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Kosovo

A just solution requires multinational co-existence

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Description:

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1. **"The Yugoslav crisis began in Kosovo, and it will end in Kosovo"**. This phrase that is widespread among the people of ex-Yugoslavia indicates the significance and the tension that is encapsulated in that region. Seventeen years after the collapse of Yugoslavia we stand before a new episode related to Kosovo. Unfortunately, there is no sign that a just solution can be secured in the absence of a social dynamics that oppose nationalism and imperialist interventions as well. The Yugoslav crisis that started in 1989 with the violent dissolution of Kosovo autonomy is about to complete 20 years full of wars, national conflicts, rebellions but still yet many of its pain aspects are still pending (i.e. Bosnia)

2. **The imperialist forces of NATO and the European Union in 1999 launched the bombing of Serbia in the name of "human values"**. This military operation resulted in:

- a. the killing of more than 2000 people in different towns of Serbia,
- b. an important sector of the country's infrastructure was destroyed,
- c. there has been an increasing uprising of nationalism and
- d. Milocevic unleashed a sweeping ethnic cleansing with the killing of thousands Kosovars and the displacement of more than 500000 people as the "humanitarian bombings" lasted.

Their intervention was completed with the establishment of a protectorate whose main aim was to keep a balanced status. In the diplomatic jargon this is called "humanitarian crisis administration". Kosovar people for about 10 years have survived mainly thanks to the benevolence of the "civilized West", who in exchange has been building military bases in order to guarantee their interests in the whole region of South-Eastern Europe and Middle East. Kosovo inhabitants live under humiliating conditions and the majority of them are unemployed, surviving thanks to the donations of their immigrant relatives. The country is paralyzed, without basic infrastructure (e.g. continuous distribution of electricity) and the state apparatus is totally corrupted. All these past years, the imperialist forces have shown no interest in changing this situation in order to be able to steal all the productive wealth and national resources and to implement the "reconstruction" projects by the big multinational and Western European corporations.

3. **Ten years later, US and many countries of the EU (like Germany, France, Britain, Italy etc.) are about to complete their mission by recognizing this fiasco-independence of Kosovo**. Actually, they create a protectorate. The "independence" of Kosovo is fully subordinated to the plans and the pursuits of the imperialist forces. The NATO force of about 16.000 military personnel, who have occupied Kosovo, will remain and the EU will send EULEX that will consist of 2000 policemen, juridical and administrative staff. The colonial-style rule of the UN will be re replaced by the International Civilian Office; a body that will be appointed by the EU and it will be able to exercise veto on every law that the "independent" parliament of Kosovo will vote for.

The construction of the military bases (Bonsteel, the biggest and most luxurious base that US has ever built after Vietnam War, and Monteith) in Kosovo does not only aim at securing the "order" in the region but also at protecting broader interests. In these military bases thousands of personnel can be hosted and they are not limited only to "transitional" use. The US shows clearly that the territory of Kosovo will be the fortress for future interventions mainly for guaranteeing alternative oil routes towards the West.

The rest of the big powers who are against the independence of Kosovo are not deprived of cynical attitudes and profit interests. Russia, who stands by Serbia, is trying to exchange its solidarity with a monopoly contract for Russia's Gazprom, while at the same time, together with other countries like Spain, Canada and China, is skeptical because the independence of Kosovo will be a bad example for the ethnic groups and minorities that are badly oppressed at home. Today, Kosovo is at the heart of an intra-imperialistic conflict and the people of the Balkans have nothing to hope for from these so-called "protectors".

4. The pursuits of the imperialists should not be identified with the just demand of the Kosovar people for self-determination, which must be supported by the international working class movement and all the progressive forces. It is a fundamental right of the Kosovar population to define their future. The real liberation -both national and social- of the Kosovar people can only be achieved if it is linked with the struggle for the socialist transformation of their society and not in the frame of capitalism.

The Kosovo Albanian people have been for many years the victims of a very oppressive, antidemocratic and racist policy. The national-liberation movement of Kosovo Albanians is not an artificial invention of imperialism. Its root can be traced back at the beginning of the previous century. The texts of the left-wing Serbian socialists (as Dimitrije Cucovic) and revolutionary socialists (as Leon Trotsky) revealed in the most obvious way the colonial discriminations against Kosovo Albanians. Even after the founding of Yugoslavia and the victory of the partisans, the national issue of the Albanian people was not resolved, although their autonomy was typically recognized. The Kosovo Albanians became the victims of the conflict among the Yugoslavian bureaucracy who were reluctant to implement a policy of equality. The demand of Kosovo Albanians to become a separate federal Republic within the framework of the former Yugoslavia was never met. The Kosovo Albanian people used to be the most repressive and humiliated nation of the ex Yugoslavia.

The only exception was the period 1974-1988, when Kosovar autonomy was upgraded and they gained some rights similar to the other republics.

The full annexation of Kosovo to Serbia took place in 1989 after the violent abolition of the Kosovar autonomy and the military coup d'état imposed by Milosevic. Kosovo was condemned to "apartheid", where the use of Albanian language was forbidden, schools and universities were shut down, all Albanian employees in public sector were fired and a lot of Albanians were sent to jail as political prisoners (some of them are still there).

5. The Serbian minority, as well as other non-Albanian ethnic groups (Roma etc.), after the bombing of NATO and the de facto secession of Kosovo from Serbia in 1999, are under persecution. A big part of the Serbian population escaped into Serbia or other neighbor countries. The majority of the Serbian people have gathered in the north part of Kosovo, in the Mitrovica region, and there are still some enclosed ghettos in the rest of the country. This unacceptable situation that Serbian people suffer is not just the result of some personal revenge actions. The government of PDK (the main Albanian party that comes from dissolved KLA), despite its hypocritical statements on co-existence and the respect of minority rights, has occasionally encouraged the national tensions against the minorities aiming to the "national homogeneity". NATO and the rest of the imperialist forces motivated the Albanian nationalism through their diplomatic tactics and their refusal of a clear independence for Kosovo. The more unsafe the Albanian nationalists feel about the independence, the more eager they were to create a "national cleansed" state. Additionally, the main tactics of KFOR for coping with the national tensions in Kosovo was the

division of the people across ethnic lines, through the implementation of the notorious "decentralization plans". Today, a real just solution for Kosovo comes through the restoration of multinational co-existence (an aspiration that unfortunately has been lost in most part) and the full respect of the rights of all ethnic groups and minorities, including their right to define the level of their autonomy and self-defense.

6. No progress in the national issue can be achieved if at the same time there isn't any social evolution reflected in the consciousness of the masses. Today, in Kosovo the conditions for a "normal social life" are absent -even by the criteria of an average capitalist normality. The majority of the inhabitants are obliged to survive through the donations of the western NGOs and other organizations. The social and political life is somewhere between an ambiguous legality and an extended corruption. The country is about to be offered to the big corporation groups so they can execute their "business plans" in a small "paradise" of a cheap and over-exploited labor force.

We have no trust in the international community that can prepare and implement a plan for the restoration of economy, production and social institutions in favor of the public interests.

Being fully aware of the difficult situation, due to the weakness of the organized trade-unions and the lack of political and social forces with a class and left-wing orientation, we still insist on the necessity of building resistance movements as the only perspective for a just solution in Kosovo.

During the last years there has been a movement among the Kosovo Albanians (known as Self-determination - Vetevendosje) who are against the presence of NATO troops and they defend a program of progressive social reforms. This movement has organized massive demonstrations against the imperialist troops and they have been brutally suppressed by the occupying forces (last February, two members of this movement were killed by Romanian soldiers and many Vetevendosje activists have been arrested). Nevertheless, their nationalist rhetoric is a big political problem.

Some initiatives that are related to the anti-globalisation movements such as the European Social Forum and the Balkan PGA (People Global Action) can surely play an important role. Although limited, there have already been some networks on various themes in the Balkan region that have managed to break the isolation and to establish a co-ordination between different social groups.

7. In the national question, the Left must implement a politics of principles without being dependent by the temporary and opportunist maneuvers of the imperialist forces who act according to their profit interests. The starting point should be the defense of the democratic rights of the people. All those who say that, in the name of any "primary antithesis", the systematic repression of a people should be ignored it is not anything else than a by-mistake or on-purpose racist attitude against the oppressed people.

The real guarantee for the defense of the democratic rights should be based on the fraternity of the labor masses. The task of the Left should not stop simply at declaring the democratic principles. An indispensable element of a left-wing strategy should be also the unity of the workers and oppressed masses that live in the war-zone regions. This unity cannot be secured with a typical maintenance of Kosovo within Serbia proper; which actually it will be a big prison for the majority of Kosovar people. This unity can be forged only in the ground of joint fights and demands, where the working class and the oppressed people could understand that their real enemies are not the national but the class ones. The maintenance of an obscure and uncertain status in Kosovo will always be an excuse for the nationalists, the ruling classes and the imperialists in order to divide the working class and impose their plans more easily.

The left-wing currents should defend the independence of Kosovo -keeping alive all their critics for the process that is

followed by the imperialist forces and the dangers that can be produced by that. From this viewpoint we are against the maneuvers of the Greek government who uses the issue of Kosovo in the diplomatic negotiations for the name of the Republic of Macedonia. Unfortunately, the majority of the Greek left-wing organizations (in contrary with the brave attitude of the Serbian internationalist radical left-wing currents) actually identify themselves with the main orientations of the Greek "foreign policy". The main argument of the Greek Left (both reformist and anticapitalist) is the "maintenance of the borders" and the International Law. Nevertheless, the borders of the contemporary world, which in general have been formed after the end of Second World War, are the outcome of the imperialist division. The adoption of these slogans from the Left means that they do not recognize actually the right of the oppressed peoples (like the Palestinian, the Kurds, East Timor etc.) for self-determination. But above all, it means their full adaption to the imperialist institutions and the abandonment of the humanist demand of the communist movement that the rights of the oppressed people are above any law. Finally, they consider that for "destabilization" can be equally blamed both the "oppressor" and the "oppressed" as well.

8. Today, the fight for the Balkan Socialist Federation is still live as the only way for an internationalist and antiwar strategy that will be based on the best experiences of the workers and socialist movement of the peninsula. Against the diplomatic realism that simply legalizes the nationalist, militarist and imperialist violence we must oppose the class unity and solidarity of the Balkan proletarians.

The tasks of the socialists is to fight for the unity of the Balkan people and to demand

- ▶ The withdrawal of all imperialist troops from Kosovo and the whole region of the Balkans
- ▶ Recognition of the right of self-determination for Kosovar people
- ▶ Equal political and legal rights for all ethnic groups and minorities
- ▶ Fight back all the neoliberal plans for the "reconstruction" of the Balkans
- ▶ Cancellation of all privatizations that have been occurred - Defend the public wealth and national resources of the Balkan countries
- ▶ Defend the rights of women who are the major victims of reactionary institutions and trafficking.

Athens, March 4, 2008