

Belgrade 1997

The Enemy of My Enemy Is Not Necessarily My Friend

BY BOGDAN DENITCH

After the Rome meeting of the Socialist International (SI) in January, I returned to Belgrade to join by then long lasting mass demonstrations of from 20,000 to 400,000 people against the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic. The few previous demonstrations in Belgrade in 1993 did not compare to these in size, breadth or intensity. The two groups leading the demonstrations are the political parties in a coalition called "Zajedno" (Together) and the university students who are formally non-political but whose leaders included some nationalists, some supporters of the Democratic Party and a strong minority of the youth section of the Social Democratic Union.

The demonstrations were triggered last November when Milosevic stole the municipal elections—which he lost in most cities, including Belgrade, to Zajedno. Milosevic's February 5 bow to the demonstrators and their leaders was a massive and unprecedented victory.

But Milosevic is no Gorbachev. He will not go quietly into the night. How much violence he will use to maintain power will depend on how far the opposition moves beyond the issue of the theft of municipal elections. After all, two weeks earlier Milosevic's coalition won the federal elections with a larger majority than earlier and Zajedno lost 300,000 votes in comparison with previous elections. It seems that the voters wanted Zajedno to run most of the cities but did not have confidence that it could run the country.

The situation in present-day Yugoslavia (Serbia and

Montenegro) is now extremely fluid, with quickly shifting relations of forces among student organizations, unorganized students, political parties, trade unions and the Serbian Orthodox church. At the same time there is great stability in the leadership of the parties, including the leaders of Zajedno who have been in place since the beginning of multi-party activity in Yugoslavia in 1990.

Zajedno is clear in its detestation of Milosevic and even more of his orthodox Communist hard-line wife, Mira Markovic, but very vague about its own program. They tend to repeat the stale mantras, "privatization and marketization," which, given the vast amount of obsolete industry in Yugoslavia devastated by years of

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blockade, would mean even more unemployment and misery. That is one reason why Milosevic will resist the pressure for a change of regime but has yielded on leadership of the cities. A second reason is that the loss of political power at this stage also means an irreversible loss of economic power for the present elite—an unlovely mix of the old nomenklatura and new gangsters.

Major Opposition Parties Sorting out the major opposition parties might help DL readers understand the political context—who is who, in ex-Yugoslavia.

The Serbian Radical Party, led by Vojislav Seselj, is a right-wing populist party whose militia have, with the cooperation of the Milosevic government and the army and police, committed some of the very worst of the war crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

The Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), led by Vojislav Kostunica, is a conservative nationalist party which has bitterly criticized the Milosevic regime for "betraying" the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. It has maintained a very close relationship to Bosnian Serb leaders in Pale. They are Serb nationalists close to the Orthodox Church. They are opposed to Milosevic, in part, because of his supposed "leftism." They were with Zajedno for a time, but are now outside the coalition.

There are three parties with a democratic socialist orientation: 1) The League of Vojvodina Social Democrats (Nenad Canak), a regional party which did very well during the November federal and local elections. Their record is consistent in opposing the war and defending minorities in the region. 2) The Social Democratic Party of Montenegro, led by Krivokapic, is an observer party of the SI. The party received almost 10% of the vote in the federal elections. It is solidly anti-war and has a following among Moslem and Albanian voters. It is proudly multi-ethnic. 3) The Social Democratic Union (SDU), led by federal deputy Zarko Korac, is a newly (1995) founded party which views nationalism in Serbia as particularly virulent and as a primary cause of the wars of Yugoslav succession. The party is small, untested in elections and has an active student group which has played a substantial role in the student demonstrations.

Close to the social democrats is the independent union, Nezavisnost, (Branko Canak). This union has been anti-war and anti-Milosevic during the worst of times, is organizing rapidly and is of growing importance.

The coalition Zajedno includes: 1) The Civic Alliance of Serbia (GSS), led by Vesna Pesic, is the smallest and most attractive party in this coalition. They are democrats who were anti-war and have been active with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Politically they rank someplace between liberalism and social democracy and have a following among intellectuals in Belgrade. Their main weaknesses are an absence of links to trade union-

ists and an unwillingness to confront nationalism within the coalition and among the demonstrators. 2) The Serbian Movement for Renewal (SPO), led by Vuk Draskovic, is a large populist party which is romantically nationalist, royalist and harks back to the Chetnik movement of the Second World War. They are strong throughout the country and play a major role in small towns. Draskovic ran a nationalist militia at the beginning of the wars of Yugoslav succession. Lately he has turned against the war and is now an anti-war nationalist who supports democratic renewal. 3) The Democratic Party (DS), led by Zoran Djindjic, is a large middle-class party which is for democratic political reforms and a modern market economy. It supported the chauvinist Bosnian Serb leadership to the very end, opposes autonomy for Kosovo, with its Albanian majority, and Vojvodina, with its numerous minorities (including Hungarians, Croats, Slovaks). This is a modern party which would probably lead the coalition if it were to win elections in Serbia in the fall of 1997 and form a post-Milosevic government. Djindjic is a very skilled politician and has the reputation of a Machiavellian opportunist. He and his party stand for a liberal state and free media.

Demonstrations and Leaders After cheering the victories of popular mass demonstrations against Milosevic's authoritarian regime, democratic socialists should ask some important questions about the situation in the region.

- Why is it that in multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, where 35% of the population are not Serbs, no member of any other ethnic community has ever been a speaker either at the meetings controlled by Zajedno or at meetings run by students? Why were extremist nationalist speakers invited by the students? No Catholic, Moslem or Jewish religious leaders were invited.

- Why was the Serbian Orthodox Church so visible in the protests even though it did not protest the war, the bombing of Sarajevo, the prolonged violation of democratic rights of Albanians in Kosovo, the mass destruction of Roman Catholic Churches and Islamic mosques, the repression of media or the mass expulsions of Croat and Moslem citizens of Yugoslavia?

- Will the Zajedno leaders pledge to accept the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia? Will they state so publicly?

- Will the leaders of Zajedno accept the right of the majority Albanian population in Kosovo to govern themselves within Yugoslavia? What about the rights of the Moslems in the Sanjak and Montenegro? Will Zajedno support decentralization and regionalization of Yugoslavia—which is the demand of the Vojvodina and other regions?

- Why doesn't Zajedno permit anti-Milosevic democratic non-nationalist groups, like the trade union Nezavisnost, the Social Democratic Union, the Social Democratic Party of Montenegro, and the League of Vojvodina Social Democrats, to speak at their rallies? Is it their view that they alone represent the anti-Milosevic democratic opposition?

Having asked these questions, democrats and socialists should cheer the defeat of Milosevic and his brazen attempt to steal elections. His shameless pleas for support from democratic socialist parties and NGOs is outrageous. To support efforts for long range solutions to the situation, you can give contributions to Transition to Democracy (c/o DSA) which is working in Yugoslavia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina for democracy and social justice.

Bogdan Denitch is an honorary chair of DSA and a leading expert on Yugoslav politics.

Milosevic's February 5 bow to the demonstrators and their leaders was a massive and unprecedented victory . . . But the situation is now extremely fluid.

Video Activism with Breaking Bread

BY A.C. WARDEN WITH MAX ALVAREZ

How can progressives from diverse political and ethnic backgrounds forge closer alliances in these days of racial polarization? The Breaking Bread event from 1995's DSA convention lives on in home video and it can help. This one hour video captures the spirit of the event and the ideas of DSA co-chairs Cornel West and Barbara Ehrenreich along with Clarence Lusane of Black Political Agenda, Asian-American activist Mari Matsuda and Roland Roebuck, Afro-Latino activist. Their ideas remain relevant today as progressives in the US continue to struggle with the devastating effects of conservative political leadership.

Using the backdrop of the O.J. Simpson criminal trial, the Million Man March and the 104th Congress, the speakers and their audience debate such questions as:

- How do the demise of affirmative action programs and the rise of the white supremacy movement tie in with the global economy?
- Are non-market values like kindness, gentleness and the idea that each and every person has equal value gone?
- Does the national media construct false dichotomies around race and gender?

Throughout, the speakers remain frank and honest while respecting differing views and perspectives. As Barbara Ehrenreich promises, you won't hear "the same old platitudes."

The Breaking Bread video can serve as an organizing and educational tool for all those seeking to understand racism and how it divides us politically, economically, socially, and personally. Use it in the classroom, during anti-racism organizing and as a fundraising tool. Get it on your local cable public access station and then advertise it. These broadcasts can also serve as organizing opportunities by getting local groups to discuss issues in community forums in and out of the studio.

To order a copy of *Breaking Bread*, send \$30 to Breaking Bread, PO Box 29490, Washington, DC 20017. Include your name and address—written clearly and a check payable to DC/MD/NOVA DSA. You will also receive a resource and discussion guide with the tape to help activists and organizations build multi-racial alliances.

Why are we charging \$30 when you can get *Independence Day* at your local Blockbuster for \$15? Because *Breaking Bread* is no corporate mass-market production that will play in cineplexes all over the world, the production cost is high. Without special efforts these ideas cannot be heard or seen. *We All Live Downstream*, a program about toxic chemicals in the Mississippi River and local activism against their release, was twice rejected by Discovery Channel because it "names too many corporations." Several more adventurous public television channels across the country did broadcast it, but it reached its main audience through direct appeal. We plan something similar for BREAKING BREAD.

To get as wide distribution as possible we are working to get the tape to broadcast and cable TV and to organizations and institutions such as schools. We have already sold a shortened version of the program to Free Speech TV which provides some programming to cable access stations and some PBS stations across the country. If you have ideas and funding sources we can use to get the tape into the hands of those who will use it, please contact the DC/MD/NOVA DSA local at P.O. Box 33345, Washington, DC 20003 or Cherchez La Femme Productions at P.O. Box 29490, Washington, DC 20017 or acwarden@igc.apc.org.

A. C. Warden is a member of DC/MD/NOVA DSA and head of Cherchez La Femme Productions; Max Alvarez works with her.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RESOURCES

DSA's Anti-Racism Commission has materials for activists to use in defense of Affirmative Action. The materials include background research, a speakers' packet, and videos. We offer these materials to any activist, organization or DSA local.

Please send a check for \$15 to cover copying costs to Our Struggle, P.O. Box 162394, Sacramento, CA 95816. Annual subscriptions to *Our Struggle* are \$15.

Budget Balancing Acts

BY CHRIS RIDDIOUGH

Earlier this year the Senate defeated, by one vote, the Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution. That was round one in this year's debate about the federal budget. But the fight on the budget will continue throughout the year.

Conservative Republicans and 'Blue Dog' (moderate) Democrats continue to argue that balancing the budget is crucial to maintaining a strong US economy. At the same time, they are proposing increases in the military budget and tax cuts for the wealthy. Balancing the budget is then done on the backs of the middle income and working people.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus is fighting back with proposals that show how even with a balanced budget cuts in social spending are not necessary if we set the right priorities. The Caucus is proposing two key changes in budget priorities:

- a new understanding of national security which will result in cuts in the military budget; and
- cutting corporate welfare and shifting money to education, health and other programs.

In mid-March, Rep. Ron Dellums (D-CA), a DSA vice chair, told progressives and the media that over \$200 billion could be saved over the next five years by cuts in the military budget. Dellums outlined his new national security plan at a forum organized by Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) and Senators Paul Wellstone (D-MN) and Ron Wyden (D-OR). Dellums noted that national security is not defined simply by the size of our armed forces, but by our investment, at home and abroad, in education, sci-

ence research and other areas.

Dellums described our national security as being made up of three accounts—military budget, foreign assistance and domestic budgets. He said, "In [the military] account, we continue to make a commitment to find ways to finance a too-large military force structure, an overly aggressive and in many cases misguided weapons modernization program, and an overly programmed requirement to maintain short-term readiness... We fail to pay for a sufficient program of foreign assistance and much of what we do pay for goes for military security assistance which often compounds the problems that generate regional instability and hostility... And, finally, we ... continue to sacrifice the necessary investments in education, science, research and development, medical and infrastructure that are absolutely critical to the national security of our nation..."

A few days later, Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) led Progressive Caucus members in proposing reductions to corporate welfare. They outlined cuts that would total \$260 billion over the next five years and showed how the money could be used to fund important social programs. Cuts would include ending grants and tax breaks for arms-exporting companies, putting a \$300,000 gap on mortgage interest deductions and collecting royalties in minerals extracted from public lands. These and other corporate welfare cuts would be included in the Cut Corporate Welfare and Budget Fairness Act that the Caucus will release shortly.

Ask your representative and Senators to support these Progressive Caucus budget proposals. You can write them at:

Hon. [Name of Representative]	Hon. [Name of Senator]
US House of Representatives	US Senate
Washington, DC 20515	Washington DC 20510

For more information on the budget proposals contact the DSA Washington office at 202-726-0745.

Chris Riddiough is DSA Political Director.

DAVE WILDBERGER

DSA lost one of its best friends and most committed activists when David Wildberger died of a heart attack in his Washington, DC home on February 11. He was 45.

Dave was active in many of the local's projects and coalition efforts over the past decade, including health care, labor, anti-apartheid and Central America anti-intervention work. He also served as a writer and editor of the *Washington Socialist*. He was a delegate to several DSA conventions, and seldom missed the opportunity to march behind the DSA banner in a rally or demonstration.

In addition to his DSA work, Dave was active in the environmental movement as a staffperson at Clean Water Action Project. He also was an active member of Amnesty International, D.C. Men Against Rape, and the Socialist Party USA. He was buried February 18 in his family plot in Baltimore.

DSA members will miss not only Dave's energy and dedication but also his irreverence and, especially, his sense of humor. He will live on in our memories as a friend who not only professed socialist ideals, but lived them as well.

—Bill Mosley

Youth Section Conference

Anti-Guess Demonstration Highlights Gathering

BY KEVIN PRANIS

On Tuesday, February 25, I received a call from a reporter for the *Suburban World*(?), a newspaper serving the Columbus, Ohio, suburbs. He had received the press release for *Go Left*, the spring Youth Section conference, and had some questions. After a few perfunctory queries about the nature of the group and our complaints against Guess, he arrived at the heart of the matter: "Why is this conference being held in Columbus?" Our friend from the *Suburban World* seemed genuinely worried by the imminent prospect of socialist invasion, and perplexed as to why such a fringe group would hold a conference in Columbus, heart of America's heartland.

Yet the seventy or so young activists who came to the conference from New York, California, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Colorado, Michigan, and even Spain defied such easy



Michael Heffron attempts flight during the welfare activism workshop.

categorization. A motley collection of public and private school students, young workers, veteran and neophyte activists, they came to see old friends, hone activist skills, or just meet Barbara Ehrenreich. Or, in the case of the majority of the participants for whom this

was a first ever DSA event, to verify that there are really, all around the country, young socialists carrying on the struggle for justice.

On Friday evening, the socialist youth started trickling into Capital University. The next morning, the conference began in ear-



Mall security pushes into the DSA crowd protesting at the Guess store.



Barbara Ehrenreich.

nest, with a quick report on the State of the Youth Section by yours truly. After several lean years in the YS, members were happy to learn of gains, with about twenty chapters functioning (half of whom were represented in Columbus) and another ten on the way. The report was followed by a review of the ABC's of democratic socialism led by Joe Schwartz.

At precisely 11:15, the review concluded and the DSA anti-Guess strike force swung into action. DSA YS is part of a national effort to support rights of workers in Guess Jeans' L.A. sweatshops to join UNITE (Union of Needle-Trades, Industrial and Textile Employees). The strike force handed out marching orders, synchronized watches, and dispatched convoys (rental vans, battered sedans with "I'd Rather Be Smashing Imperialism" bumper stickers) to an upscale Columbus mall.

It was rumored that the Law had been tipped off by unscrupulous members of the Ohio State Republican Club, so our forces (including DSA National Director Alan Charney and Honorary Chair Barbara Ehrenreich) proceeded with caution, attempting to enter the mall as inconspicuously as is possible for sixty scruffy-looking socialists (Hide the "Abbie Hoffman Lives" buttons and all that!). At 11:47, we were stationed throughout the mall distributing informational leaflets to bemused customers.

On the stroke of twelve, or maybe a few minutes after, our forces assembled in front of the Guess boutique, and the entire

mall reverberated with a chant of "Shame on Guess" led by DSA staffer Michele Rossi. By 12:10, we were being forcibly marched past crowds of curious onlookers and out the mall doors. Undaunted, our merry band continued with singing, chanting and speeches for the benefit of the passersby. At 12:35, the protest, which had begun to disperse, was hastily reassembled for the benefit of the late-arriving television camera crew.

Our activists returned, invigorated, to the conference site. After a quick lunch, the festivities continued with a discussion led by Ehrenreich and Bob Fittrakis on socialist history. When the discussion concluded, participants broke into a series of YS-led trainings and workshops on topics ranging from chapter building to transnational capitalism to welfare reform to political theater.

After dinner conference attendees reconvened for the conference keynote, a presentation by Barbara Ehrenreich on progressive political prospects. Ehrenreich focused her talk on the erosion of support for public provision of goods, and she challenged socialists and progressive to think beyond statist solutions to poverty and inequality. The event was followed by a bumping party held at the Fittrakis residence at which YS members danced, drank, socialized, sang socialist songs, and became acquainted with Bob's pet pigs.

Surprisingly, almost everyone appeared the next morning (a bit bleary-eyed) to participate in a discussion of DSA's Cam-

paign for Economic Justice led by Chris Riddiough and Alan Charney. The session focused in particular on the need to connect current YS activism around labor and prison issues to DSA's work with the Progressive Caucus. The day continued with a discussion of the YS's Prison Moratorium Project covering the significance of prison-building to a broad progressive agenda and the ongoing work of the project, including a New York state coalition of students and community organizations and a PMP CD featuring major hip-hop artists which will be released soon on the DSA's own Luxemburg record label.

Following the prison discussion, participants broke up into committees to discuss ongoing national work. Highlights of the meetings include a recommendation by the Prison Justice Committee that the PMP develop an organizing handbook and a media project, and a tentative plan by the International Committee to organize an international day of action around the right to strike.

After the committee meeting, there was nothing left to do but evaluate the conference. While many changes were suggested, the general mood of the conference evaluation was euphoric. Veterans agreed that this was the largest and best conference we've had in years, and new folks left excited to reinvigorate existing chapters or start new ones.

Kevin Pranis is the DSA Youth Section staffperson.



Boone Davis strums some rather unique interpretations of labor traditional during the sing-along Saturday night.

It's good to see that the Congressional Progressive Caucus has decided to take up the issue of military expenditures in earnest. For too long the debate in Washington about budget deficits has proceeded under the premise that military (and national security) expenditures were off limits. It has always been our contention that the military was the place where real cuts were necessary and proper, and that reductions in social programs violated rights and increased inequalities. So, we congratulate the Caucus on raising these issues. We will do our part to support their efforts and to make the reduction in military expenditures a central plank of a progressive agenda.

Of course, the issue of military spending cannot be separated from a broader question of its utility. Why, in a post-Cold War world, must we spend over \$300 billion a year on arms and intelligence? Where exactly is the threat to our national security that justifies such an enormous outlay of public resources?

We know the right-wing response. (Unfortunately, a response now shared by Clinton Democrats.) There are rogue states out there, such as Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea, that can upset the new world order at any moment. The U.S. is the only superpower and has a global obligation to maintain a military force to dissuade any rogue behavior. This was the logic behind the Gulf War.

We also know about the pervasive influence of the military-industrial complex and its capacity to perpetuate itself. Just look at the recent wave of mergers within the aerospace industry, mergers encouraged by the Bush and Clinton Administrations. Moreover, we understand the importance of arms exports to the economic health of this sector. Of course, arms exports increase global insecurity, but we have to promote larger corporations so that the U.S. can win a

greater share of this global market. With more global insecurity as the result of more arms, there is the potential for more rogue states—which provides even more justification for a larger U.S. military presence around the world and so the cycle continues.

Now, all this is true, but it's only a small part of the truth. For, the majority of our military budget is not spent on containing rogue states, or fighting wars, or even

It has always been our contention that the military was the place where real cuts were necessary and proper, and that reductions in social programs violated rights and increased inequalities.

so-called "human rights" missions like Somalia or Haiti. Quite frankly, over half the budget is spent on "defending and occupying" the territory of our closest allies. These are our NATO and Far Eastern security "commitments." For example, our military forces are permanently stationed on Japanese and German territory—fifty-two years after the end of the Second World War. This is truly astonishing. Is there any connection between the fact that Germany and Japan are the two greatest capitalist economies after ours? Conventional wisdom has it that first the defeat of the Axis powers and then the Soviet threat necessitated the "occupation" of these (and other) nations. But, it's 1997 and these rationales just won't hold any longer. Yet, this U.S. military presence is now a permanent fixture of our foreign policy. What is going on here?

I have an hypothesis. The real danger to world peace does not lie with our sup-

posed enemies—the so-called rogue states—or even in murderous ethnic convulsions like Bosnia or Rwanda. The real danger lies with our closest allies! After all, which is a more dangerous nation: an over-armed, expansionist Iraq, or an over-armed, aggressive Japan, Germany, Britain, or France that would use its military might to defend and expand its economic interests worldwide? When we really get to the core of it, the U.S. military presence around the world is about preventing the emergence of new "imperialist" politics. It's Hobbes' Leviathan solution on a global scale. There is the need for one superpower—and only one—to hold as much of the monopoly of the means of violence as possible. Global capitalism "works" because nations like Japan and Germany do not engage in geo-military politics of any significance, and nations like France are restricted to a sphere of influence in a few of their former African colonies. The U.S. is the world hegemon which underwrites the new planetary marketplace. You just can't have this new capitalist world order without one—and only one—geo-military superpower. Otherwise, it can unravel into a morass of "imperialist" rivalries.

From this perspective the chief task of U.S. foreign policy for the next several years is to make sure that Russia and China accept this geopolitical logic: military hegemony of the United States is the price for integration into the global economy. Everything else—rogue states, ethnic conflicts, human rights—is secondary.

One final note—those with a bent for interpreting today's developments in the light of socialist disputes of yesteryear cannot help but notice that my hypothesis has a striking resemblance to the hypothesis of "ultra-imperialism" that Kautsky put forward a few years before World War I. Of course, that war proved him wrong or did it in the long run?