

Yugoslavia on the brink of an explosion

A special Workers Press supplement by RADOSLAV PAVLOVIC

The profound Yugoslav crisis is reaching a climax. It is the end of an era that began in 1945. Radical change is certain. Inflation is way beyond 200 per cent, the economy is in complete anarchy. Strikes take place all the time and they are massive and angry. Politics has come on to the streets with workers' or nationalist demonstrations that number in the thousands or even tens of thousands. The local regimes tremble or, as happened in Voivodina, they fall. The very top of the state hierarchy is tearing itself to pieces, playing at fireman, indulging in compromises that have neither principles nor future - and all this effort only speeds up the stampede.

A child can see that Yugoslavia is going to blow up. But nobody can predict when or how.

There are two possibilities: either the working class will find the strength to unite and overthrow the bureaucracy, or - because the working class has no programme and no consistent revolutionary organisation, the bureaucracy will succeed in diverting the revolt into insoluble national conflicts (the Balkan tradition is rich in such conflicts).

That would lead to the collapse of Yugoslavia as a federation; and nakedly counter-revolutionary forces would appear to form an 'unholy alliance' with the right wing of the bureaucracy.

'After me comes the great flood' murmur the bankrupt bureaucrats, recognising their own weakness, but determined to hang onto their privileges to the end.

Kosovo is a province in the south of Serbia, bordering Albania, where the conflict between Serbs and Albanians has already reached boiling point.

This is not the only national conflict capable of ravaging Yugoslavia, but it is the most intense. People are talking about a real war if it continues.

The political revolution in Eastern Europe has a common source, but it expresses itself in different ways and the tempo varies from nation to nation.

The Yugoslav government is as bankrupt as that of Poland - indebted to the capitalist banks, in total chaos, with draconian restrictions on wages, and widespread corruption; there is even the same coalition between the new layer of brazen speculators and the state. In Poland the Catholic Church is a powerful factor in disarming the workers and upholding the rampant bureaucracy. In Yugoslavia national divisions brought into the working class by the national oligarchies obstruct their struggle.

The national bureaucrats are haggling at the top, swearing that they will uphold federal unity and their 'fidelity to Tito'. Meanwhile, they speak to the lower ranks in quite a different language, that of national animosity. By pouring out chauvinistic poison they hope to preserve themselves against the anger of the workers.

With no clear idea of the national question, which is very old and complex in the Balkans, the workers' revolution cannot defeat the bureaucracy.

It is impossible here to sketch out the internationalist position which the Fourth International must resolutely and urgently declare. This is an attempt to trace the broad outlines of what is happening so that an international discussion with militant Yugoslavian workers can begin.

'The republic of Kosovo'

The present conflict in Kosovo has a long history, but it has got worse since 1981. In March 1981 there was a mass demonstration of Albanian youth. It was a social revolt, and it was brutally suppressed.

In the background was massive and chronic unemployment. A hundred thousand young people come on the labour market every year, but there are jobs for only a few thousand of them. At the same time the Western frontier was closed to migrant workers; there were no new jobs in Yugoslavia, where the Albanians do the hardest, least skilled and worst paid jobs. It is often seasonal and irregular.

Many Albanian families, and they may have eight or nine children, have nobody employed except as seasonal workers. There are also a good many Albanians in the schools and universities.

Education has leapt forward among these people who only yesterday were living in a patriarchal society. But now the chances of social and economic expansion have darkened.

In comparison with the advanced parts of Yugoslavia, Kosovo has fallen further behind. Thus the social revolt (and it is deeply socialist: it has the red flag, slogans against the 'red bourgeoisie' and so on), has crystallised into a national political movement which demands a 'Kosovo republic'.

That is, in the Yugoslav federation which is made up of six republics, Kosovo must emerge from its vague status of 'autonomous region' and become a republic in its own right.

After all, if 400,000 Montenegrins have one, why not the 1,700,000 Albanians, 200,000 Serbs and Montenegrins, who all live together in Kosovo? If the 'Bosnians', who are variously Serbs, Muslims and Croats, have a republic, though there is no nation of Bosnia, why not Kosovo?

In demanding a republic, Albanians have claimed complete equality. If they had been given this immediately, the Albanian workers and peasants would probably not have lived any better under the rule of Fadil Hodja's Albanian bureaucracy.* But as he was dragged in the mud by the furious Serbian press, he has been transformed into a kind of 'national hero'.

Whatever he may have been, and even though the administration, education and the police force are predominantly Albanian, the Albanians think that to remain an 'autonomous region' means they are subtenants of the Serbs; Kosovo is the aban-

doned orphan of a Slav federation.

The 1981 repression, with nobody knows how many wounded and dead, was followed by thousands of arrests and heavy sentences for what the bureaucracy called 'separatism' in the years which followed.

But it was the source of a new nationalist upsurge. At one time Yugoslavia was named by Amnesty International as the country with the biggest number of political prisoners in Europe. Probably it still is. But neither the East nor the West ever says that the largest proportion of them are Albanians.

Because they need to maintain the status quo in Europe, where Yugoslavia is one of the raw nerves, neither the Moscow bureaucracy nor the bourgeoisie dares to disturb the status quo.

Albania makes propaganda for its own purposes: faced with anarchy in Yugoslavia and fully aware of what is happening to the Albanians of Kosovo, Tirana maintains the pure line of 'Marxism-Leninism' established by Stalin and Mao Zedong. They are the world's last orthodox and infallible 'communists' and do not have to prove anything.

Condemned for 'separatism', though only a tiny minority have ever called for separation from Yugoslavia, the Albanians of Kosovo have closed ranks and begun a kind of muted resistance.

If 'Kosovo-republic' was originally a student demand it has become a rallying point for the whole Albanian population. High school students have been sentenced to five, six or even seven years in prison for writing 'Kosovo republic' on school walls. Relations between Serbs and Albanians have deteriorated rapidly.

Despite this repression, the Serbs of Kosovo did not hesitate to ask for more. Like the Albanians they were suffering the effects of the slump, and like them they were forced to consider a way out; but their solution was to pile all the problems onto the backs of the Albanians.

In the course of time they had become more and more a minority in an Albanian environment but they refused to learn Albanian and tried to impose Serbo-Croat as the official language (at present bi-lingualism is in force). In addition they protest against the Albanian flag and everything else Albanian.

Since the beginning of the century, when it was freed from Turkish domination, Kosovo has been the object of Serbian colonisation under the auspices of the conquering Serbian monarchy.

After the war it was looked after by Rankovic, Tito's Minister of the Interior, whose political police dominated the 'autonomy' of Kosovo. When Tito sacked Rankovic the Serbs saw that their economic, social and economic positions had been weakened. Tito gave more autonomy to Fadil Hodja and the Albanian bureaucracy.

The Serbs keep harking back to the Middle Ages, when Kosovo was the cradle of the Serbian kingdom, later destroyed by the Ottoman invasion, in order to prove their ancient right to the land, just as the Zionists call on the Jewish presence in Palestine 2,000 years ago.

Stirred up (and strongly supported) by the Serbian government and the Belgrade opposition, the Kosovo Serbs would like to

* Fadil Hodja: Albanian Communist and wartime partisan leader. Communist Party chief in Kosovo until deposed in the early 1980s.

reduce 1,700,000 Albanians to the status of a 'national minority', like the Gypsies, Jews, Slovaks and other groups scattered throughout the federation in local populations.

Constitutional reform

The constitutional reform the Serbs are demanding is the opposite of what the Albanians are asking for: they want to abolish the 1974 Constitution which gives a voice to the autonomous regions of Kosovo and Voivodina within the federal consensus. They demand 'a Serbian state on all Serbian territory'; that is, from the Hungarian frontier in the north to the Albanian frontier in the south.

They say the question of national minorities is to be the responsibility of the police, the legal system and the civil service in Serbian Belgrade.

The Serbian nationalists say: 'Serbia must be a sovereign state'; it simply does not occur to them that in a federation, internationally recognised as a sovereign state, each national component cannot claim the same sovereignty.

There cannot be a sovereign state without its own army, its own frontier guards, its own customs, its own currency. It must be a fiction. But the nationalist blindness does not recognise this contradiction as long as it can rouse the most reactionary, chauvinistic instincts in the heart of the discontented Serbs.

The present (1974) constitution is the result of the fragile equilibrium set up by Tito to ensure the national balance of Yugoslavia, the essential condition of his long rule. He was the unchallenged, most prestigious leader of the bureaucracy, but in one way he was a realist.

His right arm in this, Edward Kardelj*, brought with him a dose of learned legalism which was important while Tito was alive and in full power.

They introduced into the constitution the notion of 'nationality', (narodnost), halfway between 'nation' (narod) and 'national minority'.

This came to be the theoretical basis for the so-called 'autonomous regions' and allowed for the strong presence of Hungarians and Albanians in the federation.

These regions have all the political and state features of the republics except that they have to 'consult' with Belgrade, and through Belgrade with the federal government. It was always a complex structure and the source of completely opposite interpretations.

The official juridical law, like the economic law called the 'planned market economy', is based on what is known as 'compulsory agreement'. But after Tito, nothing and nobody in Yugoslavia agrees any more.

Now that it has lost its supreme arbiter the bureaucracy is tearing itself apart. All the ideological masks have fallen off - among others that of 'workers' self-management'. Naked self-interest has come to the fore.

The meteoric rise of Serbian nationalism

Inter-communal hatred in Kosovo does not begin with the local Serbs and Montenegrins - living as well as they can in an Albanian environment - but with those in Belgrade.

The standard-bearers of this nationalism are the intellectuals, not least the old communists and partisans, the comrades of Tito.

Among them Dobrica Cosic, a well-known writer, has the most authority. In 1967 he was already warning of the fate of Serbs in Kosovo. He was expelled from the central committee of the Serbian Communist Party. Since then, the professors of philosophy at

Belgrade, like nearly all the intelligentsia, have fallen into step with him.

In semi-opposition, the writers and academics worked out by autumn 1986 the famous 'Memorandum', a political programme which reflects the aspirations as well as the contradictions of this intelligentsia. Its second section is frankly nationalist.

The party in power violently attacked the document, but events took place rapidly and in a few months a majority of the Central Committee of the Serbian CP had adopted the theses of the Memorandum, though without admitting it.

The deputies and apparatchniks took up all the points of the opposition which concerned Kosovo, including those about 'terror' and 'genocide', grave and false accusations for which they could find no proof.

Despite the skirmishes between the government and the opposition over freedom of expression, a tacit understanding was reached - on the basis of nationalism.

The 'left professors', Mihailo Markovic and Ljuba Tadic at their head, underwrote this agreement. That was the way in which a Serb 'holy alliance' was formed.

Strengthened by the discreet support of the opposition, the authorities unleashed a highly tendentious and demagogic propaganda campaign against the Albanians. Capitalist press barons like Axel Springer in Germany, Hersant in France and Rupert Murdoch had nothing on the power and concerted attack of the Belgrade press. Everything was set in motion like a powerful machine in the service of chauvinist propaganda. This stretched from the 'serious' paper 'Politika', the government mouthpiece since the end of the war, to the pornographic 'Duga', which besides naked women and obscene articles, goes in for unconcealed admiration for the Patriarch of the Serbian church and the warmest sympathy for professors and 'revolutionaries' of the 1968 vintage - a heterogeneous and highly profitable mixture.

The facts were distorted, embroidered; the most diverse news (theft, rape, acts of vengeance, grievous bodily harm) were systematically transformed into political acts of 'separatism' and 'counter-revolution'.

If infant school children hit each other, and one was a Serb and the other Albanian, that became 'premeditated separatist action' to drive the Serbs out of Kosovo. If Albanians had eight or nine children to a family, it was because they had got the idea in their heads of driving the Serbs out by a 'demographic counter-revolution'.

Crude ideas of this type, which had been heard in private conversation or in the street, passed more and more openly into the columns of the press and into official discourse.

This political and psychological pressure has driven the Albanians into a bunker.

It has made the region into a powder-keg which could explode any day.

At every step of everyday life a no-man's land is set up between the Serbs and the Albanians. The Serb minority see a grim future in such a hostile environment, cry for help, and demand arms.

Slobodan Milosevic

Faced with the deteriorating political climate in Kosovo and under the pressure of the attempts to outbid them, the bureaucracy can no longer carry on wavering.

A manoeuvring wing of the bureaucracy, led by Slobodan Milosevic, a typical apparatchnik, has adopted the opposition's theses and rapidly come to power.

Those bureaucrats who hesitate and prefer 'moderation' and more 'political methods' instead of making the national tensions worse, such as Belgrade party leader D.Pavlovic, and the Serbian representative at federal level, Ivan Stambolic, have been swept aside.

In two years, Slobodan Milosevic, an almost unknown functionary of the new

species, has become the uncontested political leader in Belgrade. Already songs are being dedicated to this 'new guide'.

His grip on the press has produced an auction of nationalist demagogy, strongly resembling the 'higher bid' technique of Mussolini.

His unholy alliance lacks neither priests nor secret royalists who admire the Chetniks**, nor former members of Rankovic's famous secret police, the UDBAS, nor left-wing professors, nor right-wing lawyers, nor artists and writers, nor kafana singers*** looking for a way to boost their careers.

They say the Belgrade press has become much freer in the last few years. In fact, once it had been released from the control of the bureaucracy there was a complete and grovelling self-censorship.

Any black sheep gets thrown out straight away. There has however been a complete freedom from anything that could be described as journalistic scruples, especially when it comes to broadcasting nationalist poison.

Upheaval at Novi Sad

At a stroke, Serbian nationalists have provoked trouble where there was none. This happened in Voivodina this summer, when Milosevic started a powerful campaign of mass meetings all over Serbia against the regional authorities.

Although this body had a Serbian majority it had refused to endorse Milosevic's constitutional reform which aimed to suppress the autonomous regions.

This resistance was motivated in part by the aspiration of the regional bureaucracy to safeguard its own autonomy as the source of its own privileges. Partly, though, it was motivated by realism: the particular national composition of a region where half the population was Hungarian, Roumanian, or other.

By means of repeated and well-organised mass meetings and by demagogy ('Down with the bureaucrats! down with armchair leaders!'), Milosevic managed to force the whole regional leadership to resign.

The legitimate anger of the workers was thus channeled adroitly against their regional government, even though its responsibility for the general economic mess is extremely limited when all is said and done, compared with that of the federal government.

Recently they tried to repeat their success in Montenegro, but there the workers took centre stage with their own slogans: 'Down with the bureaucracy! Down with the thieves! Yugoslav workers unity!'

The heterogeneous crowd stayed day and night outside the centre of government in Titograd and the order went out to disperse them. The injuries they received in this action only increased the anger of the masses. But the role of the working class in the Yugoslav crisis will be discussed later.

In order to organise all these impressive meetings, some of them outside Serbia, the Serbian and Montenegrin nationalists have had to set up a veritable parallel party under the wing of the official party.

This hidden hand of the Serbian bureaucracy is trying to impose itself at a federal level and to dismantle the federation under its control.

Milosevic's impudence, and his spirit of enterprise, can only be explained in the context of the paralysis, decay and decrepitude of the whole Yugoslav bureaucracy. It took two years after the Kosovo incident before it decided to characterise the revolt as a 'counter-revolution'.

All the signs point the same way, though the interested parties keep on denying it: a good number of the most senior leaders, none of them Albanians, were first taken aback and then terrified by what was going on, and were quite ready to accept republic status for Kosovo within the Yugoslav federation.

* Edward Kardelj: leading ideologist of the Yugoslav Communist Party.

** Chetniks: Serbian royalist forces and wartime opponents of Tito's partisans.

*** Kafana singers: popular singers in cafés and inns.

Two years later, although they had agreed to put the label of 'counter revolution' on the Albanian demands, the federal oligarchy balked at giving a free hand to those who, like Milosevic, were making the most protests against the 'counter revolution'.

The Serbian, Croatian and other bureaucracies were terrified by their own working masses, and were not ready, either for a deal or to make a fight of it.

The present boss of this federal gang is Stipe Suvar, the leader of the Croatian Communist Party. He is a former university lecturer and a consummately cynical politician, who changes his political views as often as he changes his shirt. The federal oligarchy has led Yugoslavia into the catastrophe and has no idea what to do next to get it out of the mess. It is trying to hang on to the status quo which is shattering in all directions.

It is wheeling and dealing and giving way to the pressure from Serbia. The only rule for these 'natiocrats', as they call them in Yugoslavia, is to do whatever will protect their own privileges, even at the risk of the whole thing sinking.

They decided to give the green light to the federal police, who had been drafted to Kosovo in large numbers, to arrest 42 Albanians as a sign that they were willing to do something.

These Albanians, a number of whom had been implicated in the 'Kosovo-republic' movement of 1981, had been keeping quiet since the massive repression which followed.

However, the Yugoslav federal bureaucracy found that to restore calm at the top it was necessary to pacify Serbian public opinion with Albanian heads. They had classified the muted Albanian resistance as 'counter-revolution', and since there was no sign either of leaders or troops of this counter-revolution, they decided at the highest level to make something up. So a number of potential militants were woken by the dawn knock.

Lebanon in Europe?

The unspoken logic of Serbian nationalism is to place the whole of Yugoslavia under its heel. But since Serbian ambitions by far exceed the means at their disposal, the bureaucracy will only manage to do what the bourgeoisie did before the war.

That is, it will fan the flames of every kind of nationalism and push the country into an abyss of chauvinism.

The only force capable of standing up to this blind and irresponsible policy is the working class, united nationally against all factions of the bureaucracy, with clear aims; it must drive the bureaucracy from power, take the fate of the country in the hands of real workers' councils, and re-establish confidence between the different peoples within the Yugoslav federation.

Above all, it must give the Albanians the right of national self-determination - and it will have to devise an emergency plan to deal with the economic shambles.

The main task for us Serbian international communists is to restore the international Marxist heritage of Dimitrije Tucovic, the leader of the Serbian Socialist Party which fought bravely against the megalomania and barbarity of the young Serbian bourgeoisie at the end of the Balkan Wars on behalf of the Albanian people.

We must affirm openly Lenin's position on the national question: 'We cannot make them love us by force'.

It is especially true for the Serbian people, above all the working class, for whom the bureaucracy and the intellectuals have set a dangerous trap.

A minority of honest and democratic intellectuals, like Branko Horvat, an econ-

omist from Zagreb, in his well-documented 'The Question of Kosovo', have tried to find a way to 'an understanding' or 'a dialogue between responsible people' with the aim of saving the Yugoslav federation. To do this with any kind of socialist orientation is praiseworthy and deserves generous and even passionate support; but alas, it reflects the powerlessness of the intelligentsia in the ferocious struggle which is coming up.

To Horvat's appeal for a 'democratic dialogue' between Yugoslav intellectuals, the Serbian nationalists spit in his eye or use the hypocritical and academic methods of the 'left-wing professors'.

But Horvat proposes 'an understanding' on the basis of reform, of democratising the bureaucracy. Now, can there be any friendly 'understanding' between the mass of working people and the bureaucracy? The mass meetings of the workers say 'Get rid of the thieves!'

They are ready to pull them out of their comfortable chairs with their bare hands.

The unity of Yugoslavia can only be safeguarded on the basis of workers' unity. And workers' unity can only be achieved on the basis of a common struggle of all the workers against all the bureaucracy.

They must be prepared to kick the bureaucrats out, and prepared for the political revolution, that is to say, the seizure of power by the working class.

Economic centralisation, and strict reorganisation of the existing anarchy in the interest of the masses - workers, peasants, teachers, health workers, retired people - everyone living at a minimum standard - these things can only be done under the blows of proletarian fists.

To reach that point means the working class has to understand that you have to uproot the privileges of the bureaucrats and the caste of officials and policemen and you have to put an end to all corruption and speculation.

The proletariat can only deal with the national question, which is loaded with unhappy memories for everyone, by means of the widest democracy. All the Albanian political prisoners must be set free.

If the Serbian chauvinists can raise their slogan 'Down with the constitution!' unhindered under the benevolent eye of the police, why cannot the Albanians have the right to put their position freely, 'A Republic of Kosovo!'

Unless the working class can do this there will be economic ruin and an open restoration of fascism. In the course of a civil war the most noticeable groups to reappear will be the Serbian Chetniks and the Croatian Ustashi*, both of which live still in the collective memory of the people.

Either there will be a revolutionary assault of all the Yugoslav workers to save the Yugoslav federation and lead it towards unification with the workers of East and West, or there will be a Lebanon in the heart of Europe. There are no other alternatives.

The working class and nationalism

The key to the Yugoslav situation is in Serbia where, faced with the chauvinistic propaganda of the bureaucracy, no-one dares to raise their voices. The opposition agree with the propaganda or they consent in silence. The wing of the bureaucracy which has been pushed out of office, like the surviving wartime partisans, is in a state of confusion and total impotence.

The workers have for a long time resisted calls for a 'sacred union' with Serbian nationalism, because they distrust the authorities, but they are slowly giving way.

This climate of opinion explains why the workers of the IMR RAKOVICA industrial complex, a working class fortress in Belgrade, enraged by the exploding cost of

living, marched to the National Assembly, burst in, and placed their legitimate and important demands on the table.

They were offered junior spokespersons to soothe their feelings but they refused to be clamped down; they even insisted that the government should resign; but they went back without gaining a single thing after Milosevic made a personal intervention which lasted ten minutes. All he offered was vague promises of a better future if they would support him.

The Serbian workers, who are as discontented as any others because of the fantastic drop in the real value of their wages, cannot spontaneously understand how to resolve the thorny national problem, or how to outsmart the bureaucracy when it tries to manipulate them.

Like the workers in other regions they have been on the road of struggle for three years, a period marked by numerous strikes, often repeated ones, and these strikes have not only become fiercer: they have become political.

The Labin miners had taken the lead for more than a month in the spring of 1987. Then the workers of the ZMAJ Tractor Factory near Belgrade came out; then the workers of the Borovo Shoe Factory in Croatia; and then those from the Agrokomerc in Bosnia. This agricultural food products enterprise went bankrupt after a sensational financial scandal involving its management group (the case is at present in court).

Last spring these workers took an important step in the struggle. In their thousands they went straight to the Federal Parliament in Belgrade, demanding an immediate interview with the government. They did not want to see their own managers any more, or the heads of the local or regional authorities.

They knew that these people, who bureaucratically follow the rules through the maze of 'workers' self-management', always come unstuck, like beads off a broken string, every time they are faced with any real responsibility.

Although they demanded to see him, Branko Mikulic, the leader of the Federal government, did not dare to appear.

Instead, the President of the Assembly, a sort of Clerk of the Court, (or perhaps he is the caretaker of state power?) was presented to them; he said, more or less, that there was nothing he could do; he was not competent to do anything; they ought to go and address themselves to half a dozen local and regional 'competent people', who in fact were all totally irresponsible and would pass the workers on from one department to another.

They had come to Belgrade to address the government directly; they came from a distance at their own expense, and demanded that the government should resign.

The working class had showed that it did not want to fall into the trap of 'workers' self-management'. Instead, it wanted to settle accounts right at the top.

When they sat down in the National Assembly deputies' chairs (no-one had invited them, and the Borovo workers had been left outside to stamp their feet for five hours before they forced their way in) they were posing the problem of power.

Who is the master in this country? they asked. This is a country where even the Constitution declares that the working class is in power! The ZMAJ workers came as far as the entrance to the parliament and stirred up the working population of Belgrade with their presence.

Even then, the slogan 'Down with the bureaucracy!' was raised only here and there. Two months later, at the beginning of October, the workers of Titograd in Mont-

* Ustashi: Croatian fascists; allies of German occupying forces during World War Two.

enegro put this watchword out in front. When they added 'Down with the thieves!' they made the whole regional authority quake.

The clashes with the police that took place only made the workers more furious. The youth, including the official youth movement, joined them en masse.

The pro-Serb nationalists, who had called the meeting, were relegated to the back. Nevertheless, they were still there, and a striking feature of these Serbian meetings that summer was that the political demands of the working class were closely mingled with the nationalist catchphrases inspired by Belgrade. In fact they were often mixed up together in the heads of the workers. Both sides in these meetings wanted the resignation of all members of the Regional government.

The nationalists in Voivodina wanted to remove one team from office and put in another one which supported Milosevic.

The workers wanted to finish the bureaucracy off altogether and to demand working class unity. The apparent agreement of the two sides is only so to speak accidental, owing to the lack of an independent working class leadership which is capable of separating the class line from the nationalist line.

If a Marxist counter-propaganda had existed in Serbia the nationalists would never have been able to take the positions they did. Here as elsewhere the problem is reduced to the problem of an independent working class leadership.

The Yugoslav working class cannot spontaneously resolve the complex problem of a political programme where the national question must come first

The bureaucracy as agent of the IMF

Although the authorities have often been forced to give a few crumbs under the impact of strikes and demonstrations, they have really given nothing away. There is nothing for them to give away, at least without scuttling themselves.

As Trotsky said, 'The devil doesn't gnaw his nails because he enjoys it!'

The Yugoslav bureaucracy does not wish to give up either the prerogatives or the privileges of power. It does nothing at all but transmit the pressures of imperialism on to every worker's back; to be precise, it takes more and more out of their pockets, and digs deeper and deeper to pay the debts to the capitalist banks - and these debts were arranged, squandered and generously misappropriated by itself.

The economic policy of Stalinist bureaucracies (and the 'Yugoslav model' is just a bit in advance of the general trend) is no different now from the policy of any parasitic comprador bourgeoisie in an indebted nation.

The bureaucracy is a direct agent of the IMF. It sells the natural resources of the country, its raw materials and finished and semi-finished products, the work of millions of its people, at a discount. It reduces wages to Far East levels.

Mikulic, the leader of the government, is the symbol of this sort of policy, and people all over Yugoslavia are calling for his resignation. At the same time as luxury and opulence overflow from the power-elite and its allies, the new petty-bourgeois layers of speculators who operate on the margins of the law are getting rich at dizzying speed.

Seeing this engraves the workers even more. When a worker who is standing on an improvised platform says in tears that he has nothing left to feed his children with, that is a cry of despair.

You can feel an electric shock run through the crowd. At that moment you know everything is possible: the smallest spark could

blow up the whole structure. That is the logical explanation for the generally 'neutral' attitude of the police when these gatherings take place!

That shows the temperature the class struggle has reached on the Yugoslav thermometer! Another indication of the temperature is this: you listen to the general tone each meeting adopts, and see how often someone says 'This is our last warning!'

Fear, so characteristic of this country where the working class is fragmented to individuals and where 'walls have ears', has disappeared. Faced with a terrified and tattered bureaucracy the workers clearly have the initiative.

The central problem, that of power, is working its way to the top of the list. But to pose a problem is not to resolve it - far from it. The workers' initiative, powerful as it may be, halts before the complicated questions of general politics as long as it remains spontaneous.

The movement cannot go forward unless it has a clear awareness of what it has to achieve. Many workers explicitly admit that the national problem is their main stumbling block.

But the national problem complicates the task of the bureaucracy, too. Faced with the advance of workers they will not hesitate to resort to the 'Jaruzelski formula', but if the bureaucracy has to give the power completely to the army, then that means that power must be concentrated in the hands of a military leader.

And there is a problem: the Yugoslav bureaucracy will first of all have to choose from the generals of different nationalities. That is not an easy thing to do, even if it is not excluded a priori.

The attempts to trample over Slovenia met with broad opposition, that even included the Slovenian bureaucracy who challenged the operation of the military budget. At the time a compromise was made on the backs of the Albanian workers, but even suppose the army did restrain the subdued Albanian resistance, the problem of the external debt would still be there.

So would the problems of getting the economy working, and of satisfying the claims of the workers throughout the whole of Yugoslavia (even though all they are asking for is a living wage). Those in power are incapable of assuring them even this minimum.

Well, with or without the Albanians, the Yugoslav workers, and especially the Serbs, are going to have to come back and begin again in their struggle against the bureaucracy. A new social war, a revolution, is inevitable. Perspectives of 'democratisation', of a progressive and peaceful outcome to the economic crisis of Yugoslavia (it would be better to call it a catastrophe) are only pious hopes with no basis in reality.

Such a viewpoint assumes that the bureaucracy will shut themselves down, go to confession, make their excuses to the working class for getting the country bankrupt, and, like good little children, hand over to the 'competent people'.

Everything in future is going to be all right - except for economic recovery, social harmony and a peaceful democracy. Even in the highly unlikely event that the workers will pardon them, the bureaucracy will never give up their privileges. All this means that the future will demand a 'strong hand' - a dictatorship.

The question is this: will it be a fascist dictatorship under some national flag, on the basis of the general dismemberment of Yugoslavia, or will it be the proletarian dictatorship on the basis of a re-established unity of the workers?

The democratic opposition calls for the reform of the system. They want a sort of more or less parliamentary political plural-

ism. Like the Polish opposition, they demand a minor political role for the working class.

In Poland it is the 'second chamber'; in Yugoslavia it is the 'Workers Council' tacked on to the existing Parliament which already has two chambers, the General Council and the Council of the Nations.

So the intellectuals, who still call themselves 'Marxists' from time to time, attempt to turn their dream of parliamentary democracy into reality, instead of seeing this reality in its objectivity, in class terms.

As a result they find themselves stuck between the bureaucracy and the working class. The democratic opposition accepts the nationalist platform.

This shows that it is not ready to divorce itself from the bureaucracy despite the uncomfortable nature of their domestic arrangements. At the moment it has the feeling that its dream is impotent in this Balkan context, where history has always been made by dictatorships.

It sinks into disenchantment, moralism, religion and even mysticism. Serbian nationalism inevitably goes in the direction of the Orthodox church and the royalist Chetnik.*

Even the heir of the Karageorges (the ex-royal family) is beginning to strut around in emigrant drawing rooms and to 'offer his services', like the partisans of Rankovic who were shown the door by Tito very early on. Djilas, the only survivor of the old Yugoslav Communist Party leadership, ideologically anti-party and the blue-eyed boy of the international bourgeoisie, is getting himself rehabilitated at full speed.

Under the pretext that he is not personally compromised and that he has paid for his dissidence by his isolation and imprisonment, his political ideas, which are becoming the ideas of the whole opposition, are being rehabilitated.

Just as it did in Poland, the so-called democratic opposition has evolved to the right. Nothing distinguishes it any longer from bourgeois ideology. It has given up Marxism and is no longer sure whether it is in favour of socialism.

Its political programme is reduced to three points: human rights; civil society; constitutional state. Anti-Bolshevism has become very fashionable: the question is who should we blame everything on? Lenin? Or perhaps Trotsky?

The big expert, the absolute authority on political philosophy, is Ljubomir Tadic who, with impressive eclecticism, has managed to combine Kant, Bakunin, Max Weber and Rosa Luxemburg against Lenin.

'The sickness of the twentieth century is Bolshevism,' he says. Among the 'Bolsheviks' proscribed alongside all other 'revolutionary dictators' (this category includes Robespierre, for example) he has put Tito.

The Slovenian students have gone even further - they have included Slobodan Milosevic!

In such an atmosphere the principled intellectuals and those democrats who are worthy of the name, such as the architect known as Bogdan Bogdanovic, feel that they are 'exiles in their own country'. If Dimitrije Tucovic was still alive he would be exiled from his country like a shot, unless they managed to lynch him first as a 'Bolshevik' and a traitor to the Serbian fatherland. Look how Branko Horvat, who is neither a Bolshevik or a revolutionary, but simply a well-intentioned democratic socialist, was welcomed in Belgrade.

Today, a book like Tucovic's 'Serbia and Albania' (published in 1911) would have to be burned in the town square. That shows what a wretched state the Serbian intelligentsia are in today, and how great and urgent are the tasks facing us Bolshevik-Leninists.

* For example, see the way Vojislav Seselj has developed. He is a young philosopher, who in a few years has passed from 'critical Marxism' (of the 'school of praxis' variety) to Berdjaev-type orthodox mysticism.