incapacity of the royalist army in 1946.

The royalist forces led by Mihailovic although benefiting initially from the west's sympathy were too tainted with Serbian nationalist interests to be up to re-organising a coherent State. Given these conditions this unredeemable loan was left to its fate. The royalist army cut off from provisions was reduced in number then massacred with greater ruthlessness than necessary to sever a military force from a political one possibly able to modify the outcome of elections which from the liberation had to legitimate the communist party's power.

From the liberation the party apparatus copied State structures from the soviet model. However a "revolution" had taken place in Yugoslavia. Not the one described by official historiographers but in the appearance of a Yugoslavian myth which for the first time since its creation amounted to a massive adhesion of different peoples to this territory.

This ideological identification with the Yugoslav homeland embodied in the C.P. was the result of untold massacres which all the peoples of Yugoslavia had been a victim of. In the space of five years nine armies had laid waste to the entire territory. The power of the C.P. resided in the fact that it knew how to embody the project of a stable solidly based State capable of initiating a period of order and reconstruction. And Tito commanded attention as the symbol of this aspiration one descended in the party and in the people.

The pressure coming from this base prevented Tito under pain of losing control from openly ceding to the arrogant pressures from Moscow. In order to hold on to his position he found himself under constraints and the more the pressure was heaped on from Moscow the more he was placed in a situation of opposition. At the same time as the attack grew he was sufficiently familiar with Moscow's methods to appreciate the fate awaiting him from above. Yugoslavian history itself had not permitted the unconditional stalinists to take hold of the wheel of State sufficiently firmly. Thus this personal confrontation quickly degenerated in the eyes of Yugoslavians into an affront to their resistance movement and sacrifice.

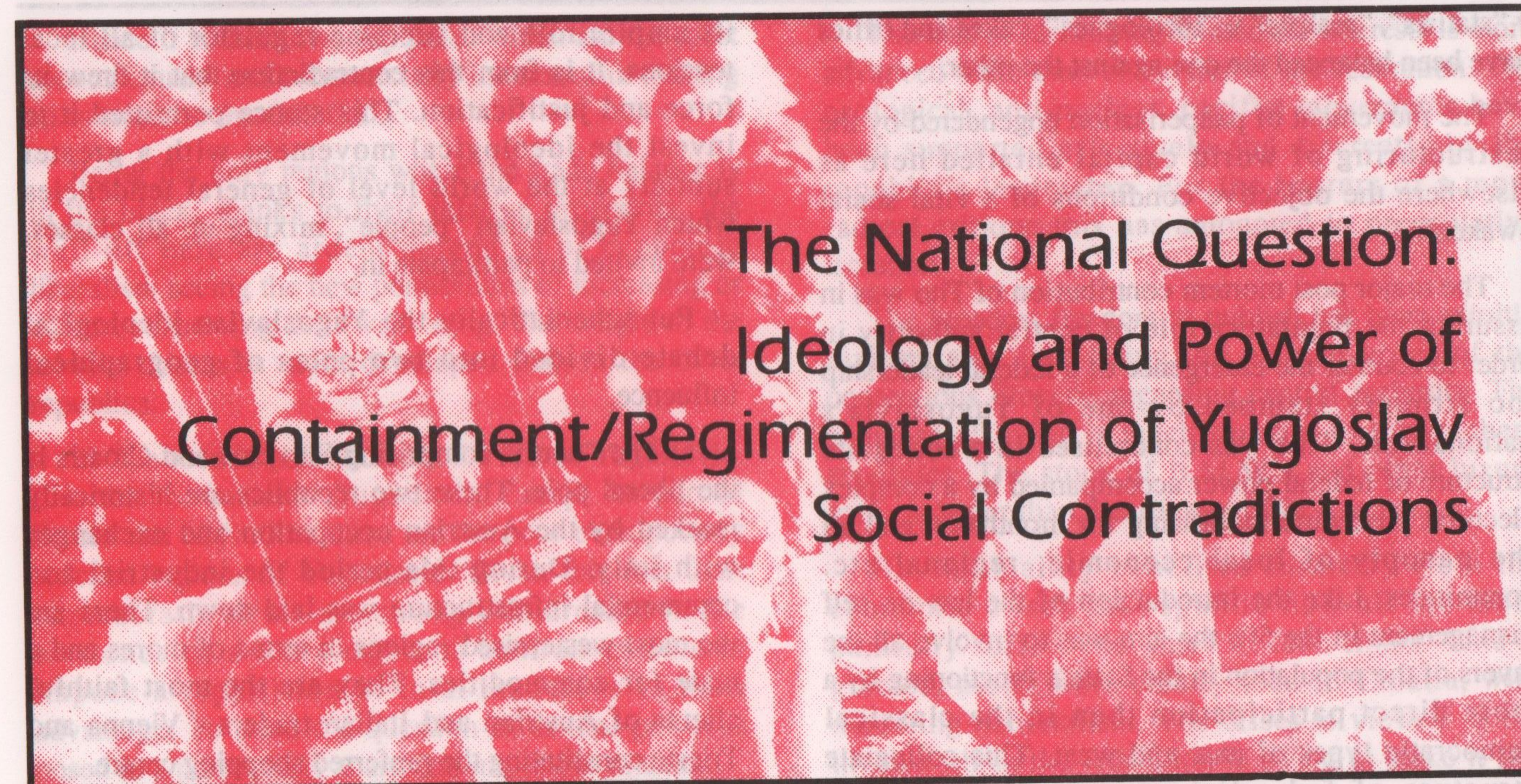
Placed in this situation between Moscow and his own base Tito's response was to develop the idea that it was only a matter of an error of judgment by Stalin and that he was going to make a mistake. Because as far as Tito was concerned he had never deviated from Stalinist orthodoxy. In fact he was Stalin's best defender.

In this context of rupture Yugoslavia was obliged after the war to develop its own "road" towards socialism and to construct an ideological identity around which it could consolidate the State without fear of finding itself in the short term asphyxiated by the Russian bloc.

The political intelligence of Tito was expressed along a dual axis:

- on the diplomatic front by the creation with Nasser and Nehru of a "movement of non aligned countries" giving to the Yugoslavian experience an international dimension.

- on the home front by the introduction of self managed federalism which enjoined Yugoslavians to the reconstruction of the State giving it the aura of an innovative State.



The National Question: Ideology and Power of Containment/Regimentation of Yugoslav Social Contradictions

The relativity of the national question

The importance of national questions which characterises ideological conditions in Yugoslavia is not the product of irredeemable complexity. From our point of view it is a concrete expression of the power of mystification, still very real, of the Yugoslavian State. To sustain the State's cohesion this pseudo-problematic rested on the constant jealousy between different local bureaucracies.

On this latent confrontation of national interests between different republics was founded the necessity of the federal State - that is of the Yugoslav fatherland - which guarantees respect for each particularism. Thus each local fraction of the State constituted as such based its strength on the defence of its own particularism defending its corner as regards others through the political cultural valorisation of its language, history, traditions. This "legitimate power" called Yugoslavia became thus the possibility of survival as a particular territory of each of its component parts confronted with other States and in the conflictual conditions of the world economy. It amounted to an ideal State structure which Corsicans, Bretons, Occitans etc. throughout the world could dream about.

This State structure guarantees to a degree in return the fencing in of social tensions which can surface in different regions within the federation.

The historic cement of Yugoslavian ideology is the

struggle, unified by the C.P., of the "different" Slav populations of the south for their survival through a war against several armies which looted and dissected their territory in the second world war. The episode is given the ulterior title of "revolution". Given the weakness of the former kingdom of Yugoslavia, the national question is in itself the particular response formulated by capital in Yugoslavia to guarantee its developmental conditions after the second world war. The federalist structure reinforced in the same vein later by self management structures corresponded to the necessity of stabilising and therefore rationally integrating into the world economy a heterogeneous territory whose traditions were anchored in a resistance, which included Serbs, to a centralism embodied in a Serbian political cadre between the two wars. This structure of Yugoslavian ideology strengthened by local ersatz is apt to lead local social tensions onto the terrain of nationalism by explaining the reasons for poverty as due to the meagre handouts of others in the federation.. This makes of each particular nationalism a force for social containment.

Hence the qualitative development of struggle in Yugoslavia collides head-on with nationalism recalling in certain respects the way in which in other countries it can collide with trade unionism as a force for national economic integration.

Tito had the luck so far as concerns his legend to die at the right time. His demise in 1980 corresponded to a major push by capital to homogenise ideological debate and rationalise the conditions of economic activity throughout the globe. Constituting the favourite delicacies of the Yugoslavian political class, for the past ten years throughout the world "liberals"

v "statists", "realists" v "ideologues", cakes and trifles have been balanced the one against the other.

The movement of pauperisation engendered by the restructuring of world capital entailed here as elsewhere the objective conditions of a vital social awakening.

The major post mortem contribution of Tito was in assuring the regulatory role of central authority in order to counter the emergence of a federal leadership too strongly stamped by one of Yugoslavia's nationalisms. This was concretised in a collegiate structure of federal power accompanied by a complex electoral procedure mobilising for months on end all the panoply of local economic, regional etc. committees. Like the introduction of the law on self management in the 50s the aim was to involve all the layers of the population in the State's functioning by a more direct participation than in the classical democratic types of east and west. This collegiate structure of federalist power with its hybrid promiscuous aspects nevertheless attained for a while the hoped for end. An apparent weakness in the authority of the central power vis a vis different regions confirmed in return the increased necessity of

its umpire role and supreme regulator of all local tensions. It is from this contradiction that it drew its force and justification. This stance permitted it to invest the ideological movement with a greater subtlety at the world level of general tendencies which Yugoslavian "people", mixing up all classes, were invited to participate in.

Put schematically the Yugoslavian ideological debate divided into two poles of geographical influence.

a) The "north" comprising Slovenia and Croatia is the liberal pole. These two republics are historically marked by the Austrian occupation and exchanges with Italy. During this period the industrial and commercial infrastructure was laid down. These are the most westernised regions in terms of mores and a taste for commodities. They are the most faithful clients of Austrian and Italian traders - Vienna and Trieste constituting the preferred shopping centre.

Contrary to another stalinist type regime, Yugoslavia has opened its frontiers to the west and it is the west which has tended for some time to restrain the tide of buyers.

Hence it is these two republics which are the most spontaneously and commercially interested in making an overture to the O.E.C.D.

Being the only regions where the trade balance is in the black, thanks to their relative prosperity, the well-off here are ardent defenders of economic liberalism seeing the new possibilities of increasing or at least conserving their well being. The weight of the middle classes is more developed than in the other republics.

b) The second pole includes the rest of Yugoslavia. It is the "balkanised" Yugoslavia. Except for part of Serbia and Vojvodine these are the poor even poverty stricken regions of Yugoslavia. Given this fact their bureaucratic strata are strongly interested in the existence of a more rigorous centralism able to impose a repartition of total resources to their advantage. To them the question of central power is posed in a particularly sharp and imperious manner.

This pole includes in its ensemble that part of Yugoslavia which historically was opposed to the ottoman occupation. Given this history marked likewise more culturally by a much more pronounced survival of communitarian traditions, light can be shed on certain recent events in Serbia and Kosovo.

Some Aspects of Yugoslavian Nationalist Spectacles

a) Slovenia

The content of Slovenian nationalism which is the most "modern" and perhaps the most imbued with the everyday affirmed itself in economic rather than cultural terms. It is the region that was most pervaded by the Austrian occupation, its language having kept the harshest most guttural germanic tone. It is the most industrialised republic and its ideology manifests pride in its economic success. Bosnians and Albanians serve as immigrant labour there and are treated as such- they take jobs belonging to others and monopolise public housing. In the bars of Ljubljana one can easily recognise these intruders from the din: they are the ones singing unable to hold themselves in.

The "average" Slovene wants to work and is disciplined treating with scorn the boorish Balkans. The Slovene bureaucracy, conscious of its economic standing in the federation, has encouraged the development of a national Slovene will, which, awaiting an opening towards the west, exerts pressure.

The task of identifying immediate interests is more advanced there than in the rest of the federation. The ecological, anti-nuclear, pacifist movements have been supported effectively and discreetly by the republic's leadership. For the bearers of a more radical critique this has amounted to preventative isolation.

The broadest freedom to publish has been adroitly manipulated into being the official voice of the contentious Slovene regarding central authority. The standard of living is much superior to the southern republics. The stock of B.M.W's and other luxury cars, is larger than that of tractors in Kosovo.

Having mainly benefited formerly from the economic crises the republic now all the more painfully suffers the onset of lean times. This is greeted, much more clearly than in Croatia, with mounting nationalism. The crises is viewed as the invoice which the federation is trying to make it pay on account of the federal governments bad management. Given the fact that its history is little marked by wrangles with Serbia, the Slovene bureaucracy willingly serves as a mouthpiece for the liberal duet.

b) Croatia

Zagreb, Croatia's biggest city is the westernised capital of Yugoslavia. It also wants to be the intellectual capital. It manifests an intellectual stratum abusively described as "trouble makers" which tries with its Slovenic counterparts to work-out a compromise between the titoist past and the liberal future whose echo bypasses the middle class. The other half of the liberal duet, this republic runs from Slavonica in the north to the Dalmatian coast in the south. Here they trawl the biggest haul of tourists. The form its nationalism takes still secretly evinces its history and conditions which it opposed to Serbian centralism. During the war it was an autonomous State allied to Germany and Italy. The Ustashi Croats', stamped with a principally anti-Serb religious nationalist ideology gained a reputation for massacring Serbs. "Liberation" in its turn had been an immediate settling of accounts. The forbidden recollection of these events, etc. still mark Croatian socialist ideology. Their southern character, their more "Italian" language, their vocation for the tourist industry gives greater prominence to the Yugoslavian national sport — money. The stance taken by their bureaucracy is to steadfastly but prudently back-up Slovenian demands. Their closer contact with the peoples of the south, with whom they share the Serbo-Croat language, means that nationalism expresses



Spot the Difference

On the left a Yugoslav painting from the fascist era. On the right, adapted to the needs of the Titoist state.
A fascist social realism

itself with greater subtlety and a tactical flair regarding the southern population.

c) Serbia

Deprived of the solid economic base of the northern regions the Serbian bureaucracy proudly founds its nationalism on its history. It boasts the knowledge it is the political cement of the Yugoslavian land mass. It is the biggest and the most densely populated republic around which the State has been erected. It remains the axis around which present day Yugoslavia is organised. Its predominance is political. The legacy of its centralist bent is apparent from certain pronouncements it makes on the "superior interests of Yugoslavia". Its situation in the federation makes it the bounden arbitrator between the rich republics of the north and the poverty stricken republics of the south. It houses in Belgrade, its capital city, all the various federal authorities. Poverty is more apparent here and the narrow minded, trumped-up bureaucracy is tinged with the exotic colours of the Balkans. Belgrade, a vast city of crumbling grey houses sheltering a varied noisy, coloured population has the smell of oriental Europe about it. One is far from the neat, tidy appearance of Croatian towns like Zagreb.

d) Kosovo

This is the "autonomous region" that is to be found in the south of Serbia. It is a very poor, arid country. Since the middle ages it has been the mythological home of Serbia. Kosovo was the scene of a battle which became one of the central myths of the Serbian oral tradition throughout the centuries. According to tradition it was in this battle King Lazare and his christian knights, preferring sacrifice to slavery, fought and were annihilated by the Ottoman army. This myth passed down through the intervening centuries the valour, dignity and refusal of the Serbs to submit when confronted with the power of Islamic despots. It was on this spot there gathered together prior to the deed, the assassins of the Austrian archduke who through their sacrifice would seal the "renewal" of the Serbian State at the end of the first world carnage (this assassination being the pretext for it). At the very least its epic survival requires thus. This small country shelters two peoples each organised around powerful community structures. One the one hand there are the Slavs, the "historic" Serbs and the Montenegrins possessing an orthodox christian culture and on the other hand, the Albanians,

with an islamic culture who speak a language remote from the other languages in the region. In this context a demographic increase renders hunger for cultivated land - the sole source of a livelihood for the two communities - increasingly acute. The mutual antagonism was from the outset fuelled by a greater repartition in favour of the Serbs who enjoyed the State's preference.

The Albanian community, which demographic increases had placed increasingly in the majority and who were becoming poorer, had no other recourse than to sell their labour in the other republics and attempt to seize land off Serbs and Montenegrins.

This process of nationalist radicalisation amongst the Albanians was favoured by their "foreign" character vis. other Yugoslavian nationalities. Their demands were considered suspect, anti- Slav - even anti-Yugoslavian.

Trapped by the Yugoslavian State within the ghetto of nationalist confrontation they were not even recognised as a nationality "equal" to the rest (they did not accord them the right to regroup within an Albanian republic belonging to Yugoslavia, which would have been considered politically dangerous). So the Albanians poured all their energy into one of the more vindictive ideologies.

It was in this context there erupted at the beginning of the 80's, violent riots which were ferociously put down. So the situation in Kosovo was transformed into a latent ever present danger for the entire Yugoslavian political edifice, unable to offer to the Albanian bureaucracy the means of channelling confrontation into a framework compatible with the general interests of the federation.

Kosovo lies at the limit and is the open negation of the regional democratic debate in Yugoslavia. Increasingly concretely it has come to cast doubts on the federalist thesis on which the political equilibrium of Yugoslavia is based.

The situation in Kosovo having taken a dramatic turn in the past few months requires some comments:

1) In Yugoslavia, in relation to other regions, Kosovo is not a hot bed of social agitation that is more opaque than the rest. However due to a number of reasons and particular blunders it became an exemplary instant of repression.

For more than four years an uninterrupted wave of strikes, with its peaks and troughs, shook without distinction all sections and regions of Yugoslavia.

2) Social awakening has taken on some years the character of a profound movement of drawn out, on-

going maturation but which upto the present and including the recent riots in Kosovo, has not yet been marked by a rupture with a nationalist stance.

The real strength of communitarian traditions in spite of the exemplary determination which it has shown during the course of these events only underlined, very dramatically the power of national ghettos.

The defeat of the Albanian rioters today is matched by the fact that the first uncompromising social confrontation since the war was castrated, for the time being, by its inability to extend beyond a strictly Albanian riot. The State has been able to pass over in silence the fact that for the first time in history the militia has had to face armed proletarians in the streets protesting against their poverty.

3) This riot in its nationalist aspect is a consequence of the political manoeuvres which the Slovene and Serbian bureaucracies within the federation enjoyed in and over these two republics - a consequence of the ideological confrontation between the different fractions of the federal state.

As a mode of government the "madhouse" is one of the well-springs of Yugoslavian ideology. The rule consists in periodically putting into play the internal equilibrium of the different republics and autonomous regions, renegotiating each individual part by raising the spectre of excess imputed to one region by the others while pitting each nationality against the rest. The end result of this process is to regularly re-affirm that only unity around the federal State can ensure an equilibrium of interests.

The constant justification that abets each political destabilisation is clearly the necessity of reactivating a nationalist stance against a social awakening. This was clearly understood when Serbia took the risk of provoking a constitutional crises in Kosovo. In the same vein shortly afterwards Slovenian bureaucrats sympathised with the Albanians; whom they scorned on other occasions, because that allowed them to defuse social tension directed against the Serbs. On the other hand they could float, without getting wet, the risks of a bloody repression regarding irresponsible social attitudes.

4) The difficulty of managing the Kosovo question is linked equally to historical antecedents in the post war period and to the question of the Albanian State. One of Tito's political defeats in the post war was his inability to integrate Bulgaria and Albania into the Yugoslavian State.

On the Albanian question the outcome was decided by the defeat in 1948 of the pro-Yugoslavian

faction in the workers party that was against Enver Hoxha. It was this confrontation with Tito in part that determined the Stalinist orthodoxy of Albania.

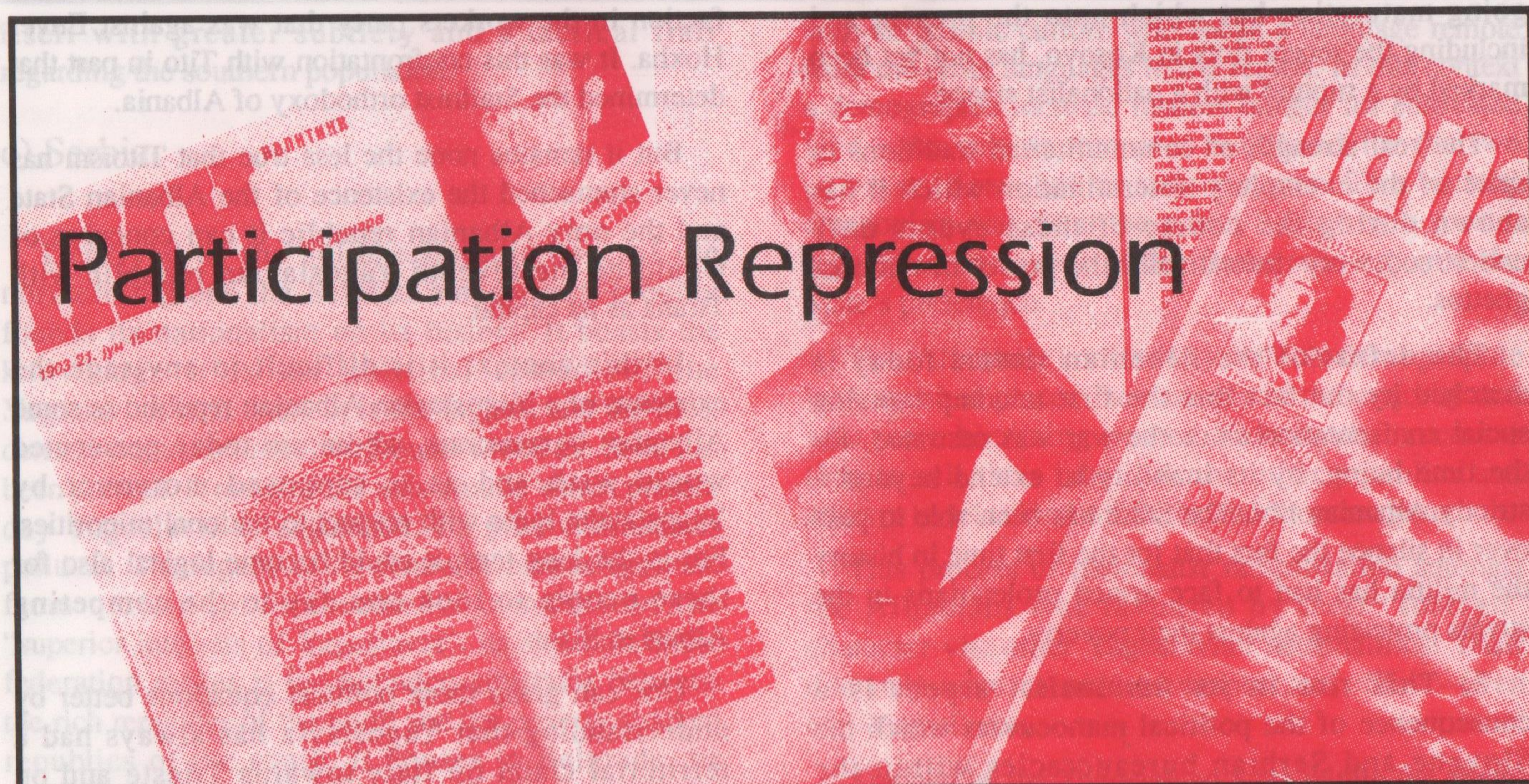
But it remains none the less true that Titoism has never stomached the existence of the Albanian State and the only Albanian republic it can conceive of would be the seventh Yugoslavian republic with Tirana as its capital.

In this context it is difficult to envisage the existence of a Yugoslavian Albanian republic as some Albanian bureaucrats, whom are today persecuted would wish and as is supposed moreover by Yugoslavian logic with respect to national minorities. For in the long term it could become logical also for these people to look one day to the competing Albanian State.

One can grasp these political equations better by understanding that Yugoslavia has always had a territorial claim on Italy towards Trieste and on Austria viz. the frontier strip inhabited by Slavs. As for Hungary it keeps an eye on a part of Vojvodine inhabited by Hungarians whilst Bulgaria considers that the Macedonians are in fact Bulgarians. As for these Bulgarians it hasn't always escaped that Thessalonika is a Macedonian town as moreover is all of northern Greece ...



Albanian zinc miners resurfacing after a sit-in to remove pro-Serb Albanian Party officials. February '89.



Participation Repression

There exists in Yugoslavia two quite distinct levels of repression: the one which is openly talked about subject to discussion and the taking of sides, professing exemplary intentions. For the most part this is the one taken up by the media and finds an echo abroad. The one which is not talked about is hidden by the Yugoslavian consensus

The first instance applies for example to certain Slovenian journalists, to such and such group of bureaucrats who quite obviously are corrupt. They are intellectual soap operas having a pedagogic purpose. There are the public moments in debates between fractions of the State directed against such and such social fraction through some such scapegoat and are accompanied by a more or less large scale mediatory mobilisation polarising debates around matters of no interest and this in periods of social tension. At the same time their observance is often revelatory of real events they are supposed to cover.

The second which is sometimes the result of the consensus affected through the former, is expressed daily in the narrow minded arrogance of the militia and by a multitude of 'minor' political trials which do not appear in the newspapers and serves mainly to maintain the terror in Kosovo. Not to mention court appearances for economic crimes relating to strike action as well as wages in kind which proletarians grant themselves. In fact this unspectacular character of the repression is difficult to make head or tail of, particularly in periods like the one which just started in the spring of '88 because the press has been gagged once more precisely in order to keep struggles which have broken out again this summer in an atomised state. On the ground information is always

fragmentary and at times at variance, magnified by rumour, but in a way that compliments the strategy of diversion. Police beatings seem to be commonplace and, in any case, intimidation and threats constitute the daily, all but official practises of the filth.

During one of the spectacular waves of repression directed against "dissident intellectual" milieus in 1984, one of the arrested trade unionists was killed. A cock-up or a warning - doubtless both - to amateurs. This person was killed in public unlike the victims in Kosovo which add up to several dozen and surely more since 1981. The repression of isolated insurgents is without mercy and perhaps explains in part the non-appearance of attempts at autonomous organisation, in spite of the great waves of struggle which uninterruptedly has shaken Yugoslavia for several years. This repression is all the more effective to the degree it articulates these visible aspects and those cunning constraints in a manner which enforces the consensus. Some leaders heads roll but that is the cost for being able to terrorise in isolation which is more effective than a brutal strategy of wholesale repression

At the present people who have participated in the strikes come through unscathed generally and even if they have taken an active part they will not be harmed by the outcome provided they have stayed within the resultant consensus. The media upto the spring of '88 had given out some information on the strikes just so long they more or less agreed to be taken over by the unions. The newspapers justified the strikers by showing how the economic situation had wronged them, then the proper authorities would relieve from their posts one or two of those responsible, double

wages and order would reign once more.

On the other hand the few movements which the newspapers busied themselves with and did not follow trade union logic, were not described as part and parcel of a strike but presented as acts of collective sabotage - in particular a Croatian furniture factory last spring against which the newspapers demanded repressive measures be taken because successive orders were not met owing to the fact production had come to a stand-still.

A typical procedure of indirect repression is illustrated by an indictment of journalists at the beginning of '88. A number of newspapers had been indicted for having shown a want of respect towards the army, another for having pulled the rug from under a guest of the Yugoslavian State by treating a

head of an African State in Belgrade as a tyrant. Week after week accusations multiplied touching on fringe papers essentially. The banned newspapers referred the matter to the courts who generally lifted the banning order. In the name of democracy journalist circles rallied against censorship. And one after the other the accused journalists were cleansed of blame by court rulings. Except in the case of some Slovenes who had the nerve to continue after an armistice had been announced, because they saw fit to add their weight to the weight Slovenia exercised in the federation when certain economic texts came up for discussion. However once the majority of journalists had been acquitted one found bit by bit that no information on the social movement would illuminate the entire Yugoslavian media. The message had got through.



ĐOKO NINKOVIĆ, Večernji list

Albona -Yugoslavia Miners on Strike

It was a Wednesday like any other. Spring was arriving gradually. Meanwhile everyone was scraping what they had together after a further price rise. Yet in the centre of Albona life appeared to calmly continue. But as you know appearances at times deceive. We were reminded of this as we neared the headquarters of the "Istrian Mines". The janitor came towards us. Having introduced ourselves he exclaimed: 'You can't come in, the press conference is at 1 o'clock.' The words were barely out of his mouth when the door was thrown open and out came some forty people. They were miners from Labin colliery who had been on strike for nearly a week (the trouble which bit by bit had assumed a notable dimension had been started by their workmates in Tuplijak.) Speaking all at once they all added their bit. One of them abruptly let fly: "We don't believe anyone not even you journalists". Not everyone is in agreement, objections are raised. Others insist: 'What average wage of 170,000 dinar? Our wage packets are a lot thinner'. 'We don't want anything to do with our leaders they are not behaving honestly with us'. 'Why don't you write about the failure to invest in Ripenda and Valmazzinghi collieries'. We try to get a calmer discussion going. Vojko Andrie interjects: "I have worked down the pit for nearly nine years. I have a wife and child. We live in conditions which are uncomfortable to say the least. In practise damp is my constant companion. It accompanies me everywhere whether at work or in the house. This isn't living. Come and see for yourselves". We agree. Ante Bandolo comes along with us: "I found a place to live in a derelict building with my wife and child. It used to be a school".

Andrie has found a place to live in a manner of

An account taken from the "People's Voice" an Italian language paper that comes out in Fiume, Yugoslavia.

Albona, April

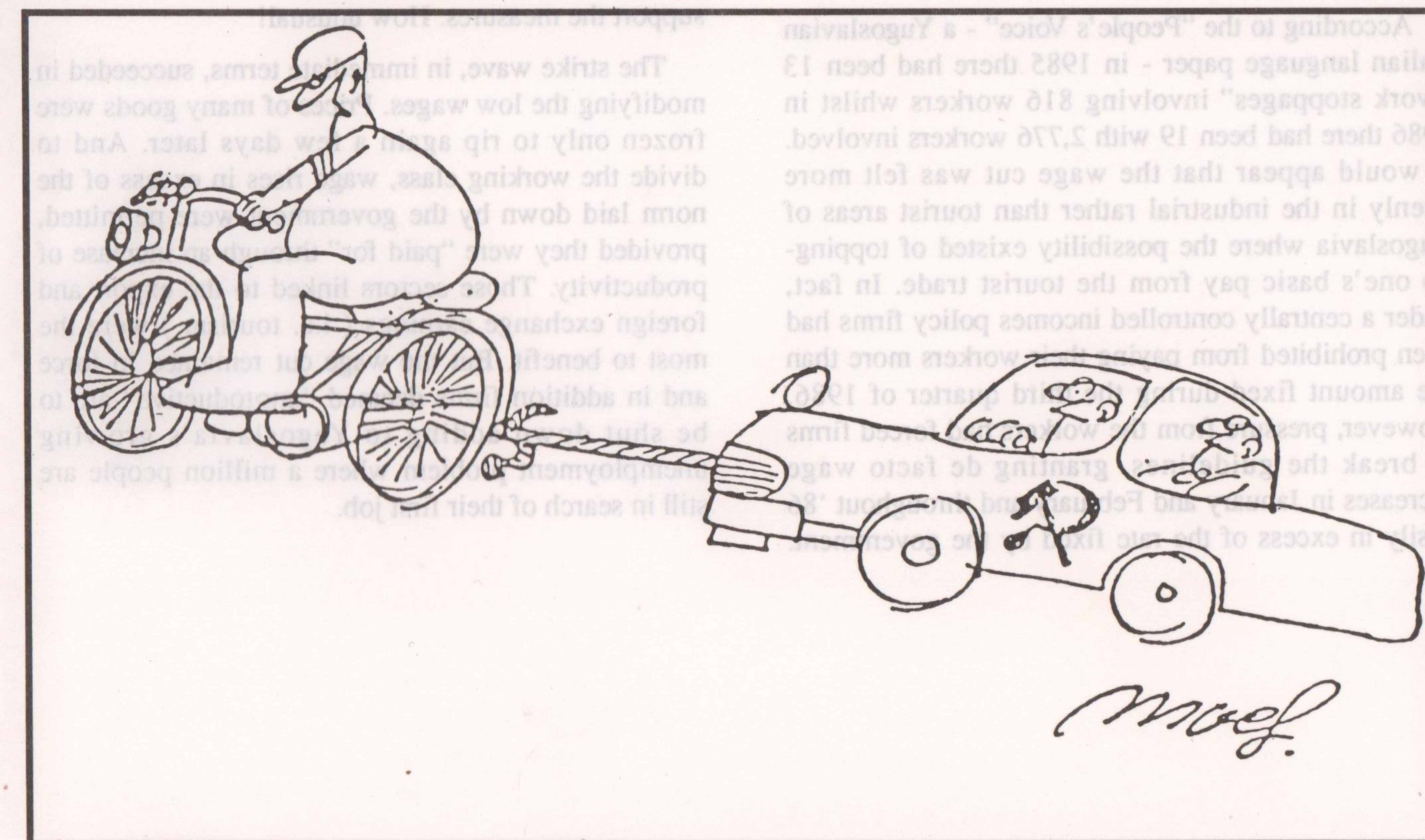
speaking in Vines. It is a rickety little house, damp inside, in need of urgent repairs. Needless to say it is insanitary. The toilet is outside and a bath is a mere dream. The living space is not more than twenty-eight square metres. In a moment of dejection he unburdens himself. "Amongst the miners some come from Bosnia — our part of the country. Instead I am feeling deeply disappointed. We wanted to work so much we didn't ask for anything else. Only that the remuneration be equal to the task. My basic pay varies between 11 to 12,000 dinar. Not much. Some engineers earn a lot more. There are some who can have the house of their dreams and the last word in a brand new "Volvo".

It wouldn't be a bad idea if you were also to take a photo of one of their houses so as to compare it with the slum I came across here. Probably, but this is only my opinion, none of this would have happened if the bosses had at least shared in our ups and downs. Instead what happened we never saw them for months on end and no one thought it worthwhile to exchange a few words with us. Not to mention the unions! I don't think I will take part in them anymore, even if reluctantly. The union leadership has abandoned us". 'Yes it's true' added Ante as we were taken to his place; 'Ye have lost all faith both in the trade union and self-management cadre'. We parked in front of an abandoned building or rather one that had been partially re-occupied.

Here were to be found the young families of four miners. We met Marija, the wife of Bandolo. She was carrying a bucket: "I'm off to replenish the water". She told us: "the tank over there supplies us with the precious fluid". "We'll be practically dead before

there's a decent place to live" warned Ante. "As regards housing points we want their, to be valid outside the Albona district". We return to the issue of the pits. "In no way has there been any excesses" they point out in chorus. Raso Huse steps forward. He insists on going with us. We get back in the car. Ramiz Soldic and Raso follow. Raso, lean with a kindly face speaks in quiet but firm tone: "Our demands have been falsified. We asked for 100% wage increase for production workers with a 50% increase for administrative staff. Furthermore we wanted various bosses dismissed including the Managing Director. When trouble erupted in Lupijak pit they were motivated by the idea of breaking away from the parent organisation. But this didn't happen. Hence our mistrust as regards their protest. Our pay absolutely has not kept pace with the continued increase in productivity. I worked the entire month, Saturday included, standing in water up to my knees for 14,600 dinar.'

Here also living conditions are at the limits of the humanly tolerable. In the building that Raso shares with 11 other families there is no water. They get it from a spring where there is a continual danger of disease. Close by there is a food store. The Health Inspector wanted to close it down but people were opposed to it. Substandard, unhygienic conditions were better than nothing at all. "Don't think," Raso interjects, "things are better for single men. They are crowded into two hostels living in completely precarious conditions. The only advantage is that they don't pay rent which everyone is resigned to paying'. They thank us for listening to them and return sadly to the pits. However there is much fierceness in their looks. They say goodbye remarking, "we won't give in so easily!"



Blob jottings circa Summer '87

- Yugoslavia:

At the beginning of March '87 news of big strikes leaked out of Yugoslavia. The most important centres were Belgrade and Zagreb where industry is the most developed. The official press did not speak of a strike wave but of work stoppages. Then all of a sudden came the news the Belgrade government had threatened to use tanks if there was no return to work. The strikers numbered around 20,000 and were protesting against a law passed by the federal executive council that cut the wages at a stroke of thousands of workers' wages and congealing them to the end of June.

According to the "People's Voice" - a Yugoslavian Italian language paper - in 1985 there had been 13 "work stoppages" involving 816 workers whilst in 1986 there had been 19 with 2,776 workers involved. It would appear that the wage cut was felt more keenly in the industrial rather than tourist areas of Yugoslavia where the possibility existed of topping-up one's basic pay from the tourist trade. In fact, under a centrally controlled incomes policy firms had been prohibited from paying their workers more than the amount fixed during the third quarter of 1986. However, pressure from the workers had forced firms to break the guidelines, granting de facto wage increases in January and February and throughout '86 easily in excess of the rate fixed by the government.

With inflation running at 100% per annum these wage rises were, even so, considerably below the rate of inflation. For example, 53 businesses employing a total of 13,600 workers in the Fiume area on the Adriatic coast had paid out during 1986, 5 billion, 875 million dinar in excess of the agreed limit. However, the law passed on February 26th '87 not only sought to curb wages but required that wages in excess of the limit be paid back: a third in April and the rest to follow in June. The collection of the "debt" was to be left to individual firms and at a meeting in Capodistria on the 21st/22nd of March, the trade unions agreed to support the measures. How unusual!

The strike wave, in immediate terms, succeeded in modifying the low wages. Prices of many goods were frozen only to rip again a few days later. And to divide the working class, wage rises in excess of the norm laid down by the government were permitted, provided they were "paid for" through an increase of productivity. Those sectors linked to the export and foreign exchange earnings (i.e. tourism) were the most to benefit. But the wage cut remained in force and in addition firms deemed "unproductive" are to be shut down adding to Yugoslavia's growing unemployment problem where a million people are still in search of their first job.

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