

A Socialist Schism:

British socialists' reaction to the downfall of Milošević

by

Andrew Michael William Cragg

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Supervisor: Professor Marsha Siefert

Second Reader: Professor Vladimir Petrović

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Abstract

This work charts the contemporary history of the socialist press in Britain, investigating its coverage of world events in the aftermath of the fall of state socialism. In order to do this, two case studies are considered: firstly, the seventy-eight day NATO bombing campaign over the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, and secondly, the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in October of 2000. The British socialist press analysis is focused on the *Morning Star*, the only English-language socialist daily newspaper in the world, and the multiple publications affiliated to minor British socialist parties such as the Socialist Workers' Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee).

The thesis outlines a broad history of the British socialist movement and its media, before moving on to consider the case studies in detail. In particular, it focuses on disagreements and conflicts among the publications of the British left, such as their various attitudes towards former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević, while also emphasising cases where their opinion was unified against mainstream press narratives, as in the categorisation of NATO as an imperialist force. The disagreements and conflicts within the socialist press, which constitute the work's titular "socialist schism," are considered to be indicative of a leftist movement, shorn of its erstwhile Soviet vanguard, competing amongst themselves for support and authority, with enduring consequences for socialists in Britain today.

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List of abbreviations

AWL: Alliance for Workers' Liberty

BSP: British Socialist Party

CND: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

CPB: Communist Party of Britain

CPGB: Communist Party of Great Britain

CPGB-ML: Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

CPGB-PCC: Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee)

FRY: Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

KFOR: Kosovo Force

KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army

LCY: League of Communists of Yugoslavia

NATFHE: National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NCP: New Communist Party

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

RCPB-ML: Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

RMT: National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers

RTS: Radio Television of Serbia

SFRY: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

SLP: Socialist Labour Party

SWP: Socialist Workers' Party

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1. Introduction

In this thesis, I intend to consider the multitude of ways in which the British press responded to events in the aftermath of the Cold War in Europe, especially those publications maintaining an avowed socialist line following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The approach taken by these publications is illustrative, when considering the need for all parties left of the parliamentary Labour Party to adapt to new geopolitical realities. In order to do this, I will take two key events in contemporary Balkan history as case studies: firstly, the seventy-eight-day NATO bombing campaign over the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1999; and secondly, the ousting of that country's President, Slobodan Milošević, the following year.

Looking at British media sources, predominantly from the socialist press, I intend to demonstrate that, although the socialist press in the UK continued their Cold War-era focus on moving away from capitalism and towards what they considered a fairer, more humane socialism, they did not speak with one voice on matters relating to Yugoslavia or Milošević. Some considered Milošević to be an independent, or even socialist, voice, struggling against the new world order; others thought his regime to be symbolic of the worst crony capitalist practices. This plurality of press opinion constituted the “socialist schism” of this work's title. At the same time, the wide variety of socialist press sources still took a very different approach to much of the mainstream, an aspect which I also intend to highlight.

This analysis is situated at the intersection of media history and political history. Simultaneously considering both the demise of the FRY and the reorientation of a world socialist movement shorn of its Soviet vanguard, I intend to evaluate the consequences of post-Cold War events on internal schisms within the British socialist movement, on media

presentation of politically contentious events in a US-dominated Europe, and on media framing of problematic political leaders.

The thesis will consist of three further chapters after this introduction. Firstly, I will provide some historical context relating to the British socialist movement and its press, sketching the methodological approaches I use and their importance to the study. The next two chapters are analytical examinations of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in the British socialist press. Finally, I will state (and re-state) my findings and conclusions at the end of the thesis.

Why the British socialist press?

Justifying the choice of Yugoslavia as a case study, of course, only provides half of any appropriate validation for this thesis—the same question must be asked of why I chose to look at these events through the lens of the British socialist press. Certainly, the UK did not have a Communist Party with the power and influence of those in France or Italy; nor was it at the forefront of a recalibration of Marxist principles, as, for instance, was the Communist Party in Spain.¹ The majority of British socialism in the twentieth century took a non-Marxist, parliamentary form, espoused predominantly through the Labour Party.

Nevertheless, when studying newspapers and printed media, the British example is an illustrative and enlightening one. The British press has long been highly partisan, especially when compared to printed media elsewhere in Europe, and the socialist press in the UK is no exception, with a number of highly varied publications catering for practically every leftist

¹ Under the influence of Santiago Carrillo, the so-called Eurocommunist trend was developed within the Communist Party of Spain, which was highly influential on other Western European Communist Parties.

current. This multifaceted media landscape provides a solid justification for considering the importance of British socialist media, and their multitude of views towards Milošević and Yugoslavia constitute fertile ground for analysis.

Moreover, the *Morning Star*, which constitutes the bulk of my analysis, remains the only English-language socialist daily newspaper in the world. Where monetary or ideological considerations caused similar newspapers to print less regularly, or to stop altogether, the *Morning Star* outlasted all of its critics' predictions of its demise, causing its staff to unofficially name it "The Daily Miracle." Its surprising persistence, if not unbridled success, makes it an unusual case in the global socialist media landscape, though its critics continue to argue that it remains wedded to a Cold War-type mentality. Any such manifestation of Cold War-esque bipolar thinking in its editorial line is worthy of further investigation.

When comparisons are made between the output of the *Morning Star* and other socialist publications, as opposed to the British mainstream press, some consideration must be given to the respective size of these publications. In a documentary made on the *Morning Star* in 2010, the then-editor Bill Benfield notes that his newspaper has "a very small staff [...] we have 24 or 25 people in the newsroom."² The current editor, Ben Chacko, estimated in 2015 that around ten thousand copies are sold per day.³ This is in stark contrast to mainstream British newspapers of the centre-left, such as the tabloid *Daily Mirror*, whose parent company employs over 4,300 people⁴ and had a circulation of nearly 870,000 in the same year.⁵ Naturally, the *Morning Star* does not expect to meet this type of figure, being

² *The Daily Miracle*, produced by Ivan Beavis and Chris Reeves (London; People's Press Printing Society, 2010), DVD.

³ Edward Platt, "Inside the Morning Star, Britain's last communist newspaper," *New Statesman*, last modified Aug. 4, 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/2015/07/red-all-over-article>

⁴ "Our Company: People," *Trinity Mirror*, accessed Dec. 17, 2016, <http://www.trinitymirror.com/our-company/people>

⁵ William Turvill, "National newspaper circulations, May 2015: Mail on Sunday overtakes Sun on Sunday, Times remains only growing title", last modified Jun. 5, 2015, <http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/national-newspaper-circulations-may-2015-mail-sunday-overtakes-sun-sunday-times-remains-biggest-growing/>

predominantly a paper that, in the words of Derek Simpson, former Joint-General Secretary of UNITE, the UK's largest trade union, "reflects trade unionists' viewpoints to trade unionists."⁶ Nevertheless, its comparatively tiny body of journalists means that it can rarely send correspondents beyond its newsroom, while its circulation figures suggest that the vast majority of its readership already sympathises with its editorial line. Moreover, the newspaper is not universally carried in newsagents or supermarkets, meaning that readers sometimes have to request it personally from store managers. These circulation problems are even greater for the smaller publications issued by parties such as the SWP, whose publications are typically sold at protests, demonstrations and party meetings. As such, it is reasonable to conclude that these publications do not have the intention of shaping broad public opinion, instead vying for space in the small but congested field of the extraparlimentary left.

Considering these facts, another justification for my choice of focus may appear surprising; namely that no such similar analysis of the British socialist press has been attempted by media or history scholars to date. Existing scholarship focused on British newspapers typically considers the impact of mass-circulation, "mainstream" newspapers, rather than alternative or radical media. While some analysis of these mainstream publications will feature in this thesis, my predominant focus remains on the socialist press. In doing so, I am hopeful that these socialist publications will be subject to greater academic scrutiny and scholarly consideration in the future.

Finally, a not-inconsiderable factor in my choice of the British socialist press was my existing familiarity with the socialist landscape in the UK, both through speaking native English, and coming from a left-wing family where such newspapers were not an uncommon

⁶ *The Daily Miracle*, produced by Ivan Beavis and Chris Reeves (London; People's Press Printing Society, 2010), DVD.

sight. My pre-existing knowledge of the modern British socialist movement and its publications will prove key to the analysis to follow.

Why Yugoslavia, and why these events?

I chose to consider the events in Yugoslavia in 1999–2000 for a number of reasons. Firstly, NATO’s increased self-confidence and capability in a newly unipolar world was an entirely new phenomenon. The military body, which previously existed in opposition to the state socialist countries’ Warsaw Pact, became the largest and most important transnational military alliance of its kind after the Warsaw Pact was dissolved in 1991. NATO had previously involved itself in elements of the Bosnian War in the early 1990s, including enforcing no-fly zones and deploying peacekeeping forces. However, its display of military force over Yugoslavia in 1999 was the first instance in which a bombing campaign targeted non-military installations and organisations, such as television transmitters and the headquarters of the state TV broadcaster, RTS. British Prime Minister Tony Blair would insist that these targets were “entirely justified” as they constituted the “apparatus of dictatorship and power of Milošević.”⁷ This change in military tactics and justification is key to understanding the new role NATO played in world politics after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, and equally key to understanding why much of the British socialist press considered NATO both dangerous and imperialist.

Secondly, we must consider the use of “humanitarianism” as a justification for war. Much of the mainstream press, along with the NATO powers, considered humanitarian ideals

⁷ Richard Norton-Taylor, “Serb TV station was legitimate target, says Blair,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Apr. 24, 1999.

to constitute a sufficient, even self-evident justification for military intervention. The socialist press, however, rejected this notion, largely framing intervention as a matter of imperialism under the guise of humanitarianism. Humanitarian rhetoric, invoked heavily to vindicate NATO actions in Yugoslavia, continued throughout the 2000s, as an explanation for the invasion of Afghanistan, and subsequently, Iraq.⁸ In the last few years, the moral universalism of humanitarian intervention has continually been invoked by lawmakers advocating for the use of military force in Libya and Syria, among others. The dichotomy of “humanitarianism versus imperialism” invoked by many socialist thinkers would continue to provide them with justifications in their arguments against the NATO offensive, and would later be synthesised into Jean Bricmont’s concept of “humanitarian imperialism,” namely “the idea that our ‘universal values’ give us the right and even the duty to intervene elsewhere.”⁹

Thirdly, although many of the themes I observe in this thesis were also present in media reporting of the Yugoslav Wars in the early-to-mid 1990s, including the humanitarian justification for NATO operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1992, these wars are discussed far more often in academic literature than the cases I am analysing. Moreover, as the Yugoslav Wars lasted considerably longer than the events I am examining, the amount of data to work with is substantially higher, and would require a much greater level of explicatory analysis relating to the collapse of socialist Yugoslavia, which I increasingly felt would unnecessarily complicate a work of this length.

Fourthly, the continuation of a Cold War-type narrative was utilised by both sides with regard to the figure of Slobodan Milošević himself. Throughout his leadership, much of

⁸ For more on this topic than I have room to mention here, see Eric A. Heinze, *Waging Humanitarian War: The Ethics, Law and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009).

⁹ Bricmont, *Humanitarian Imperialism*, preface (electronic edition).

the mainstream press considered his regime to be one of what I would term “Communist continuity”; for instance, in 1992 the *New York Times*, under the headline “Stop the Butcher of the Balkans,” referred to Milošević as “Europe's last Communist tyrant.”¹⁰ Similarly, after his arrest in 2001, shortly before he was deported to The Hague, the *Wall Street Journal* called Milošević “Europe’s last Communist-era strongman.”¹¹ Milošević’s past as a member of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) was not unusual in East Central Europe or South Eastern Europe at the time; the former Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Macedonia also had leaders who were members of the LCY,¹² while other countries such as Poland, Hungary and Romania also had former Communists at the highest levels of government.¹³

Finally, my experience of living in Belgrade demonstrated strongly to me the importance of the 1999–2000 period in the formation of today’s Serbia. Indeed, as critical as one may be of what I conceptualise as the “Communist continuity” hypothesis relating to Milošević, it must be remembered that today’s President (and former Prime Minister) of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, was the Yugoslav Minister of Information during the NATO bombing campaign. Some of the most notable damage inflicted by NATO bombing is yet to be repaired.¹⁴ The continuing presence of some of Serbia’s most notorious public figures of the 1990s (for instance, the leader of the Serbian Radical Party, Vojislav Šešelj) further illustrates the relevance of studying this period and its continuing resonance in Serbian political life today. As Zala Volčič notes, the image of Milošević, and of this period in

¹⁰ “Stop the Butcher of the Balkans,” *New York Times* (New York), Apr. 15, 1992.

¹¹ Matthew Kaminski, “Milosevic to Face Wide Range of Charges From Yugoslavia,” *Wall Street Journal* (New York), last modified Apr. 2, 2001, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB985978972948156109>.

¹² Namely, former Slovene President Milan Kučan and former Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov.

¹³ For instance, Polish former President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Gyula Horn, former Prime Minister of Hungary, and former President of Romania Emil Constantinescu.

¹⁴ The most obvious example of this are the former buildings of the Yugoslav Ministry of Defence in the centre of Belgrade. At the time of writing, it is not immediately clear what will happen to the ruins, although some attempts to redevelop the site have begun.

Serbian history, remains complicated and contradictory: “Milošević was seen as a Serb fighting the West while casting himself and the Serbs as victims. But at the same time, it seems that there was and is a strong tendency in Serbian society at large to blame Milošević for everything.”¹⁵

Key terms

Throughout the analysis to follow, a number of key terms emerge which require some explanatory comment. Most prominently, the distinction I make between “mainstream” and “socialist” media demands clarification. For the purposes of this work, I consider mainstream press sources to be those unaffiliated to a political party or its stated ideology, with a mass circulation and/or a reputation for quality journalism. Examples of this current include the *BBC*, the *Guardian*, the *Daily Mirror* and the *Independent*. By contrast, the publications I categorise as socialist, or extraparliamentary socialist, are typically affiliated to a political party without parliamentary representation or a party’s political programme, adhering closely to John D. H. Downing’s concept of “radical media.”¹⁶

My use of the term “Yugoslavia” to describe the country governed by Slobodan Milošević is also in need of clarification. Although the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) had officially disintegrated by 1992, the so-called “rump” Yugoslavia persisted, without the formerly constitutive republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the new name of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). This entity, by now comprising only Serbia and Montenegro, with Kosovo and Vojvodina as

¹⁵ Volčič, *Serbian Spaces of Identity*, 124.

¹⁶ For Downing’s differentiation between mainstream and radical media, see Downing, *Radical Media*, especially v-xi, *passim*.

constituent parts of Serbia, lasted until 2006, albeit with a change of name in 2003. Unless clearly specified, the term “Yugoslavia” refers to the “rump Yugoslavia,” or FRY.

The ideological affiliations of the parties and publications discussed can also be clarified further. Those described as “Trotskyist” typically assert that the Soviet Union ceased to be socialist after the death of Lenin and the consolidation of Stalin’s power; most also engage with later Trotskyist theory by intellectuals such as Tony Cliff, Ernest Mandel, Chris Harman and others. Those described as “anti-revisionist” constitute a number of Marxist-Leninists who, as a rule, believe the Soviet Union dispensed with any pretensions towards a correct socialist line after Stalin’s death. Many of these individuals would go on to embrace Maoism, the politics of Enver Hoxha’s Albania, or even the line of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK; North Korea). Perhaps unsurprisingly, this current is among the smallest represented in the British socialist landscape.

2. The British socialist press: Setting the stage

Don't tell me about the press. I know exactly who reads the papers. The *Daily Mirror* is read by people who think they run the country; *The Guardian* is read by people who think they ought to run the country; *The Times* is read by the people who actually do run the country; the *Daily Mail* is read by the wives of the people who run the country; the *Financial Times* is read by people who own the country; the *Morning Star* is read by people who think the country ought to be run by another country, and the *Daily Telegraph* is read by people who think it is.

—Jim Hacker, *Yes, Prime Minister*¹⁷

Jesters do oft prove prophets.

—Regan, *King Lear*¹⁸

The British socialist press

While national media landscapes always adhere to their own specificities, few have such an idiosyncratic character as that of the United Kingdom. This character is sufficiently well-observed that it transcends academic analysis and consequently permeates mainstream culture, as shown in the above quote from the seminal BBC satire *Yes, Prime Minister*.

Although printed media in much of Europe can be said to approach news reporting from a specific ideological position, rarely is this phenomenon more evident than in the UK. As Kenneth Newton and Malcolm Brynkin note, “the British press is highly partisan by most western standards; most papers have clear party attachments, and most nail their political colours to their mastheads.”¹⁹ This is in stark contrast to other forms of mass media, such as radio and television, which in the UK “are bound by law to be neutral and balanced in their

¹⁷ This sketch is available on YouTube: “Who reads the papers? - Yes, Prime Minister - BBC comedy,” YouTube video, 1:48, from the TV show *Yes, Prime Minister*, posted by “BBCWorldwide,” Jun. 8, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGscouUWW2M>

¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 260.

¹⁹ Newton and Brynkin, “The National Press and Party Voting in the UK,” 267.

presentation of political news, thus leaving newspapers as the dominant partisan influence among the mass media.”²⁰ Moreover, some elements of the print media in Britain are commonly renowned for their sensationalism and lurid reporting, deploying “[e]xuberant rhetoric and stoked-up emotion”²¹ in order to compete with each other within the crowded and dense print media landscape. This seems particularly the case with regard to political coverage; Mick Temple argues that “by the 1990s much of popular press’ coverage of politics was sensational, personal and sometimes little more than character assassination,” and furthermore, “[i]t was not only the tabloids who arguably trivialised politics... the mid-market titles and the broadsheets or ‘qualities’ were often equally guilty.”²² Indeed, the British press retains this popular reputation far beyond its national borders, with distinguished media such as Germany’s *Deutsche Welle* suggesting that “Britain’s tabloids go to extremes to an extent papers in places like Germany wouldn’t.”²³

It is within this broader context that the British socialist press must be situated. Political parties of the left and far-left often maintain their own newspapers—indeed, in the case of communist parties, it is unusual for them not to do so—and virtually every leftist party of note in the UK uses such a publication to convey their political line. These newspapers are certainly more openly ideological than the mainstream press; their party political affiliations are not only clear, but form the very foundation of their editorial line. Taking into account both their ideological underpinning and their relative dearth of journalists and staff, such newspapers stand little chance of reporting as broadly on global affairs as the mainstream press does. For instance, the *Morning Star*, the largest of the British

²⁰ Newton and Brynin, “The National Press and Party Voting in the UK,” 272.

²¹ Wei-yuan Chang and Jason Glynos, “Ideology and Politics in the Popular Press: The Case of the 2009 UK MPs’ Expenses Scandal,” in *Discourse Theory and Critical Media Politics*, ed. Lincoln Dahlberg and Sean Phelan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 106.

²² Temple, *The British Press*, 68.

²³ Chuck Penfold, “British tabloids feed Britain’s appetite for sensationalism,” *Deutsche Welle*, last modified Jul. 13, 2011, <http://www.dw.com/en/british-tabloids-feed-britains-appetite-for-sensationalism/a-15231306>

leftist newspapers, is able to employ fewer than thirty paid members of staff;²⁴ others rely largely on party members volunteering to ensure the newspaper makes it to press.²⁵

Furthermore, unlike the mainstream press, these newspapers are usually required to solicit extra funds through donations and fundraising events, since they fail to gain sufficient revenue from advertising, or the cover price of the newspaper.

In trying to outline a conceptual difference between the press categorised as “mainstream” and the socialist press in the UK, John D. H. Downing’s work is highly significant. In his framework, British socialist newspapers can be accurately categorised as “radical media,” as they meet a number of his definitions for such a classification in opposition to the mainstream: they all “break somebody’s rules,” are “typically small-scale” and “generally underfunded,” “express opposition vertically from subordinate quarters directly at the power structure and against its behaviour,” and “build support, solidarity, and networking laterally against policies or even against the very survival of the power structure.”²⁶ All of these factors, Downing suggests, are “in strict opposition to the mainstream media.”²⁷ In further categorising the mainstream media, we can consider Noam Chomsky’s conception of what he terms the “elite media” or “agenda-setting media,” which “set a framework within which others operate,”²⁸ as closely analogous to the notion of mainstream media.

Thus far, it has been established that these newspapers appeal to a very small number of regular readers, and moreover, that their stated ideology has remained unpopular in the UK

²⁴ *The Daily Miracle*, produced by Ivan Beavis and Chris Reeves (London: People’s Press Printing Society, 2010), DVD.

²⁵ See, for instance, the recollections of the former *Weekly Worker* writer Manny Neira, describing his volunteer responsibility for typesetting and layout while he was a member of the newspaper’s parent party, the Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee) [CPGB-PCC]. “Writing for the *Weekly Worker*,” accessed Apr. 20, 2017, <http://www.mannyneira.com/weeklyworker/>

²⁶ Downing, *Radical Media*, x–xi.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, ix.

²⁸ Noam Chomsky, “What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream?” Originally published in *Z Magazine*, Oct. 1997, reprinted online at Chomsky.info, accessed Apr. 28, 2017, https://chomsky.info/199710_/

to this day. So why is it important to look at them? Again, it is worthwhile to turn to Downing. He categorises radical media “as agents of developmental power, not simply as counterinformation institutions,”²⁹ making it fair to suggest that their influence on broad levels of discourse is their most vital feature. Such publications commonly play a part in setting agendas far beyond their readership base. For instance, the erstwhile monthly magazine of the Communist Party of Great Britain, *Marxism Today*, has long been acknowledged as extremely influential by both its supporters and detractors on the left: its former editor Martin Jacques stated that “it is no exaggeration to say that *Marxism Today* was easily the most influential political magazine in Britain between 1978 and 1991,”³⁰ while the Socialist Workers’ Party’s Alex Callinicos decried the “real social hold” of the magazine’s revisionist ideas, and asserted the need to “struggle against its influence.”³¹ The “agenda-setting” purpose that Chomsky identifies in the “elite media” can also be applied, albeit more narrowly, to the socialist press. Although in the British case, these newspapers remain largely incapable of bringing their talking points and political positions to a truly mass audience, they nevertheless constitute a key facet of discussion among leftist groups, setting an agenda among likeminded individuals and groups, and contributing to the formulation of political policy among broader leftist organisations such as trade unions.

A further defining feature of the socialist publications in the UK, in comparison to the mass-circulation mainstream press, is their editorial overlap with theoretical discussions and intellectual enquiry. The case studies I have chosen to analyse are illustrative of this inclination, sparking debates which would be continued in journals such as *New Left Review*, and among scholars such as Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman and Marko Attila Hoare.

²⁹ Downing, 45.

³⁰ Martin Jacques, “Marxism Today,” *Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust*, accessed Apr. 27, 2017, http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/mt/index_frame.htm

³¹ Alex Callinicos, “The politics of *Marxism Today*,” *International Socialism* 2, no. 29 (1985): 128–68.

Many of the self-identified Trotskyist opponents of the NATO intervention would go on to formulate their arguments in a more academic setting, both in the SWP's quarterly theoretical journal *International Socialism*, as well as in edited anthologies such as Tariq Ali's *Masters of the Universe? NATO's Balkan Crusade*. Despite the intellectual character of these debates, strongly emotive discourse continued on both sides of the argument, often with reference to Western failures and Serbian aggression in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the aftermath of socialist Yugoslavia's dissolution. Marko Attila Hoare provides a wide-ranging identification and critique of this current in academia, observing that many opponents of the NATO intervention had previously taken a critical or sceptical approach to suggestions of Serb-led, or Milošević-led, genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina; he categorises these sceptics as "left revisionists," adeptly deconstructing their motivations and arguments.³² His ultimate argument that the "rhetoric of the left revisionists in fact goes beyond denouncing the US as an evil in itself to *defending politically the Milošević regime*"³³ is a key fact that my case studies will later substantiate.

A brief history of British socialism and its press

In the nineteenth century, significant publishers of socialist media in the UK included the Fabian Society,³⁴ founded in 1884, and a number of locally-based trade union councils. The relevance of these trade union-published journals and periodicals cannot be understated, with many proving loud and effective agitators for socialism. Media such as the short-lived

³² Marko Attila Hoare, "Genocide in the former Yugoslavia: a critique of left revisionism's denial," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, no. 4 (2003): 543–563.

³³ Hoare, "Genocide in the former Yugoslavia," 545, original italics.

³⁴ For more on the Fabians' publications, and others of the late nineteenth century in the UK, see Callaghan, *Socialism in Britain*.

Labour Standard even carried a series of articles by Friedrich Engels.³⁵ The foundation of the Labour Party in 1900 saw a further increase in socialist periodicals, and the establishment of the avowedly Marxist British Socialist Party (BSP) in 1911 brought with it a revolutionary weekly periodical, *Justice*.

During World War I, the BSP would undergo a split, with its right wing, pro-war members leaving the party. The remainder of the BSP began to publish another weekly, *The Call*, and sought to join with other revolutionary socialist organisations in order to form a unified communist party under Lenin's direct influence.³⁶ This unified body, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), would finally emerge in August 1920. It would continue to publish weekly newspapers in the 1920s, initially *The Communist*, which was later replaced by the *Workers' Weekly*, and subsequently *Workers' Life*.

Although Lenin apparently suggested that the CPGB should publish a daily newspaper as early as August 1921,³⁷ no such publication would commence operation until 1930: this newspaper was the *Daily Worker*, an official organ of the CPGB and precursor to today's *Morning Star*. The consolidation of Stalin's brutal rule in the USSR was reflected in the CPGB's line, as well as that of the *Daily Worker*; the newspaper welcomed the Moscow Trials, and "other socialists who questioned the verdicts were dismissed as 'degenerates' or 'fascists'".³⁸ This obedience of the Moscow line lasted throughout World War II. Initially, the *Daily Worker* supported the war against Nazi Germany as one of democracy against fascism, but Moscow soon ordered the replacement of the CPGB's leadership, and the party's new position was to categorise the war as "imperialist."³⁹ This categorisation would last until the

³⁵ These articles are available online; see "Articles by Engels in the Labour Standard," *Marxists Internet Archive*, accessed May 17, 2017, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/newspapers/labour-standard.htm>

³⁶ Callaghan, *Socialism in Britain*, 97.

³⁷ Eaden and Renton, *Communist Party*, 38.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 65–66.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 68–84 *passim*.

Nazi regime initiated Operation Barbarossa, and the Soviet Union's own line was forced to change. As a result of its position, the *Daily Worker* was banned from January 1941 until August 1942,⁴⁰ its only break in daily publication since its foundation. This episode demonstrates an early example of the British communists' attitude to war being seen exclusively as a matter of imperialist competition between capitalist regimes, alongside a defence of highly problematic individuals and actions under the banner of socialism.

Despite its early anti-war position, the CPGB and the *Daily Worker* would eventually find significant success among British workers when its line changed to support the war, embracing what James Eaden and David Renton called "left patriotism."⁴¹ In the words of Keith Laybourn, the party "emerged from the Second World War as powerfully organised and as influential as it had ever been or was ever to be and could be said to have almost entered the mainstream of British politics,"⁴² having over 50,000 card-carrying members, and even gaining parliamentary representation in the first post-war parliament.⁴³ Nevertheless, what Eaden and Renton termed the party's "finest hour" was short-lived, while also heralding the end of "any pretence that the CPGB remained a revolutionary party."⁴⁴ Its membership would decline as quickly as it grew, while the circulation of the *Daily Worker*, which stood at 120,000 in 1945, would fall under 80,000 in the following decade. A budding Trotskyist current was also developing on the British revolutionary left, further strengthened by the CPGB response to the events in Hungary in 1956.

The *Daily Worker* covered the Hungarian revolution from an exclusively pro-Soviet perspective, claiming that the uprising constituted "an organised and planned effort to

⁴⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁴¹ Ibid., 98.

⁴² Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, 11.

⁴³ The party gained two MPs, the long-time activists Willie Gallacher and Phil Piratin, along with a number of local councillors and prominent positions in trade unions. See Laybourn, 11–12.

⁴⁴ Eaden and Renton, *Communist Party*, 97.

overthrow by undemocratic and violent means a Government which was in process of carrying through important constructive measures.”⁴⁵ The CPGB would later endorse a statement that “the action of the Soviet forces in Hungary should be supported by communists and socialists everywhere.”⁴⁶ The paper’s correspondent in Hungary, Peter Fryer, found his dispatches suppressed, even from his comrades in the CPGB.⁴⁷ The *Daily Worker*’s unbending allegiance to the Moscow line caused a number of its journalists to leave the newspaper, with many also leaving the CPGB.⁴⁸ The reputation of the CPGB as “unthinkingly wedded to the Soviet Union”⁴⁹ led many radical leftists to embrace Trotskyist ideas, which gained increasing credence among students.⁵⁰

The *Daily Worker* changed its name to the *Morning Star* in 1966, while the CPGB began to attempt broader leftist alliances, involving itself with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and bidding to win support from Labour Party voters.⁵¹ However, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was also highly damaging to the CPGB, regardless of the fact that the party by this stage openly advocated individual roads to socialism, and condemned the USSR’s actions in deploying Warsaw Pact troops to the country.⁵² Trotskyist organisations, by this point gaining greater currency on the British left in spite of their fractured nature, were even more critical, lamenting the “climate of deception, of confusion, of lack of satisfaction, of restraint of struggles of the masses in the Workers’ States.”⁵³

⁴⁵ Fryer, *Hungarian Tragedy*, 20–21.

⁴⁶ Ian Black, “How Soviet tanks crushed dreams of British communists,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Oct. 21, 2006.

⁴⁷ Fryer, *Hungarian Tragedy*, 10.

⁴⁸ For a compelling autobiographical take on this period from a former CPGB member and *Daily Worker* journalist, see Alison Macleod, *The Death of Uncle Joe* (Woodbridge: Merlin Press, 1997).

⁴⁹ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, 56.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

⁵² The condemnation was severe enough that the USSR cut its daily order of the *Morning Star* from 12,000 copies to 9,000, which former foreign editor Sam Russell described as “a shot across the bows.” See Beckett, *Enemy Within*, 165.

⁵³ This quote comes from the *Red Flag* newspaper, published by the Revolutionary Workers’ Party, which advocated an esoteric brand of Trotskyism based on the writings of J. Posadas, who combined revolutionary socialism with a belief in forthcoming alien invasion. Quoted in Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, 79.

Despite the CPGB's denunciation of the Czechoslovak invasion, many observers sympathetic to socialist ideas equated Communism with the actions of the USSR, losing the party further potential support.

The popular perception of the CPGB as dangerously close to Moscow was not without merit. For decades, the *Daily Worker*, and later the *Morning Star*, were used as means for the USSR to directly provide hard currency to the CPGB. By the mid-1960s, the paper's circulation had fallen to around 15,000, half of which was attributed to sales in the Warsaw Pact states.⁵⁴ This order was apparently worth around one million pounds a year, paid directly by the USSR.⁵⁵ Former CPGB Assistant General Secretary Reuben Falber admitted the existence of Soviet cash in 1991, claiming that the payments he facilitated had stopped by 1979. Even the *Morning Star* reported Falber's revelations, including methods CPGB members had used to launder the money, along with his statement that "[f]or myself, I can only say... '*je ne regrette rien*'."⁵⁶

The 1970s brought further upheaval on the British far left. The CPGB became increasingly associated with the Eurocommunist current pioneered by the Spanish and French Communist Parties, causing internecine conflict within the CPGB as many of its members defected to newly-founded Communist parties, or to Trotskyist organisations like the emerging Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). Keith Laybourn identifies this period as "a process of rapid decline... which foreshadowed [the CPGB's] eventual collapse as the main representative of British Marxism."⁵⁷ Along with the increasing importance of Trotskyist groupings, some anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninists would also split from the CPGB, especially after the release of the re-drafted *British Road to Socialism*, the CPGB's official

⁵⁴ Anderson and Davey, *Moscow Gold*, ch. 20, "Moscow's Secret Subsidy" (electronic edition).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Former CPGB leader gives details of Soviet cash," *Morning Star* (London), Nov. 15, 1991.

⁵⁷ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, 82.

programme. These activists would form smaller parties such as the New Communist Party (NCP), founded by Sid French in 1977, and the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), or RCPB-ML, which allied with Enver Hoxha's Albania in 1979, and publishes the *Weekly Worker*.

The *Morning Star* would become a key battleground in the internal schisms within the CPGB. Keith Laybourn observes that many older party members disagreed with the new Eurocommunist ideas which the CPGB promoted, and that the "*Morning Star*, through its editor Tony Chater, acted as a conduit for their criticism of the emerging Eurocommunist trends" in the party.⁵⁸ The party's theoretical journal-cum-current affairs magazine, *Marxism Today*, represented the official CPGB line under the editorship of Martin Jacques. By 1981, the CPGB leadership openly criticised the *Morning Star*'s reporting at a Party Congress,⁵⁹ and tried on numerous occasions to remove Chater from his post. By 1988 a number of CPGB members, especially those associated with the *Morning Star*, finally split from the party to found a new entity, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB); those left within the CPGB, which would vote to dissolve itself in 1991, "were people more likely to buy the *Daily Telegraph* than the *Morning Star*."⁶⁰ Unlike the "official" CPGB, the CPB survived the collapse of the Soviet Union, and continues its association with the *Morning Star*, whose circulation declined dramatically in the 1990s.

From this broad overview, we can discern the attitudes of the numerous British socialist publications towards the USSR and the Warsaw Pact states. The *Morning Star* was typically seen as strongly pro-Moscow, and in favour of the "actually existing socialism" of the Warsaw Pact countries. It could sometimes be critical of certain facets of the USSR's

⁵⁸ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 116.

⁶⁰ Beckett, *Enemy Within*, 1.

policy, as demonstrated by the Czechoslovak case. Nevertheless, it was usually strongly supportive of actions taken by the Eastern Bloc countries, backing the Polish suppression of the Solidarity movement,⁶¹ and insisting during the collapse of the German Democratic Republic that “[d]espite the propaganda being pumped out daily in the West, Socialism itself is not the issue in question.”⁶² Publications allied with the SWP and other Trotskyist organisations were much more critical of “actually existing socialism.” The SWP’s leading ideologues considered the USSR and its satellite states to be “state capitalist,” and considered themselves equally critical of both the Washington-led West and the Moscow-led East.⁶³ Similarly, the Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee), or CPGB-PCC, suggests in its *Weekly Worker* newspaper that the USSR had not been socialist since Stalin consolidated his leadership of the union.⁶⁴

Unsurprisingly, those entities considering themselves anti-revisionist took a very different line. The NCP, with its weekly newspaper *The New Worker*, “became strongly supportive, almost worshipful, of China and North Korea” following the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁶⁵ Parties like the RCPB(ML) claimed the Soviet Union and its satellite states were “pseudo-socialist,”⁶⁶ while asserting that Stalin’s USSR, along with Hoxha’s Albania, constituted “the most advanced examples to date of states with democratic political processes.”⁶⁷ Considerations of these political positions are instructive when observing British leftist approaches to the “socialist” character of the rump Yugoslavia, and especially of Slobodan Milošević.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “For peace and stability,” *Morning Star* (London), Nov. 11, 1989.

⁶³ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, 72.

⁶⁴ Parker, *The Kick Inside*, 118.

⁶⁵ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, 157.

⁶⁶ Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), *Draft Programme for the Working Class* (London: Workers’ Publications Centre, 1995), 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 4.

A further worthwhile contemplation is the position of these newspapers within an open media market. Leon Hurwitz's study of socialist newspapers and their response to the Watergate affair in the United States found that the Communist Party USA's official organ, the *Daily World*, was "totally submerged by most, if not all, other American newspapers"⁶⁸ due to its position in such a market; a similar effect can be observed in the British case. Furthermore, the small size of the *Daily World* meant it exhibited "a standard of journalism far below even that of [French communist daily] *l'Humanité* and [Italian communist daily] *l'Unità*,"⁶⁹ which can arguably be observed across the spectrum of British socialist newspapers. Perhaps most interestingly, Hurwitz notes that the *Daily World*'s "blatant ideological nature far overwhelms that of [Soviet dailies] *Pravda* or *Izvestiia*."⁷⁰ This is certainly true of some newspapers of the British left, especially those representing the anti-revisionist parties. Nonetheless, the applicability of this statement to a newspaper like the *Morning Star* is more questionable, not least because of its affiliation to a comparatively moderate socialist line. Nevertheless, the position of British socialist newspapers within a capitalist, competitive media market meant that ideology was one of the key ways in which they differentiated themselves from other newspapers. Moreover, their predominant affiliation to political parties meant that the British socialist newspapers had distinct voices on political issues—often reserving their strongest polemics not for capitalists or warmongers, but rather for each other.

⁶⁸ Hurwitz, "Watergate and Détente," 247.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

What makes the following case studies illustrative?

Following the demise of the state socialist regimes in Europe, the collapse of the USSR, and nominally socialist countries like China adopting a distinctly capitalist model, the global revolutionary leftist movement found itself in uncharted waters. Those formerly espousing a pro-Moscow line had to adapt to a new reality, one without a communist party at the vanguard of world revolution. As with the mainstream capitalist press, old habits would die hard, and previously inviolable Cold War dichotomies would continue to be replicated in altered forms. As Markus Ojala and Mervi Pantti note in their considerations on the war in Ukraine, “the East-West division never completely withered away” in the geopolitical imagination.⁷¹ While most authors, including Ojala and Pantti, emphasise the role of Vladimir Putin’s Russia in the reinforcement of this division, I argue that my case studies show the prevalence of this rupture even before the emergence of the so-called “new Cold War.” Since the fall of the USSR socialist media critiques, while not always supporting the actions of the “Eastern” countries, would most often incorporate harsh criticism of Western actions, both those in conjunction with the new multiparty democracies emerging from state socialism, and those against recalcitrant regimes like that of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

A great deal of these critiques would be manifested against Western military engagements, with the relevance of NATO increasingly called into question after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The *Morning Star*, for instance, was deeply suspicious of the NATO enlargement of 1999, while also quoting German general Klaus Naumann as stating that “troops will be engaged for the maintenance of the free market and access, without hindrance to the raw materials of the entire world.”⁷² The *Morning Star* was not alone in its

⁷¹ Ojala and Pantti, “Naturalising the new cold war,” 43.

⁷² Brian Denny, “The stuff of fanaticism,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 10, 1999.

suspicion; for many on the British left, NATO's new role in a unipolar world was to introduce and enforce capitalism for the benefit of its member states. Those who refused to engage with this aspiration would be targeted. As such, much of the extraparliamentary left considered opposition to NATO policies an imperative part of a modern fight against imperialism.

It is important to keep in mind that the range of opinions expressed in the British socialist press were often markedly different to those dominant in the mainstream media. The latter's considerations of Western actions as imperialist were almost entirely absent, while every socialist newspaper highlighted this interpretation as key to understanding events in Yugoslavia. This divide between mainstream media opinion and socialist press views is equally visible today, as many of the same tropes and frames are utilised in considerations of contemporary wars. The *Morning Star* continues to argue, for instance, that events following the Euromaidan in Kyiv show "NATO is engaged in an imperialist push eastward, against Russia itself,"⁷³ while the ongoing civil war in Syria is labelled a consequence of "US and Israeli-led imperialist intervention."⁷⁴

As I have discussed earlier, the reach of the British socialist media is fairly narrow; nevertheless, their positions have been noted, and aroused criticism, in sections of the mainstream press. The *New Statesman*, for instance, has used the *Morning Star*'s position to lament the fact that "[i]t remains popular among parts of the left to view global justice as a battle for and against US imperialism—a principle some are willing to doggedly adhere to even as images of tortured Syrian bodies reach our newspapers."⁷⁵ Here, the same emotive themes are invoked to categorise potential Western action as "humanitarian" rather than

⁷³ David Ayrton, "Stop NATO's war in Ukraine," *Morning Star* (London), Feb. 20, 2015.

⁷⁴ John Green, "Syrian misery has its roots in Western imperialism," *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 26, 2016.

⁷⁵ Media Mole, "No, Aleppo is not being "liberated" – despite what the Morning Star says," *New Statesman*, last modified Dec. 13, 2016, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/media/2016/12/no-aleppo-not-being-liberated-despite-what-morning-star-says>

“imperialist,” a common dichotomy during the NATO war over Yugoslavia. Media theorist Philip Hammond⁷⁶ observes that this adoption of “humanitarianism” as a justification for Western interventions arose, in the words of Michael Ignatieff, from the “dominant moral vocabulary” of the 1990s,⁷⁷ its invocation used to explain the later invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Currently, its coverage of the war in Ukraine continues to receive rebukes from other leftists, including Jim Denham, who has called the paper’s editorial line “a dishonest pro-Putin disgrace.”⁷⁸

Why choose these publications?

I hope to represent the vast majority of British socialist thinking through their press and media publications, though readers will notice that my comparison is somewhat asymmetric, with the *Morning Star* subject to the lion’s share of analysis. There are numerous reasons for this. Most obviously, the *Morning Star* is the only British socialist newspaper published on a daily basis, resulting in a far higher amount of data than that produced by weekly newspapers, which make up the majority of British socialist publications. Indeed, the newspaper makes a convincing claim to be the only English-language socialist daily in the world. Moreover, the *Morning Star* is perhaps the most outward-looking of the socialist newspapers in the UK, devoting a significant portion of its time and resources to foreign news, when many other socialist publications focus predominantly on domestic affairs. Additionally, the *Morning Star* has the highest circulation among the socialist press in the

⁷⁶ Not to be confused with the Conservative Party’s erstwhile Secretary of State for Defence.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Hammond, “Humanizing War,” 174.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Edward Platt, “Inside the Morning Star, Britain’s last communist newspaper,” *New Statesman*, last modified Aug. 4, 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/2015/07/red-all-over-article>.

UK, not least due to its (limited) availability in newsagents' stores and supermarkets, and its advocates have campaigned for greater recognition by the mainstream media.⁷⁹

The higher profile of the *Morning Star* also means that when those on the mainstream centre-left criticise the socialist press, the *Star* is usually the target. For instance, the former editor of the weekly magazine *Tribune*,⁸⁰ Paul Anderson, has claimed that the newspaper “runs articles extolling the virtues of single-party ‘socialist’ states on a regular basis—North Korea, Cuba, China, Vietnam. Its default position on just about everything happening in the world is that anything any western power supports—but particularly the United States—must be opposed, which has led to it cheering on Putin, Hamas, Assad and a lot of other real nasties.”⁸¹

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the circulation of these publications, and the membership levels of their parent parties, were comparatively low throughout the Cold War, and fell to even lower levels in the period I am analysing. As such, I argue that the relevance of these publications is less rooted on their effect on the mainstream media or the broader public sphere. Instead, following Nancy Fraser, I suggest that the effect of the British socialist press is focused on the *subaltern counterpublic* which workers and socialists constitute, which emerged “in response to exclusions within dominant publics.”⁸² In short, following J. Zach Schiller's reading of John D. H. Downing, “these media help project,

⁷⁹ Indeed, the newspaper gained the support of 89 MPs in an Early Day Motion #1334, tabled in 2011, which called “on the Director General of the BBC to ensure that the *Morning Star* is featured regularly and as a matter of course in broadcast newspaper reviews in the interests of fair and balanced reporting.” See “Early day motion 1334,” *parliament.uk*, accessed May 24, 2017, <https://www.parliament.uk/edm/2010-12/1334>

⁸⁰ *Tribune*'s editorial line has typically reflected the left-wing of the Labour Party, advocating a reformist democratic socialism rather than Marxist ideas or revolutionary socialism.

⁸¹ Quoted in Edward Platt, “Inside the *Morning Star*, Britain's last communist newspaper,” *New Statesman*, last modified Aug. 4, 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/2015/07/red-all-over-article>. Anderson's statement is somewhat harsh: the *Morning Star* has long since abandoned any pretext of support for North Korea (although it continued, well into the 1990s, to refer to the country as “People's Korea.”) Anderson's visceral charge of “bone-headed Stalinism” on the part of the *Morning Star* likely has its roots in battles between the newspaper and *Tribune*, which began in the early 1980s, and went on to assume “all the characteristics of ‘holy wars’,” according to Francis Beckett. See Beckett, *Enemy Within*, 199–200.

⁸² Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 67.

validate, and promote the collective identities of the movement groups whose interests they advance.”⁸³

Finally, one pragmatic consideration must be highlighted at this juncture; namely, that very few, if any, analyses of these publications have been conducted in mainstream academia before. Authors describing the differences between these socialist media sources typically come from within one of the British socialist parties, and bring with them their own (declared) biases,⁸⁴ sometimes using their writings to further propagate or solidify a party political line. While authors like John Callaghan, Francis Beckett, Keith Laybourn, James Eaden and David Renton have produced scholarly works about the CPGB and the effect of Marxism on British politics, very few have considered the role of the wide variety of media publications issued by these groups. With this thesis, it is my intention to begin bridging this gap in the literature.

Methodology

My starting point was to scan articles from the *Morning Star*, *Weekly Worker*, the SWP-affiliated *Socialist Review*, *Workers' Weekly*, *Lalkar*⁸⁵ and other British socialist publications, focusing on their coverage of Yugoslavia leading up to and during the seventy-eight days of NATO bombing in 1999, and later, their articles from September to October of 2000, when

⁸³ J. Zach Schiller, “On Becoming the Media: Low Power FM and the Alternative Public Sphere,” in *Media and Public Spheres*, ed. Richard Butsch (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 125.

⁸⁴ See, for instance, Lawrence Parker’s excellent analysis of CPGB factionalism, *The Kick Inside*, in which he quickly notes that “it will be immediately apparent where the author’s sympathies lie.” Parker, *The Kick Inside*, 11.

⁸⁵ Lalkar, while remaining technically independent, is strongly affiliated with the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist), or CPGB-ML, an avowedly anti-revisionist party. It is strongly linked to its editor, Harpal Brar, chair of the Stalin Society. According to its website, it “contains news and analysis of current events and labour history from the perspective of the proletariat and its struggle for social emancipation, as well as from the perspective of the oppressed people and their struggle against imperialism and for national liberation.” See “Lalkar,” accessed May 22, 2017, <http://www.lalkar.org/>.

Milošević was overthrown. Where appropriate or illuminating, other articles from outside this time period were also considered. These publications are sourced from a mix of online and offline sources; for instance, many of the publications related to the SWP (including *Socialist Review* and the quarterly scholarly journal *International Socialism*) have replicated their articles online, while the majority of the *Morning Star* archival holdings are only available on paper or microfilm.

Following John E. Richardson, lexical analysis is used heavily in analysing these texts, in order to acknowledge the fact that words “convey the imprint of society and of value judgments... they convey connoted as well as denoted meanings.”⁸⁶ Clearly emotive or impassioned language is particularly noted, in view of its potential to convey the connotations which Richardson describes. Close attention is paid to both narrative content and narrative form—in brief, the nature of the news story, and the sequence of its presentation.⁸⁷ The narrative content of the British socialist publications is unusual in the sense that, unlike mainstream press sources, their journalists did not “rely overwhelmingly on government sources when constructing the news,”⁸⁸ or at least not *British* government sources.

In addition to the British socialist publications, similar secondary considerations of mainstream press sources are considered, in order to provide a broader contrast between the socialist publications and a wider mainstream narrative. Most of the mainstream sources I look at position their editorial line on the centre-left, though as the following case studies demonstrate, their interpretation of events in Yugoslavia differs radically from that of the British socialist press. I would argue that this difference in interpretation is representative of a broader mainstream dismissal of socialist anti-war efforts. For instance, Tony Blair’s official

⁸⁶ Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 47.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁸⁸ Piers Robinson, “Researching US Media-State Relations and Twenty-first Century Wars,” in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, ed. Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 97.

biographer, John Rentoul, suggested in a debate with Chris Nineham, SWP and Stop the War Coalition member, that “[t]he SWP was not against the [Iraq] war, it was in favour in the war, it was in favour of Saddam winning the war, and it was in favour of the British losing.”⁸⁹ In making this contentious allegation, Rentoul continued to evoke the spectre of nationalism, commonplace in mainstream media reporting of British intervention abroad.⁹⁰

While much of my analysis is text-based, the effects of the press cannot be fully considered without contemplating the power of visual elements. As noted by Markus Ojala and Mervi Pantti, “[p]hotographs, in particular, highlight the importance of stories and, due to their power to induce emotions and their effectiveness in conveying implicit reality claims not easily recognised by the audience, they often direct the interpretation of news stories.”⁹¹ As such, significant analysis of images and newspaper layouts will also be employed to consider both explicit and implicit messages conveyed, and supplemented, by the accompanying text. In some cases, the images used not only support the editorial line and the content of the article, but vividly reify it; careful note will be made of when this happens, and what it contributes to the broader message in the socialist press.

These methodological considerations will ultimately afford me the rounded perspective necessary to evaluate the way British socialists reacted to events in Yugoslavia, and in particular to the figure of Slobodan Milošević. I will show that the British extraparlimentary left did not speak with one voice on issues relating to Yugoslavia at the turn of the millennium, and especially not on those relating to Milošević as a leader. Moreover, I will demonstrate that the reasoning behind this schism on the British left was

⁸⁹ Michael Ezra, “John Rentoul v. the Stop the War Coalition,” *Harry’s Place*, accessed May 28, 2017, <http://hurryupharry.org/2010/08/17/john-rentoul-v-the-stop-the-war-coalition/>. Rentoul was proud enough of his phrasing that he replicated this charge verbatim in *The Independent*.

⁹⁰ For the impact of such reporting, particularly the growing discourse around the “support our boys” consensus, see Craig Murray, Katy Parry, Piers Robinson and Peter Goddard, “Reporting Dissent in Wartime: British Press, the Anti-War Movement and the 2003 Iraq War,” *European Journal of Communication* 23, no. 1 (2008): 7–27.

⁹¹ Ojala and Pantti, “Naturalising the new cold war,” 44.

largely related to interpretations of Marxism, socialism and imperialism, with every party and publication taking a different approach towards these questions. Such a schism persists today, especially relating to treatments of contemporary conflicts in Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere.

3. “From baby boomers to baby bombers”:⁹² British socialists respond to the NATO bombing

If NATO was there to protect us from the threat of Soviet invasion—its justification for four decades—what was the point of it continuing if that threat no longer existed?

—Peter Morgan⁹³

This chapter introduces the first of my case studies, focusing on the period from March to June of 1999, in which the NATO countries conducted bombing raids over the territory of Serbia and Montenegro. The raids began following the breakdown of the Rambouillet talks, an attempt by NATO to broker a high level of autonomy for Kosovo within the framework of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The talks collapsed after Yugoslav representatives refused a deal which could include the deployment of NATO ground forces throughout Yugoslav territory; later, mainstream British media outlets would suggest that the talks themselves were “designed to fail,”⁹⁴ giving NATO a pretext to begin bombing. Statesmen such as Henry Kissinger agreed with this analysis, calling the Rambouillet text “a provocation” and “a terrible diplomatic document that should never have been presented in that form.”⁹⁵ The *Morning Star*’s Geoff Simons, seeking parallels between Rambouillet and historical acts of aggression, would describe the accords as “a Hitlerian diktat (sic) for unconditional surrender, nothing less,”⁹⁶ while the newspaper’s lead editorial in early May would call them “even more one-sided than the surrender terms forced on the Czechoslovak

⁹² This phrase is adapted from Lindsey German, “Why the pro-war liberals are wrong,” *Socialist Review* 230 (May 1999), accessed Dec. 21, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr230/german.htm>

⁹³ Peter Morgan, “Testing to destruction,” *Socialist Review* 230 (May 1999), accessed Apr. 29, 2017, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr230/morgan.htm>

⁹⁴ Barnaby Mason, “Rambouillet talks ‘designed to fail’,” *BBC News*, last modified Mar. 19, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/682877.stm>

⁹⁵ Kissinger quoted in Mark Littman, “Kosovo: Law and Diplomacy,” *Centre for Policy Studies* (November 1999), 11-12.

⁹⁶ Geoff Simons, “Just how virtual can a death be?” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 23, 2000.

government by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain at the behest of Hitler.”⁹⁷ This opposition was not limited to socialists: legal professor Peter Radan claimed “the terms of the Rambouillet document went further [...] than did the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum presented to Serbia in July 1914,”⁹⁸ the document whose rejection led to the First World War.

In this chapter, I will analyse a range of discourses across the British extraparlimentary left, predominantly from newspapers and party theoretical journals, relating to the seventy-eight days of NATO bombing. These will be set in opposition to the mainstream discourse emanating from the British government and the mainstream British print media. As noted by Robin Blackburn in 1999, “[j]ournals of the left, like *New Left Review* and *Socialist Review*, have been talking about the problem in Kosovo for a very long time.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, support for the intervention, ostensibly on behalf of the Albanian population in Kosovo, was very low throughout the British left, including those segments which advocated for the rights of Kosovo Albanians. It is my intention to further investigate this phenomenon by identifying and highlighting a plurality of opinions among the socialist media, almost all of which were against the intervention, but with a number of varied justifications for their stance.

The role of Britain in the Kosovo war

During the period leading up to the commencement of bombing, the United Kingdom assumed a prominent and visible role within the NATO coalition. Tony Blair’s Labour Party, in government for the first time since the 1970s, had moved away from old Labour values

⁹⁷ “Star Comment: A confused document,” *Morning Star* (London), May 7, 1999.

⁹⁸ Peter Radan, “Secession: a question of law or fact?” in *Territorial Separatism in Global Politics: Causes, Outcomes and Resolution*, ed. Damien Kingsbury and Costas Laoutides (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), electronic version.

⁹⁹ Robin Blackburn, “Imperialism, war and resistance,” *Socialist Review* 232 (July/August 1999), accessed Dec. 20, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr232/harman.htm>

and towards what Blair termed “the radical centre,”¹⁰⁰ dispensing with “traditional positions on disarmament and internationalism,” and instead moving towards “a robust ideological defence of the liberal internationalist *zeitgeist* and America's role as the leader of the ‘international community’.”¹⁰¹ It was this shift in party policy that allowed the academic Philip Hammond to declare Blair “the most belligerent NATO leader in the Kosovo war.”¹⁰² In the British Parliament, Blair was not alone in advocating military action: the leaders of the other largest parties in the UK, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, also endorsed British intervention, with the Conservative leader William Hague also in support of deploying NATO ground troops in Kosovo.¹⁰³ Active opposition within Parliament was confined to a limited number of backbenchers, the majority of whom represented the Labour Party. These dissenting voices were typically traditional anti-war campaigners, such as Tony Benn, Tam Dalyell,¹⁰⁴ and future Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. Nevertheless, even on the left wing of the Labour Party, some notable figures came out in support of the intervention, including future London mayor Ken Livingstone.

For better or worse, Blair's role would naturally be emphasised in the British press, with newspapers such as the *Independent* proclaiming that the NATO intervention “proved that he is developing into a national leader of stature.”¹⁰⁵ However, in the British socialist press, Blair's outspoken support for the NATO operation would see him labelled as “the leading hawk” who had “ordered more bombing in two years than Margaret Thatcher did in her entire rule,”¹⁰⁶ and whose policy proposals “created concern [even] in other NATO

¹⁰⁰ Coates, *Prolonged Labour*, 42.

¹⁰¹ McCourt, “New Labour governments,” 38.

¹⁰² Hammond, “Third Way War,” 123.

¹⁰³ “Hague signals support for ground troops,” *BBC News*, last modified Apr. 23, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/326386.stm

¹⁰⁴ Tim Youngs, Mark Oakes & Paul Bowers, *Kosovo: NATO and Military Action*, research paper 99/34, London: House of Commons Library, 1999, 40-1.

¹⁰⁵ “Clinton and Yeltsin enjoy a last hurrah,” *The Independent* (London), Jun. 11, 1999.

¹⁰⁶ “Bomber Blair,” *Socialist Review* 231 (June 1999), accessed Dec. 20, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr231/edit.htm>

capitals.”¹⁰⁷ Although some of the UK’s assistance to the Balkan region came in the form of international aid—according to the Prishtina Council on Foreign Relations, “the UK was notable in the amount of humanitarian assistance that it provided” to Kosovo¹⁰⁸—it also contributed to NATO the most military resources of any country beside the United States.¹⁰⁹

Blair’s justification for the intervention leaned heavily on a moral duty either to “act or do nothing.”¹¹⁰ In a televised address to the British public, evoking the human horror of ethnic cleansing and streams of refugees fleeing Kosovo, he stated that “taking action is the only chance justice has got [...] Fail to act now, and the conflict unleashed by Milošević would not stop.”¹¹¹ He concluded his address with a universalised moral statement, asserting that intervention “is simply the right thing to do.”¹¹² His call for NATO forces to begin their raids over Serbia “with the whole country united behind them”¹¹³ was echoed, at least at the beginning of the intervention, in the British mainstream press.

The British mainstream press

The centre-left tabloid *Daily Mirror* was among the most enthusiastic supporters of NATO intervention. From the beginning of the operation, the newspaper led with increasingly bellicose and patriotic front pages, coupled with attacks on the Yugoslav federal government

¹⁰⁷ Mike Ambrose, “Blair ultimatum divides alliance,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 21, 1999.

¹⁰⁸ Nicholas Doyle and Engjellushe Morina, *The United Kingdom’s Foreign Policy towards Kosovo: A Policy Perspective*, Prishtina: Group for Legal and Political Studies/Prishtina Council on Foreign Relations (2013), 8.

¹⁰⁹ “Britain in the Balkans,” *BBC News*, last modified Jun. 11, 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/320094.stm>

¹¹⁰ “Blair’s TV address - Full text,” *BBC News*, last modified Mar. 26, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/305034.stm

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

which stretched credibility; most notably, in the first week of the campaign, the newspaper devoted its cover to declaring Milošević “Pol Pot II”¹¹⁴ (see Figure 3.1).

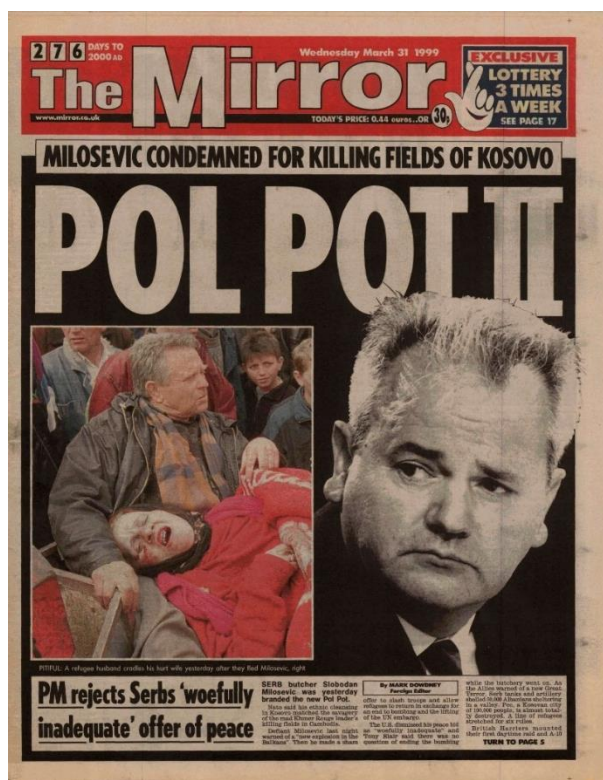


Figure 3.1: The front page of the Daily Mirror, March 31st 1999.

This would not be the only comparison the *Daily Mirror* would make with such tyrants. On the same day, the newspaper’s cartoonist, Tom Johnston, would show the Devil “welcoming” Milošević to Hell, along with Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Pol Pot and Benito Mussolini.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Mark Dowdney, “Pol Pot II,” *Daily Mirror* (London), Mar. 31, 1999.

¹¹⁵ “PC5900 – ‘A bit more practise on the pronunciation... all together now...welcome Slobodan Milosevic!’,” *University of Kent: British Cartoon Archive*, accessed May 30, 2017, <https://archive.cartoons.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=PC5900>.



Figure 3.2: Tom Johnston's cartoon in the Daily Mirror, captioned "A bit more practise on the pronunciation... all together now...welcome Slobodan Milošević!"

Less than a month after the newspaper led with the "Pol Pot II" front page, another lead editorial admitted that "[w]e are fighting a war in Yugoslavia that we are simply not winning"; however, its answer to this dilemma was for NATO to "order the deployment of a substantial ground force. And do so quickly."¹¹⁶ In combination with this explicit, hyperbolic demonization of Milošević and the Serbs, much of the coverage also took a nationalistic, venerating approach towards the ability, courage and virtue of the UK's armed forces. For instance, in the final days of the bombing, the newspaper's front page took the form of an open letter to Milošević, accompanied by a photograph of troops from the Brigade of Gurkhas. Under the heading "Your call Slobodan," the letter read

¹¹⁶ "Time to send in troops," *Daily Mirror* (London), Apr. 23, 1999.

These men are Gurkhas, the most feared fighting force in the world, leaving Britain for Kosovo yesterday [...] The Gurkhas are said to be very unimpressed by the way you have raped, tortured and murdered refugees. They think you should stop right now and sign the peace deal. We can do this the easy way Mr Milošević, or the hard way. It's up to you.¹¹⁷

As noted by media scholar John E. Richardson, “once a war starts, the newspaper buying public are notoriously unreceptive to reporting critical of ‘our boys’, or even stories unsupportive of the war”;¹¹⁸ the *Daily Mirror*’s efforts demonstrate the extent to which a patriotic, righteous narrative was upheld by significant elements of the mainstream press. Such a media strategy had long been seen as effective, arguably reaching its nadir with the *Sun*’s coverage of the Falkland Islands conflict in 1982, in which the death of over three hundred Argentine conscripts aboard the General Belgrano warship, which was moving away from the Falklands, was heralded with the single-word headline: “GOTCHA.”¹¹⁹

While the *Daily Mirror*’s coverage constitutes one of the more extreme examples of pro-war reporting in the British mainstream media, it remains indicative of a wider trend in British journalism of the time; as Philip Hammond notes, “every British newspaper except the *Independent on Sunday* took a pro-war line in its editorial column.”¹²⁰ Other mass-market populist tabloids such as the *Sun* created the most reductivist paradigm, beginning its coverage of the war by proclaiming “Our boys batter butcher of Serbia,”¹²¹ and suggesting

¹¹⁷ “Your call Slobodan,” *Daily Mirror* (London), Jun. 8, 1999.

¹¹⁸ Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 186.

¹¹⁹ This headline has entered into common parlance in the United Kingdom, usually as shorthand for an unjustified triumphalism in the face of great human loss. For more on some of the reprehensible tactics utilised by the *Sun* in subsequent wars, see for instance John Newsinger, “Supporting ‘Our Boys’: the Sun and the Gulf war,” *Race and Class* 32, no. 4 (1991): 92-98.

¹²⁰ Hammond, “Third Way War,” 124.

¹²¹ “History in the making,” *BBC News*, last modified Mar. 25, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/303308.stm

that any dissenters against the NATO intervention were nothing more than “apologists for Milošević,”¹²² with a duty instead to be patriotic during “the worst moment Europe has faced since 1945.”¹²³ Moreover, figures from the British government would sometimes use their positions to reprimand those they felt were presenting a critical view of their actions. In a speech to the Newspaper Society, Tony Blair claimed that “[r]efugee fatigue may have set in with some TV stations [...] [t]his is a dangerous path, and it is one that benefits the Serbs,”¹²⁴ while the BBC’s foreign correspondent John Simpson was accused by a “senior official” within the British government of “presenting Serb propaganda at face value.”¹²⁵

Explicitly dissenting voices were unusual, but nevertheless did occasionally emerge from the mainstream media. Typically, these took as assumed wisdom that regime change, and the removal of Milošević, was a worthy objective; their complaint largely was that the NATO campaign constituted an ineffective means of reaching that goal. For instance, the *BBC*’s David Sells, a reporter for the daily news magazine show *Newsnight*, advanced the critique that “[t]he raddled and long-sanctioned Serbian economy is slowly being bombed back to the last century. Jobs vanish with it. As in Iraq, it is the people who pay. Milošević himself sits tight.”¹²⁶ Unlike many British sources, the *BBC* would sometimes adopt a self-reflexive view of the media role in the conflict, with diplomatic correspondent Barnaby Mason suggesting that Blair’s position “is backed up by an intensely professional information or propaganda machine—the choice of label depends on your point of view.”¹²⁷

¹²² Tulloch and Blood, *Icons*, 85.

¹²³ “History in the making,” *BBC News*, last modified Mar. 25, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/303308.stm

¹²⁴ Rupert Cornwell, “BBC news coverage attacked by Blair,” *The Independent* (London), May 11, 1999.

¹²⁵ Janine Gibson, “BBC veteran denies bias,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Apr. 17, 1999.

¹²⁶ David Sells, “Kosovo and ‘the truth’,” *BBC News*, last modified Apr. 29, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/kosovo/330804.stm

¹²⁷ Barnaby Mason, “Tony Blair: Kosovo crusader,” *BBC News*, last modified Apr. 22, 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/325989.stm>

Following its conclusion, more questions would be asked about the motivations and consequences of the NATO intervention. For instance, in later years the *Guardian* would provide a platform to overt Milošević defender Neil Clark, who wrote a fawning obituary to the erstwhile Serbian leader in the *Morning Star*, labelling him “a life-long socialist, and “a man all true progressives should have mourned.”¹²⁸ However, at the beginning of the air offensive, its editorials would openly advocate for “‘discreet but serious’ preparations for a ground war.”¹²⁹ The BBC, meanwhile, gave coverage to a Human Rights Watch report that suggested NATO had violated the Geneva Convention,¹³⁰ while in an episode of the current affairs programme *Panorama*, foreign correspondent Allan Little summarised the situation in Kosovo a year after the bombing: “The war started as a moral crusade [...] But in the end it wasn't about morality. It wasn't even about Kosovo. It was about saving NATO from collapse [...] how hollow the moral victory amid the ruins of a Kosovo where the oppressed, once liberated, themselves oppress.”¹³¹ Questions were also asked about the validity of NATO targets. The *Guardian* reported on a court case taken to Strasbourg by relatives of those killed in the RTS bombing, accusing NATO of violating the right to life; in this report, barrister and author Natasha Joffe quoted Tim Gopsill of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) as stating “In wars everyone produces propaganda. NATO are making the BBC a target if you are legitimising the attack on RTS.”¹³²

¹²⁸ Neil Clark, “From Belgrade to Baghdad and Beyond,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 29, 2006.

¹²⁹ “History in the making,” *BBC News*, last modified Mar. 25, 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/303308.stm>

¹³⁰ “Nato ‘violated human rights’ in Kosovo,” *BBC News*, last modified Feb. 7, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/633909.stm>

¹³¹ Allan Little, “Moral Combat: NATO at War” (transcript), *BBC*, accessed Jan. 27, 2017, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/panorama/transcripts/transcript_12_03_00.txt

¹³² Tim Gopsill, quoted in Natasha Joffe, “At war with NATO,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Oct. 23, 2001.

The Morning Star coverage of the bombing

In February of 1999, the *Morning Star* attempted to take stock of the growing tension in the former Yugoslavia. It suggested that the state's descent into civil war in 1991 was the result of "former imperialist powers wanting to administer these parts politically and militarily as neocolonial client states," while the "Serbs are a thorn in the side of the West's plan to dominate eastern Europe as far as Moscow."¹³³ The tone of this discourse would remain unchanged throughout the bombing campaign, along with the rejection of evidence of Serb massacres as "dubious and contested."¹³⁴ Moreover, the newspaper would draw explicit connections between Milošević and Saddam Hussein, not in terms of their domestic policies or any atrocities committed, but instead that neither "will do as he is bid," making them both "a CIA target."¹³⁵ This style of blunt anti-imperialism, even when presented with undoubtedly brutal regimes, was a hallmark of the paper's coverage.

During this period prior to NATO intervention, the *Morning Star* devoted significant segments of its international reporting to Belgrade's actions in Kosovo, continually coded by the newspaper as the "Serbian province," the "Yugoslav province,"¹³⁶ or after the end of the NATO bombing, the "occupied Serb province."¹³⁷ Among groups on the left, the issue of naming was highly politicised when referring to the region; groups supporting Kosovan self-determination or independence, such as the Socialist Party (England and Wales), would refer to the area only as "Kosova," following its Albanian name.¹³⁸ The *Morning Star*, by contrast,

¹³³ John Boyd and Leo Dreapir, "A long catalogue of intervention," *Morning Star* (London), Feb. 4, 1999.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ For examples of both, see Brian Denny, "KLA decides not to sign Western deal," *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 9, 1999.

¹³⁷ For an example of this, see Brian Denny, "Russia signs deal on Kosovo role," *Morning Star* (London), Jun. 19, 1999.

¹³⁸ See, for instance, Lynn Walsh, "The KLA and the struggle for Kosovar self-determination," *Socialism Today* 39 (June 1999), accessed Jan. 28, 2017, <http://www.socialismtoday.org/39/kla39.html>

used the usual English-language designation of “Kosovo,” or on occasion “Kosovo and Metohija,”¹³⁹ following its legal Yugoslav (and consequently Serb nationalist) appellation. Each choice of name, while revealing little to the lay observer, immediately indicated the likely political position of the writing to follow. This choice of nomenclature is further echoed in the newspaper’s attitude against the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), as highlighted by features writer, trade unionist and campaigner Andrew Murray, who suggests that if “you are conducting an armed struggle against a state which the US finds awkward, you escape condemnation, even if your methods and ostensible aim (independence) are exactly the same.”¹⁴⁰ Much of the newspaper’s later coverage would focus on atrocities attributed to the KLA, sometimes at the expense of wrongdoing by the Milošević regime.

In March, by the time that airstrikes appeared inevitable, the *Morning Star* lamented what their writers saw as an “openly belligerent” atmosphere of “renewed militarism,”¹⁴¹ much of which was focused on the impending failure of the Rambouillet Agreement, which the newspaper suggested constituted the West “whipping up anti-Serb hysteria.”¹⁴² As noted earlier, these critiques had some significant basis in fact, even if many of the mainstream media outlets responsible would not admit to their one-sided or unbalanced reportage until after the war had finished. Nevertheless, these two statements reveal twin pillars of the *Morning Star*’s coverage which would persist both throughout the war and in its aftermath: namely the incessant hawkishness of the NATO countries or the West, and Western demonization of the Serbs in order to justify this belligerence.

During this period of initial anger at the bombing, many of the *Morning Star* reports focused on international reaction from countries which did not support the intervention, such

¹³⁹ For instance, see Kay Landy, “Exposing the aims of foreign intervention,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 15, 1999.

¹⁴⁰ Andrew Murray, “Designating terrorists,” *Morning Star* (London), Feb. 26, 1999.

¹⁴¹ Brian Denny, “The stuff of fanaticism,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 10, 1999.

¹⁴² Brian Denny, “Yugoslavia slams West over ‘fraudulent peace’,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 18, 1999.

as Russia and China, while harshly criticising the actions of NATO, the European Union¹⁴³ and “the West” more generally. Russian media, in turn, produced what historian Vladimir Brovkin called a “completely one-sided [...] example of manipulation of the media”¹⁴⁴ against NATO, while Chinese state media echoed the *Morning Star*’s tone, condemning NATO raids as “out-and-out imperialist actions.”¹⁴⁵ The *Morning Star*’s reporting on the Western military alliance did not constitute a significant editorial deviation for the newspaper, which had always been staunchly anti-NATO and anti-EU in its editorial line, and which stated prior to the intervention that “[t]he entire history of NATO should be a warning to everyone that the alliance is motivated by the economic and political interests of imperialism.”¹⁴⁶ In doing so, the newspaper was continually able to link the threat of NATO involvement to a continuation of its “imperialist” ambitions, much as media in Russia and China would eventually do during the conflict.

Throughout the duration of the war, the coverage of the bombing was both prominent and consistent. Even when news of the raids did not make the lead story on the front page, it would invariably feature in some capacity. For instance, on 3rd April, a week and a half into the bombing, the newspaper’s lead story concerned the possibility of a teachers’ strike, but the photo story on the cover featured a demonstrator protesting against the air raids with a sign proclaiming “Nuclear America Threatens Oblivion” (see Figure 3.3).¹⁴⁷ In other regular *Morning Star* features and editorials, including the newspaper’s primary editorial column *Star Comment*, news of NATO actions and protests against them was regular; indeed, in the weekly *Eyes Left* column written by Andrew Murray, news and analysis of the bombing

¹⁴³ See, for instance, “Fischer urges EU hegemony in Balkans,” *Morning Star* (London), May 28, 1999.

¹⁴⁴ Vladimir Brovkin, “Discourse on NATO in Russia during the Kosovo War,” *Demokratizatsiya* 7, no. 4 (1999): 548.

¹⁴⁵ Henry He, *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the People's Republic of China* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 286.

¹⁴⁶ “Star Comment: The future for Kosovo,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 11, 1999.

¹⁴⁷ “Sharp,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 3, 1999.

would feature prominently in every column for the duration of the raids. Moreover, in a newspaper which “reflects trade unionists’ viewpoints to trade unionists,”¹⁴⁸ coverage was given to British trade unions urging the end of NATO actions, including the lecturers’ union NATFHE,¹⁴⁹ the railway union RMT,¹⁵⁰ and the Scottish Trades Union Congress.¹⁵¹

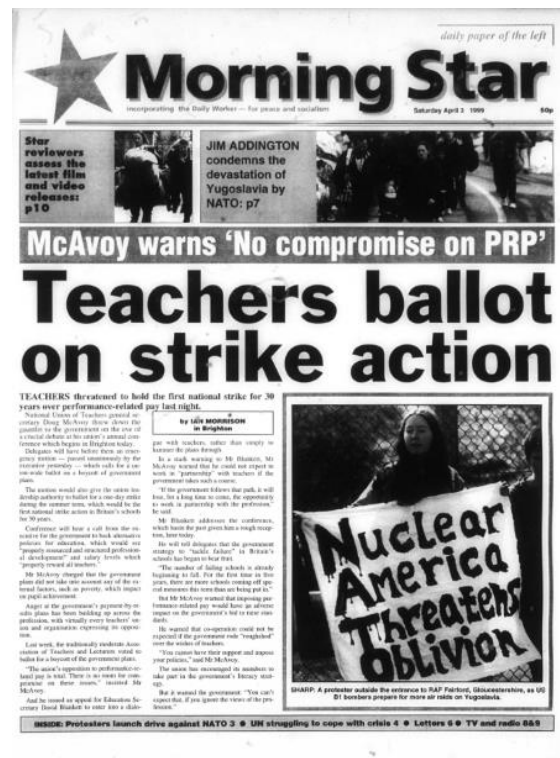


Figure 3.3: The front page of the Morning Star, April 3rd 1999.

The coverage given to demonstrators would be key to the *Morning Star*’s output during the months of the NATO operation. Indeed, the newspaper quickly assumed an interesting position where it would have a significant role in creating the news on which it

¹⁴⁸ Derek Simpson, in *The Daily Miracle*, produced by Ivan Beavis and Chris Reeves (London; People’s Press Printing Society, 2010), DVD.

¹⁴⁹ “NATFHE demands end to raids,” *Morning Star* (London), May 31, 1999.

¹⁵⁰ “Yugoslavs mourn killed TV workers,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 27, 1999.

¹⁵¹ Ian Morrison and Andrew Clark, “Unions back call to scrap nuclear arms,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 23, 1999.

reported. For instance, on the 25th March it ran a classified advert promoting a protest against the bombing;¹⁵² it then reported the protest on the front page the following day.¹⁵³ Coverage of the protests would sometimes conclude with a schedule of further demonstrations, often organised by bodies such as the Committee for Peace in the Balkans,¹⁵⁴ which the political theorist Tom Gallagher described as comprising “luminaries of Right and Left disinclined to condemn Serbian actions in the conflict.”¹⁵⁵ Similarly, the newspaper’s front page report of Labour MP Alice Mahon’s criticisms of the war included directions to the weekend’s anti-war protest in London,¹⁵⁶ with which the newspaper led the following Monday.¹⁵⁷ Due to the *Morning Star*’s niche position in the British media landscape, the newspaper’s readership is likely to be more politically engaged than the majority of readers of mainstream newspapers, and so details of forthcoming demonstrations are not an unusual sight within its pages. Nevertheless, the continual promotion and coverage of protests allowed the newspaper to continue reporting its anti-war editorial line on a daily basis.

Some of the protest organisers took to writing opinion pieces for the newspaper, many of which demonstrate a studied ambiguity or neutrality toward the Milošević regime. One of these articles, signed by an organiser named Ana Jugović,¹⁵⁸ states that

¹⁵² “NO to the bombing of Yugoslavia,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 25, 1999.

¹⁵³ Mike Ambrose, “Peace activists condemn NATO,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 26, 1999.

¹⁵⁴ For instance, see Chris Kasrils and Andrew Clark, “Protests demand end to Western bombing,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 12, 1999.

¹⁵⁵ Gallagher, *The Balkans*, 137.

¹⁵⁶ “MP blasts NATO war on civilians,” *Morning Star* (London), Jun. 2, 1999.

¹⁵⁷ Ian Morrison, “Biggest march yet says halt bombing,” *Morning Star* (London), Jun. 7, 1999.

¹⁵⁸ In spite of my best efforts, I have been unable to find any further information about Ana Jugović. It is not inconceivable that this is a *nom de plume*.

Whatever the people of Yugoslavia thought of President Slobodan Milošević's regime before—and there are always varying opinions about politicians—they now back him as their commander-in-chief, just as people in any other country would.¹⁵⁹

The suggestion that “there are always varying opinions about politicians” suggests an identification or equivalence with liberal democratic openness, inviting the reader to make a comparison with the political situation in Britain. Whether such a comparison is appropriate, given the authoritarian nature of the Milošević regime, is highly debatable. The consolidation of public opinion behind Milošević himself, however, was less contested, and was echoed by prominent academics such as Vojin Dimitrijević, though without the suggestion of legitimacy surrounding the Serbian leader; instead, Dimitrijević noted the continuing attempts to remove Milošević from power, before claiming that “[t]he air strikes erased in one night the results of ten years of hard work of groups of courageous people in the non-governmental organisations and in the democratic opposition.”¹⁶⁰

The article by Jugović periodically goes even further, offering some statements which could have emerged directly from Serbian propaganda publications. For instance, the author claims that the Western-led operation “proves that NATO has something personal against the Serbs,” but that “[t]he Serbs have a history of fighting greater powers,” and feel that they “will survive this beating as well.”¹⁶¹ While paying lip-service to anti-imperialist arguments, opinion pieces such as these focus a great deal more attention on Serbian exceptionalism, victimisation, and defiance in the face of adversity.¹⁶² Such statements serve to emphasise, in

¹⁵⁹ Ana Jugović, “A long history of resistance,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 8, 1999.

¹⁶⁰ Vojin Dimitrijević, quoted in Mark Curtis, *Web of Deceit: Britain's Real Foreign Policy* (London: Vintage, 2003), 146.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² For more on these concepts in the face of modern Serbian history, see for instance Veljko Vujačić, “Reexamining the ‘Serbian exceptionalism’ thesis,” *Filozofija i društvo* 21 (2003), 205-246.

some sense, the “underdog” status of the Serbs in this war, faced with vastly superior weaponry and manpower, but with righteousness on their side.

The rhetoric and imagery used by the newspaper further complements the editorial disgust for NATO and its actions in Serbia. Where sources such as the *BBC* would retain a detached, matter-of-fact tone when NATO mistakes caused civilian casualties,¹⁶³ the *Morning Star* would describe the events as “slaughter,”¹⁶⁴ with editorials even describing civilians being reduced “to a jumble of bloodied body parts and incinerated corpses.”¹⁶⁵ The visual imagery used in the newspaper is also emotional and evocative, with images of graves and weeping civilians common. Figure 3.4 provides a typical example of this, showing an old man weeping outside the ruins of his house in the heavily bombarded southern town of Aleksinac.

¹⁶³ For instance, “Nato bomb hits bus,” *BBC News*, last modified May 1, 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/333271.stm>

¹⁶⁴ For instance, “NATO admits blasting bus,” *Morning Star* (London), May 3, 1999.

¹⁶⁵ “Star Comment: Trapped in a dead-end,” *Morning Star* (London), May 3, 1999.

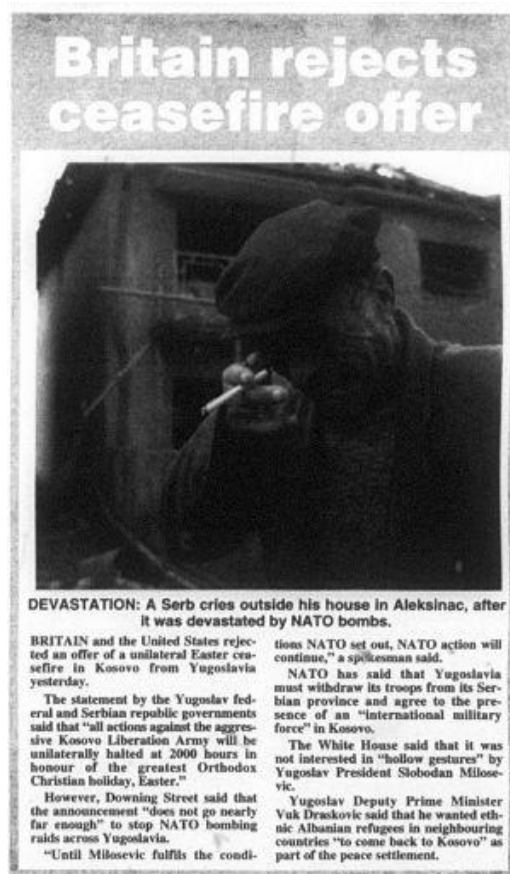


Figure 3.4: A Morning Star front-page story, April 7th, 1999, on the bombing of Aleksinac.

Moreover, key NATO figures are often portrayed as confrontational and aggressive by the newspaper, both in word and deed. An image of NATO spokesman Jamie Shea, used on multiple occasions by the newspaper, illustrates this point well; the photograph seems especially chosen to show Shea as representing the worst elements of NATO policy. In the only photo on the page, he looks directly and threateningly down on the camera from above, pointing aggressively at the reader, his eyes obscured by sunglasses (see Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5: Page 4 of the Morning Star, April 26th, 1999, featuring an aggressive-looking

Jamie Shea.

Perhaps the most prominent area for open discussion of Milošević and Serbian policy in the *Morning Star* was its letters page. A majority of letters published by the newspaper espoused a similar viewpoint to the *Morning Star*'s editorial line, sometimes to the extent of drawing frankly distasteful parallels—for instance, one letter from an E. J. Shepherd claimed that NATO hypocrisy “makes the late Dr Goebbels look like a Sunday-school teacher.”¹⁶⁶ However, a sizeable minority were critical both of the Serbian administration and of the anti-war British leftists. One writer suggested that the NATO intervention handed Milošević “the final excuse that he needs to fully ‘cleanse’ Kosovo of its Albanian population,”¹⁶⁷ at a point when the *Morning Star* rarely mentioned the possibility of ethnic cleansing by Serbs in its

¹⁶⁶ E. J. Shepherd, “Hypocrisy of ‘humanitarianism,’” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 8, 1999.

¹⁶⁷ John Fransham, “First casualty of war is always truth,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 19, 1999.

news articles or editorials. More damning were letters accusing the newspaper of “pro-Serbian undertones” in its editorials,¹⁶⁸ “an unacceptable ducking of the issues” regarding Milošević, and claims that “by his brutality and atrocities—including the violation of the Genocide Convention—the Milošević regime has opened the door to NATO.”¹⁶⁹ Notably, these letters do not affirm the legitimacy of the NATO intervention, instead suggesting that its occurrence is understandable, though not justifiable, from the NATO standpoint. While these letters would not influence the newspaper’s editorial line, they demonstrate both that the newspaper was content to print these dissenting views, and more interestingly, that elements of the paper’s fairly modest readership felt strongly enough to express them.

Coverage in the broader British socialist press

Organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), one of the largest Trotskyist groupings in the UK, devoted similar levels of coverage to the events in Yugoslavia, including full front-page spreads in their monthly periodical, *Socialist Review* (see Figure 3.6).

¹⁶⁸ David Osler, “Uncritical of Serbia,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 3, 1999.

¹⁶⁹ Mervyn E. Bennun, “Failing to address Milošević’s guilt,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 22, 1999.



Figure 3.6: The front cover of Socialist Review 231 (June 1999).

Nevertheless, their anti-war agitation had to be carefully balanced against a far more noticeable, long-standing distaste for Milošević and his regime. One of the SWP's leading ideologues, Chris Harman, expressed his opposition both to Milošević and NATO in the strongest terms:

We don't support the Serbian government, which has taken its population into a war in order to defend its right to control a population who don't want to live under it. It is a crime against humanity which you couldn't defend. At the same time we also have to understand that the power which wanted to crush the Serbian government is a much greater evil. The US breeds and controls dictators just like Saddam Hussein, just like Milošević, right across the world.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Chris Harman, "Imperialism, war and resistance," *Socialist Review* 232 (July/August 1999), accessed Dec. 24, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr232/harman.htm>

While the comparison between Saddam Hussein and Milošević was also made by the *Morning Star*, this new comparison between both NATO and the Milošević regime was largely the preserve of the SWP and similarly ideologically-inclined Trotskyist organisations in the UK. This line would later come under fire from another broadly Trotskyist group, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL), who considered the SWP's efforts merely constitutive of a "feeble [...] campaign allied with pacifists and *Morning Star* neo-Stalinist, uncritical partisans of Milošević," concluding that "[i]t is not imperialism they are against, but NATO."¹⁷¹ As we have seen earlier, for many *Morning Star* writers, such a statement would be effectively tautological: there is no room to oppose one without the other.

Some of the avowedly anti-revisionist communist movements took an even more radically critical line towards NATO than the *Morning Star*. For instance, the *Workers' Weekly*, the newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), or RCPB-ML, built on the *Morning Star*'s view of NATO's imperialist nature, characterising the NATO actions as part of a strategy where the West was "[d]ismembering Yugoslavia and taking complete control of the Balkans as a means to control Europe."¹⁷² The party would describe NATO leaders' justifications for the intervention as "Hitlerite lies,"¹⁷³ while showing their international ideological affiliation by prominently quoting in their newspaper a response from a North Korean spokesman to the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.¹⁷⁴ Likewise, the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist), or CPGB-

¹⁷¹ Sean Matgamna, "The SWP, The Balkans, Nationalism and Imperialism in the 1999 War," *Workers' Liberty*, last modified Nov. 13, 2008, <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2008/11/13/swp-balkans-nationalism-and-imperialism-1999-war>

¹⁷² "Condemn the Bombing of the Belgrade Chinese Embassy!," *Workers' Weekly* 29 (11), May 15, 1999.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ "DPRK on NATO's Bombing of Chinese Embassy," *Workers' Weekly* 29 (11), May 15, 1999.

ML, described the NATO intervention as “neo-Nazi,”¹⁷⁵ with trade unionist David Ayrton suggesting in their theoretical journal *Lalkar* that:

surely anyone with any sense would realise that to blame the conflict in Yugoslavia on the criminality and deviousness of Slobodan Milošević falls into a propaganda trap laid by the capitalist media; it is to forget that the main enemy of working people internationally is imperialism.¹⁷⁶

This line, Ayrton concludes, must be advanced by the left as part of “a clear and consistent anti-imperialist perspective.”¹⁷⁷ While all British extraparliamentary leftists considered the role of imperialism in NATO actions to some degree, anti-revisionist communist elements took the most hardline and radical stance against it, along with the most accepting outlook towards its supposed opponents.

It is also worth noting that all sections of the media in Britain engaged in reflexive considerations of the media’s role in the war, which radical journalist John Pilger called “a period of extraordinary shame” for journalism.¹⁷⁸ Considerations of the role of the media had already been critical to NATO strategy over Serbia, most notably in the attack on the RTS state television building in Belgrade, though leftist counter-critiques to NATO media theorising were increasingly produced by British socialist publications during the period of the intervention. In some cases, these issues were framed as the manifestation of “culture

¹⁷⁵ “Oppose the neo-Nazi NATO war against Yugoslavia,” *Lalkar* (May/June 1999), accessed Dec. 23, 2016, <http://www.lalkar.org/article/2019/oppose-the-neo-nazi-nato-war-against-yugoslavia>

¹⁷⁶ David Ayrton, “The Media coverage of Nato’s war on Yugoslavia — and the response of the ‘Left’,” *Lalkar* (July/August 1999), accessed Dec. 23, 2016, <http://www.lalkar.org/article/2043/the-media-coverage-of-natos-war-on-yugoslavia-and-the-response-of-the-left>

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ “Protesters call for end to bombing,” *BBC News*, last modified Apr. 11, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/316565.stm

wars,” such as the front page of the *Morning Star* on 9th April which claimed that “NATO threatened to destroy Yugoslav television and radio stations yesterday unless Belgrade broadcasts [...] Western programmes for six hours a day.”¹⁷⁹ Other claims were made within the newspaper’s pages with little apparent corroboration, such as the suggestion that, on the domestic British scene, “[w]ar films have even been postponed due to the effect that they might have on the sensibilities of the great British public.”¹⁸⁰ However, some assertions made by the newspaper may have more credence, such as the suggestion that “[d]issidents across the world opposed to the war apparently don't exist according to the British media.”¹⁸¹ Indeed, the mainstream press reporting of opposition and anti-war activism was extremely limited, and often confined to second-hand reports of Serbian television coverage,¹⁸² thereby further negating the impact of these dissidents and their protests. Where dissidence occurred in Britain, the mainstream press would predominantly ascribe it to Serbians living in the UK, while positively portraying the Albanian-led protesters demonstrating in favour of NATO action; for instance, in a *BBC* piece about rival protests occurring on the same day, the article concluded with the observation that “[a]t one point Union flag-waving Kosovans allowed two Serb women through, escorted by riot police, to attend their rival demonstration.”¹⁸³

While the extraparliamentary leftist press was aware of its role in shaping discourse, some of its elements were less inclined to engage with counter-arguments in this direction. For instance, on April 13, the *Morning Star* reported accusations by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans against “the British [mainstream] media’s biased reporting of the war,”¹⁸⁴ beneath a photo of demonstrators in Belgrade holding a picture of Milošević, whose own

¹⁷⁹ Brian Denny, “West targets Belgrade TV,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 9, 1999.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Donovan, “Propaganda wing of the NATO offensive,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 22, 1999.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² For instance, see “Serb TV highlights anti-Nato protests,” *BBC News*, last modified Apr. 5, 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/311661.stm>

¹⁸³ “Nato bombing ‘unpardonable folly,’” *BBC News*, last modified Mar. 29, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/307225.stm

¹⁸⁴ Brian Denny, “NATO jets strafe passenger train,” *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 13, 1999.

media manipulation was left unmentioned by the newspaper. Official Yugoslav state sources, such as the news agency Tanjug and the Yugoslav Minister for Information Goran Matić, were quoted and reported uncritically in the newspaper. David Ayrton's analysis in *Lalkar* suggested, with even more force, that "[w]ith very few honourable exceptions, the 'Left' repeated chunks of the propaganda that the CIA and MI6 had fed through the various press agencies and briefings, on behalf of the imperialist bourgeoisie."¹⁸⁵ Such conspiratorial explanations remained absent from the *Morning Star*, though the minute circulation and stringent ideological homogeneity of *Lalkar*'s readership allowed its writers to make much more controversial statements. Indeed, very few socialist publications adopted a line of this type, preferring instead a more analytical and sophisticated critique of the media's role in the war.

Humanitarianism or imperialism?

Insofar as a binary division between the mainstream and leftist press can be established, the dominant paradigm emerges pitting pro-war humanitarianism on the one hand, and anti-war imperialist critiques on the other. While some exceptions to this rule have been outlined above, as a rule the mainstream British press supported intervention along Blair's espousal of humanitarian necessity. Conversely, British socialist publications all acknowledged an imperialist character to the NATO actions. The main differences between the British extraparliamentary leftists did not concern the legitimacy of the NATO intervention—in this,

¹⁸⁵ David Ayrton, "The Media coverage of Nato's war on Yugoslavia — and the response of the 'Left'," *Lalkar* (July/August 1999), accessed Dec. 23, 2016, <http://www.lalkar.org/article/2043/the-media-coverage-of-natos-war-on-yugoslavia-and-the-response-of-the-left>

they agreed unanimously that NATO's engagement was illegal—but rather their attitude towards Milošević and the unfolding situation in Kosovo.

Chris Harman was prominent among a number of leftists arguing against Blair's notion of humanitarian intervention: "the war has nothing to do with humanitarianism, but with the insistence by US imperialism that it can punish any state that defies it."¹⁸⁶ In this judgement, the vast majority of the British extraparlimentary left were largely in agreement, though dissent would still emerge from small groups such as the Communist Party of Great Britain – Provisional Central Committee (CPGB-PCC). Writing in the party's *Weekly Worker* newspaper, the group's Roger Dark, advocating for revolutionary defeatism, rejected what he considered leftist "dogma" which suggested that "it is obligatory to support any country outside the advanced capitalist 'club' which engages in military confrontation with the imperialists—irrespective of the country's regime or the issues over which the war is actually being fought."¹⁸⁷ This line was among the most complex espoused by any British leftist movement; while still categorising the war as "reactionary," the CPGB-PCC looked with disdain at the British "'revolutionaries' advising Serbian workers to support their own government, as it fought to expel two million ethnic Albanians from Kosova."¹⁸⁸

While the CPGB-PCC may have focussed on what it deemed leftist duplicity and betrayal of principles, much of the discussion in British left publications concentrated on the perceived hypocrisy among supporters of the NATO intervention. For instance, *Socialist Review*'s editorial was swift to invoke comparisons between Milošević's Serbia and Turkey: "The Kurds are subject to constant oppression from the Turkish state and army and have seen their homeland divided between three powers, but far from intervening on their behalf, the

¹⁸⁶ Chris Harman, "Divide and conquer," *Socialist Review* 232 (May 1999), accessed Dec. 18, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/harman/1999/05/selfdet.htm>

¹⁸⁷ Roger Dark, "Try Milošević!" *Weekly Worker* 355, last modified Oct. 11, 2000, <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/355/try-milosevic/>

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

west supports NATO member Turkey.”¹⁸⁹ Chris Bambery, writing in the same periodical, extended the comparison to “the rulers of Indonesia, who have killed far more [than Milošević] in East Timor,”¹⁹⁰ while noting that “Milošević is a butcher in a region which abounds with butchers.”¹⁹¹ In the *International Socialism* journal, Mike Haynes concentrated on hypocrisy in Western relations with former Yugoslav republics, and focused on Serbian victims of this hypocrisy, stating that “the entirely justifiable demand of the Kosovans to be free of the brutality of Belgrade is also the same right that the Serbs in the Krajina were denied, their right to be free of the Croats.”¹⁹² The SWP’s Harman framed these issues, along with the support for military intervention from a number of parliamentary socialists and social democrats, as “[a] question of intellectual clarity,”¹⁹³ which advocates of intervention were, presumably, thought not to possess.

The SWP’s writers continued to reinforce the humanitarianism versus imperialism paradigm. This was often framed in the context of NATO having recently expanded its membership to include former Warsaw Pact states; less than two weeks prior to the beginning of NATO strikes, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary all acceded to the bloc. *Socialist Review*’s Peter Morgan suggested that this expansion “shows how aggressive the alliance is,”¹⁹⁴ as it sought to redefine its *raison d’être* after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. Morgan suggests that the real justification behind the NATO intervention in Kosovo was to allow “the US, and to a lesser extent its European allies, [to demonstrate] to the rest of the world that it

¹⁸⁹ “No to war in the Balkans,” *Socialist Review* 229 (April 1999), accessed Dec. 18, 2016,

<http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr229/notes.htm#editorial>

¹⁹⁰ Chris Bambery, “The Nazis, the Serbs and the truth,” *Socialist Review* 231 (June 1999), accessed Dec. 24, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr231/bambery.htm>

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Mike Haynes, “Theses on the Balkan War,” *International Socialism* 83 (1999), accessed Dec. 20, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj83/haynes.htm>

¹⁹³ Chris Harman, “Imperialism, war and resistance,” *Socialist Review* 232 (July/August 1999), accessed Dec. 14, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr232/harman.htm>

¹⁹⁴ Peter Morgan, “Testing to destruction,” *Socialist Review* 230 (May 1999), accessed Apr. 29, 2017, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr230/morgan.htm>

is *their* interests which are paramount,”¹⁹⁵ and that the intervention was emblematic of NATO’s shift “from being a military alliance concerned with Eastern Europe to one that is prepared to go on the offensive in the interests of US and European capitalism.”¹⁹⁶

Other facets of the narrative categorising NATO as imperialist invoked the spectre of prior Western intervention in Yugoslavia, a policy which the *Morning Star*’s Andrew Murray defined as “breaking up relatively large socialist states [...] and creating small dependent client regimes out of the wreckage.”¹⁹⁷ This framing allowed the newspaper to categorise the South Eastern European countries backing NATO intervention as “Western client states.”¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the socialist press’ narrative of NATO imperialism also incorporated elements of triumphalist discourse. The *Morning Star* sometimes tied the expansion of the bloc, along with its newly emerging role in the post-Cold War era, to a jingoistic, almost celebratory attitude on the part of the West. In typically evocative language, the newspaper’s leader writer Mike Ambrose noted placards in anti-war protests rhetorically asking “how many Serbian children had to die to mark the 50th anniversary of NATO.”¹⁹⁹

Conclusions

The most notable difference between the majority of the mainstream press and leftist publications is, not unexpectedly, the level of support for the NATO intervention, with predominant mainstream support and near-total leftist opposition. However, some small levels of overlap do exist between the two types of media, with some mainstream voices

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Andrew Murray, “An imperialism of the modern age,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 26, 1999.

¹⁹⁸ Both Croatia and Albania were categorised in this way; see, for example, “Davies demands halt to bombing,” *Morning Star* (London), May 4, 1999.

¹⁹⁹ Mike Ambrose, “Peace activists condemn NATO,” *Morning Star* (London), Mar. 26, 1999.

advocating reduction or cessation of bombing, and more rarely, leftists suggesting that the NATO intervention represented the lesser of two evils. Nevertheless, the British socialist consensus was highly critical of the so-called “baby boomers turned baby bombers,”²⁰⁰ leaders whose foreign policy represented a new turn towards “humanitarian” intervention in the aftermath of the Cold War.

The concept of anti-imperialism, espoused in a number of ways, is also crucial to this analysis. Roger Dark’s suggestion that most British support for the Milošević regime was premised in a highly simplistic anti-imperialism seems close to the reality of the situation, especially in the case of the *Morning Star*’s somewhat ambiguous relationship to Milošević. In the case of smaller parties such as the RCPB-ML, the inclination towards almost conspiratorial anti-imperialism was wedded to a seemingly more sincere appreciation for the Milošević regime and its stated policies. Nonetheless, most leftists would likely sum up the conflict in words close to those of the SWP’s Peter Morgan; namely, as “imperialist rivalry spilling over into war.”²⁰¹ As such, a significant number of the parties on the British left considered their position as being against both NATO and Milošević, though as both Jugović and Dimitrijević note above, in primarily opposing NATO the parties may briefly have coalesced in defence of Milošević, or at least have appeared to.

Throughout the war and its aftermath, the rigidity of the ideological line espoused by socialist media sources is evident. The mainstream press would ultimately emerge at a more nuanced understanding of the war and their role in it, acknowledging to some extent NATO’s failings, along with the dubious legal position occupied by intervention. The socialist press, by contrast, largely held fast to its original convictions; even in the aftermath of Milošević’s

²⁰⁰ Lindsey German, “Why the pro-war liberals are wrong,” *Socialist Review* 230 (May 1999), accessed Dec. 21, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr230/german.htm>

²⁰¹ Peter Morgan, “Testing to destruction,” *Socialist Review* 230 (May 1999), accessed Dec. 26, 2016, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr230/morgan.htm>

ousting, the *Morning Star* would continue to reference the bombing as “criminal”²⁰² and “illegal.”²⁰³ By the war’s end, some journalists from the leftist press would actively emphasise their role in opinion-forming: the *Morning Star*’s erstwhile editor John Haylett suggested that a higher circulation of his newspaper “would have put arguments at the disposal of activists earlier than was the case.”²⁰⁴ The convictions and approaches from the extraparlimentary leftist press toward Yugoslavia would become manifest again the following year, as the Milošević government faced its next major crisis.

²⁰² “Star comment: Pawns only need apply,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 10, 2000.

²⁰³ Brian Denny, “Yugoslav Socialist Party PM resigns,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 10, 2000.

²⁰⁴ Haylett quoted in Leigh Arnold, “Activists demand NATO dissolution,” *Morning Star* (London), Jun. 28, 1999.

4. The Milošević regime crumbles

Though his country remained in a deeply demanding situation following the NATO actions and continuing international sanctions, Slobodan Milošević continued at the head of government, battling on from crisis to crisis, until he was finally overthrown in October of 2000. In this chapter it is my intention to provide an overview of the evolving situation in Serbia and the manner in which it was covered by the British socialist press, with an emphasis on the coverage of the *Morning Star*, culminating in the day widely acknowledged to constitute his overthrow, the 5th October 2000.²⁰⁵ Particular attention will be paid to the manner in which the *Morning Star* established and promulgated a counter-narrative to the British mainstream press' reading of events, points at which the newspaper found itself espousing different positions to others on the British left, and the extent to which the newspaper omitted important details of events in Serbia, widely reported in the mainstream press' narrative, which could have raised issues with the established counter-narrative of this sub-section of the left. Moreover, further consideration will be given to the counter-narratives promulgated by other British socialist publications, and the stated opinions which members of different parties had of each others' periodicals.

²⁰⁵ Although Milošević did not formally concede the presidency until the day after, this was the day on which the Parliament building was stormed, and which popular discourse suggests constitutes the end of the Milošević regime.

Before the elections

Milošević appeared entirely cognisant of some of the challenges which would await him in the months to come. In late December 1999, he provided an interview to Serbian newspaper *Politika*, a once-respected newspaper which soon became little more than a propaganda outlet for the regime,²⁰⁶ in which he claimed that “the West wants to conquer the whole world,” and that the “New World Order” posed an existential threat to the “East, both near and far.”²⁰⁷ The interview was conducted by *Politika* editor Hadži Dragan Antić, a close confidant of the Milošević family.²⁰⁸ Its sympathetic portrayal of Serbia’s desperate political and economic situation allowed the leader to reinforce his leftist, progressive self-definition and rhetoric, which stood alongside his fierce denunciation of the West and NATO countries. The words of Milošević and his media outlets, as evidenced by the *Politika* coverage, would be echoed within some leftist circles and their publications in the United Kingdom.

In spite of his awareness of the difficulties ahead, the year 2000 proved to be more chaotic than even Milošević himself could have predicted. In January, the warlord Željko Ražnatović, more infamously known as Arkan, was shot dead in the lobby of a Belgrade hotel. While this news appeared in mainstream sources such as the *BBC* and the *Guardian*, which accused the Yugoslav secret service of involvement in the murder,²⁰⁹ the *Morning Star*’s report on the assassination framed it with an emphasis on the response of the Serbian opposition, who were said to have “exploited” the killing for their own ends.²¹⁰ When arrests were made a week after Arkan’s death, the *Guardian* suggested that “many observers believe

²⁰⁶ Agneza Božić-Roberson, “Words Before the War: Milošević’s Use of Mass Media and Rhetoric to Provoke Ethnopolitical Conflict in Former Yugoslavia,” *East European Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2005): 400-1.

²⁰⁷ Cohen 344. The full translated text of the interview is available online at <http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/int-pol99.htm>, accessed Nov. 17, 2016.

²⁰⁸ Đukić, *Milošević and Marković*, 88.

²⁰⁹ Dušan Stojanović, “Serbian spies ‘killed Arkan’,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Jan. 20, 2000.

²¹⁰ “Serb opposition exploits killing,” *Morning Star* (London), Jan. 17, 2000.

that little real effort is being made to find who was behind the killings,”²¹¹ a view which the *Morning Star* ascribed to “Western-backed Serbian opposition parties.”²¹²

The following month, the Yugoslav federal defence minister, Pavle Bulatović, was killed in an attack which the federal government blamed on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). While most of the British mainstream press linked this assassination to clan warfare in Montenegro,²¹³ and considered the KLA link to be “highly implausible,”²¹⁴ the *Morning Star*, continuing to code the group as “western-backed,” spent more than half of its report on the murder describing attacks by the KLA.²¹⁵ Political murders and assassination attempts would continue throughout the year. In April, the head of the Serbian flag carrier airline JAT, Žika Petrović, was killed, in what the *Independent*’s Steve Crawshaw called just “another day in Belgrade,” where “assassinations have become almost par for the course.”²¹⁶ June saw a second attempt on the life of Serbian Renewal Movement leader Vuk Drašković, covered in the *Guardian*, which described it as the latest incident in “a string of mysterious assassinations of officials and underworld figures in Belgrade,”²¹⁷ continuing the narrative from the mainstream press of chaos and confusion in Slobodan Milošević’s state. In August Milošević’s erstwhile mentor in the League of Communists, Ivan Stambolić, was snatched from a park in Belgrade and murdered, apparently on the orders of Milošević himself.²¹⁸ It seems clear that the British mainstream press saw these incidents as emblematic of an

²¹¹ Peter Beaumont and Nerma Jelačić, “Did Milosevic's son kill Arkan?” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Jan. 23, 2000.

²¹² “Police arrest 3 over Arkan murder,” *Morning Star* (London), Jan. 24, 2000.

²¹³ For instance, Jacky Rowland, “Who killed Bulatovic? Serbs grieve for assassinated minister and lawless state,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Feb. 9, 2000.

²¹⁴ Gabriel Partos, “Riddle of a murdered minister,” *BBC News*, accessed Dec. 14, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/635508.stm>

²¹⁵ “Belgrade blames murder on West,” *Morning Star* (London), Feb. 10, 2000.

²¹⁶ Steve Crawshaw, “Anarchy, assassinations, gangland rule - another day in Belgrade,” *The Independent* (London), Apr. 30, 2000.

²¹⁷ “‘Assassination attempt’ on Serb opposition leader,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Jun. 16, 2000.

²¹⁸ The assassination was masterminded by Milorad “Legija” Ulemek, who was also sentenced for the later killing of former Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić in 2003. In sentencing “Legija,” the court “concluded that Milošević had ordered the killing of his political rival [Stambolić] in order to retain power.” See Nevenka Tromp, *Prosecuting Slobodan Milošević: The Unfinished Trial* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 133.

increasingly anarchic atmosphere in Serbia, and they were happy to cover the reaction of the Serbian opposition to the country's problems, with outlets such as the *Guardian* quoting Vuk Drašković directly.²¹⁹ However, none of the incidents were covered in any issue of the British socialist press which I have analysed, allowing the construction of their counter-narrative through omission.

Meanwhile, in Kosovo disorder continued apace, despite the presence of the international peacekeeping Kosovo Force (KFOR) in the region. Reports from the *Morning Star* on the situation there focused predominantly on framing ethnic Albanians as victimisers and perpetrators of murder and ethnic cleansing, with no mention of prior or ongoing Serb atrocities in the territory.²²⁰ In Britain, the Commons Select Committee published a report on the NATO intervention of the previous year, which the *Morning Star* called "[t]he Kosovo whitewash," accompanying its verdict with a photograph of a burning Serb house in the majority-Albanian Kosovan city of Prizren.²²¹ The newspaper's writers remained clear throughout this period that Serbs, and other ethnic groups including Roma, were victims of Albanian aggression. At the same time, they significantly downplayed any actions involving Albanian victims, in direct contrast with the vast majority of British mainstream media sources.

Against this dire backdrop, with international sanctions still in effect and economic difficulties mounting, on 27th July 2000 Milošević decided to call early presidential elections, which were scheduled for 24th September. As the Serbian opposition struggled to prepare itself in time, the United States opened an "Office of Yugoslav Affairs" in Budapest, which became a meeting point for American officials and Serbian opposition members. Although

²¹⁹ Gillian Sandford, "Serb leader accused of murder plot," *The Guardian* (Manchester), Jun. 17, 2000.

²²⁰ See, for instance, Brian Denny, "Curtain parts on NATO crimes," *Morning Star* (London), Jun. 10, 2000.

²²¹ Jim Addington, "The Kosovo whitewash," *Morning Star* (London), Jun. 20, 2000.

the candidate of the newly unified Democratic Opposition, Vojislav Koštunica, had criticised the decision to open this bureau in Hungary, the *Morning Star* editorial of 18th August 2000 suggested that Koštunica was “[b]iting the hand that feeds him” by doing so.²²² This framing of Koštunica stands in direct opposition to his portrayal by mainstream British sources such as the *Guardian*, who described him as “a fervent Serb nationalist who rails against NATO, as much as the present regime, for Belgrade's distressed state.”²²³ In its news articles, the *Morning Star* reported that support for Koštunica and his party was assumed to be minimal,²²⁴ and reporting of the region continued to focus predominantly on Western actions in Kosovo, under the auspices of what the *Morning Star* labelled the “NATO occupation forces.”²²⁵

When coverage of the forthcoming elections did come into play, the journalists at the *Morning Star* appeared intent on establishing their own firm counter-narrative to the British mainstream consensus. In August, it suggested that support for the opposition “remained low,”²²⁶ citing a report by Brussels-based NGO International Crisis Group (ICG) stating that “it remains extremely unlikely that the opposition will win the elections”,²²⁷ what was not mentioned in the *Morning Star* article was the ICG report’s assertion that the Milošević regime was engaged in “practiced efforts to foul the electoral pitch,”²²⁸ and that the elections themselves were considered by the NGO to be “flawed and illegal.”²²⁹

²²² “Star comment: Biting the hand that feeds him,” *Morning Star* (London), Aug. 18, 2000.

²²³ Mark Tran, “Vojislav Koštunica,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Oct. 5, 2000.

²²⁴ “Yugoslavia slams US interference,” *Morning Star* (London), Aug. 18, 2000.

²²⁵ “Star comment: Pause for flying pigs,” *Morning Star* (London), Aug. 17, 2000.

²²⁶ “Yugoslavia slams US interference,” *Morning Star* (London), Aug. 18, 2000.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ International Crisis Group, *Serbia: The Milošević regime on the eve of the September elections*, ICG Balkans Report #99, Belgrade/Washington/Brussels: International Crisis Group, Aug. 17, 2000, 27.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

The elections of 24th September and the fallout

The presidential elections of 2000 marked the first time that the position of Federal President had been directly chosen by the electorate; previously, the President was elected by the members of the parliament. In this new electoral format, if any one candidate received over fifty percent of the vote in the first round of voting, no second round would be required; the leading candidate would be declared the outright winner and immediately assume the office of the Presidency. However, if the most popular candidate received under fifty percent of the vote, then a second round run-off between the top two candidates would be required.

Milošević himself instigated these changes, decisions which writer and journalist Slavoljub Đukić would describe as “challenging,” “brazen,” and ultimately “fatal.”²³⁰ Milošević and his party prepared for the elections through a continuation of “an extremely anti-West campaign,” in which the opposition were characterised as “servants of the West and NATO,”²³¹ a categorisation which had a great deal in common with the *Morning Star*’s own reportage.

Initially, many onlookers outside of Serbia, including journalists, were left in the dark with regard to the legitimacy of the elections; as the author Vidosav Stevanović noted, “[f]oreign correspondents had little to report except that the turnout had been the highest ever witnessed.”²³² Some international election observers were turned away at the border or denied visas, including representatives from the OSCE and the European Parliament,²³³ while the Inter-Parliamentary Union reported that “[o]nly countries that had opposed NATO’s

²³⁰ Đukić, *Milošević and Marković*, 144.

²³¹ Bojan Todosijević, “Serbia,” in *The Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe, Third Edition*, ed. Sten Berglund et al. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013), 531.

²³² Stevanović, *Milošević*, 189.

²³³ OSCE/ODIHR, *Elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, Warsaw: OSCE, Sep. 25, 2000, 1-2.

bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999 were invited to monitor the elections.”²³⁴ In spite of these restrictions, a three-person British delegation from the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), a small group coalesced around renowned militant trade unionist Arthur Scargill, was invited to monitor the voting. The three members of this delegation, Mick Appleyard, Liz Screen and Ian Johnson, delivered a positive account of their observations, claiming that the only evidence they found of “tactics of intimidation and disenfranchisement” appeared “designed to benefit the so-called Democratic Opposition” of Vojislav Koštunica.²³⁵ Other figures within the British left ridiculed these assertions, including the SLP’s own Simon Harvey. Writing in the newspaper of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee), the *Weekly Worker*, he described the SLP delegation’s conclusions as “discredited” and a “whitewash.”²³⁶

Although international observers were largely kept away, internal observers were present, including many from Koštunica’s Democratic Opposition. Two days after the election, it was they who claimed that Koštunica had gained over fifty percent of the vote, and thus had won the election outright. The official preliminary results still indicated Koštunica as having the highest share of the vote, but put the figure at under fifty percent, mandating a run-off between the opposition candidate and Milošević. As Western representatives including the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the German and British foreign ministers called for Milošević to accept defeat, the foreign desk writers at the *Morning Star* continued to invoke the spectre of NATO. Calling these representatives “NATO ministers” who were “gang[ing] up against Milošević,” the newspaper asserted that these demands appeared “clearly orchestrated to install a

²³⁴ “Yugoslavia,” *Inter-Parliamentary Union*, accessed Nov. 15, 2016, http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2355_00.htm

²³⁵ “Yugoslav Elections – A Lesson in Outside Interference,” *Workers’ Daily Internet Edition*, Oct. 6, 2000, <http://www.rcpbml.org.uk/ww2000/d00-167.htm>

²³⁶ Simon Harvey, “Greater Serbia,” *Weekly Worker* (London), Nov. 16, 2000.

Western-backed regime in Belgrade.”²³⁷ In this same article, the *Morning Star* had reported that Milošević was ahead of Koštunica in the count by five per cent.²³⁸ The *Morning Star* had made similar claims of foreign interference some time before the elections, claiming in August that the United States “secretly adopted the German government plan to disregard any election result that doesn't return the NATO candidate.”²³⁹

The 27th September saw the beginning of opposition rallies on the streets, with over two hundred thousand people in Belgrade protesting the results, alongside many tens of thousands more in smaller cities.²⁴⁰ On 28th September, official results would be released, showing Koštunica as having 48.96%, with Milošević, his nearest challenger, at 38.62%.²⁴¹ As the *Morning Star* echoed appeals from the Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov for calm and against either “internal or external pressure,”²⁴² street protests continued, and on 29th September over seven thousand workers at the Kolubara mining complex began a general strike. The significance of the Kolubara strike was evidently twofold at the time. Firstly, the mines produced the majority of Serbia’s coal, plunging the country into an energy crisis. Secondly, it marked the first time in the contest that working masses began directly to enact their political will from below.²⁴³ The strikers initially circulated only one demand: “The expressed will of the citizens and workers on the elections of 24/9/2000 to be respected and the Federal Electoral Committee to recognise and publish the real results.”²⁴⁴ However, as time progressed, more and more demands were added, and the strike would continue beyond 5th October.

²³⁷ “West talks up opposition win,” *Morning Star* (London), Sep. 26, 2000.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ “Star comment: Biting the hand that feeds him,” *Morning Star* (London), Aug. 18, 2000.

²⁴⁰ Jeffries, *The Former Yugoslavia*, 531.

²⁴¹ “Konačni rezultati izbora za predsednika Republike,” *Tanjug* (Belgrade), Sep. 28, 2000 (in Serbian), <http://www.arhiva.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/2000-09/28/21673.html>

²⁴² “Russia backs Yugoslavia,” *Morning Star* (London), Sep. 28, 2000.

²⁴³ Upchurch and Marinković, *Workers and Revolution in Serbia*, 1-7.

²⁴⁴ Miodrag Ranković, quoted in Marinković, “Strike at Kolubara – a case study,” 49.

It is interesting to note how little coverage the *Morning Star* afforded to these events. Ordinarily, the newspaper is quick to report on workers' struggles, sometimes prioritising their coverage over ostensibly more urgent news.²⁴⁵ Even though a number of journalists attended the mine, including representatives from Agence France-Presse and Reuters,²⁴⁶ the Kolubara case received almost no attention from the *Morning Star* at all, save for a brief sentence on 4th October describing the Yugoslav army chief of staff urging the strikers to return to work.²⁴⁷ By contrast, the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Worker Party (SWP), *Socialist Worker*, highlighted the struggle of the Kolubara strikers prominently in its reporting, including a short quote from a miner lamenting his material conditions under the Milošević regime,²⁴⁸ as part of their own counter-narrative that the working classes had abandoned Milošević and could now force his removal.

By 2nd October, a broader campaign of civil disobedience had begun, including the construction of roadblocks.²⁴⁹ Milošević addressed the nation on television, and claimed that the country remained "under attack from NATO but in the guise of the opposition leaders."²⁵⁰ The *Morning Star*'s coverage on the 2nd and 3rd was predominantly focused on the responses of Russia to the crisis, with offers of mediation from Moscow²⁵¹ and continuing assertions that both the election and its results were legal.²⁵² Throughout this period, the articles emphasise the importance of Russia in the unfolding situation, suggesting that the country could have a "vital mediation role,"²⁵³ while stating that Moscow "recognised the electoral

²⁴⁵ Most infamously, on 12th September 2001, when the newspaper's front page led with "Unions gear up to defend schooling"; only by turning to page two could the reader find the day's bigger story, "Terrorists destroy World Trade Centre."

²⁴⁶ Marinković, "Strike at Kolubara – a case study," 56.

²⁴⁷ "Belgrade hit by demonstrations," *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 4, 2000.

²⁴⁸ "Workers must raise their own demands," *Socialist Worker*, Oct. 7, 2000, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/35600/Workers+must+raise+their+own+demands>, accessed Nov. 16, 2016.

²⁴⁹ Jeffries, *The Former Yugoslavia*, 532.

²⁵⁰ Marshall, *Shadowplay*, 206.

²⁵¹ "Russians enter talks with Serbs," *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 2, 2000.

²⁵² "Russia declares poll legitimate," *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 3, 2000.

²⁵³ "Russians enter talks with Serbs," *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 2, 2000.

commission's conclusions [that Koštunica had not won outright], despite a concerted campaign, led by Britain and Germany, not to accept the results.”²⁵⁴ The coverage of 4th October saw a continuation of the newspaper’s counter-narrative, uncritically reporting Belgrade’s declared intention to “prevent any ‘subversive’ activity to overthrow the government,” while covering British foreign minister Robin Cook “join[ing] the Western campaign to oust the government.”²⁵⁵ Around the same time, the *Socialist Worker* was reporting the continuation of working-class Serbian resistance, stating that “the movement against Milošević has the potential to defeat him and win even more... Whether or not it succeeds depends on whether the strikes and protests deepen and put workers' demands at their centre.”²⁵⁶ Events on the ground were moving quickly on 4th October, as police tried and failed to take over the Kolubara mines, the federal constitutional court annulled some of the official election results, and the opposition issued an ultimatum to Milošević, urging him to resign by three o’clock the following day.²⁵⁷

5th October: revolution?

During the night, plans were laid for demonstrators to arrive in Belgrade in time for the ultimatum, in spite of police barricades set up to prevent their passage. The protesters from the western Serbian city of Čačak, headed by their tracksuit-wearing mayor Velimir Ilić, were among the first to arrive in Belgrade. Within an hour, they had launched their first assault on the federal parliament building, which the police repelled with tear gas.²⁵⁸ Over the next

²⁵⁴ “Russia declares poll legitimate,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 3, 2000.

²⁵⁵ “Belgrade hit by demonstrations,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 4, 2000.

²⁵⁶ “Workers must raise their own demands,” *Socialist Worker*, Oct. 7, 2000, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/35600/Workers+must+raise+their+own+demands>, accessed Nov. 16, 2016.

²⁵⁷ Jeffries, *The Former Yugoslavia*, 533.

²⁵⁸ Bujosević and Radovanović *The Fall of Milošević*, 178.

couple of hours, more and more of the arriving marchers descended on the parliament building. Serbian police radio reported to its officers at three o'clock that the crowd was seventy thousand strong; police commander Colonel Bosko Buha believed the crowd to be ten times that number.²⁵⁹ Just after half past three, the second assault on the parliament began, and this time, the protesters were able to storm it, taking the building within just forty minutes.²⁶⁰ Within the next two hours, angry masses would also set fire to the nearby building of Radio-Television Serbia (RTS), the state broadcaster bombed the year before, which was "long seen as the font of propaganda for the Milošević regime."²⁶¹ The most emblematic symbols of the old regime had fallen, with police stations and other media outlets being similarly overrun over the rest of the day. Milošević was caught with nowhere to go; on the 6th October he acknowledged on television that Koštunica had won the elections, and the latter was officially sworn in the next day. The protesters, according to the *Guardian*, had "reclaimed their country," in "a moment of history to be savoured to the full."²⁶²

Given the left's admiration for revolutionary praxis, those on the British left who supported Milošević, or at least favoured him over Koštunica, found themselves in a difficult position. From the outside, the events of 5th October certainly looked like a revolution driven by the masses, and the British mainstream press did not hesitate to label it as such. Writers for these mass-circulation publications proclaimed this "people's revolution"²⁶³ was linked, in part, to a failure of the anti-Western narrative from Belgrade: as Brian Roberts wrote in the centre-left mass-market tabloid *Daily Mirror*, "It has been impossible for Milošević's spin doctors to make convincing accusations that Koštunica is a Western stooge."²⁶⁴ What the

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 33.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 179.

²⁶¹ Eleanor Pritchard and Crna Gora Medija Klub, "News from Serbia," *Central Europe Review* 2:34 (2000), <http://www.ce-review.org/00/34/serbianews34.html>, accessed Dec. 10th, 2016.

²⁶² "Farewell to a tyrant: Yugoslavia celebrates its 'liberation'," *The Guardian* (Manchester), Oct. 6, 2000.

²⁶³ Anton Antonowicz and Mike Moore, "Serbs, You Are Free," *Daily Mirror* (London), Oct. 6, 2000.

²⁶⁴ Brian Roberts, "The elected hero," *Daily Mirror* (London), Oct. 6, 2000.

mainstream press writers did not comment upon was the fact that similar accusations had also originated in London, in the pages of the *Morning Star*.

Given the mainstream press' strong support for the overthrow of Milošević, with some reportage beginning to sound triumphalist, elements of the rhetoric emanating from mainstream press sources would in cases become outright offensive: Anton Antonowicz, writing in the *Daily Mirror*, described Milošević as a "psychological basket case" while evoking the suicide of his parents.²⁶⁵ This, perhaps, illustrates another interesting difference between the mainstream tabloid press and the British socialist press: while the *Morning Star* would continually cast doubt on the character of the opposition due to its political beliefs and financial links, their writers refrained from *ad hominem* arguments and unpleasant, sensationalist rhetoric, while the writers at the *Daily Mirror* clearly saw no problem with such language.

Who were the protesters?

"The presence of nonurban, nonelite, and formally not 'civic' protesters gave October 5, 2000, the character of a mass revolutionary event," wrote the anthropologist Jessica Greenberg in her study of Serbian anti-regime protest.²⁶⁶ The mainstream British press largely concurred with this assessment. In the *Guardian*, veteran foreign correspondent Jonathan Steele described a "tidal wave of protest,"²⁶⁷ while the paper's unsigned leading article told of "the exultation and release of a truly popular revolution."²⁶⁸ Other newspapers, such as the centre-left tabloid *Daily Mirror*, emphasised a popular "tide of anger," reaching

²⁶⁵ Anton Antonowicz, "Dictator keeps the world on edge," *Daily Mirror* (London), Oct. 6, 2000.

²⁶⁶ Greenberg, *After the Revolution*, 63.

²⁶⁷ Jonathan Steele, "Yugoslavia's hated regime crumbles," *The Guardian* (Manchester), Oct. 6, 2000.

²⁶⁸ "Farewell to a tyrant: Yugoslavia celebrates its 'liberation'," *The Guardian* (Manchester), Oct. 6, 2000.

its apogee as the people were “determined never again to be duped.”²⁶⁹ Some writers even attributed the overthrow of Milošević to Tony Blair. Despite the *Guardian*’s political commentator Hugo Young claiming that NATO actions in Kosovo constituted “the most blatant violation of the UN system ever authorised by Europe and the US,”²⁷⁰ he would write in the same article on 10th October:

No NATO leader is more gratified by what has happened in Yugoslavia than Tony Blair. The deposing of Milošević is the vindication of a strategy for which he risked more than anyone else in the west. He was the moral, if not the military, leader of what saved Kosovo, and has now led to the despatch of the tyrant.²⁷¹

In response, the SWP’s Lindsey German, writing in *Socialist Review*, sardonically observed that:

People in Belgrade could be forgiven for questioning the rewriting of history which makes Tony Blair the despatcher of tyrants while the estimated million people on the streets on 5 October, or the miners and supporters who defied the police at Kolubara, are consigned to the role of stage army.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Anton Antonowicz and Mike Moore, “Serbs, You Are Free,” *Daily Mirror* (London), Oct. 6, 2000.

²⁷⁰ Hugo Young, “Blair is moved by foreign misery but tougher at home,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Oct. 10, 2000.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Lindsey German, “The revolution has to continue,” *Socialist Review*, Nov. 2000, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr246/german.htm>.

Young's statement certainly went against the prevalent discourse on the impact of the NATO intervention; most writers would suggest that the bombing merely galvanised the Serbian population,²⁷³ with even those who disliked Milošević acknowledging that the state of war had strengthened his position.²⁷⁴

In subsequent weeks, mainstream press portrayals of the protesters would become more nuanced, as evidenced by the words of historian Timothy Garton Ash, writing for the *Guardian* a month after the ousting of Milošević:

Many of those who went to Belgrade were ordinary people from opposition-controlled cities, sometimes better informed than their counterparts in the capital, because of the local independent television and radio stations, but often materially worse off than the Belgraders, and so more angry. However, among them were also former policemen and soldiers, veterans of the Serbian campaigns in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo—tough, with shaved heads and guns under their leather jackets. Men who knew how to fight, and were determined to win this day.²⁷⁵

For the *Morning Star*, writing in the immediate aftermath of the events in Belgrade, events were portrayed rather differently. The newspaper had no doubt who the protesters

²⁷³ See, for instance, Andreja Živković, writing in the SWP's *Socialist Review*, who claimed that "imperialist intervention is the real reason for the longevity of Milošević's bankrupt regime." Andreja Živković, "Otpor! helped prepare the ground," *Socialist Review* 246 (November 2000), accessed May 31, 2017, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr246/zivkovic.htm>.

²⁷⁴ Otpor! leader Srđan Popović describes this vividly: "some of the people who were most bitterly opposed to Milošević's rule—including a few members of Otpor!—caught themselves supporting our genocidal president as he defiantly stood up to the West. It was like some primordial wellspring of tribalism bubbling up. During a speech by Milošević just after the bombs started falling, one of my fellow Otpor! leaders even caught himself cheering on the dictator, gushing (to his embarrassment only moments later), 'Go get them, Slobo!'" Popović, *Blueprint for Revolution*, ch. 9 (electronic edition).

²⁷⁵ Timothy Garton Ash, "Today we will be free or die," *The Guardian* (Manchester), Nov. 3, 2000.

were. “Pro-capitalist demonstrators burn Parliament” ran the sub-heading on the newspaper’s front page on 6th October, the day after the federal parliament was stormed; further inside the lead article, entitled “Arson rules in Belgrade,” reporter Brian Denny described the presence of “drunken mobs” who “stopped ambulances to drag out injured policemen.”²⁷⁶ The establishment narrative of Serbia as a country of anarchy and chaos, not invoked by the *Morning Star* in the Milošević years, was now being utilised to criticise the demonstrators. For the first time since the NATO intervention in 1999, news of events in Serbia had been deemed important enough to make the front page of the newspaper, and again they were framed in a very different way to the vast majority of British media.

Once Milošević had officially conceded the presidency and Koštunica took office, the newspaper’s lead editorial, *Star Comment*, acknowledged that “[half] a million people on the streets is not a phenomenon that can be ignored and it is clear that broad sections of the Serbian people have turned their backs on the regime of Slobodan Milošević.”²⁷⁷ Nevertheless, while the *Star* by this point acknowledged the role of “miners, factory and transport workers” in addition to the previously existing “mainly middle-strata opposition,” they suggested that in removing Milošević, “many workers have taken a leap of faith.”²⁷⁸ The spectre of Western meddling in Yugoslav affairs was continually invoked: reporting Koštunica’s official swearing-in ceremony, the newspaper ran with the subheading “Reports uncover millions paid to opposition.”²⁷⁹ Descriptions of the opposition, continually accused of being Western-funded, as violent and volatile would persist in the aftermath of Milošević’s ousting, with an article on 12th October claiming that “opposition activists have been intimidating ministers and other government employees out of their jobs with threats of mob

²⁷⁶ Brian Denny, “Arson rules in Belgrade,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 6, 2000.

²⁷⁷ “Star comment: Why NATO celebrates,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 7, 2000.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Brian Denny, “Koštunica takes up presidency,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 9, 2000.

violence.”²⁸⁰ Indeed, the focus on negative actions from demonstrators, and the coding of these demonstrators (or at least their most radical elements) as roving “mobs,” was commonplace throughout coverage in the *Morning Star* in the first days after the removal of Milošević.

Leading luminaries in the SWP took a decidedly different approach. Much of the reportage in the *Socialist Worker* celebrated the “hundreds of thousands of ordinary people”²⁸¹ who were involved in strikes and protests, and reiterated that “[w]orking class people were central to the opposition against Milošević.”²⁸² Lindsey German, writing in the SWP’s monthly *Socialist Review*, echoed this point, stating that “the Serbian people, led by the working class, have in fact ousted Milošević.”²⁸³ Other elements of the Trotskyist left were even more stark in their assessment. Writing for *The Socialist*, the newspaper of the Socialist Party (England and Wales), Niall Mulholland declared that “WORKING PEOPLE and youth around the world will be inspired by these historic events and will celebrate the demise of this dictatorial and anti-working class regime.”²⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the more measured tone adopted by writers for the *Socialist Worker* saw them continue to be concerned by elements within the opposition “who want a smooth transition to a stable government which protects capitalists.”²⁸⁵

Of course, the election results suggested that this “smooth transition” which the SWP feared was exactly what the Democratic Opposition voters desired. A conservative nationalist who had been a dissident against the once-ruling League of Communists, Vojislav Koštunica

²⁸⁰ Brian Denny, “Serb government defies takeover,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 12, 2000.

²⁸¹ “After Serbia’s revolution,” *Socialist Worker*, Oct. 14, 2000, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/35581/After+Serbias+revolution>, accessed Nov. 10, 2016.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Lindsey German, “The revolution has to continue,” *Socialist Review*, Nov. 2000, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr246/german.htm>.

²⁸⁴ Niall Mulholland, “Uprising in Serbia,” *The Socialist*, last modified Oct. 13, 2000, <http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/issue/177/7949/13-10-2000/uprising-in-serbia>, original capitals.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

represented a decisive break with socialism, either in name or deed. His vision of the handover of power, in the words of Serbian journalists Dragan Bujosević and Ivan Radovanović, involved “an orderly state, continuity of government, and democratic procedures.”²⁸⁶ Furthermore, it is reasonable to deduce that the majority of protesters had little interest in the type of revolutionary left-wing politics which the SWP, and other groups occupying their political position, hoped would arise as a result of the overthrow. Bora Kuzmanović’s analysis of political attitudes among demonstrators in the 1996–97 student protests, again arising following opposition accusations of vote manipulation by the Milošević government, found that many had much more classically liberal attitudes towards such matters as wage equality than non-demonstrators,²⁸⁷ and that over half the protesters considered themselves, to some extent, right-wing.²⁸⁸ Given the prominent role of the 1996–97 protests in the initial creation of an oppositional network, made manifest by the founding of such organisations as *Otpor!*, it is reasonable to conclude that many of the same activists were involved in taking to the streets to unseat Milošević in 2000.

Both the British and American mainstream press, and the *Morning Star*, were in agreement that the protest and oppositional movements were, to a large extent, financed and aided by Western organisations. Although *Washington Post* foreign correspondent Michael Dobbs stated that the opposition “was never to talk about Western financial or logistical support” in Serbia, for fear of being labelled traitors or foreign agents,²⁸⁹ he notes that “[i]n principle, it was an overt operation.”²⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the ethics of such funding and assistance was disputed. The *New York Times* had no issue with describing *Otpor!* as “[f]lush

²⁸⁶ Bujosević and Radovanović, *The Fall of Milošević*, 153.

²⁸⁷ Kuzmanović, “Value Orientations”, 140.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁸⁹ Michael Dobbs, “U.S. Advice Guided Milosevic Opposition,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 11, 2000.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

with funds from Western aid groups and governments,”²⁹¹ while Dobbs claimed that many opposition figures “view the U.S. support as atonement for past mistakes”²⁹² in the region. For the *Morning Star*, the opposition was constantly prefaced with the qualifier “Western-backed,” and the role of Western national political institutions, continually coded as “NATO governments,” appeared to be one of destabilisation and interference. This line was extremely similar to the Russian pronouncements following the election, which were uncritically relayed by the newspaper.²⁹³ Lindsey German, writing in the theoretical journal of the SWP, *International Socialism*, did not talk about Western funding for the opposition, though she did note that Western states were “desperate to get rid of Milošević at virtually any price,” even that of supporting Koštunica, who they considered “may even be somewhat hostile to the US.”²⁹⁴ This approach is in keeping with her view, and that of the SWP more broadly, that Serbian workers were predominantly responsible for the downfall of Milošević. This also constitutes the key difference that the SWP saw between previous mass demonstrations against Milošević and the movement which culminated in his ousting; in their weekly newspaper *Socialist Worker*, they argued that Milošević “was able to withstand mass demonstrations because they did not start to challenge the loyalty of rank and file troops or fight for economic power in the factories and workplaces.”²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Steven Erlanger and Roger Cohen, “From a Summons to a Slap: How the Fight in Yugoslavia Was Won,” *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 2000.

²⁹² Michael Dobbs, “U.S. Advice Guided Milosevic Opposition,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 11, 2000.

²⁹³ See, for instance, “Russia backs Yugoslavia,” *Morning Star* (London), Sep. 28, 2000.

²⁹⁴ Lindsey German, “Serbia’s spring in October,” *International Socialism* 89 (2000), <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj89/german.htm>, accessed Nov. 16, 2016.

²⁹⁵ “Workers must raise their own demands,” *Socialist Worker*, Oct. 7, 2000, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/35600/Workers+must+raise+their+own+demands>, accessed Nov. 16, 2016.

What of Milošević?

Although its coverage seemed highly critical of the actions surrounding the overthrow of Milošević, the *Morning Star* did state in its pages that it had little sympathy for the erstwhile ruler. “The *Morning Star* holds no particular brief for Mr Milošević, who bears his share of the responsibility for the fratricidal hell that engulfed Yugoslavia,”²⁹⁶ read the paper’s editorial comment on 10th October; moreover, the editorial claimed that “this paper condemned his withdrawal of autonomy for Kosovo within Serbia a dozen years ago when many of those seeking his blood today would have had difficulty locating the province on a map.”²⁹⁷ Nonetheless, this line did not persuade others on the left in the UK that the newspaper had decisively broken with conditional defence of the old regime in Belgrade. The SWP’s Charlie Kimber, writing in the *Socialist Worker*, saw the *Morning Star* and the UK mainstream press as sharing the belief that the Milošević government “was in some ways socialist,” while suggesting that the editorial staff of the *Morning Star* saw his downfall as “a disaster.”²⁹⁸ Kimber and his party were keen for Milošević not to be viewed as a socialist, not least because his regime was discredited; to this end, their articles invoked historical evidence of his government engaging in the type of unfettered crony capitalism which they would routinely criticise, while proclaiming Milošević “the enemy of the workers in whose name he pretended to speak.”²⁹⁹ Other figures such as Lindsey German would draw parallels between the Eastern bloc countries and Milošević’s Serbia:

²⁹⁶ “Star comment: Pawns only need apply,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 10, 2000.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Charlie Kimber, “Milosevic – a socialist?” *Socialist Worker*, Oct. 14, 2000, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/35589/Milosevic++a+socialist>, accessed Nov. 11, 2016.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

Regimes which called themselves socialist and claimed a popular mandate fell without a fight. In reality they were unpopular, rotten regimes with nothing in common with democratic socialism. The Milošević regime had exactly the same characteristics, which is why it has been so overwhelmingly rejected.³⁰⁰

In making these critiques, figures within the Trotskyist left in Britain attempted to show the Milošević regime as inherently capitalist and bureaucratic throughout its existence, where “[s]emi-private control [of state assets] was taken over by anyone with contacts and influence,”³⁰¹ and which had much more in common with what they viewed as the “state capitalist” regimes of the former Warsaw Pact states than any socialist project.

As a general rule, this distaste was not confined to Trotskyist parties; Milošević appeared not to be regarded highly by many on the British left. However, a split does emerge between those who chose to outwardly attack his character, some of whom would describe him as an “ultra-chauvinist” and a “kindred spirit” of Nicolae Ceaușescu,³⁰² and others who make little to no explicit value judgment on the man himself, concentrating instead on criticising his electoral opponent, Koštunica, as “pro-free market”³⁰³ or “Western-backed.”³⁰⁴ Groups such as the SWP would apply criticisms of these sort to both men equally.³⁰⁵ In contrast with the SWP position, over successive months and years, the *Morning Star* continued to give a voice to writers and campaigners with varying levels of positive

³⁰⁰ Lindsey German, “Serbia’s spring in October,” *International Socialism* 89 (2000), <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj89/german.htm>, accessed Nov. 16, 2016.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ian Donovan, “Serbia on the brink,” *Weekly Worker* (London), Oct. 4, 2000.

³⁰³ Leigh Arnold, “Cook threatens second war against Yugoslavia,” *Morning Star* (London), Sep. 27, 2000.

³⁰⁴ “Koštunica told to accept result,” *Morning Star* (London), Sep. 30, 2000.

³⁰⁵ The SWP described “the corruption and chauvinism of the Milosevic regime” alongside the description of Koštunica as “committed to the kind of free market policies which have been a disaster in Eastern Europe.” See “Workers must raise their own demands,” *Socialist Worker*, Oct. 7, 2000, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/35600/Workers+must+raise+their+own+demands>, accessed Nov. 16, 2016.

sentiment toward Milošević and his government, while continuing to label the new regime as “pro-Western” and “right-wing.”³⁰⁶ To support the charge that Koštunica was dangerously right-wing, the *Morning Star* quoted Jean-Marie Le Pen on its front page, describing the new president as “an anti-communist patriot.”³⁰⁷ In using these descriptions in a pejorative sense, particularly the epithet “right-wing,” the newspaper and its writing staff could be seen as implying that the Milošević regime was therefore left-wing in some sense, exactly as the SWP’s Charlie Kimber had argued.

In the immediate aftermath of his overthrow, the *Morning Star* appeared aware of the likelihood that Milošević would soon be extradited to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague for his actions during the Yugoslav Wars. However, it was equally critical of this court’s actions, and indeed its entire *raison d’être*, once again framing it in the context of NATO’s intervention the year before. Its editorial column claimed that the court was “merely a fig-leaf by which the NATO powers intend to legitimate their own war crimes in the Balkans,”³⁰⁸ and bluntly proclaimed that Milošević’s main crime was “refusing to accept that a European state could remain non-aligned and daring to say No to orders from the European Union-NATO proponents of the new imperialist world order.”³⁰⁹ Some of its rhetoric even echoes far-right criticisms; it claims that the court is financed both by NATO countries and “by private donors such as billionaire currency speculator George Soros,”³¹⁰ a statement which Milošević himself echoed both in his last days in power,³¹¹ and

³⁰⁶ Brian Denny, “Yugoslavia hands over Milošević,” *Morning Star* (London), Jun. 29, 2001.

³⁰⁷ “West demands Milošević trial,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 7, 2000.

³⁰⁸ “Star comment: Pawns only need apply,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 10, 2000.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ On Oct. 4, 2000, the FRY government wrote a Memorandum to the United Nations Security Council, stating in part that “The US Administration, the Governments of NATO countries and various foundations, such as the Soros foundation, openly finance Yugoslav opposition and various forms of subversive activity aimed at destabilizing the FR of Yugoslavia and at overthrowing its legitimate Government.” Full text available online, “Foreign Interference in the Yugoslav Elections, *slobodan-milosevic.org*, <http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/election-interference.htm>, accessed Jun. 1, 2017.

in the dock.³¹² This statement was not untrue: foundations linked to Soros, including the Open Society Fund, did indeed contribute financially to the tribunal and its leading members.³¹³ Nevertheless, highlighting him as one of the court's private benefactors served to demonise both Soros, and the court by proxy, while also conjuring up images of the hidden hand of international capital controlling events. As such, the unspoken message remains of the ICTY as a pro-business, pro-free market organisation, linked closely to the overthrow of Milošević and the consequent opportunities for Western financial growth in Yugoslavia.

Those socialists who welcomed Milošević's overthrow, while avoiding appeals to consider the role of financiers like Soros in the ICTY's activities, were nevertheless similarly equivocal that he should not be sent to the Hague. Roger Dark, writing for the CPGB-PCC's *Weekly Worker*, vehemently stated that:

We reject the 'right' of the imperialists—who are at root responsible for most of the exploitation, poverty and starvation, repression and human suffering in the world—to put their enemies on trial for crimes that, however bloody and brutal, are relatively small beer by the standards of the imperialist world overlords.³¹⁴

Instead, he suggests that “the masses of the entire region” convene a “revolutionary popular tribunal,”³¹⁵ in which “Milošević and his closest collaborators should face the same fate as

³¹² “International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Page 32261,” *icty.org*, http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/trans/en/040901IT.htm, accessed Jun. 2, 2017.

³¹³ Most notably, in the tribunal's early days, to Cherif Bassiouni, Chairman of the Commission of Experts established in 1992. See John Hagan, *Justice in the Balkans: Prosecuting War Crimes in the Hague Tribunal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 39 and 68.

³¹⁴ Roger Dark, “Try Milošević!” *Weekly Worker* 355, last modified Oct. 11, 2000, <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/355/try-milosevic/>

³¹⁵ Ibid.

tyrants such as Ceausescu, Mussolini and Nicolas the Bloody.”³¹⁶ The SWP’s Lindsey German similarly suggested that justice must not be handed down by the West, quoting a Belgrade shopkeeper as stating “[i]t was the Serbian people who got rid of Milošević, not NATO, and it is for the Serbian people to punish him.”³¹⁷

Indeed, on this point, some of the mainstream media followed a more nuanced interpretation than might be expected. For instance, the *Guardian*’s lead article as Milošević was flown to the Hague to face trial claimed that “[r]ules do not just apply to NATO’s enemies,” and that “[a] court confined to those branded tyrants by George Bush or Jack Straw looks like nothing more than a kangaroo court of the strong.”³¹⁸ Nevertheless, the line that the newspaper took was mixed, allowing space for emotive invocations of humanitarianism used again to justify Milošević’s extradition. Maggie O’Kane, writing in the *Guardian*, calling Milošević’s extradition “the last act” of the revolution of 2000, stated that “There is a message from the transfer of Slobodan Milošević to the Hague. It is as loud as a scream, and it should be heard around the world. It is that the bad guys—some of them at least—get done in the end.”³¹⁹ This highlights an element which is largely missing in the socialist press; namely, the existence of a plurality of opinion among each individual newspaper’s editorial line.

This treatment of Milošević in the *Morning Star*, whether openly favourable or favourable through omission, continued after his apprehension in Belgrade on 1st April 2001 and subsequent handover to officials in The Hague, with paid commercials from the “Committee to Defend Slobodan Milošević” appearing in the newspaper on multiple

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Quoted in Lindsey German, “The revolution has to continue,” *Socialist Review*, Nov. 2000, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr246/german.htm>.

³¹⁸ “After Milošević,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Jun. 30, 2001.

³¹⁹ Maggie O’Kane, “Last act of revolution sends a message around the world,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Jun. 29, 2001.

occasions. Indeed, this organisation's website continued to be promoted over one hundred times in the newspaper's "Progressive Website Listing," even after Milošević's death in his prison cell in 2006. Moreover, the newspaper also gave a voice to those looking to minimise the atrocities committed by Serbs and the Milošević regime in the Yugoslav Wars. In 2005, they devoted a full page article to a revisionist minimisation of the events at Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the tenth anniversary of those massacres,³²⁰ written by the editor of the website free-slobo-uk.org, a site devoted to "Fighting back from the Dock of the New World Order's phoney international court."³²¹

Imagery

The role of photographs, their captions and their positioning is also highly illuminating in this study. These photographs would often be used in the constriction and support of counter-narratives. For instance, the front page of November 2000's *Socialist Review* featured a red flag with the *Otpor!* logo, a clenched fist of resistance, in the centre, while its articles on the events featured photographs of the massed crowds on the streets of Belgrade. Conversely, the *Morning Star* accompanied its lead story with images of flames and a much smaller number of seemingly enraged protesters who had appeared to set up a makeshift gallows.

³²⁰ Christopher James, "Genocide or propaganda?" *Morning Star* (London), Jul. 10, 2005.

³²¹ "Free Slobodan Milosevic!" *Committee for the Defence of Slobodan Milosevic in the United Kingdom*, accessed Oct. 22, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20050305102809/http://www.free-slobo-uk.org/>



Figure 4.1: the front page of the *Morning Star* the day after the overthrow of Milošević, 6th October 2000.

In some cases, the use of photographs appears to be deeply misleading. As noted above, the *Morning Star* illustrated its view on the Commons Select Committee report on Kosovo with a photograph of a burning Serb house in Prizren, taken in 1999.³²² More troublingly, the newspaper would go on to use the same image, this time inverted and without any mention of its place of origin, in another aforementioned piece questioning the massacres at Srebrenica in 1995. This latter article contained no mention of either Prizren or Kosovo.³²³

³²² Jim Addington, "The Kosovo whitewash," *Morning Star* (London), Jun. 20, 2000.

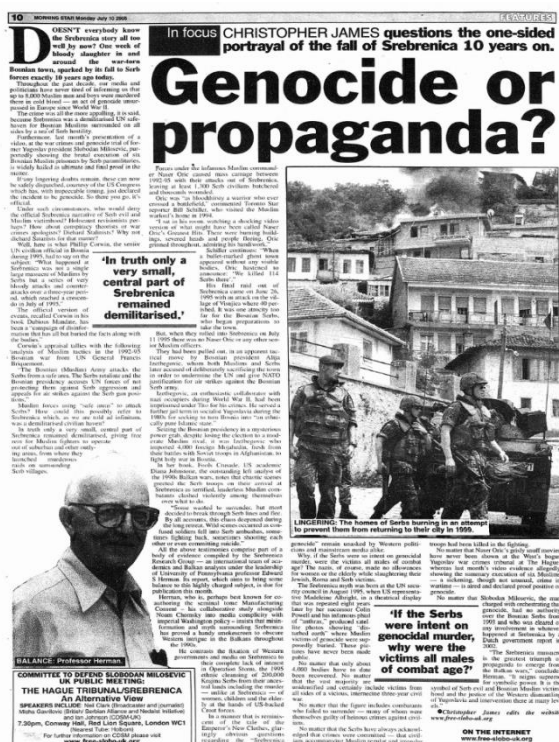
³²³ Christopher James, "Genocide or propaganda?" *Morning Star* (London), Jul. 10, 2005.



Figure 4.2: a side-by-side comparison of the same photograph illustrating two different articles: on the left, an article on Kosovo from 20th June 2000; on the right, an article on Srebrenica from 10th July 2005.

The captions for both images indicate that these houses belonged to ethnic Serbs, though the earlier article correctly identifies the location in the caption. At the very least, the choice of a photograph depicting ethnic cleansing against Serbs in an article superficially about Srebrenica highlights the editorial choices made to maintain the *Morning Star*'s counter-narrative regarding the Yugoslav Wars. Of course, the *Morning Star* was far from the only place where such revisionist minimisation was espoused; these same views retained credence in some academic circles, notably by financial professor and media analyst Edward S. Herman, whose image was also included in the article.

The spectre of NATO continued to dominate both the *Morning Star*'s reportage and its use of imagery. By chance, NATO was holding a meeting in Birmingham in the days



following the overthrow of Milošević; this again afforded the *Star*'s Jim Addington the chance to suggest that the true objective of the West was "to break the Yugoslavian political system because it did not conform to the capitalist pattern."³²⁴ Accompanying this article was a protester's placard, depicting NATO as a fierce, snarling skull, with soldiers stood behind. The constant educement of NATO as an all-powerful enemy is a defining feature of the newspaper's coverage of the alliance, a style of reportage it shares with the vast majority of the socialist press in Britain.



Figure 4.3: a placard protesting against NATO in the *Morning Star*, 10th October 2000.

In addition to the *Morning Star*'s portrayal of NATO as an institutional body, it also maintained a less stringent criticism of Milošević's successor, Vojislav Koštunica, which

³²⁴ Jim Addington, "Another binge to maintain secrecy," *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 10, 2000.

extended to his pictorial representation in the newspaper. The first picture of the new President in the *Star*'s pages featured him kissing the hand of Pavle, the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch, under the headline "The breaking of Yugoslavia."³²⁵ In addition to continuing the newspaper's narrative of "how the Western powers got their man in the president's seat in Belgrade,"³²⁶ they also bring up the problem of religion, long considered to be a vital factor in the earlier Yugoslav Wars. In the article, Brian Denny states that the West's aim "has been to create a patchwork of tiny, unstable statelets which institutionalise ethnic hatred";³²⁷ the portrayal of Koštunica as a politician who bows to religious leaders further buttresses this point.

³²⁵ Brian Denny, "The breaking of Yugoslavia," *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 14, 2000.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

BRIAN DENNY charts how the Western powers got their man in the president's seat in Belgrade.

THE spectacle of Western governments and their media machines baying for blood in Belgrade during rioting last week shows just how degenerate and venal they have become in meeting the needs of corporate capital.

NATO countries celebrated as mobs attempted to burn down the parliament, attacked people in the streets and destroyed ballot papers from the first round of voting in the disputed elections.

This sort of anarchy represented exactly the conditions that NATO had been trying to create inside Yugoslavia for decades through manipulation, intrigue and open terror.

The West openly intervened to back the mobs, annul elections results and block any further rounds of voting in the presidential elections.

'The West openly intervened to back the mobs, annul elections results and block any further rounds of voting in the presidential elections.'

Yet, on the very same day that NATO countries backed the anarchy in Serbia, the United States denounced that the election results in neighbouring Albania must be accepted despite opposition complaints of widespread fraud.

"We call on all parties to continue co-operation and accept the ballot results," US Ambassador Joseph Limprecht declared.

It will come as no surprise that Washington's puppet Socialist Party had declared itself the winner.

Washington bankrolled the opposition in Serbia to the tune of over £60 million and funnelled millions more into the opposition-controlled towns.

Millions of US dollars also went to Ilie Montenegro President Milo Djukanovic's pockets.

Not to be outdone, Germany revealed that it had matched this funding and millions more went to undisclosed "independent" media outlets inside Yugoslavia.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer even proclaimed: "For Germany, it was an obligation based on history."

Anyone with any knowledge of German involvement in the Balkans this century will find this remark bizarre in the extreme and chilling to say the least.

Other European powers also proudly boasted of how many millions they had poured into the opposition coffers.

In fact, did any Western power not fund the internal campaign against the Yugoslav government?

However, the West still has a problem. Having first denounced elections as totally meaningless since they would inevitably be "stolen" by President Slobodan Milosevic, the West then decided, before any results had been announced, that Milosevic had lost on the first ballot.

For the West, a second ballot was out of the question after the Yugoslav Federal Electoral Commission stated that newly installed President Vojislav Kostunica had not received 50 per cent of the vote.

Despite over 31,000 bombing raids, crippling sanctions and promises to lift them if Yugoslavs voted out their government, millions refused to bend their knee to the uneasy NATO/EU/US alliance.

And, even if Kostunica had won the vote, the fact remains that the government is controlled by an elected parliament which has vowed to continue to rule despite bomb attacks on the Radical



BLESSING: Vojislav Kostunica (left) kisses the hand of Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Pavle, prior to the presidential swearing-in ceremony in Belgrade.

The breaking of Yugoslavia

Party headquarters, continuing violent attacks on individuals and further threats of mob violence.

Therefore, the West is using the "democratic" opposition that it has bought to try to destabilise the country, bring down the government and, if necessary, create the conditions for another civil war to intervene in its usual murderous "humanitarian" manner.

However, even Kostunica is embarrassed by the situation, declaring that he "could not justify all that is going on."

Despite these problems, big business has begun to prepare for a new Balkans goldrush and it is ready to annex Yugoslav markets in the same way that it has already annexed markets in Bosnia and Kosovo.

British Trade Minister Richard Crampton gathered leaders of the British construction, engineering, telecommunications and utility industries yesterday for the first meeting of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Task Force.

Mr Crampton said that the new task force would cover Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro and would incorporate the Kosovo Task Force, which secured contracts worth £24 million for British firms in the wake of the murderous NATO assault last year.

"It is imperative that British companies play a vital role in the reconstruction of Serbia in the aftermath of this people's revolution," he said.

The comments from task-force head Nigel Thompson, of engineering giant Ove Arup, said it all.

"Our work was of huge importance to the Kosovar people at a crucial time in 1999. I am delighted that, again, we find ourselves ready to spring to action," he said.

As an example of things to come, NATO troops have already annexed the Trepcia mine complex in Kosovo by storming the plant, which was then handed over to a Western consortium — privatisation at gunpoint.

After NATO gave the arms trade an estimated £10 billion business last year by bombing hospitals, roads, schools and electricity stations, it is handing its corporate backers the lucrative job of rebuilding and running the country's economy.

The history of NATO in the Balkans over the last 10 years has been an orgy of bloodshed and open criminality.

It has fomented civil war in the ethnically mixed region — which is child's play if that is your determined aim.

It has armed the Croats to fight the

Serbs and the Muslims, armed the Muslims to fight the Serbs and other ethnic minorities from Kosovo.

As noted foreign affairs analyst Jan Oberg said, "The largest ethnic cleansing in the Balkans has happened under the eyes of 45,000 NATO troops" in Kosovo.

'The history of NATO in the Balkans over the last 10 years has been an orgy of bloodshed and open criminality.'

Kosovo is now a nest of organised crime run by Kosovo Liberation Army thugs, recruited by the West as the Kosovo Protection Corps in contravention of all UN resolutions agreed to end the bombing.

The corps is trained by Military Professional Resources Inc., a US mercenary outfit involved in the training and command of the Croatian forces that drove over 200,000 ethnic Serbs from the Kraji-

na region of Croatia in 1995.

The aim has been to create a patchwork of tiny, unstable states which institutionalise ethnic hatred and are politically, economically and militarily dominated by the West.

The issue here is not whether Milosevic won the first round of elections. It is whether NATO countries have the corporate-given right to appoint puppet governments in the Balkans at will.

NATO has no intention of leaving the Balkans as it is obvious that it will be required to crush any internal opposition to the new corporate order that will surely arise as a result of the Western annexation of the region.

Moreover, it needs to hold the region to launch a programme of war and domination in the oil-rich and unstable regions of central Asia to the east.

It is hard to believe that the European liberal "left" will continue to act as cheerleader of this bloody adventure on the basis that "we have to do something."

It brings to mind the words of the German empire builder Otto von Bismarck.

"I have always heard the word 'Europe' on the lips of certain politicians who would like to go by other means that which they would not dare to demand in their own names."

Figure 4.4: a feature in the Morning Star by Brian Denny on October 14th, showing new Yugoslav President Vojislav Koštunica kissing the hand of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch.

Conclusions

In analysing contemporaneous articles in the *Morning Star*, it appears that the newspaper was not especially welcoming of Milošević's overthrow. Much of the same rhetoric levelled against NATO during its bombing campaign the year before is repeated, even down to labelling certain states as "NATO governments." The Serbian opposition are similarly denigrated by association, and the *Morning Star* is sceptical at best of their motivations. Here, the notion of imperialism, such a common trope during the NATO bombing, comes back into use. Even those newspapers which welcomed the overthrow of Milošević, such as the *Socialist Worker*, continued to be highly cynical regarding the motivations of the West, and their role in the change of leadership.

However, the "socialist schism" of this work's title is most evident when considering the overthrow of Milošević. While all of the socialist publications poured scorn on the motivations of the West, and indeed the pro-capitalist orientation of Vojislav Koštunica and the Democratic Opposition, they had starkly divergent views of Slobodan Milošević and his overthrow. The *Morning Star* was adamant that the events of October 5th did not constitute a "people's revolution," asking its readers in its lead editorial "What kind of 'revolution' is backed by the most powerful imperialist states?"³²⁸ Trotskyist groups such as the SWP, by contrast, wrote in their publications that this was absolutely a revolution, "a mass explosion of power from ordinary people,"³²⁹ while allowing a platform for local socialists, such as Dragan Plavšić, to proclaim that "the Serbian Revolution was neither an imperialist plot nor a pro-capitalist adventure, but the culmination of a genuine working class uprising from below in defence of

³²⁸ "Star comment: Why NATO celebrates," *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 7, 2000.

³²⁹ Lindsey German, "The revolution has to continue," *Socialist Review*, Nov. 2000, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr246/german.htm>.

freedom and democracy.”³³⁰ The SWP and its newspaper also heavily criticised the line of the *Morning Star* for what they considered to be its defence of Milošević and his regime.³³¹ Similar views could be seen from the CPGB-PCC, who used their *Weekly Worker* newspaper to describe Milošević’s rule as “apartheid-like tyranny,”³³² and label some opponents of his overthrow, somewhat paradoxically, as “ultra-Stalinophile Trotskyists.”³³³

The British socialist press did eventually coalesce on a common line when considering the implications of Milošević’s overthrow. All feared a move towards a more pro-Western, pro-free market capitalism. Some espoused the need for continuing workers’ pressure on the new government in order to halt this advance; the SWP’s Lindsey German emphasised that “[w]hether the revolution will progress in a radically democratic direction that has implications for the Balkans as a whole will depend in part on whether socialists will be able to push the struggle forward.”³³⁴ The *Morning Star*, by contrast, appeared resigned to the inevitability of a pro-Western, pro-capitalist new government under Koštunica, stating in their editorial that “[w]hen the euphoria dies down, [Serb workers] will find that imperialism is not sentimental. Serb workers are useful only as long as the NATO powers find them so. After that, their interests will be cast aside.”³³⁵ This binary choice between optimistic faith in the working class, and pessimistic resignation to imperialist domination by Western powers, is equally reflected in what the respective newspapers consider the driving force behind the overthrow of Milošević.

³³⁰ Dragan Plavšić, “Serbia erupts in revolution,” *Socialist Review* 246 (November 2000), <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr246/plavsic.htm>, accessed May 30, 2017.

³³¹ Charlie Kimber, “Milosevic – a socialist?” *Socialist Worker*, Oct. 14, 2000, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/35589/Milosevic++a+socialist>, accessed Nov. 11, 2016.

³³² Ian Donovan, “Anti-democratic ‘anti-imperialism’,” *Weekly Worker* 362, last modified Nov. 30, 2000, <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/362/anti-democratic-anti-imperialism/>.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Lindsey German, “Serbia erupts in revolution,” *Socialist Review* 246 (November 2000), <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr246/plavsic.htm>, accessed May 30, 2017.

³³⁵ “Star comment: Why NATO celebrates,” *Morning Star* (London), Oct. 7, 2000.

5. Some concluding remarks: what became of the socialist schism?

Insofar as the socialist press involved itself with internal disagreements during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, these divergences predominantly focused on considerations of Milošević's regime. In contrast to elements of the mainstream press, all of the British socialist media condemned the NATO actions as illegal, unjust and imperialist. Some writers, such as those in the *Morning Star*, placed great emphasis on protest movements against NATO, along with covering opposition from the Russian and Chinese governments to the bombing campaign. Other socialist media sources, often those affiliated with the SWP, took a more theoretical approach, casting NATO's actions within the framework of a "new imperialism."³³⁶ Writers in publications affiliated to the CPGB-PCC, along with the SWP and other Trotskyist publications, often considered both NATO and Milošević to be engaged in illegal and immoral actions, though on balance, they considered the damage done by NATO to be greater, and ascribed a greater culpability to the Western powers than to the government of Yugoslavia. The *Morning Star* focused its reporting far less on the Milošević regime. While conceding that Milošević had "acted in a criminal fashion and should be condemned,"³³⁷ it focused the vast majority of its ire for the "barbaric bombing campaign against the sovereign state of Yugoslavia."³³⁸ Moreover, unlike other British socialist publications, the *Star* was content to use information from official Yugoslav sources, such as the news agency Tanjug and official government spokesmen, many of whom other British socialists considered to be discredited.

³³⁶ See, for instance, John Rees, "NATO and the new imperialism," *Socialist Review* 231, <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr231/rees.htm>, accessed Jun. 2, 2017.

³³⁷ "Star Comment: A gruesome reminder," *Morning Star* (London), Apr. 3, 1999.

³³⁸ Brian Denny, "What the West is really fighting for," *Morning Star* (London), May 3, 1999.

The socialist schism of this work's title truly emerged in force with the overthrow of Milošević the following year. Many publications, including those affiliated with the SWP and the CPGB-PCC, were welcoming of what they happily called a "revolution," considering it a legitimate and spontaneous uprising from below. The *Morning Star* was entirely unconvinced of this, casting many of the protesters as armed thugs and rioters, much as the mainstream press would label many of Milošević's supporters. This conflict between different currents on the British left would be highlighted in socialist press articles in the following days, including in the *Socialist Worker*. The conflict, as such, had its origins in two considerations: firstly, whether or not Milošević was a socialist and/or anti-imperialist worthy of support; and secondly, whether the protesters' cause was just, and had the potential to improve on Milošević's leadership.

While the textual discourse in the British socialist press makes these arguments clear, the role played by photographs, cartoons and other imagery should also be noted. Here, again, a difference between the mainstream and socialist press becomes apparent during the NATO intervention; in keeping their anti-war narrative, the socialist press typically used protest imagery, along with depicting the suffering of ordinary people, while the mainstream focused much more on portrayals of Milošević in his stereotypical role as "the butcher of the Balkans." The following year, the socialist schism would also manifest in the use of imagery; while those who welcomed Milošević's overthrow would use photographs of mass protest and revolutionary fervour, the *Morning Star* instead opted for threatening imagery suggesting the potential for unjustified bloodshed, along with continuing to highlight NATO as an interfering power.

Self-reflexivity in the British socialist press

While academia has largely failed to research the matter, the issue of the *Morning Star*'s editorial line has been critically analysed by a number of British socialist and leftist journalists. For instance, the self-described “libertarian democratic socialist”³³⁹ journalist Paul Anderson considers the *Morning Star* to have a “reputation for bone-headed Stalinism,”³⁴⁰ echoing many dissenters on the extraparliamentary left who have problems with the newspaper. The centre-left weekly *New Statesman*, reflecting on the *Morning Star*'s coverage of an unfolding situation in the Syrian city of Aleppo, claims that “[i]t remains popular among parts of the left to view global justice as a battle for and against US imperialism,”³⁴¹ an argument echoed by a writer who has recently left the newspaper due to its stance on the Russian intervention in Syria.³⁴² The paper's coverage of other contemporary foreign events has been harshly criticised, especially in the British left blogosphere, where the popular *Shiraz Socialist* blog called its coverage of the war in Ukraine “a dishonest pro-Putin disgrace,” and even more pithily, its position on the European Union, which the *Star* has long campaigned to leave, as “utter bollocks.”³⁴³

From another point of view, the *Morning Star* is sometimes accused, almost impossibly, of being in league with Western imperialism; the newspaper of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist), the bimonthly *Proletarian*, stated that “the left in Britain, from the Livingstones and Shorts to the Redgraves and Troto-revisionist fraternity,

³³⁹ Taken from the subtitle of his blog, *Gauche*, <http://libsoc.blogspot.co.uk/>, accessed Dec. 15, 2016.

³⁴⁰ Edward Platt, “Inside the Morning Star, Britain's last communist newspaper,” *New Statesman*, last modified Aug. 4, 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/2015/07/red-all-over-article>

³⁴¹ Media Mole, “No, Aleppo is not being ‘liberated’ – despite what the Morning Star says,” *New Statesman*, last modified Dec. 13, 2016, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/media/2016/12/no-aleppo-not-being-liberated-despite-what-morning-star-says>

³⁴² Rabbil Sikdar, “Why I will no longer write for the Morning Star,” last modified Dec. 15, 2016, https://medium.com/@RA_Sikdar/why-i-will-no-longer-write-for-the-morning-star-80f8f1bd59de#.k7bokke6p.

³⁴³ “The utter bollocks of the Morning Star on Europe,” *Shiraz Socialist*, last modified Apr. 9, 2015, <https://shirazsocialist.wordpress.com/2015/04/09/the-utter-bollocks-of-the-morning-star-on-europe/>

supported the crooks in power (Blair and Cook) in their blood-thirsty war against Yugoslavia” in 1999,³⁴⁴ in an article which claims Milošević was murdered at the Hague, rather than dying of natural causes as is commonly accepted.³⁴⁵ The same party also composed a highly critical open letter “to the readers and supporters of the *Morning Star*” in which they describe the newspaper’s criticisms of North Korea as emerging “from the lowest depths of the anti-communist and racist sewers of the imperialist disinformation and intelligence agencies,”³⁴⁶ and the newspaper’s editorial line as “spitting on the graves of millions of victims of [Labour Party] imperialism.”³⁴⁷ Such critiques are, however, rare, emanating usually from avowedly anti-revisionist parties and publications.

Finally, the motivations of those writing for the British socialist press should be considered. While there is no doubt that the position of the *Morning Star* and other socialist publications in the UK is sincere, the conclusion which comes from consideration of their low circulation is that these publications see themselves as fighting for position within the left more broadly, presenting varying analyses with the intention of winning over fellow members of the revolutionary left, rather than aiming to shape opinion across political boundaries. As such, they are destined almost by design to be highly self-reflexive, appealing always to readers of other socialist publications, and regularly highlighting what they believe to be ideological or theoretical errors in reporting.

³⁴⁴ “Milošević murdered at the Hague,” *Proletarian* 11 (April 2006).

³⁴⁵ For instance, “Milosevic died of natural causes, officials confirm,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), Apr. 6, 2006.

³⁴⁶ “Letter to the readers and supporters of the Morning Star,” *Proletarian online*, last modified Jun. 1, 2009, <http://www.cpgb-ml.org/index.php?secName=statements&subName=display&statementId=25>

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

What persists today?

The Cold War-type discourse utilised by both the mainstream and the socialist media has maintained a continuing resonance since the fall of the Soviet Union. The binarism of the NATO conflict provided a clear example of this, as the vast majority of British socialists declared themselves opposed to the actions of NATO and “the West.” In the subsequent wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, much of the same discourse would manifest itself in the British socialist press. Nonetheless, the continuation of a simplistic anti-imperialism, as the *Weekly Worker*’s Roger Dark charged many British socialists with espousing,³⁴⁸ has resulted in new conflicts among British socialists.

Increasingly, these conflicts have been related to Russian foreign policy. The *Morning Star* has been accused, both by mainstream and socialist media, of glossing over or ignoring Russian aggression beyond its borders, particularly with regard to Syria and Ukraine. For instance, the newspaper ran an article by John Wojcik, editor of *People’s World*, the successor to the American *Daily Worker*, complaining of the West’s “[m]odern-day Russophobia,” and claiming that “Russia was called to task for ‘invading’ Ukraine and ‘annexing’ Crimea” only in response to “a bold right-wing coup in Ukraine that was backed by the US.”³⁴⁹ The *Socialist Review*, by contrast, considered Ukraine to be “torn apart by imperialism,” identifying both the US and Russia as imperialist powers.³⁵⁰ New socialist media such as the online *RS21* have attempted to address this modern manifestation of the socialist schism: their writer Mark Boothroyd has noted that a “layer of activists in the movement saw [Gaddafi’s Libya and Assad’s Syria] as opposed to imperialism, so-called

³⁴⁸ Roger Dark, “Try Milošević!” *Weekly Worker* 355, last modified Oct. 11, 2000, <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/355/try-milosevic/>

³⁴⁹ John Wojcik, “Could a dangerous campaign against Russia spin out of control?” *Morning Star* (London), Jan. 4, 2017.

³⁵⁰ Rob Ferguson, “Ukraine: torn apart by imperialism,” *Socialist Review* 390 (April 2014), <http://socialistreview.org.uk/390/ukraine-torn-apart-imperialism>, accessed Jun. 4, 2017.

‘anti-imperialist’ regimes that were part of an ‘axis of resistance’ which merited them support, regardless of their brutality.”³⁵¹ Evidently, the same themes which came to prominence among the British socialist press in my case studies continue to cause conflict with no end in sight.

This use of Cold War-type binarism is, of course, not exclusive to the socialist press. Some elements of the British mainstream press have used it similarly to draw parallels between social democratic movements and the legacy of the Soviet Union. At the time of writing, referring to Jeremy Corbyn’s campaign as leader of the Labour Party, the right-wing mass-market tabloid *The Sun* made the astonishing claim that there is an “inevitable price of socialism: unemployment, poverty and death.”³⁵² These mass-circulation right-wing outlets have continued to argue that Corbyn is a communist, further highlighting the perpetuity of a Cold War-type demonization of socialist ideas.

Ultimately, it is clear that the British socialist schism during the reign of Slobodan Milošević did not relate to anti-imperialist sentiment, which all British socialist media sources loudly espoused. Instead, the schism largely emerged around questions relating to Milošević himself, the supposed “socialist” character of his regime, and the role of the organised opposition to his rule. To many in the mainstream press, the fact that publications like the *Morning Star* outlasted the fall of the state socialist countries was surprising enough.³⁵³ This schism presents further evidence that the fall of the state socialist countries of

³⁵¹ Mark Boothroyd, “The Syrian Revolution and the crisis of the anti-war movement,” *RS21*, last modified Sep. 10, 2015, <https://rs21.org.uk/2015/09/10/the-syrian-revolution-and-the-crisis-of-the-anti-war-movement/>.

³⁵² “A toxic leftie coalition would spell Brexit betrayal, havoc with the economy and the destruction of Britain,” *The Sun*, last modified Jun. 2, 2017, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3704671/a-toxic-leftie-coalition-would-spell-brexite-betrayal-havoc-with-the-economy-and-the-destruction-of-britain/>.

³⁵³ For instance, the *BBC*’s Sean Coughlan, who stated “Many newspaper readers might be surprised that the *Morning Star* is still published, others might dismiss it as a historical anomaly.” Sean Coughlan, “Pressing on,” *BBC News Magazine*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/4361137.stm, accessed Jun. 8, 2017.

East Central Europe had less impact on the tone and content of the British socialist press than most observers would expect.

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