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# international **VIEWPOINT**

• December 1995 • issue 272 •



Israel:  
**Post-Zionism**

Britain:  
**Leaving Labour?**

France:  
**Public sector revolt**



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## Looking back, looking forward

Like every December, this issue of International Viewpoint includes the full index to all issues published this year. Before you put this copy back on the shelf, take a good look at that index. And judge us on it. Our authors are activists in the countries concerned. From Sri Lanka to Brazil, it is they - you - who write this magazine. It's your network, they are your comrades. We hope you stay with us in 1995.

Thanks to all those who help write and sell the magazine. Keep up the good work!

### The editors

PS We need to replace the old equipment we use to produce International Viewpoint and its French version, Inprecor. Our French and Belgian subscribers have raised enough money for a photo-scanner. Now we need a computer powerful enough to drive it. Our British and US subscribers have already raised \$1,372 (£866) towards our target of \$2,000 (£1,300). Can you help? Send your contribution to your local *International Viewpoint* representative. Or add it to your payment when you re-subscribe.

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France

# General strike now!



*For the first time since 1968, the conditions for a general strike are present. The government wants to dismantle the social security system, and slash the retirement*

**THERE IS A POWERFUL UNDERCURRENT IN SOCIETY.** RAILWAY workers are on strike. So are employees at the post office, France Telecom, Electricité de France, Gaz de France, tax collectors, and students. And there is more to come. We have already seen the first meetings and discussions to prepare strikes in the private sector. For the first time since 1968, the country is covered with strike activity. These struggles are spreading within each professional group, and generalising across the economy. Their demands converge on a number of partial objectives, notably the protection of the civil service and railway workers' pension systems. And there is a clear global objective: withdrawal of government plans for the reform of social security system.

History never repeats itself exactly, and all analogies have their limits. This is not May 1968! But at the same time, it is more important than the hard sectoral struggles in the Post

*pension. But behind these demands, and all the specific demands of each section of the struggle, there is something else. A choice of society...*

*This report prepared by the editors of the*

Office -Telecom (1974), railways (1986) and health sector (1988). We are also living through a more significant event than the "greatest" strikes at Renault, Snecma, Lip, Joint français. Struggles in all these companies have, at a given moment, crystallised the social and political confrontation in the country as a whole.

When we bring up 1968, it isn't as a model, but to indicate a perspective. That perspective is that of the general strike.

The problem is that, while the general strike is spreading across the whole of the public and nationalised sectors, it has not spread to the private sector. The substantial participation of wage earners in the private sector is the main element which is missing, for all those who would like to transform this struggle into a general strike.





The participation of the private sector is not easy to organise. Unemployment, and the fear of unemployment, weighs heavily on private sector workers. So do all the defeats faced in the "restructuring" and "downsizing" (labour force cuts) of those enterprises which formed the bastions of the organised working class.

Nevertheless, the force of the strike in the public sector, and its whole dynamic, does bring together the necessary conditions for a general strike across France. The question is, is this enough?

The media portray this struggle as the amalgam of separate sectoral, profession-specific and corporatist demands. In fact, the struggle reflects something shared: the feeling that, around problems with pension, social security and education systems, a

new historical choice is being made. Society is changing, one way or another.

The accumulation of the social consequences of the economic crisis — massive structural unemployment, constant pressure on the workforce, increased vulnerability and fragility — have increased these last few years. These last attacks on the social security system have been perceived as a qualitative shift in the government's attacks. The social security system is considered as the major social gain of all the generations of workers since the second world war. Hence the diffuse awareness that the Juppé government's plan represents a historic modification in the relationship between wage earners, the state, and the employers. This is the social and political basis of the dynamic of the struggle. The specific struggle is for the withdrawal of the Juppé plan.

**THE DEPTH OF THE ATTACKS OF THE EARLY 1990S HAS transformed the trade union landscape. But this has perhaps only now been exposed to the light. The leadership of the**

CFDT federation has lined up behind the Juppé plan. And while the struggles have set the dividing line, those on our side still don't hesitate to defend the interests of their own bureaucracy.

The FO federation is a direct victim of the Juppé plan. But it continues to negotiate with the government, in the hope of saving the major part of its positions in the administration of the social security system. FO President Blondel calls for "the generalisation of the strikes", but stresses that this is not a call for a general strike. This might seem like only a nuance, but he certainly thinks the distinction is important.

As for the CGT, the federation has not been up to the challenge. It is still mired in its internal contradictions. President Louis

Vlannet didn't use the opening speech at the CGT Congress (on 5 December) to call for a general strike. He too puts the accent on "negotiations", and is very vague in his pronouncements on the Juppé plan. Though pressure from the congress did oblige him to announce that the withdrawal of the Juppé plan is a necessary precondition to negotiations.

The union leaderships have a major responsibility in the extension of the strike and the development of a general strike. This is why the general assemblies in workplaces, and union branch meetings, should discuss and approve motions demanding their unions' leaderships to call for a general strike, and build for it.

Of course, we shouldn't forget that, back in 1968, we had the largest general strike in French history, without the union leaderships ever having called for it!

It is still clear that the various confederations are not respecting the necessary framework of an inter-union, inter-professional co-ordinating body. Such a leadership must instead be built out of those sectors which are already in struggle. National co-ordination is a precondition for a nation-wide strike.

Local inter-union co-ordinating bodies should incorporate representatives of the general assemblies of the workers in each workplace. This is a concrete way of combining the struggle in the workplaces and the struggle for trade union unity. And a concrete step towards a self-managed struggle.

As I have already argued, the central issue is bringing together the necessary conditions for the extension of the movement in the direction of a general strike. The movement is still growing. It has to put down roots in those sectors which are in struggle, widen in the public, and above all in the private sector, and it has to clarify the way to go. ★

The author, François Ollivier, is a militant of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French Section of the Fourth International. This article is reprinted from the 6 December 1995 issue of Rouge (Red), weekly of the LCR.



# Women's movement resurges

**Forty thousand people marched in Paris on 25 November. We spoke to Maya Surduts, spokeswoman of the abortion and contraception rights group CADAC**

CADAC<sup>1</sup> WAS SET UP AS A REACTION TO THE "PRO-LIFE" commandos. We wanted to break the silence around their activities, and publicly condemn them. One of the results was the law of 27 November 1993, which made it illegal to hinder a person from exercising their right to an abortion). But we have come to see a number of faults with this law.

The whole terrain is fragile: Abortion clinics don't have the same status as other medical establishments, contraception is not properly reimbursed by the social security system. Since 1992, one of the key activities has been mobilising around the prosecution of the "commandos". We have also agitated to oppose the definition of self-abortion as a crime. We also reacted when the last socialist Prime Minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, said publicly that abortion was not eligible for reimbursement from the social security system "not for financial reasons, but for ethical reasons".

In 1993, we realised that the right to abortion was under threat in a number of European countries. Even our campaign of information about contraception came under attack as "an incitement to abortion". In Spring 1994 we helped organise a Europe-wide meeting in Paris.

We identified the close links between the anti-abortionists and the extreme right. The commando lawyer, Wagner, also represents for the National Front. The commandos even denounce the legislation legalising abortion under certain conditions as worse than the holocaust.

We realised that all the "acceptable limitations" in the 1975 law were now being exploited as weaknesses by the missionaries of the new moral order. The law said that only women "in distress" could be considered for an abortion. This kind of formulation is now allowing the right to nibble away at the content of the law, without direct confrontation.

And yet, for the 20th commemoration of the legalisation of abortion, only 8,000 of us were ready to demonstrate. And this was in January 1995, a few months before the presidential election! Simone Veil (Socialist MP, former Minister of Health, author of the 1975 law) subsequently announced that abortion "is not an issue" in France. But Le Pen, the catholic fundamentalists, the evangelical charismatics, and all the others, they are in the street!

The first law passed after the election of Jacques Chirac announced a general amnesty. CADAC set up a co-ordination of feminists, to oppose the amnesty of the anti-abortion terrorists. The government replied that pro-choice and anti-abortion militants "balance each other out".

We decided to increase the struggle. For the first time, we called on all the trade unions and political organisations to act. In 24 hours, we organised a demonstration for 27 June 1995, the day parliament voted on the amnesty law. The response wasn't massive, but all the organisations were represented. Prime Minister Juppé eventually accepted that

there would be no amnesty for the anti-abortionists. But no amnesty, either, for those who "provoke" abortion, through distributing information on abortion. Nevertheless, we considered the event a victory. And we benefited from the considerable media interest, that day, to announce the 25 November demonstration.

We began sending out information and invitations for the broad-based organising committee. We quickly realised that the situation was different from in previous periods. The trade union movement now has women in leadership positions. A gap had opened. The rules of the game in the workers movement had changed, and we had the chance to exploit them now. Everyone supported the demonstration. Even the Workers' Struggle group (LO, Trotskyist), who we had not seen at feminist meetings for about 20 years! The main vacant seat was, of course, Ms. Nichol Notat, President of the CFDT trade union federation. One more absence she will have to answer for one day...

As the moment approaches, the social movement as a whole begins to speed up. We didn't know if this would help us, or if we would be bypassed. The media didn't exactly help build the demonstration. Articles about the week of mobilisations invariably missed out the 25th. On the day, the trains are on strike. But there are plenty of coaches. And planes from Toulouse. We end up on television. In the first line of the demonstration, "stars" like trade union leader Louis Viannet (CGT), Robert Hue (Communist Party President) and Arlette Laguillier (Workers' Struggle).

For the first time in years, the police had allowed two demonstrations in the same place: ours, and that of the anti-abortion fundamentalists. We were worried about a provocation from the other side. Until our security team told us we had 40,000 participants behind us! Why such a success? First of all, there was a very positive dynamic outside Paris. The campaign brought activists who had never met into contact with each other. Then there were the media revelations about the far-right links of the anti-abortionists. Then the news from Poland (re-criminalisation of abortion), Ireland (referendum on the right to divorce) and Algeria, the conference in Beijing, and the mobilisation of schools and the left for Sarah (the Filipina sentenced to death in the UAE). All these elements matured the women's movement, and contributed to the success of the movement.

Clearly, we have to approach the government, and place the demands from the demonstration in front of them. We must be more offensive in our demands for the complete depenalisation of abortion, the reimbursement of contraception costs, and information on contraception and abortion in all schools. And then there are all the work-related questions: a real reduction in the working week for men and women, equal pay for equal work, and creation of public service jobs. We don't really know what to do next! ★

#### Notes

1. *Coordination des associations pour le droit à l'avortement et la contraception*

Maya Surduts was interviewed by Gaëlle Lucy. This article was first published in *Rouge*, 30 November 1995

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# What alternative?

Prime Minister Alain Juppé claims "there is no alternative". The Socialist and Communist Parties haven't yet proved him wrong.

by Christian Picquet

THE "EXPERTS" PRESENT THIS AS A PURELY SOCIAL CONFLICT, with a purely social solution. The most important thing is not to let the conflict spread into the political sphere. Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin is so worried that he keeps exhorting the Prime Minister to discuss. "The government should treat this social problem by social means", he urges. As if the Juppé plan was anything more than a new packaging of the same austerity policy for which labour has been paying for 20 years now.

Social security is one of labour's main social advances. Who still can't see that an attack on these advances is a political attack? Particularly today, when the attack on social security is the symbol of the application of strict neo-liberal orthodoxy in all the sectors of the economy.

Those on strike recognise, with varying degrees of clarity, that they are struggling against a global economic and social programme, imposed on the member states of the European Union by the treaty of Maastricht. To join the exclusive club of monetary union countries, each state has to meet strict financial criteria. And since the "strong Franc" policy rules out devaluation, the only way France can meet these "convergence" criteria is through a brutal attack on the reforms won by past generations of working people. These attacks aim at reducing the public deficit.

## ROUGE

This explains why Chirac and Juppé are so firm in their response to the strikers. Any significant concession would be a setback for the whole Maastricht construction. Other groups of workers would be encouraged to struggle. A shock wave across the continent would bury the whole arrogant idea of a new Europe built on the unity of its financial markets.

The problem for the political elite in France is that the strike movement seems to be spreading and deepening. And the movement still has energy in reserve. The stock market has started to tremble. Part of the RPR-UDF (conservative) parliamentary majority is taking its distance from the Prime Minister. And the President of the CNPF (the main employers association) has recommended that the government make sufficient concessions to get through the crisis with most of the current government intact. The government doesn't have much room for manoeuvre. It will be very difficult to divide the strikers, or to cook up an offer which some of the main union leaderships could present to their memberships as an honourable settlement.

This might lead the government to seek a political settlement to the crisis. The problem is that 62% of the

population sympathises with the strikers, which suggests that the result of any referendum on social security would be against the government. In the case of new general elections, the present conservative majority would probably not be returned. Any such vote would sweep away what little remains of the legitimacy of the head of state.

THE GOVERNMENT DOES HAVE ONE POLITICAL CARD. NEITHER the Socialist Party nor the Communists have a serious alternative proposal. Alain Juppé profits from every opportunity to remind us that his policies are the logical continuation of the neo-liberal and monetarist degeneration which began under (Socialist Party) President François Mitterand.

Socialist leader Lionel Jospin argues that "there must be negotiations. This doesn't mean retreating on all questions. Just reconsidering each dossier one at a time." His party has no alternative programme. Nor does it support the strikes. Henri Emmanuelli and a few other Socialist MPs have joined the demonstrations, but their party is still impregnated with the "culture of government". Part of the Socialist Party openly supports the government.

Now that the Communist Party (PCF) has modified its policy of "constructive opposition", they are rather more critical of government policy than the socialists are. Not that party leadership has yet put forward any elements of a possible alternative solution to the crisis. They try to steer the movement away from the perspective of a general strike. At first, the PCF was reluctant to demand the withdrawal of the Juppé plan. They have since concentrated on contrasting President Jacques Chirac's pre-election promises and post-election behaviour. PCF policy gives the vague impression of desire for an alternative. But what kind of alternative? With which partners? And how to put it into effect?

All this makes one thing very clear. The rest of us have to do all we can to generate the political alternative which is so sorely missing. This means bringing together all possible forces in a movement of solidarity to the strike movement. It means doing all we can to check-mate the government with a general strike. Those who worry about "not making the crisis worse" are mistaken. There has rarely been so great a gap between the reality of this country and its institutional representation. ★

The author is one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), French section of the Fourth International. This article first appeared in *Rouge*, 6 December 1995



## After Rabin

# Post-Zionism

by Michel Warshawsky, Jerusalem

THE PARADOX IN THE DEATH OF ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER, Yitshak Rabin, is that he was shot a few minutes after singing, for the first time in his life, the "Song of Peace" which his subordinates have, for years, forbidden in the army and banned from public radio. It was as if Rabin wanted to become, in the last years of his life, the incarnation of everything his right-wing opponents accused him of. In any case, he now enters the history of Israel as Rabin-the-Hero-of Peace, shot down at the head of a peace demonstration, dead for peace. A role which contradicts completely with any honest evaluation of his character and politics.

The combination of the lying, mystifying discourse of the far right, and the powerful images of the last hours of his life have turned more than one head. Israeli analysts who never used to have illusions in Rabin's objectives, his incoherence and his hesitations, now argue that, several weeks before his death, there was a qualitative shift in his political conceptions, even his personality. Maybe. Who can tell? What we can say is that one of Rabin's last political acts was to refuse to liberate the majority of the remaining Palestinian political detainees. And that days earlier he had authorised the assassination of [Islamic Fundamentalist leader] Sheikh Fathi Shkaki. Neither of these acts are a positive contribution to peace and reconciliation. Yitshak Rabin's life, even the last chapter, is no justification for the Nobel Peace Prize he received. Even if his death is very likely to become a kind of posthumous justification.

For Rabin's death has provoked a major shock in the Israeli population, particularly among young people, and in what is left of the peace movement. The advocates of peace now, apparently, want to re-gain the initiative, and impose their majority, views in the street. There is growing support in Israel for a new moderate, pacifist discourse.

Since the Cairo agreements of Spring 1994, the government has been alone, faced with a rightist minority which dominated public spaces, and spread an increasingly "tough" and threatening message. The peace movement, after its moment of glory during the Intifada, stopped being a significant element in Israeli politics after the centre-left coalition took control of the government. The peaceniks effectively left the scene after the September 1993

signature of the Declaration of Principles. At the same time, the right, particularly the Zionist colonists [on the West Bank and in Gaza], overcame their disorientation in the face of the new Israelo-Palestinian accords, rapidly gaining confidence as the peace movement declined. Yitshak Rabin's own ambiguous discourse was a major encouragement for this growing rightist wave of public activism. After all, Rabin was always willing to stroke the colonists the right way. When the respectable right, like the Likud bloc, found themselves unable to increase their support beyond about 40% of the population, their leaders decided to reach out to the hard-line colonists and the extreme right, in an attempt to form a majority opposition to the Labour government. Likud and Tsomet party leaders began to associate themselves with arguments and slogans which were much to the right of their traditional programme and philosophy.



The government has rightly accused those who called Rabin a traitor to the country of contributing to the climate which led to his assassination. But the parties of the government coalition and the peace movement attached to them are just as responsible. As one young man commented, "where were we when they called Rabin a traitor, a sell out? We were happily looking towards the radiant future of the New Middle East which the government promised. And we abandoned the street to the colonists and the fascists."



A little self-accusation and guilt may do us no harm. But the main responsibility, of course, is with those leaders of the Zionist left who, rather than trying to conserve and increase the initially quite strong public support for the accords, tried to convince the colonists and the right that Rabin was carrying out THEIR policies more effectively than anyone else could, and that the colonists had never been so well served and protected as under the Labour-bloc government.

This Zionist left has still not understood that the consensual discourse is out of step with events. Israel faced opposing choices, between alternatives which contradict each other.



Preparing for celebrations as the Israeli army withdraws from West bank town.

For some years now the Israeli left has been playing with the concept of "post-Zionism". But if such a thing exists anywhere, then it is a section of the right which is developing it. The left is still desperately trying to spread beauty cream on the ugly old face of Zionism. This kind of "Post-Zionism" isn't "post-" at all.

Classical Zionism is being replaced, on the right, by messianic, terrorist Jewish fundamentalism. "By the year 2,000, the Palestinian national movement will be led by fundamentalists", these new rightists declared eighteen months ago. "The same will be true of the Israeli right!"

The traditional Zionist right is slowly disappearing from the political scene. You see it in all the demonstrations against the Israelo-Palestinian accords. The immense majority of the participants are religious colonists. Their ideology is one of terrorist messianism. And their references are rabbinical exegesis, not the myths of Zionism's founding fathers. The right wing parties will now be obliged to distance themselves from the far right, under the pressure of an electorate horrified by the assassination, and in the "national interest". The respectable right will try to recreate a consensual climate, with respect for the democratic rules, moderation of the terms of the political debate. Maybe even a tacit acceptance of the Israelo-Palestinian accords, which, after all, do not contradict Likud's original position.

Shimon Peres' new government will have an easier task than Rabin's. The new Minister faces an opposition which is extremely confused, and public opinion now associates Rabin and the Rabin myth with the peace process as such. And Peres totally supports the objectives, mechanism and timetable of the agreements signed in Oslo two years ago.

More than could have been said for Rabin. The Palestinian Authority has no reason to worry about the change in PM.

Rabin's assassination was a bigger shock for the Palestinian population than the Israelis. Palestinians in the occupied territories have absorbed into their consciousness an image of Israel as a stable, unified society, which, on the domestic scene, respects the rules of the democratic game. And, for obvious reasons, any destabilisation in Israel provokes deep feelings of insecurity among the Palestinians. And most of all for the ruling circles in Gaza and Ramallah.

In fact, the assassination is more of an indication of a process already under way than the catalyst of any new reality. The sacred union which had dominated Jewish society in Israel since the establishment of the Jewish state has been wearing away ever since the early 1980s. The fundamental myths, conditioned reflexes, unconditional and acritical respect for the institutions and basic values of Zionism are not as easily and as widely accepted as they used to be. Soldiers refuse to follow orders, the army is no longer sacred, history is being re-written, and the so-called national interest is no longer the only element which is taken in to account in writing it. This challenge to the old consensus started when Labour came back to power. But now the right wing of society is also being affected.

For the first time since 1948, a minority current, inspiring itself from spiritual fathers even the Labour establishment respects, is questioning the supremacy of the Jewish state and its institutions. This current refuses uncritical loyalty to the state, replacing it by uncritical respect for Jewish Law, as interpreted by fundamentalist rabbis.

This would have been impossible, or much more difficult, if the government had been able to trace a clear line of demarcation between the old Zionist consensus and this new climate, where religion has a stronger and stronger influence in the dominant ideology, the education system, and the official media. Rabin accepted the need to run after the Rabbis for their advice and support, and the government allowed people to say "Death to the Arabs" in public. Once it became possible to carry out this slogan with only a minimal threat of police and legal intervention, there was no longer any real barrier to the acceptance of the natural legitimacy of a Jewish fundamentalist discourse.

The shock wave which has just shaken Israel was produced in a society which is no longer consensual, but doesn't yet realise it, and refuses to accept the consequences. The assassination confirms that Israel is different from what our politicians thought it was, and still think it is. This murder demonstrates, in a very dramatic way, that the transition of Israel from an atypical consensual system to a "normal" system of plurality and conflict is virtually complete.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. There is a possibility that the young people who, in recent weeks, have demonstrated their angers and their hopes, will decide to take up their responsibilities, and to confront not only the militant extreme right, but the whole packet of values, concepts, institutions and ways of behaviour which have, inevitably, created this country's rightist rabble. This isn't an easy task. It will take years. But the massive, explosive re-emergence of democratic and pacifist sentiments these last few days give us reason to look forward with hope. ★



## Ukraine

# The left divided

*Former railway worker Gregory A. Lemenko is Co-Chairman of the Union of Work Collective Councils of Ukraine, and a member of the Odessa Regional Committee of the Socialist Party. He was interviewed by David Mandel.*

● *Let's start with the ouster of President Leonid Kravchuk in Spring 1994*

LEMENKO: The demand for early elections arose in 1993. The standard of living of the overwhelming majority of the population was falling sharply. The regime was surrounded by an atmosphere of militant nationalism. The demand for new elections was constantly raised in worker circles and among the left parties. The best organised section of the working class, the Donbass miners, struck over this demand, and there were demonstrations in front of the Supreme Soviet.

The right-wing parties for a time blocked the demand for early elections, but Kravchuk, "the fox", was more sophisticated. He understood that the left was likely to win any elections. So he re-opened the debate on the legalisation of the Communist Party, which had been banned (illegally) after the August 1991 coup. The expected right-wing opposition to re-legalisation suddenly disappeared, and the Party was re-established.

This seriously weakened the left. It provoked an immediate division in the Socialist Party, which had been set up after the ban on the CP, and which represented an unified, organised force. Only one in ten of the Socialist Party's 200,000 members stayed. Most returned to the CP. Others set up an Agrarian Party, following the Russian example.

Those who stayed in the Socialist Party believed in a different kind of socialism than that which existed under the old regime. Those who went back to the CP might admit that mistakes had been made in the old days. But those who stayed in the SP are generally people who are much more critical of the past.

One fundamental difference is the CP's demand to restore the Soviet Union. The Socialists understood that there was no practical way of realising such a demand. Nor is it desirable. A political union would be premature. And it would be a mistake to join with Russia under the Yeltsin regime. The left in Russia is even weaker than in the Ukraine and Byelorussia. And republics like Moldavia and the Baltic states could only be brought back into a union by force, which would be a crime. As for the Ukraine, we would be split between a [more nationalist, Ukrainian speaking] west and [a more industrial, mixed Russian and Ukrainian-speaking] centre and east. There could be a civil war.

● *Tell us about the left parties' election campaigns*

The central leadership of the Socialist, Communist and Agrarian parties reached an agreement on co-operation. Where this agreement was respected, it worked very well. In Zaparozh'e, Donetsk, Lugansk and Kharkhov we scored a total knock-out against the centre-right, not to mention the far right.

Unfortunately, the agreement was broken in many other regions, typically by ambitious local and regional candidates of one of the parties.

Money was a big problem. We didn't even have enough for paper! The Communist Party did rather better — they inherited most of the SP treasury when they re-formed, they have a number of well placed individuals and businessmen, and they had the support of most of the left deputies in the outgoing parliament, each of whom had two full-time assistants, paid by the state, and who could be used for electoral organising.

● *Your programme?*

The candidates of all the parties proclaimed some version of the Socialist Party's programme: respecting the predominance of the state-owned economic sector, a ban on buying and selling land, maintenance of the collective farming system (or at least not destroying it by force), free medical care, education, the right to a job, and social guarantees. Even the nationalists proclaimed all this — just crossing out from our original programme the points like a common economic space in the ex-USSR, equal status for the Russian language in Ukraine, etc.

● *Russian and western commentators say that Ukraine's economic situation is worse than Russia's precisely because successive governments have not decisively embraced market reforms.*

It's not true. Russia is simply richer in natural resources. They have oil and gas, we have none.

The Kuchma government of 1992-3 was a market government. Economy Minister Viktor Pinzenik was known as the "Ukrainian Gaidar". Pinzenik later admitted that he and Kuchma had consciously unleashed inflation. Why? To destroy the more-or-less normal functioning of the nationalised economy. To force changes.



While prime minister, Kuchma got special powers from the Supreme Soviet, and virtually ruled by decree for three or four months. One of his first decrees deprived the work-collectives of all their powers. As representative of the corps of directors, he carried out the will of the managers in the enterprises. Henceforth, the councils had an advisory role, but their main power, the right to veto the appointment of a director, was taken away. A new law on social organisations also made it impossible to register our regional and national unions of work collective councils and give them official status.

Maybe we are to blame for not mobilising workers to resist these moves. But it all happened so quickly. The left deputies in the Supreme Soviet opposed these measures, but there were few of them. Eighty percent of the deputies were former CP members, but there were only three real socialists among them. Many deputies were members of the Corps of Directors, or close to that body. They were frightened by the scope of our [the unions'] activities. We had a million members. In reality we were a political organisation.

● *If Kuchma had been such a bad Prime Minister, how come he was elected president?*

First of all, he claimed that he had not been free to follow the policies he had wanted. He posed as a martyr. Second, while things were bad when he resigned as prime minister, they were much worse by the time he stood for election as president. Third, the climate was so unfavourable for them that the right did not bother putting forward their own candidate. They knew he would have been trounced.

● *But the nationalists were happy with Kravchuk's candidature, weren't they?*

Yes, Kravchuk was their candidate. But our comprador bourgeoisie was too smart to put all its eggs in one basket. Kuchma spent a huge amount of money on his election campaign. He has never explained where it all came from.

Kravchuk won a majority in the more nationalist areas, and scored highest in the first round. Kuchma won in the south and east. The Socialist-Communist-Agrarian candidate Aleksandr Moroz came third. Kravchuk's big mistake in the second round was his declaration that his leading position in the first round was an endorsement of his former policies. The Socialist Party took no position in the run-off, but some of our members had illusions about Kuchma.

*Who turned out to be an ultra-marketeer!*

He has set a pace for privatisation which outstrips even the Russian programme. And he intends to break any resistance across his knee. He has appointed former KGB head Marchuk as Prime Minister.

The Supreme Soviet adopted Kuchma's market programme in December 1994. Since then, it has been practical impossible to stop him.

We've seen the privatisation of small and middle-sized enterprises. About 40% remains in state hands — essentially the major military-industrial enterprises and the land.

Privatisation of what's left will bring no improvement to the economy. And even if there was a sudden upsurge in demand, most enterprises would not be able to resume

normal production for several years. Their skilled workers and engineers have all left. And there has been no new investment for six or seven years. The old equipment is not being repaired. It is being stolen piece by piece and sold for a few pennies.

Kuchma came back to parliament this spring, saying he needed more powers in order to "restore the economy to health". In fact, what he needs this power for is to ensure that he can't be stopped from carrying out policies that benefit those who gave him financial support during the electoral campaign.

He has also learned from our neighbour's experience. President Gamsakhurdia of Georgia was unable to concentrate all power in his own hands. And he ended up running round the country, chased by men with Kalashnikovs.

That first Kuchma government was a market one. But they kept claiming that they did not know what future system they were building. And they kept asking the supreme soviet to define policy for them. Kuchma knew exactly what he was doing, of course. And he said it plainly in 1994, after he was elected president: "there is no alternative to market reform, no alternative to capitalism".

● *What about the trade unions?*

Workers no longer have illusions in privatisation. But the interests of the union leadership and the rank and file has sharply diverged. The leadership has property — real homes, sanatoria, office buildings — which means that they are not directly dependent on the support of the members.

Individual unions have shown significant activity, including our own Odessa regional federation. The most militant union in the Ukraine is the Machine and Instrument Builders Union. They have initiated a series of protest actions. They have not always met with a very active response from below, which gives their leaders cause to reflect. Public sector workers, teachers and medical personnel are preparing for a general strike over wages.

As for the rest, the unions are mainly mere slogans. There is little resistance in practice. Union leaders in the enterprises are still dependent on management. And if they decide to strike, it only hurts the workers — the government doesn't give a damn if the plant shuts down.

● *And the general mood of the workers?*

Maybe active resistance will pick up in the autumn, when it gets colder. The cost of communal services — electricity, gas, hot water, rent — has risen so much that two thirds of the urban population no longer pay. The Supreme Soviet recently approved a law providing for eviction of those who fall 12 months behind in their payments. But the real income of workers is only 8 to 10% of what it was in 1991!

In Moscow they say: "Russians hitch up slowly, but ride fast!" Ukrainians are no different. But I wouldn't like to see a spontaneous rising, since I'm not sure the left would be able to lead it. On the other hand, there are fascist organisations ready to lead impoverished and desperate people.





# Death of a writer

*Writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa was hanged on November 10. But, as B. Skanthakumar explains, Nigeria's real*

*criminals are the military junta, and the managers of Shell and the other companies exploiting the country's oil resources.*

"I WAS FOUND GUILTY EVEN BEFORE I WAS TRIED" SAID A defiant Saro-Wiwa as he was lead away from the kangaroo court. An international campaign for the release of the nine Ogoni activists had been gathering pace. Amnesty International in a report released on September 15th had found outrageous abuses in the pseudo-judicial process and recommended the immediate release of the accused. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in New Zealand had been lobbied hard, with some success.

region. The military appointed him as administrator of a region including the oil port of Bonny in Rivers State. Although he later fell out with the Gowon regime, he never lost his federalist sympathies. This was ironic, because MOSOP demanded regional autonomy and was accused of trying to break up the Nigerian federation.

The response of the South African government shocked many of the campaigners. Only too aware of the repression in Nigeria, and the brutal character of its regime, they knew that the "softly, softly" approach of quiet diplomacy, advocated by President Nelson Mandela right till the bitter end, would not work. The speed with which Mandela has done an about turn and now advocates tough sanctions reflects not just personal embarrassment, but recognition of the anger and disillusionment he caused to those who look to him for Pan African leadership.

## OGONI AGONY

Saro-Wiwa came from the 500 000 strong Ogoni community, one of several indigenous peoples who live in the oil rich Niger Delta in south-eastern Nigeria. For thirty seven years the Anglo-Dutch petroleum company Shell has been mining on-shore in various parts of the Delta. Nigeria is dependent on oil sales for over 90% of its export earnings. The ruling class has grown rich on oil, but not the Ogonis (or any other ordinary Nigerians). The Ogoni unemployment rate is 80%, their literacy rate 20%. This region, which provides oil to the rest of the world, has no electricity, and very poor housing, education and health facilities.

## KEN SARO-WIWA

Ken Saro-Wiwa was an unlikely radical. He had become very rich in the food business, and wrote novels, plays, poetry, children's books and journalistic articles. Within Nigeria he was best known as the creator of "Basi and Company", a popular television serial which poked fun at national foibles. He made his literary reputation at home and abroad with "Sozaboy", subtitled "A novel in broken English" because of its innovative use of the everyday slang which most Nigerians speak and "On A Darkling Plain", a non-fictional reflection on the Biafran civil war which began in 1967. Nothing in his life had marked him as the dangerous subversive and murderer the regime painted him to be.

During the tortured months of that secessionist conflict Saro-Wiwa sided with the Federal Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon against the Easterners — his home



Neglect by the government and the oil companies is exacerbated by the pollution and destruction of the natural environment by Shell. Ancient surface pipelines criss-cross homes and fields. Between 1982 and 1992, 1.62 million gallons of oil were spilled, in 27 separate incidents, by Shell alone. Five other oil companies operate in the region. When farmers dig into the ground they find pools of oil. Nothing grows, nothing bears fruit. Nothing is produced but misery. Water is too contaminated to drink or wash in and fishing is a declining occupation. A once self sufficient community has been reduced to importing its food and exporting its young people.

In the extraction of oil, natural gas (which is found in the same deposits) is brought to the surface. Instead of bottling it and selling it as energy, Shell found it more profitable to burn off this natural gas into the atmosphere. Twenty-four





hours a day, for 30 years, until late 1993. Ogonis joke that the gas flares were their lighting. But there is no joke about the resulting acid rain, which kills vegetation and livestock and noxious fumes which cause respiratory problems.

These problems had been observed for decades but there was only indifference from the polluters and from the government. In desperation, Saro-Wiwa and others formed the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). Their main demands were compensation from Shell for past damages, and autonomy for Ogoniland, with a fairer sharing of the revenue extracted from the region.

The formation of MOSOP was a turning point. For the first time, a minority community had begun to organise itself against a giant company. It began non-violent protests against Shell, and contacted environmental and human rights groups outside Nigeria.

Steps were taken to repress the protests. A Mobile Police Force was created to deal with protesters against Shell. Homes, whole villiages were burned, people shot at, hundreds imprisoned without charge, and others driven out of their homes into the bush. The head of the Rivers State Internal Security Force openly boasted about all of this. His men killed over 2 000 Ogonis. As he admitted to journalists, his paymaster was the Nigerian subsidiary of Shell. The company's police mercenaries are known locally as "kill and go" — such is their reputation.

Some young militants began taking more aggressive action, which culminated in the killing of four pro-government Ogoni chiefs last year. It was on charges of complicity in this murder that Saro-Wiwa and the others were arrested, and framed (as the chief state witness admitted early this year). It didn't matter that the accused could not be placed at the scene of the crime. It was a convenient incident to imprison the entire MOSOP leadership and then to dispose of its best known activists. Both the regime and Shell had watched with concern at the unity this campaign created among the Ogonis and the example it set to other communities in the region, like the Ijaw, Ogbia and Igbidem who have begun to organise themselves.

### SOLIDARITY NOW!

The nine MOSOP leaders are dead. The Nigerian government has threatened to hang nineteen more, intoxicated by the ease with which it dealt with Saro-Wiwa and the others. We have to target Shell, which has tremendous influence on the Nigerian government. Its filling stations are being picketed by environmental activists throughout Western Europe. So are Nigerian missions world-wide. ★

# Ousting Abacha

Nigeria's head of state and Chairman of the Provisional Ruling Council, General Sani Abacha froze the "democratisation" of Nigeria back in 1993. The results of a (barely democratic) contest between two military-made parties were withheld, a short lived interim government installed, followed by the smooth assumption of power by Abacha. The presumed winner of that presidential election, Moshood Abiola, languishes in prison. Numerous appeals for his release have been ignored. In recent months, the retreat of the pro-democracy movement, whose mass character collapsed with the defeat of the oil workers strike in September 1993, has encouraged Abacha to arrest and detain more of his opponents. Among the hundreds of detainees are Frank Kokori of the now dissolved National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), Chima Ubani of the Democratic Alternative group, and Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti of the Campaign for Democracy.

Apart from the embarrassment of the recent hangings, the international financial community is quite pleased with Abacha. The General claims that the budget deficit (90 billion Naira in 1993) has been reduced to N16 billion in 1995.

Regulations restricting foreign investment and repatriation of capital have been removed. Giant public sector companies like the National Petroleum Corporation and telecommunications service are being shaken up, ready for privatisation. Banks, which are largely state owned, have been sacking thousands of workers. The cost of living is rocketing for ordinary people, with a 400% increase in petrol and kerosene prices adding to trans-

port and food costs. Abacha has announced a three year timetable for a political transition to a civilian government. Most Nigerians see right through this. Abacha's predecessor, General Ibrahim Babangida spent billions of Naira on a transition program, which he didn't respect at all. Why should Abacha be any different?

The Commonwealth meeting in New Zealand suspended Nigeria from membership and gave Abacha two years to hand over to a civilian government. But even two days is too long for this brute to remain in power. Arms sales have only now been ended, visas are being refused for the military and trade privileges removed. The danger is that the present junta will be replaced by another faction within the military. What would really hurt the government is an oil boycott, and the freezing of the elite's bank accounts abroad. Ordinary Nigerians would not be as adversely affected by a boycott. After all, revenue from oil has been enjoyed exclusively by the military and a small group of civilian politicians. The trade union movement is under military administration, left wing activists in jail or in exile. [BS] ★

*"The death of Saro-Wiwa is only Nigeria's most recent wound. And she will receive many more until she is delivered from a dictatorship so contemptuous of the well-being of her people and of world opinion"*

**Chinua Achebe**

*The focus should now be on transforming Nigeria, and using this energy and this rage towards improving the conditions of the Nigerian people*

**Ben Okri**



# Crisis continues

*Most French-speakers voted for sovereignty in the recent referendum. They were defeated. As Michel Lafitte reports from Montreal, the gap between Quebecers and English Canadians*

*has never been so deep. No-one in English Canada has a serious proposal for reforming the federation. And Quebec's leaders are preparing to implement neo-liberal federal*

IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS OF THE CAMPAIGN, QUEBEC'S bourgeois-nationalist leaders shifted their discourse towards demagoguery, populism, and criticism of neo-liberalism. Meanwhile, Canadian-federalist forces organised an unprecedented mobilisation of English-Canadian chauvinism.<sup>1</sup>

When the referendum campaign started in September, the main Canadian capitalist forces, their federal government, and all of English Canada's political forces and media were convinced that the sovereignty option would be defeated easily, by at least 60% of Quebec voters. At the time, this seemed the most likely outcome.

The referendum strategy, and behind it the whole project of bourgeois nationalists in late-20th century Quebec, is based on the utilisation of a more-or-less independent government to insert Quebec as a fourth player in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), as a junior partner of US and Canadian imperialism, and an active participant in the exploitation of Mexico. To win support for this uninspiring vision, Quebec's bourgeois nationalists spent months researching and publishing studies estimating the probable benefits of sovereignty for "Quebec Inc."

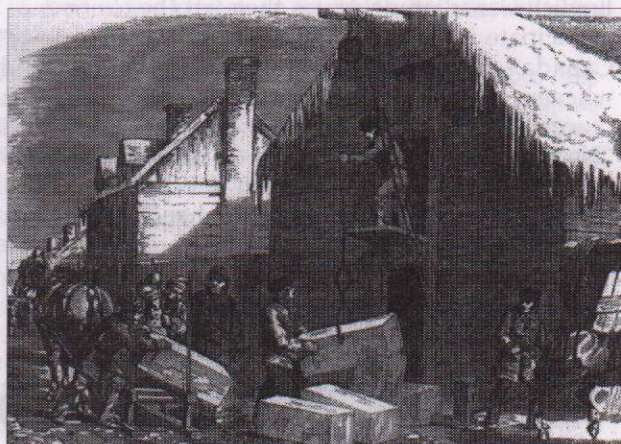
An essential part of this strategy has been reassuring the American bourgeoisie that the ruling Parti québécois and Bloc québécois have the necessary experience and qualifications to manage "Quebec Inc." in a responsible and neo-liberal way.

They were wasting their time. By mid-October it was clear that not one Quebec bourgeois of any importance was ready to take the risk of destabilising the Canadian state and NAFTA in the name of such an adventure. An adventure made all the more risky by the strong support for sovereignty in Quebec's trade unions, and the province's social and cultural organisations. The same capitalists who have used the provincial government to support them in their conflict with the main, English-Canadian bourgeoisie, are not willing to go any further at this time.

The US bourgeoisie abandoned its traditional neutral role in Canada-Quebec quarrels, and gave firm support to the Canadian bourgeoisie in its campaign to ensure the unity of the state. Bill Clinton threatened Quebec with isolation if the "Yes" vote carried the day. The tens of thousands of Quebecers who have taken their winter vacations in Cuba in recent years know only too well what this can mean.

Abandoned by those they thought were their own class, Quebec's bourgeois-nationalist leaders were obliged to appeal to the working-class' hatred of the vicious neo-liberalism of the federal government. They galvanised the vote of the majority of the French-speaking population, in part due to the enthusiastic support of Quebec's trade union leaders. One week before the vote, it suddenly seemed that the "Yes" vote might win the day.

At which point the major Canadian capitalists, the whole of the English-speaking media and English Canada's political parties, from the New Democratic Party (Social Democrat) to the rightist Reform Party, joined forces with the federal Liberal Party government of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. This grand coalition did all it could to mobilise English-



Canadian chauvinism, not just in English Canada, but above all within Quebec's sizeable English-speaking community, and among those immigrant groups whose first language is neither English nor French. The Liberal Party, the public railway and private airlines, Quebec's English-language school system, and the educational establishments of English Canada even organised a huge demonstration in Montreal in favour of the "No", just before the vote. Vancouver-Montreal return air tickets, which normally cost \$1,500 CAD each, were available for \$99 CAD for all those who wanted to come and demonstrate "for Canada". A wild campaign in the mass media attacked all those who supported the sovereignty of Quebec as anti-English, anti-immigrant and anti-native/Inuit racists. Hundreds of companies announced they would leave



Quebec if the "Yes" vote was successful. The damned separatists were now held responsible for all the plagues of Egypt, from the collapse of the Canadian dollar to the size of the federal deficit. The Canadian state faced the worst crisis in its 155-year history. The country's rulers were determined to weather the storm "by any means necessary".



Prime Minister Chrétien refused to commit himself to respecting the result of the referendum, if the "Yes" vote carried it. He threatened to invoke the "extraordinary powers" provided for by the Canadian constitution, adopted by English Canada in 1982 against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Quebecers.

The English-Canadian left, and in particular the trade unions, were, at best, silent. Canadian nationalism is branded into them. The Canadian Union of Public Employees (the biggest

pan-Canadian public sector union) held its convention in Montreal a few days before the referendum. Under pressure from its very autonomous, very pro-independence Quebec wing, the convention approved a resolution affirming Quebec's right to self-determination. But most of the English-Canadian delegates then left the conference to participate in Friday's demonstration for the unity of Canada.<sup>2</sup> A demonstration which applauded wildly whenever speakers called for the use of "extraordinary powers" should Quebec try to secede. It all worked. The "No" vote won by 50.5% to 49.5%. A defeat for all the vital forces of the Quebec people, even if the leadership of the movement was completely in the hands of bourgeois leaders.

## WHAT NEXT?

The crisis is far from over. Almost 70% of French-speaking Quebecers no longer accept the legitimacy of the federal Canadian state. Half of all Quebecers think that the federal system cannot be reformed. Not one of the federalist political parties has the slightest credible proposal for reforming the federal state in a way that would ensure it even minimal credibility. The right, in the Reform Party (the major beneficiary from the rise in English-Canadian chauvinism) proposes a devolution of federal powers to each of the provinces. They hope that this will make it easier to dismantle the social security system. For the first time, representatives of finance capital, the largest, dominant sector of the Canadian bourgeoisie, flirted openly with the racist and chauvinist outbursts of the Reform Party. Which may indicate a deepening of the Gingrichification<sup>3</sup> of political life in English Canada. The social democrats of the New Democratic Party are opposed to any further decentralisation, in the name of the defence of social security programmes. The Liberals, in power in Ottawa, are continuing with neo-liberal cuts, which hit the Quebec working class hardest of all, because of its higher vulnerability (Quebec has suffered 12% 'structural' unemployment since 1979). The Liberal government has no proposals on the national question.

The premier of Quebec, Jacques Parizeau, announced his intent to resign the day after the referendum defeat. Lucien Bouchard, the leader of the Bloc québécois, the federal wing of the bourgeois-nationalist movement, intends to replace Parizeau. His programme consists of proposing another referendum at the most opportune moment, cleaning up the public finances of Quebec and protecting the social security safety net against the federal cutbacks. Which amounts to squaring the circle. The Parti québécois' natural tendency would be to continue in power as the responsible managers of capitalism, and simply blame the federal government for all that is nasty and unpleasant in the cuts in the public sector and drastic reductions in social security which they will continue administering.

The problem is that 67% of French-speaking Quebecers want another referendum "soon". They are convinced that



## For more information...

Michel Lafitte, "NAFTA's Northern Crisis", *International Viewpoint* #265, April 1995, pp.21-23

"Socialist Challenge/Gauche socialiste Congress", *International Viewpoint* #265, April 1995, p.23

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they can win this time. Most of the nation's vital forces are convinced that we were cheated of victory by the dishonest intervention of forces in English Canada, led by the federal government.<sup>4</sup>

Trade union leaders in Quebec played a major role as counsellors to the nationalist leaders during the campaign. They will keep putting pressure on the provincial government, to make sure that we are only subjected to a neo-liberalism "with a human face". The problem is that, half way through the referendum campaign, these same trade union leaders accepted knock-down collective bargaining agreements for the public and para-public sectors (such as health, education, social services and public transport). The negative effects on jobs and work-intensity have yet to hit their members. The mass pro-sovereignty movement and the associative sector are also in a real mess. The "human face" of neo-liberalism in Quebec has entailed transferring much-reduced funds to community-based bodies, to provide many services previously ensured by unionised public sector labour. Only the women's movement seems willing and able to keep up the mobilisation. Demonstrations in favour of a significant increase in the minimum wage are planned for 8 March 1996. ★

## First nations say no

The indigenous nations of southern Quebec almost totally abstained from the referendum. The Eeyou ("Cree"), Innu ("Montagnais") and Inuit ("Eskimo") of the far north voted massively against the sovereignty measure.

For many "Yes" supporters in the south of Quebec, where almost all the "white" population lives, the only explanation for this behaviour is the existence of a plot. The aboriginals must have been "manipulated" by the federal government, and by those of their own leaders who are on the federation's payroll.

There is an element of truth behind this suspicion. The federal government, through its Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the conscious intervention of the Liberal Party, has, over the



last 25 years, striven to create an educated native elite, with a debt of gratitude towards the federation.

But this doesn't explain the massive, virtually unanimous rejection of the "Yes" option by the northern nations, nor the deep distrust of the more southern indigenous nations for Quebec nationalism. The aboriginal peoples are not children, never mind sheep who can be marshalled and led en bloc by "corrupt leaders".

So why did they vote so massively against the independence of Quebec?

The "benefits" of "white" civilisation arrived in the far north only recently, at the time when Quebec took effective control of the territory. In the old days, the federal, English-speaking tutor was only rarely present, turning up to distribute a few cheques, and disappearing again. The main domain of contact with the south was the fur trade and the hunting and fishing outfitters. But the opening of the iron-ore mines in Quebec Labrador in the 1950s, and the immense James Bay hydro-electric project in the 1970s brought the Innu and Inuit into contact with armies of civil servants, teachers and "white" workers. The overwhelming majority of these newcomers, of course, spoke no indigenous north American language. Nor did they speak English, the second language which the federal government and the fur traders had imposed on the first inhabitants of the region. With these newcomers came the destruction of the water and the forests, alcohol, drugs, even more missionaries than before, conjugal and sexual violence, deculturation and aculturation.

This invasion was the work of pro-federation governments in Quebec, and benefited from indirect subsidies from the Canadian federal state. But this doesn't change the fact that it was carried out by French-speaking Quebecers, most of the time completely insensitive, if not racist towards nations and cultures present in the region for thousands of years. Nor has the insensitive, arrogant

Notes

1. Until recently a latent force, without significant political expression, English-Canadian chauvinism can only take the form of Canadian nationalism [rather than of partition of Canada into English and French-speaking states]. This is because, while English Canada is the dominant nation in the Canadian State, it has neither its own governmental structure nor a geographically unified territory. The Canadian state is organised in ten provinces and two territories. The only common political structure which unites the nine provinces and two territories where English-Canadians form the majority is the federal government. And Quebec physically separates the four Atlantic provinces from the rest of English Canada.

2. Only a small minority, a few hundred brave, mainly women, activists in English Canada as a whole, dared associate themselves with a public statement supporting the unconditional right to self-determination of Quebecers and the aboriginal nations. Relations between the social movements in Quebec and in English Canada are even weaker, and more problematic, than before the referendum. It is difficult for Quebecers to turn the page on 25 years during which their English-Canadian counterparts have consistently refused to support the mobilisations in Quebec.

3. After Newt Gingrich, populist figure on the right of the US Republican Party.

4. Such intervention is actually illegal under Quebec's law on popular consultation, which sets strict spending limits during a referendum campaign.

**Do the workers have a country?**

by José Iriarte "Bikila"

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behaviour of the subsequent Parti québécois governments done anything to change this reality.

For the small, aboriginal nations, it is better to have the "white" enemy divided. Better, then, that the Ottawa-Quebec quarrel continues. The southern indigenous nations have not forgotten that their defeat came at the moment when the British defeated the French (1759), becoming the sole ex-European government in North America. Until that time, both French and British had made treaties with the first nations, trying to win their support for the Franco-British struggle for colonisation and trade supremacy. This has not been forgotten, and it is quite "fair" for the aboriginal nations to try to maintain the conflict between the provincial and federal authorities. They may be able to win some concessions from both parties. Hence the warning of some southern native

leaders to their northern counterparts, not to flirt too closely with the federal government at this time. Parti québécois and Bloc québécois policy was essentially to promise the native peoples that an independent Quebec would maintain the status quo in native regions, with perhaps a few dollars more from the central budget. A policy which could only repulse any self-respecting member of one of the first nations. English Canada might be as racists if not more towards native peoples, but this is no excuse for Quebec to follow such an outrageous "imperialist" policy. If the federal government can't convince us that we are only "Canadians, like all the others", how can we force aboriginal nations to define themselves as "Québécois like the rest of us"? [ML]

## English-speakers and immigrants

THE NIGHT OF THE REFERENDUM, QUEBEC PRIME MINISTER Jacques Parizeau, blamed defeat on "money, and the ethnic vote". His comment caused a storm in the English-language media of Quebec and English Canada. The vote was indeed polarised. But are the English-Canadian commentators right to say that this is a reaction to the exclusive ethnic nationalism of French-speaking Quebecers?

Ninety-five percent of English-speakers voted "No". Rejection of sovereignty was even higher among Italian Quebecers (97%), Greeks (98%) and the Jewish community (99.7%).

Other immigrant communities were more divided. The "Yes" vote scored a respectable 15-30% among the Latin American, Haitian, Arab, and Portuguese communities, despite the declarations of leading figures in these communities, almost unanimously opposed to a "Yes" vote. Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide even took the effort to speak out in favour of the unity of Canada.

There is clearly no simple explanation for the political behaviour of the various communities which are not of "French stock". There is no one immigrant community. Nor, is there one single English-speaking community.

The large ashkenazi (European) Jewish community in Montreal voted in frightening unanimity for the "No" option. Until the 1950s, this community included a working class left, massively committed to all the progressive causes. It is no accident that the French-speaking corporatist right in the 1930s used to call the Communist Party "the Jewish party". But it is now years since there was a Jewish working class. The overwhelming majority of the third and fourth generations are educated professionals and business people. They are politically, socially and economically integrated into the elite of the English-speaking community in Montreal. The Jewish community has undergone a similar evolution to the other communities of east and north

European origin - Quebec's Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, Scots, Irish, Welsh, and Scandinavians.

These other communities have dissolved, apart from a touch of folklore from time to time. What keeps the Jewish community so tightly structured is the adhesion of its members to Zionist ideology, an exclusive nationalist project par excellence. Memories of the disgraceful, stupid anti-Semitism of the Catholic right in the 1930s and 1940s, and the horror of the holocaust have a lot to do with this massive attraction to Zionism. But this does not stop Zionism in Quebec being anything more than a classic "tribal" position. The reactionary leaders of the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Bnai Brith organisation regularly present themselves as the greatest defenders of intolerance and racism everywhere, portraying the Jewish community today as the collective victims of the holocaust.

Faced with this reality, and full of liberal guilt, the Parti québécois of the 1970s made it a point of honour to finance private Jewish schools, and ensure the representation in public bodies of the "representatives" of this community. In fact, few of these schools reflect a religious reality. Most

are elite schools for the children of the elite.

Far from beginning to separate the Jewish community from their identification with English Canada and federalism, all this policy has done is reinforce the domination of the intolerant Zionist elite over the rest of the community.

Quebec's Arab community is concentrated in Montreal and the Outaouais region, of relatively recent arrival, and diverse national origin. Egyptians, Palestinians and Iraqis tend to adopt English as their second language, whereas North Africans, Lebanese and Syrians tend to prefer French. Those with left wing politics and French as their second language - which in many cases reflects their insertion in the working class here - tended to vote "Yes" or abstain (15% and 10% of the North African and Lebanese community).





The result could have been even higher, but clearly people in the community don't have much confidence in the suspicious, last minute criticism of neo-liberal policies made by bourgeois nationalist leaders like Parizeau.

On their own, the best anti-racist convictions will only serve to confirm the influence of the federalist bourgeoisie over this multitude of cultural communities which exists, and must continue to exist here in Quebec. Unless the Quebec national movement can fight against all temptation to define

itself as a movement of French-origin French-Speakers. And until we learn to stop seeing immigrants as one big bloc, and recognise their diverse origin (third world or not), second language and their class position here.

Until we do all this, our project for a new Quebec will not be a real project for all the people who live here. And it will not be a project which reflects the interests of the vast majority, the working people, whatever their origin. ★ [ML]

# The left and the referendum

QUEBEC'S LEFT PLAYED A RELATIVELY LIMITED ROLE IN THE REFERENDUM campaign. There has never been a mass working class party here, either Stalinist or reformist. Support for the far left peaked at the end of the 1970s, when, taking all tendencies and groups together, we could mobilise over 10,000 militants. In the early 1980s the major current, the Maoists, and the (much weaker) pro-Moscow Stalinists, which had rejected the call for independence, splintered and imploded. Nowadays, only a few left-over fans of Peru's (Maoist) Shining Path, and some anarchists, reject the national struggle, in the name of abstract pan-Canadian working class unity.

More recently, a range of left forces<sup>1</sup> entered the Quebec New Democratic Party (NPD-Q), transforming it into the Parti de la démocratie socialiste (PDS, Party of Socialist Democracy). This party strives for left unity in the struggle to wrest control of the national movement out of the hands of the bourgeois nationalists. The PDS is the only left party in North America which not only recognises the right of organised currents inside itself, but even encourages this pluralism as an essential form of democratic debate. The PDS is still very small. There are no illusions about developing directly into a mass party. The formation of such a force will take the form of a process of rupture of whole sections of the working class and social movements from their current collaboration with the bourgeois nationalists. Such a break would probably take place in conditions of a higher level of class struggle. In the meantime, we are doing all we can to renew the various social struggles.

At the same time, we are trying to demonstrate that we are at least a minimally credible alternative to the current nationalist leadership, by trying to fuse the national and social struggles. Last spring the PDS was the force behind the launching of the "Grass-Roots Network for Popular Sovereignty", based on the following programme,

## A QUEBEC FOR ALL PEOPLE.

We say Yes to a Quebec which:

- fights against social exclusion in all forms, particularly as it affects youth and women, by sharing the nation's wealth, by defending the primacy of the French language and the development of Quebecois culture, by protecting the linguistic and social rights of the anglophone (English-speaking) working class minority and by defining immigration and refugee policy within a framework of international solidarity;
- keeps existing jobs and creates useful new ones, particularly in health and education, by a general reduction in working hours;

- is based on the equality of women and men in all spheres;
- establishes a new agreement between the Quebecois and aboriginal nations based on the absolute right to self-determination for both, up to and including independence;

- is free of arms and all nuclear production and refuses to participate in military treaties and commercial pacts like NAFTA that work against the interests of the majority of people concerned;

- Payment of the public debt and its interest should be frozen until it's known exactly to whom it's owed and if the major creditors have not already been largely reimbursed.

- The constitution of a sovereign Quebec should be prepared by a Constituent Assembly elected by proportional representation, reflecting all parts of society, in order to really represent sovereignty of the people.

The essential campaign message of the PDS and the "Network for Popular Sovereignty" was "Yes to independence, no to the Parti québécois!". We received some favourable responses, and we come out of the campaign more numerous than we went in. In the current confused and tense situation, we are trying to avoid recruiting people on the basis of a good balance sheet of the referendum, only to risk losing them if the inaction of the bourgeois nationalist leadership, and the shameless collaboration of the official trade union leadership provoke a deeper social demoralisation. We have to learn how to root the PDS in the actually existing social movements, whatever their limits, whatever their confusion. This means offering concrete medium and long-term perspectives. We have plenty to do! ★ [ML]



### Notes

The author is a member of the PDS and Gauche socialiste/Socialist Challenge, the organisation of Fourth International supporters in the Canadian state.

1. Former members of the left wing within the Parti québécois, the radical left nationalist current around Paul Rose, former leader of the Front de libération du Québec, and several small left groups, including Gauche socialiste (GS, Socialist Left), the organisation of Fourth International supporters in Quebec.



# After the conference...

*The September UN Conference on Women was a major diplomatic and propaganda event for China's ageing elite. As*

AMONG THE NGO FORUM EVENTS THAT CAUGHT MEDIA attention were a 2-hour parade by several hundred women denouncing imperialism's exploitation of labouring women in the developing countries, the Amnesty International demonstration denouncing human rights abuses in Burma and China (such as the imprisonment of woman journalist Gao Yu and Tibetan nuns), the protest by Korean women demanding Japan's compensation for comfort women (and denouncing China's preventing Chinese comfort women from attending the NGO Forum), the demonstration of environmentalists against nuclear testing, the gagged protest of Tibetan women in exile, the parade of lesbians, and so on and so on. Xu Zhijian, Deputy Chairman of the Chinese Organising Committee, said in a press conference that "to quote the words of a friend, in the Forum, at every place in every minute, there were discussions and there were demonstrations." Exaggerated as this comment may be, the interactions among women from around the world certainly produced many positive exchanges and reflections.

The NGO Forum took place after a sustained fight with the Chinese authorities. In the first place, the Chinese authorities attempted to restrict the number of participants, and refused to issue entry visas to many participants. According to the Forum organisers, of the 36,000 persons who had registered for the Forum, only 26,000 obtained hotel registration forms (a prerequisite for visa application). There were also many cases of people holding hotel registration forms but still denied a visa. The final figures seems to be that 31,549 persons participated in the Forum, including 5,000 from China. Most of the Chinese participants had been carefully selected; dissidents, human rights activists, seekers for compensation from Japan, and former "comfort women" were prevented from attending. Some, such as the Ding Zilin couple

*October Review reports, Chinese participation was strictly controlled. And human rights activists are still in jail.*

(whose only son was killed in the 1989 movement), were detained by the police for the entire period. Some, such as Tong Zheng (who campaigns for Japanese compensation for its war crimes), were forcibly deported from the capital.

Thirdly, participants were put under strict surveillance and control. Numerous security people in uniform and plainclothes watched over the participants, video-taped some activities, or even broke up gatherings and confiscated materials. The regime clearly wanted to prevent contact between participants and local, Chinese women. ★

## Dissidents detained & harassed

IN SPRING OF 1995, A GROUP OF INTELLECTUALS publicised an open letter to the National People's Congress and the state leadership appealing for political democratisation and release of dissidents in jail. Many of the petitioners were detained for interrogation and henceforth locked up. They included Wang Dan, the well known student leader of 1989, and Liu Nianchun who has been involved in the movement for democracy since 1978.

Chen Ziming is the alleged "black hand" of the 1989 movement. He actively participated in the movement for democracy since 1978, when he was editor of the samizdat journal Beijing Spring. In 1989, the Communist Party blamed intellectuals for instigating the mass "revolt", and Chen Ziming was sentenced to jail for 13 years. In jail, he was found to have cancer, and was allowed to return home for medical treatment in May 1994. He had an operation, and was still under medication when he and his wife Wang Zhihong signed some petition letters urging for democratisation. He was once again thrown into jail this year. In jail, he was refused medication, and his health severely deteriorated. The authorities even froze the couple's bank account and put them in a desperate financial situation. In early October, Chen Ziming went on a hunger strike for over 10 days. His family applied to the Public Security Bureau for permission to hold a demonstration to appeal for his release for medical treatment, but the application was rejected. Wang Zhihong and Chen Ziming's sister Chen Zihua were even detained for several days.

In June 1994, Bao Guo petitioned the Shanghai Municipal Government for

permission for him to form a human rights organisation. He was then arrested and sentenced without trial to three years in a labour re-education camp. He is "guilty" of attempting to exercise the right of association guaranteed by the Constitution.

The well known dissident Wei Jingsheng was sentenced to jail for 15 years, merely because he wrote some articles criticising the Chinese Communist Party. He was released from prison six months before the expiry of the prison term, at a time when China was bidding to hosting the Olympics 2000. Soon afterwards, Wei Jingsheng was arrested again. Over 18 months later, his whereabouts are still unknown. His family has made enquiries, but has not obtained any explicit reply. Of course, such a long detention is a violation of the People's Republic's own Law on Criminal Prosecution.

When journalists asked Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang about the abduction of Wang Zhihong and Chen Zihua by the police, he commented: "the fact that they were taken away by Public Security people itself shows that they have committed illegal acts."

During his last visit to New York Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, and President of the People's Republic of China, acknowledged that "there are some cases of violations of human rights in the social life of our country, but the Chinese government has always taken a staunch position against these violations, and has redressed them according to law... we have always insisted that no-one will be found guilty or penalised for their speech." No comment! ★



# The memory of the movement

## 50 years ago...

# Indonesian Independence

General Suharto has usurped the 50th anniversary of the declaration of independence to deflect international criticism of his corrupt and authoritarian 30 year old dictatorship. The military clique which rules Indonesia has also tried to suppress all honest discussion of two of Indonesia's less glorious anniversaries this year. The 1965 coup which brought Suharto to power cost the lives of an estimated one million supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party. And Indonesia's 20 year occupation of East Timor has claimed the lives of a terrifying one in three of the local population. As international solidarity with East Timor and the Indonesian progressive movements mounts, we look back at the history of the country's workers' and progressive movement in the struggle for independence.

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The author, Subakat, is an independent specialist on Indonesia

DUTCH COLONIALISM PROPER EVOLVED AFTER ALMOST 200 years of war between the Dutch East India Company and local rulers. By the late 18th century, these Dutch merchants has established a trade hegemony in the Indonesian archipelago. But the effort had bankrupted them. The Kingdom of the Netherlands took over the debt, transforming the company's huge administrative apparatus into the Dutch East Indies territory.

The Netherlands itself came close to economic collapse in the following years, forced into military actions in Europe (the Napoleonic wars) and on the island of Java, where the insurrection of Prince Diponegoro in the 1920s almost ousted the Dutch from the territory.

Once control was re-established, a ruthless cultuurstelsel (forced cultivation) system was imposed in Java, lasting from 1830-1870. Cash crops like indigo, sugar and coffee brought economic recovery to the Netherlands, but devastation to Java, the political and economic centre of the Indonesian archipelago. The systematic and ruthless exploitation of natural resources and labour ruined the basis of self-sufficiency, impoverished the peasants, and left hundreds of thousands dead in repeated famines.

The forced cultivation system was abolished in 1870, when the colonial government launched an ambitious modernisation programme. Dutch administrators hoped to facilitate the modern, imperialist exploitation of the colony through administrative reform and infrastructure development. This modernisation drive coincided with the emergence of regional and international political currents opposed to imperialist domination of the region, including the Chinese reformists, anti-Manchu republicans, pan-Islamists, Islamic modernists, as well as the anti-colonial movements in the Philippines, and political and economic reforms to resist colonial penetration in independent countries like Siam (now Thailand) and Japan.

### THE FIRST COMMUNIST PARTY IN ASIA

These movements did not fail to make themselves felt in Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> The first 'modern' organisations were limited to the goal of advancing the situation of particular ethnic groups,<sup>2</sup> but they were soon joined by the first Muslim mass organisation, Sarekat Islam, the first trade unions, notably the VSTP railway workers' union, and the group of (initially mainly Dutch) socialists, the ISDV, formed just before World War One. This was the milieu from which Asia's first Communist Party was formed in 1920. Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) exercised a significant influence in some trade unions and among radical anti-colonialists in the early 1920s. but it was not able to profit significantly from the decline of Sarekat Islam, nor implant itself firmly in the



most numerous and strategically most important sectors of the Indonesian working class at that time, the agricultural workers on Java and in the East Sumatran plantation belt.

After loosing out to modernist Muslim leaders in the contest to control the declining Sarekat Islam, the PKI took a not-insignificant part of former Sarekat militants into a rival organisation. This assured the party some real influence among peasants, and, to an extent, challenged Sarekat Islam's monopoly on religion. But, by mechanically applying the Comintern's strategic guidelines, and prioritising implantation in trade unions, the PKI dismantled this rival Muslim organisation, and lost almost its entire peasant base, in the pursuit of a strategy quite inappropriate for the Indonesian circumstances.

Worse still, this move allowed the modernist, bourgeois Muslim leaders to portray themselves as the champions of the cause of the Muslim masses, and the Communists as adherents of a foreign ideology. As a result, when the Communist Party embarked on an armed insurrection in 1926, there was very limited response from the masses.<sup>3</sup> Colonial troops quickly gained the upper hand, launching the Teror Putih Pertama (First White Terror). Thousands of activists were executed, jailed, or sent to rot in the malaria-infected swamps of the infamous Boven Digul detention camp in New Guinea.

A few clandestine activities continued, which helped to keep the revolutionary tradition alive, at least at a local level. But socialism as an organised force played virtually no role until the end of the Japanese occupation. As a result, bourgeois nationalist leaders of secular and Muslim orientation<sup>4</sup> were able to establish themselves as the virtually uncontested leaders of the independence movement. Not that these leaders were able to build truly national organisations. One of the most prominent features of the pre-war independence movement was its fragmentation on regional, religious and other non-class lines. To a lesser extent, this fragmentation persisted during the subsequent war of independence. The destruction of the PKI in 1926 meant the disappearance of a nucleus of an organisation able to act with some degree of coherence on a national scale.

### REVOLUSI 1945

The 1945 revolution, and the war of independence (1945-1949) were the pivotal point in the 20th century history of Indonesia. They also represented a key event in the global struggle of Asian and African peoples to shake off the yoke of colonialism.

The uprising started in mid-August 1945, when news of the capitulation of the Japanese occupation forces spread round the country. Militant youth groups began to mushroom all over the country, clashing with the Japanese occupation forces, which, under the provisions of the capitulation agreement, were supposed to "maintain law and order" until the arrival of allied troops. Underground networks joined with youth groups established and trained by the Japanese as auxiliary forces, and began to push Soekarno and Hatta to finally declare the independence which Japanese propaganda had been promising for some time. The two bourgeois nationalist leaders declared the independence of Indonesia on 17 August 1945.

By the time the allied troops landed in late September 1945, armed, radical youth had gained control of major cities like

Bandung, Yogyakarta and Surabaya. After several weeks of heavy fighting, British troops finally rescued the beleaguered Japanese garrison in Semarang, the North-Central Javanese port which had been Indonesia's "socialist capital" in the inter-war period.

In North Sumatra, republican and 'spontaneous' military units emerged in October, clashing with British troops and Dutch parachutists. The heroic struggle of the youth of Surabaya, who fought one and a half divisions of seasoned British troops for ten long days in October, demonstrated to the world just how ridiculous were the Dutch claims that the Indonesian Republic was a "fabrication of Japanese fascism".

### PARTIES SLOW TO FORM

The immediate pressure was to defend the fledgling republic against allied troops, and the Dutch military and civil administration set up in their wake. As a result, political parties in the liberated zones formed only slowly. Pre-war allegiances, and loyalties to individual dignities or leaders of the resistance were often more important than programme. Groups nominally adhering to the same party on a national level sometimes followed diametrically opposed lines in different regions of the country. The sheer distance involved, and the war itself, made communications difficult, and effective co-ordination virtually impossible.

The major differentiation within the Indonesian camp at this time was about whether to negotiate with the Dutch for anything less than unconditional recognition of 100% Indonesian independence.

By late 1945, the Indonesian left had established a number of parties. Groups claiming the PKI name came into existence independently at different times and in different places, led by underground members, leaders released from jail, and cadre returning from exile.<sup>5</sup> In this confused situation, the party lacked anything even remotely resembling a programme able to answer the challenge of the revolutionary situation. Thus, until 1948, the PKI on Java backed the various Soekarno cabinets. These in turn favoured conciliation with the Dutch, and as negotiations dragged on they ceded republican sovereignty piece by piece. Strange as it seems now, the harsh repression of the Javanese PKI groups by the republican authorities did not lead them to question the bourgeois Soekarno-Hatta leadership of the republican and independence movement.

In November 1945 the PKI was re-established in Medan, capital of the plantation area in north-east Sumatra, by local pre-war cadre. Many of these comrades were closer to the dissident Tan Malaka faction (which had opposed the 1926 insurrection as an "adventure" and subsequently established its own clandestine network) than the mainstream PKI, centred on Java. The new Medan PKI structure initially wielded considerable influence, and controlled a significant number of armed units within the republican guerrilla. But it subsequently lost out against the established bourgeois forces which had grown up in the post-1926 period. Among the factors which contributed to this decline in party influence were the instability of social formations in the Medan region, the still primarily ethnic allegiances of large parts of the population, a lack of experience in systematic party-building, and the over-reliance of the group itself on a few individual leaders.



A couple of PKI groups emerged in western Sumatra at about the same time. This region had not only an impressive record of traditional anti-colonial insurrections, but had also experienced the most intensive participation in the 1926 uprising.<sup>6</sup> These new PKI groups<sup>7</sup> still exhibited one important feature of the pre-war West Sumatran Communist movement: they did not dissociate themselves from Islam. As a result, they could and did contest the dominant position of the modernist and traditionalist religious leaders of the region much more effectively than the explicitly secular-oriented leaders of the central party were able to do.

In early 1946, Tan Malaka<sup>8</sup> used his almost legendary reputation in militant nationalist circles to launch the *Persatuan Perjuangan* (Fighting Front), which united a vast spectrum of the more militant political and guerrilla formations, based on the following common platform

- Negotiations only AFTER the Dutch recognise complete Indonesian sovereignty and independence.
- A people's government [as opposed to the formation of governments by the non-elected leaders of the pre-war elite].
- A people's army [as opposed to the bourgeois republican's drive to professionalise the armed forces]
- Disarmament of the Japanese.
- Conclusion of the issue of the European internees.
- Expropriation of enemy property in the plantation sector.
- Expropriation of enemy property in the industrial sector.

This programme not only united a broad range of pro-independence groups, but went much further in its demands than the conditions which the Sjahrir cabinet put to the Dutch only two months later.<sup>9</sup> When even these conditions were not met, Sjahrir capitulated further, simply asking the Dutch to recognise republican control over the islands of Java and Sumatra<sup>10</sup>. The PKI continued to give political and military support to this government and its capitulationist policies. Party leaders were rewarded with cabinet posts and seats in the non-elected parliament the National Committee (KNIP).

The Tan Malaka faction, unfortunately, resorted to all kinds of manoeuvring, which eventually made them easy prey for the republican establishment.<sup>11</sup>

### THE TIDE RECEDES

The revolutionary tide began to recede. Endless compromises with the Dutch had deprived the republican authority of effective control over large parts of its territory. The Tan Malaka-inspired sections of the left were destroyed. In 1948 the repression began to turn against the PKI and the remaining left-wing military organisations. The Hatta cabinet began an explicitly policy of making the republic acceptable to American imperialism by purging progressive commanders and units in the republican army, using the pretext of "rationalisation".

The PKI response was a 180 degree revision of its policy<sup>12</sup> towards "defending the Republic," including the merging of the party with other left forces.<sup>13</sup> But this turn was too quick, and laid the party open to provocation from right wing government forces, which lured some of the PKI-inspired military units, followed by the political wing, in a short-

lived insurrection against the Soekarno-Hatta government. Liberated areas near Madiun were quickly re-taken by troops loyal to the Hatta government. The subsequent "Second White Terror" (*Teror Putih ke-2*) cost the lives of almost the entire PKI leadership, killed by government troops in cold blood when the Dutch attacked the capital, Yogyakarta.

Tan Malaka was the only leader of some standing to escape the Dutch during this second period of aggression. He tried to revive mass mobilisation on the basis of his 1946 Fighting Front. US imperialism was so alarmed by the prospects of the opening of another zone of prolonged nationalist guerrilla war, which, under the influence of leaders like Tan Malaka, were likely to ripen into social revolution. The US was only too aware of the advancing Chinese revolution, and the upheaval in Vietnam, Malaya, and other parts of the region. To stabilise the situation, the US came to the aid of its chosen disciples: they threatened the Dutch with the termination of the Marshall plan<sup>14</sup>, which obliged the Netherlands to transfer sovereignty over the entire territory of the Dutch East Indies to the Soekarno-Hatta leadership at the end of 1949.

### THE ADIT LEADERSHIP

The Dutch imposed a bogus federal system, comprising the Republic of Indonesia, and a range of Dutch-created puppet states. The inclusion of Western New Guinea into the Indonesian territory was "postponed".

The Dutch-made states collapsed within a few months, so that, by 17 August 1950 the Dutch neo-colonial project had clearly failed. In a sense, however, this date also marked the last major crime of Dutch colonialism: discrediting the idea of federalism, the only way to realise the Indonesian motto, "Unity in Diversity" in a nation of such enormous heterogeneity.

By 1950, the revolutionary momentum had ebbed. Indeed, all kinds of reactionary movements began to raise their heads. The short-lived Republic of the South Moluccas reflected a genuine fear of domination from Java. But it has to be seen in the context of an indigenous regional colonial elite trying to secure its privileges, and soliciting support in Dutch neo-colonialist circles.

Nevertheless, the centralist arrogance of the government in Java, and the lack of sensitivity of an elite which has consistently confused Javanisation with nation-building would, in the coming decades, ensure that a range of local leaders who played on regionalist sentiment for the sake of enhancing their private interest, benefit from a considerably wider social base than would otherwise have been the case.

Regionalist and religious issues were intertwined in the Darul Islam (Islamic State) movement, which wielded considerable strength first in West Java, later among former guerrillas in South Sulawesi (led by Kahar Muzakkar) who had been refused integration into the post-independence national army. Darul Islam also won support among the Ibnu Hadjar gangs in South Kalimantan. These movements had already spread terror among the population, and considerably undermined government control in their respective regions. In 1953 they were joined by a rebellion in the North Sumatran province of Aceh, led by the notorious Daud Beureuh.



The establishment of firm bourgeois rule and stable integration into the imperialist structures of the cold war proved to be very difficult tasks. The political framework corresponded very poorly to the aspirations of the millions who had fought for the republic. For whole sections of the population, these structures appeared more and more alien. This sparked all kinds of regionalist, religious and, sometimes hidden behind these two forms, social upheaval. Soekarno had proposed independence as a "golden bridge" towards a "just and prosperous society". Reality was quite different for Indonesia's small peasants, plantation workers, industrial workers, low-ranking civil servants, and all those urban dwellers depending on the "informal" sector for their income.

The cynical imposition of almost the entire debt of the Dutch East Indies, including the enormous cost of the colonial warfare of 1945-1949 left the finances of the Indonesian Republic in a bad shape. This decision of the American "arbiter" in 1949 was one more factor behind the growing, vague feeling that national revolution was insufficient, and would have to be completed by social revolution.

The ruling elite itself was deeply divided. None of the parties had any electoral legitimacy. And the bickering for power and personal influence between civilian secular and civilian Muslim parties, their respective supporters in the army, and President Soekarno himself, did much to erode the system from within. This erosion was highlighted from time to time by events like the coup attempt of 17 October 1952. Army circles linked to the "Right Wing Socialists" of the Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI).<sup>15</sup> They were outmanoeuvred by Soekarno, who aptly played on the population's longing for unity, just as he had done before, to curb support for the PKI insurrection at Madiun.

On the international scene, the Dutch effectively blocked Indonesia's full integration into the imperialist camp (this was the period of cold war) by persistently refusing to make any commitment to the New Guinea ("Irian") issue. Indonesian governments, like the Sukiman cabinet in 1951, had tried to please the United States by large-scale arrests of left-wing politicians and activists under the most absurd accusations. But the continuous confrontation with the Dutch kept alive a basic anti-imperialist sentiment. The truce in Korea and the Vietnamese victory at Dien Bien Phu suggested that there was a certain margin of manoeuvre. Korea was the first example, since the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, where an Asian nation resisted a Western power in an all-out military confrontation.

Soekarno began looking for ways of evading outright co-operation with either camp in the cold war. This idea would guide the Bandung conference. In the 1960s it was reformulated as the concept of New Emerging Forces (NEFOs) as opposed to OLDEFOs (Old Established Forces).

This was, in broad terms, the theatre in which a new generation of PKI leaders tried to rebuild the party in the first half of the 1950s, based on the scraps of the Madiun movement. PKI Chairman D.N. Aidit and his chief aides Lukman and Njoto undertook a drastic reorientation and reorganisation of the party. Their strategic guideline was to integrate the PKI firmly into the nationalist camp, to present the party as the staunchest defenders of the Republic and, at the same time, build a mass base through the BTI peasant front and the SOBSI trade union federation. These

organisations had not been discredited, as they had not backed the Madiun insurrection. The new turn also qualified the party's former defiant stance towards Soekarno and Hatta, now trying to build an alliance with the former against the latter. By the time the first post-independence elections were held, in 1955, this strategy appeared to have paid off. The PKI won about 16% of the vote, scoring considerably higher in certain regions of Central and East Java. This put the party firmly into the "big four", alongside the nationalist PNI, and the two big Muslim parties, NU and Masjumi.

But this strategy was not without pitfalls. The line between anti-communists and those bourgeois nationalists and "patriotic" traditionalist Muslims prepared to co-operate with Soekarno was blurred. And Soekarno's numerous enemies blamed the PKI for the shortcomings of the regime. This problem was became particularly severe in the economic crisis of the early 1960s.

[to be continued]



Notes

1. The anti-colonial movement began to use this name to refer to the "Dutch East Indies" soon after World War One.
2. Like the Overseas Chinese Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan, the Javanese Boedi Oetomo, and a large number of regional youth organisations.
3. It should not be forgotten that this insurrection came barely two decades after the last resistance wars against the Dutch by local rulers like the Kingdom of Klungkong in Bali, or the Sultanate of Aceh in North Sumatra.
4. Including men like Soekarno, Hatta, Sjahrir and Haji Agus Salim.
5. As the Japanese advanced at the beginning of World War Two, the Dutch colonial administration deported a number of detainees from the Boven Digul camp to Australia.
6. In early 1927, the local PKI sustained a two week military campaign against Dutch colonial troops. This struggle was much more intensive than the earlier PKI insurrection in Java.
7. Like the PKI Baso and PKI Loka Islamy groups.
8. A leading member of the party until his exile in 1922, Tan Malaka worked as a Comintern envoy for Southeast and East Asia for several years, also trying to establish an underground network in Indonesia. At the 4th Congress of the Comintern in 1922, he opposed the Comintern line on Pan-Islamism vigorously, but without success. Tan Malaka was perhaps the only left leader who preserved and, until 1945, deepened a strategic understanding of the relationship between social revolution, national liberation and Islam in Indonesia. He returned to Indonesia in secret in around 1944 and worked underground until the outbreak of the revolution.
9. Recognition of the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia over the whole territory of the former Dutch East Indies. The Republic would then guarantee the rights of minority groups and commit itself to an open-door policy for foreign capital. The Republic would also recognise and take over all debts which the Dutch East Indies incurred before March 1942 [date of the Japanese occupation]. The Republic of Indonesia would then participate in a federation with the kingdom of the Netherlands, with 'shared responsibility' for foreign relations and defence.
10. In the 1950s, this group came to be called Soska (from sosialis kanan, Right-wing Socialists).
11. Tan Malaka's heterogeneous group of pre-1926 cadre became very disenchanted with the PKI leadership, among other reasons being the behaviour of certain cadre during internment in Boven Digul, and during the period of collaboration with the Dutch and allied war against the Japanese, in line with the Soviet Union's anti-fascist line. Some of the Tan Malaka faction's youth leaders never developed any sense of systematic party work.
12. The architect of this turn was Musso, one of the pre-1926 leaders, subsequently in exile in Moscow. He commanded considerable prestige as the organiser of illegal PKI cells during the 1930s, when he travelled clandestinely in Indonesia.
13. Including the left-wing of the Socialist Party, and the Labour Party.
14. A US-funded package of aid and loans to rebuild the western European capitalist countries.
15. Partai Sosialis Indonesia. A bourgeois pro-imperialist formation headed by Sjahrir, the first prime minister after the revolution. Members of this party, like Professor Sumitro, are also among the architects of the present fascist Suharto regime's economic policy.



# Leaving Labour?

The Blair leadership used recent Labour Party conferences to "cleanse" the Party of the major aspects of its historical socialist and working-class identity (see IV 271). Arthur Scargill, leader of the National Union of Miners, and a key figure on the Labour left, has proposed a new "Socialist Labour Party", in order to uphold the continuity of the best radical traditions of working-class political struggle in Britain.

This bold move by a prestigious trade-union and political leader provoked sharp debates across the British left, both inside and outside the Labour Party. Prominent figures on the Labour left, including Tony Benn (MP), have dissociated themselves from Scargill's initiative. Among the Trotskyist forces, Militant Labour, which was for many years a part of the broad left current within the LP, before being submitted to a witch-hunt and finally breaking with a long tradition of 'entry' work within the Party, responded positively to Scargill's call. The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), which portrays itself as the revolutionary party of British workers, denounced the initiative as just one more attempt to create a "parliamentary" party.

We also publish a comment from Socialist Outlook, the publication of the British section of the Fourth International. These comrades argue that a new left party established prior to the mass struggles against the coming Labour government would only carry with it the much-reduced ranks of the far left.

The coming issues of *International Viewpoint* will devote more space to this very important event on the British left, and the wide-ranging debate it is provoking.

Salah Jaber

"FOR YEARS, THE LEFT INSIDE THE LABOUR PARTY HAS generally accepted that whilst the Party might from time to time adopt Right-wing policies, it has always been possible to fight to reverse those policies. That perspective has been held by many on the Left who, whilst not individual Party members, belong to Party-affiliated organisations and support "Left" policies. This acceptance was based on the fact that the Party Constitution embodied in Clause IV a commitment to common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, a commitment not introduced (as is generally believed) by two middle-class Fabians in 1918, but which (like proportional representation) sprang from the trade union movement and Socialist groupings that were in existence before the Independent Labour Party (ILP), Labour Representation Committee or the Labour Party were even founded.

The Labour Party was born out of the trade union movement and various Socialist groups with the aim of creating a Parliamentary Party to give expression to a Socialist political agenda in the House of Commons. At the time of its formation, the Labour Party had both a Constitution and policies which projected a Socialist philosophy, policies and programme. Its affiliates included the Communist Party, Co-operative Party, various Socialist societies and trade unions whose members were automatically regarded as being members of the Party. For example, candidates for Parliament and Local Authorities were selected at meetings where trade unions were allowed to send substantial numbers of delegates: even if they were not in individual membership of the Party, they were accepted as members as a result of belonging to affiliated unions.

The newly-formed Labour Party made clear its aim of abolishing Capitalism and establishing a Socialist society an object which many trade unions incorporated into their own rule books. The Party was also firmly committed to proportional representation — not because it believed in consensus politics but because it recognised that true proportional representation is a class issue. It is significant



Arthur Scargill

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that this Constitutional demand was ditched by (Prime Minister) Ramsay MacDonald and other Party leaders who not only supported the first-past-the-post system but Capitalism itself.

The aim of common ownership as set out in Clause IV was introduced in two stages: in 1918 and in 1929. Rather than hint at an unspecified objective, it was designed to clearly commit the Party to a strategy for achieving Socialism. The Party later became a so-called "broad church" because the "modernisers" of the time wanted to embrace sections which were not committed to a fundamental change in the nature of society. The term "broad church" was introduced to assist the Right-wing, not the Left. It was the modernisers who were responsible for expelling the Communist Party from affiliation and introducing the bans and proscriptions which were prevalent in the '30s and later during the Cold War period of the '50s.

The Party's Right-wing has always sought to destroy the trade union bloc vote, and, tragically, we have seen many members on the Left enthusiastically supporting this aim in the mistaken belief that Constituency Labour Parties would be able to control the Party Conference and ensure that Labour became a vehicle for Socialist change. Instead, we have seen the current Party leadership systematically dismantle Labour's commitment to Socialism a process in which the "spin doctors" merely put a media gloss on the machinations of the leadership.

The debacle over Clause IV exemplifies this point very clearly indeed. Some of us repeatedly warned prior to Labour's 1994 Annual Conference that the Party leadership would attempt what Gaitskell had failed to do 30 years before, and try to ditch Clause IV. Nobody should have been surprised when Party leader Tony Blair, in his address to Annual Conference last year announced his intention to get rid of Labour's fundamental commitment to common ownership. The significance of the leadership's position and the Conference vote 48 hours later rejecting that position was not taken seriously enough by the Left, either in the Party or the trade union movement. Here was a Party leader blatantly acting contrary to the Constitution — an offence which has been used to expel numerous good Party members. Yet many leading Left figures in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in the trade unions failed to see the implications of what was taking place.

In certain ways, the response of that section of the Left which failed to act and/or campaign in defence of Clause IV is the same response we saw at this year's Party Conference from all those who are so desperate to remove the Tory government that they are prepared to adopt any measure and accept any proposal made by Blair and the leadership. The significance of Constitutional changes including the ditching of Clause IV has not been fully appreciated by many Left comrades who should know better. They believe it is still possible to reverse the "setbacks" suffered as a result of Blair's destruction of Clause IV and abandonment of fundamental Socialist policies.

### IS THE LABOUR PARTY SOCIALIST?

In addressing this question it is essential to examine the Party's policies together with the Constitutional changes which have been systematically introduced over the past four years, including one-member, one-vote, reduction of the trade union bloc vote, and now the abandonment of Clause IV and introduction of new Rules and a Constitution which embrace Capitalism and adopt the "Market Philosophy". Labour is now almost indistinguishable from the Democratic Party in the United States, Germany's Social Democrat Party or, nearer home, the Liberal Democrats. It is

interesting to note how Labour has changed its policies on all the fundamental issues which have been determined by the Party Conference over many years — including privatisation, national minimum wage, unemployment, pensions, health care, education, Europe, nuclear disarmament, anti-trade union legislation and the Party itself. Where does Labour now stand on these issues?

### PRIVATISATION

Labour has abandoned not only its commitment to common ownership but its policy on public ownership and privatisation. The Party says it will not re-nationalise privatised industries, but will merely use the "excess" profits of those industries and utilities to help pay for a programme of work and education. This means that Labour intends to leave our key industries including the utilities in private hands. A Party committed to Socialism and common ownership would insist that Labour will re-nationalise water, electricity, coal, gas, British Telecom and all the public industries and services which have been sold off over the past 16 years — including our railways.

### NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

Whilst undertaking to introduce a statutory minimum wage, Labour has refused to state a figure; even more significant, the Party has accepted that any minimum wage could only be introduced in consultation with "social partners", including the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors. In other words, a statutory minimum wage will only be at a level acceptable to our traditional class enemies. The pressure on this issue applied to trade union leaders at the Trade Union Congress (TUC) Conference in September was designed to accommodate this social "partnership" or "co-determination" policy.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

Labour has always had a commitment to full employment — but the Party now says: "No-one pretends we can solve unemployment overnight" — a clear warning that unemployment will continue under a Labour Government. But a Labour Government could solve unemployment — even within a Capitalist society — overnight, provided it introduced a four-day working week with no loss of pay, banned all non-essential overtime, and introduced voluntary retirement on full pay at age 55 — measures which are fundamental to the regeneration of Britain, but which are anathema to private enterprise and Capitalism. It is economic insanity to pay out £10,000 per year to keep a worker unemployed, whilst half that amount would eliminate unemployment straightaway.

### PENSIONS

The Party is already departing from the essential principle of "universal" pensions, and is looking at ways for people to "put together" income from public and private sources. In other words, workers are going to have to pay an additional "insurance policy" to guarantee a minimum standard of Pension — and even then its value would be questionable.

### HEALTH

Labour's pledge that it will "establish regional centres of excellence" and retain the "beneficial freedoms" of fund holding is typical of how vague its commitment is to restoring and rebuilding the National Health Service (NHS). Britain spends less on health care than most other "advanced" Western countries, and a Labour Party which was serious about protecting our National Health Service would commit the resources necessary to enable it to provide health care on demand, providing for everyone from the cradle to the grave.



## EDUCATION

Labour's pledges on nursery school places, infant school class sizes and the needs of all pupils, students and teachers are hollow without an accompanying time-scale; nor do they address the demise of opportunity and aspiration for working class children over the past 16 years. Tragically, Labour continues to support privileged private education which is a vital prop to our class-ridden society.

## EUROPE

A Party once implacably opposed to the European Common Market is now one of the most ardent supporters of this bastion of international Capitalism, outdoing the Tories and Liberal Democrats in enthusiasm. Labour's about-turn on this issue is of major economic and political importance; a betrayal of all that the Party stood for.

## UNILATERAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Possibly the most shameful about-turn, however, is that on unilateral nuclear disarmament. After years of campaigning in favour of banning all nuclear weapons, Labour has now become pro-nuclear<sup>1</sup> — in a world torn by regionalised and imperialist wars from the Middle East to the Balkans, from South East Asia to Latin America. Labour should have been seen to be campaigning for an end to all nuclear weapons and a reduction of at least 50% in defence expenditure. The vast resources which go to fund death and destruction should be used instead to rebuild our industries, public housing, health care and to end unemployment.

## ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS

Labour is well aware that picketing, solidarity action and the right of unions to determine their own rule books without State interference are all human rights (United Nations Charter). But Blair has declared that in government he will retain the vicious laws which have been used to boost unemployment and enforce low pay over the past 16 years. In other words, Labour is happy to pursue the Tories' aim of rendering trade unions ineffective and compliant.

## THE PARTY CONSTITUTION: CLAUSE IV

In ditching Clause IV, Labour has erased its commitment to the aim of common ownership, without which social justice and economic democracy are impossible. Labour has since demonstrated its covenant with Capitalism by refusing to endorse a first-class Socialist, Liz Davies, as a Parliamentary candidate. It had no difficulty, however, in embracing into Party membership Alan Howarth, a Tory MP who voted for the policies and philosophy of Thatcher, including the butchery of health care, education, mining and other basic industries and services.

## LABOUR'S NEW RULES

Labour's new Rules and Constitution can only be described as an unmitigated disaster. They make it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for people within the Labour Party to campaign for Socialism. The new Rule Book allows the Party's National Executive Committee (NEC) to amend the Rules and Constitution at any time by

calling a Special Conference at which only the NEC can submit amendments to the Constitution. Constituency Labour Partys (CLPs, the party's local branches), trade unions and affiliated organisations will have no right to do so — just as on April 29 at the Special Conference. This means that the Party leadership can submit an amendment to any Clause in the Constitution in two-and-a-half years' time — i.e. in April, 1998 — and irrespective of whether that amendment is carried or lost, any further amendment to that particular Clause will be prevented for a further three years, right up to 2001. This strategy could be deployed literally ad infinitum to prevent, for example, restoring the commitment to common ownership.

## A DILEMA FOR SOCIALISTS

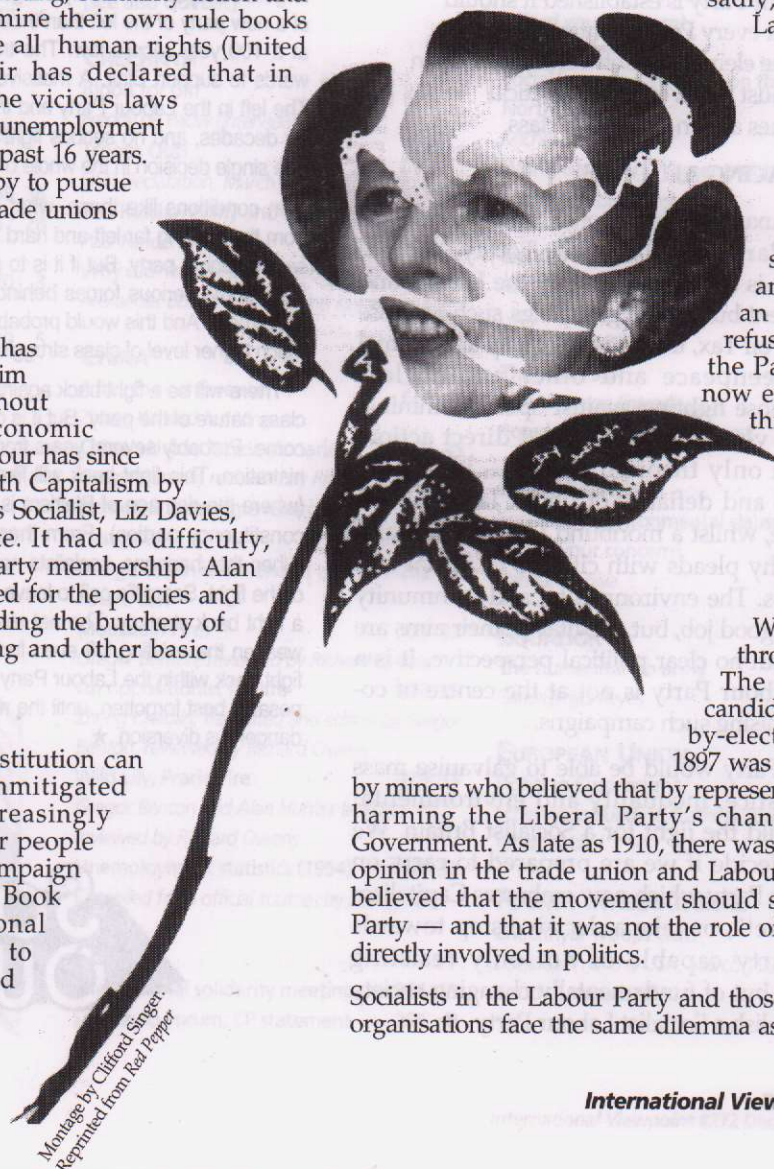
Today we have a sanitised Labour Party, which Blair has admitted should be called Social Democratic. Socialists must decide what to do. Do we meekly accept "New Labour"? Do we passively concede that the Party has abandoned Socialism and any commitment to common ownership? If so, why were we all opposed to the policies of the "Gang of Four" [right wing labour leaders who left to form the now-defunct Social Democratic Party]? Because those are the policies which New Labour (now constitutionally indistinguishable from the Tories and Liberal Democrats) has adopted. Do we, and others who feel as we do, stay in a Party which has been and is being "politically cleansed"? Or: do we leave and start to build a Socialist Labour Party that represents the principles, values, hopes and dreams which gave birth nearly a century ago to what has, sadly, now become New Labour?

There are and there will be those — including highly respected comrades — who insist we should stay inside the Party and "fight"; but such an attitude fails or refuses to recognise that the Party's Constitution now effectively prevents this. Opposition will also come from those who say that any "rocking the boat" can only benefit the Tories.

We have been through all this before. The first Labour candidate who stood at a by-election in Barnsley in 1897 was heckled and stoned

by miners who believed that by representing Labour he was harming the Liberal Party's chances of election to Government. As late as 1910, there was still a large body of opinion in the trade union and Labour movement which believed that the movement should support the Liberal Party — and that it was not the role of trade unions to be directly involved in politics.

Socialists in the Labour Party and those active in affiliated organisations face the same dilemma as our forebears who



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broke with the Liberals. If history was to repeat itself, nobody could be genuinely surprised. Can we continue to exist, let alone try to be active, within such a Party?

### SOCIALISTS AND THE FUTURE

I believe the case for a Socialist Labour Party (SLP) is now overwhelming — but if such a Party is to be born it must be on the basis of class understanding, class commitment and Socialist policies. Any SLP would require a simple Constitution and a structure designed to fight our class enemies. This structure would demand an end to internal wranglings and sectarian arguments. If an SLP is to be established, it must be done on the following basis:

- ★ convening a special "Discussion Conference" to which all those committed to founding such a Party should be invited with the aim of formulating a Constitution and structure for a Socialist Labour Party;
- ★ an Inaugural Conference to be held ideally on May 1, 1996 — May Day having great significance throughout the international Labour movement;
- ★ the new Party and its Constitution would have to ensure that its members and affiliated organisations control the Party through its national executive committee. Never again should we have a situation where the Parliamentary Party takes control of the apparatus, and the political tail wags the dog;
- ★ If a Socialist Labour Party is established it should commit itself to fight every Parliamentary seat. Parliament is but one element of democracy, a body in which expression must be given to the political philosophy and issues advanced by our class.

### THE CHALLENGE FACING ALL OF US

We do not have the luxury of time; sooner rather than later a Socialist Labour Party will be born. Today, radical opposition in Britain is symbolised not by the Labour and trade union movement but by the groupings such as those which defeated the Poll Tax, the anti-motorway and animal rights bodies, Greenpeace and other anti-nuclear campaigners, and those fighting against opencast mining. These are now the voices of protest and direct action, reminding us that only through direct — including industrial — action and defiance of unjust laws can we achieve real advance, whilst a moribund Labour Party and trade union hierarchy pleads with citizens to accept and submit to those laws. The environmental and community activists are doing a good job, but, inevitably, their aims are "single purpose" with no clear political perspective. It is a tragedy that the Labour Party is not at the centre of co-ordinating and organising such campaigns.

A Socialist Labour Party would be able to galvanise mass opposition to injustice, inequality and environmental destruction, and build the fight for a Socialist Britain. We therefore have to decide if we are prepared to carry on supporting a Labour Party which now embraces Capitalism and the "free market", or take a decisive step towards establishing a Party capable of not only resisting Capitalism's attacks but of fundamentally changing society in other words, establish a Socialist Labour Party ★

# A big mistake!

Arthur Scargill's proposal to set up a new "Socialist Labour Party", apparently between now and next May, is a serious mistake. Equally, the prognosis on which he bases his proposal — that the Labour Party is now virtually the same as the US Democratic Party or the British Liberal Democrats — is mistaken. The problem is compounded by the proposal that the new party should be electorally based, standing candidates against Labour (in every constituency, except where the official Labour candidate is from the left-wing Campaign Group). This at a time when the mood is massively for a Labour Government. Scargill's proposal is, essentially, for the reconstitution of an electoralist 'old Labour', with Clause 4 reinstated, and a few radical policies added.

This is not to say that the profound changes Scargill points to have not changed things in the Party dramatically. They clearly have. But they have not, as yet, fundamentally changed the class nature of the party, or precluded the emergence of a fight back at a later date.

Scargill's wrong analysis leads him not just to the conclusion that things are extremely difficult at the present time, which is true, but to the conclusion that the game is up in the Labour Party, and that socialists should leave forthwith and join Socialist Labour.

The discussion document is not clear on the nature of the new party proposed. Scargill first proposes a new, democratic constitution, but then says that this structure "would demand and end to internal wrangling and sectarian arguments".

New parties are shaped by the political conditions in which they are forged. And you can hardly imagine worse conditions for the formation of a new party of the left than those we face today. Strike struggles are at a 100 year record low. The trade unions are bending over backwards to support Blair. A massive employers' offensive is under way. The left in the Labour Party and the unions is weaker than it has been for decades, and no serious fight back is in sight. The left did not win one single decision in the whole of the last Labour Party conference.

In conditions like these, what could such a party represent, apart from the existing far left and hard left? It would not always be wrong to set up such a party. But if it is to represent something new, it ought to have some serious forces behind it, particularly from the trade union movement. And this would probably only come about in conditions of a much higher level of class struggle.

There will be a fight back against Blair, and his project to change the class nature of the party. But it is difficult to say when this fight back will come. Probably several years from now, well into a Labour-Blair administration. This fight back will likely start in the affiliated trade unions (where the damage of Blairism is serious, but less marked than in the constituency parties). From there, it will spread into the party itself. When that happens, socialists need to be there, and be a central part of the fight. Scargill's call to leave the party at this stage scuppers such a fight back strategy. The net result of Scargill's proposal would be to weaken the existing left even further, and weaken the strength of the fight back within the Labour Party which is likely to come later. His proposal is best forgotten, until the right conditions arise. Until then, it is a dangerous diversion ★

Socialist  
OUTLOOK



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# Resist

*International Campaign news*

**Resist!** is a new section of *International Viewpoint*. It reports on some of the campaigns our readers are involved in. If you have an update on one of these campaigns, or you want us to start monitoring a new initiative, get in touch!

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E-mail <100666.1443@compuserve.com>



A range of alternative activities have been organised during the Spanish presidency of the European Union, which expires at the end of this month. "Practically every meeting of ministers will be replicated in an alternative activity or demonstration, writes Isabel Galfi in *El Viejo Topo*. "The results of the '50 Years is Enough' campaign against the economic policies of the IMF and the World Bank, culminating in the Alternative Forum organised in Madrid last autumn were an invitation to organise a similar initiative for the six months of [Spain's] European Presidency. Co-ordinated from Madrid by the AEDENAT group, this new campaign "Contra la Europa del Capital" (Against the Europe of Capital) has invited us to organise parallel acts to the meetings of European Ministers which have been taking place in different Spanish cities. The common thread of all these activities is the need to give a radical twist to the way we pose questions about how we live in Europe, and the solutions we need. This is a decentralised campaign, which will culminate with a march

which will leave various points in Spain so as to arrive in Madrid on December 16. This march, which started as an initiative of the CGT [anarchist and radical left-dominated trade union], Baladre, and the Civic Platforms (in which Izquierda Unida (United Left) is present), was called in protest against unemployment and marginalisation.

The [official] Euro-Mediterranean Conference will be matched by the Conference for an Alternative Mediterranean, (CMA) which will take place in the same place, Barcelona, at the same time, 24-28 November. The Madrid Summit of Heads of State and Heads of Government will spark a whole range of activities between 11 and 16 December."

For more information contact: AEDENAT, +34.1.541.1071, CMA +34.3.217.9527  
Source: *El Viejo Topo*, no 88.



A flotilla of sailboats crewed by local high school students met the Ship for Bosnia in Antwerp harbour on 16 November. A larger than expected quantity of aid was loaded, the result of weekly collections organised

by trade unionists, mainly from the public service and teaching unions. Students and teachers worked together in a number of high schools to collect, pack and transport the aid, destined for trade union and school aid projects in the multi-ethnic Bosnian town of Tuzla. The campaign was also supported by a range of social and political associations, including the Antwerp-based Alternative Social Movement (BSV - Forum) where local Fourth International supporters are active.

Boat for Bosnia is one of the largest Bosnia solidarity initiatives ever organised in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking northern half of Belgium). Antwerp port authorities waived all docking fees, while the town hall helped organise a reception in the town that evening. Organisers were, however, disappointed that the national press gave such little coverage to the campaign. Despite this, the arrival of the boat gave a real boost to the whole solidarity network, which is already planning a range of solidarity actions for Tuzla, the Bosnian region where democratic and multi-ethnic forces are strongest. For example, students and teachers in 25 Belgian schools are now twinned with Tuzla high schools.

Boat for Bosnia was on its way to Barcelona as *International Viewpoint* went to press. After loading 30 containers of aid from trade unions and solidarity movements in Catalonia and the rest of the Spanish state, it will sail directly to the Croatian port of Makarska, where it will be unloaded.

Contributions towards the campaign can still be sent to: Account 70100, Banco Exterior de España, Oficina institucional no. 1, Madrid, Spain. Mark all contributions "Barco para Bosnia - Paz ahora"  
For more information contact:  
Sweden: Radvaldsgaten 14, 118 46 Stockholm. Tel. 84620532, or Gotenberg tel. 31121327, fax 31141311  
Belgium: 03.366.4800 (Jos)  
Spain: Paz Ahora association, C/Tudescos 4 - 3.D, 28004 Madrid. Tel./fax 91.5329692



## IMF World Bank WTO Enough

The October 1995 Annual Meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in Madrid resolved to abolish 67% of the debt of seven of the world's poorer countries! Or so the Belgian Finance Minister (and President of the IMF Interim Committee) Philippe Maystadt told 500 participants in a recent public debate in Belgium.

Apparently, Mr. Maystadt was not as well informed as "WB/IMF/WTO: Enough!" co-ordinator Eric Toussaint, who informed the audience that the real figure is in fact 2.7%. A symbolic sum, "which will not modify the poverty of the populations of these seven countries."

Minister Maystadt chose not to challenge this statement. In a written response to Pierre Galand, president of the National Centre for Development Co-operation (an association representing some 90% of NGOs in French-speaking Belgium), Maystadt admitted that "in fact, no new means of alleviation has been engaged to reduce the weight of multi-lateral debt in the poorest countries".

Confusion? Or just more example of the cynicism with which North-South relations are treated by those in power? One discourse in public, another in private... The public discourse, of course, is more and more a matter of creating the illusion that the IMF and the World Bank have changed, and an attempt to present their new "human" face.



This means we must be even more clear and penetrating in our own analysis. That we must make use of all the channels for distributing alternative information. And that we must strive to build the widest possible "Refusal front", in the South, North, and East.

The Belgian group of the Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt (COCAD) is the world co-ordinator of the "WB/IMF/WTO: Enough!" campaign. The appeal which forms the base of the campaign already circulates in 55 countries.

The committee in western Sierra Leone has sent in a list of 299 signatures. The last on this preliminary list is that of the Episcopal Commission for Christian Education in Kinshasa.

There is clearly significant interest in the campaign to collect signatures for the appeal. But not enough is being done. Most of the signatures so far have been sent in individually, as the result of a chance or passing contact with the initiative or its literature.

What we badly need is more local committees which can be relays for the appeal. Wherever such campaigns have been set up, the result is astounding. In Sardinia, two hundred signatures have been sent in only a short time after establishing the local committee.

But collecting signatures is not enough! What this campaign ought to be about is the direct activities of associations and individuals, among their work mates and friends, in public meetings, in the milieu of solidarity activities in the widest possible sense. It is worth thinking hard about what opportunities exist. If need be,

public activities can be planned using "50 Years: Enough!" materials and speakers. And we should always bear in mind that a signature given as the result of a clear presentation of the theme multiplies the potential for further activity.

This campaign should also be about establishing the link between third world debt and social demands in the industrialised countries. For example, austerity plans, made necessary by the convergence criteria of the Maastricht Treaty result in attacks on public service, pay freezes, redundancies and privatisation. In Canada and the USA severe cuts have been made in social programmes. All these measures are versions of the same recipes applied in the poorer countries to make sure that debt payments are respected.

Global understanding is an important strand of this campaign. This is not, fundamentally, a solidarity campaign. It is about uniting against our common enemies. The role of the IMF in managing Third World Debt is very similar to the role of the Belgian government in managing the public deficit. The public is receptive to this kind of argument. They see the parallel, and are interested in hearing more about our proposed solutions.

There is lots of work to do. The next big challenge is the Summit of the G7 (seven richest countries) in Lyon, France, in June 1996.

For more information contact:  
"WB/IMF/WTO: Enough!", c/o COCAD, 29  
Plantinstraat, 1070 Brussels, Belgium. Tel.  
+32.2.523 4023, fax +522 6127

## Conference reports

# Theory

### The year of Engels?

1995 saw the 100th anniversary of the death of Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of Marxism, a leader and educator of the international workers' movement until his death, twelve years after his great friend Karl Marx passed away.

Dozens of Marxist scholars came together in Paris from 17-20 October, to confirm the continuing validity of the theoretical contribution of Marx and Engels, and that, despite the recurring fashion for obituaries and autopsies of Marxism which have littered this century, dialectical materialism is still alive and well.

This particular event had two particular functions within the "return of the spectre of Marx". The first was to stress the fundamental contribution of Marx's alter ego, Friedrich Engels, to the development of their common theory, and to identify Engels' specific contribution to the theoretical body of classic Marxism.

Engels contributed a number of original ideas, and made some very important corrections to Marxist theory. Maybe because of the division of labour between him and Marx, maybe because he outlived his companion, and witnessed years which were crucial for humanity in general, and the workers' movement in particular.



The letters Engels sent to his many, varied correspondents during the last years of his life represent the first major defence, and illustration, of a revolutionary and critical Marxism against dogmatic "Marxism", and its deviant social democratic form, which seeks to adapt to the bourgeoisie.

The second role of this seminar demonstrated the modern-day relevance of Engels. His works include the major elements of a Marxist critique of the age of imperialism, and a sentiment, almost a prediction, of the degeneration which was to later affect this theory, and the movement which identified with it. It is without a doubt the collapse of the Stalinist lead seal which has provoked this return to the source of Marxism for the regeneration of our movement.

by Salah Jaber

# Resist

*International Campaign news*

#### Note

1. Seminars have also been held, or are planned, in Havana, Madrid, Mexico, Milan, Wuppertal (Germany) and a range of cities in Africa and Asia. The Paris seminar, Friedrich Engels, savant et révolutionnaire, was organised by Georges Labica's research group at Université de Paris X-Nanterre.



# in practice

## European Forum of Left Feminists

Ευρωπαϊκό Φόρουμ Αριστερών Φεμινιστριών

Two hundred Greek women and 60 participants from the rest of Europe gathered in Athens from 3-5 November, for the 10th annual conference of the European Forum of Left Feminists. Participants included activists in the European women's movement, anti-racism, and immigrant rights, as well as left feminist academics. Greek participants included virtually all the Athens-based women's groups and associations, many former activists, and some who had not previously been involved in feminist activities. Women from Bosnia (Tuzla and Sarajevo), Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia and from Cyprus also participated. The conference was open to men, and quite a few participated in some of the sessions.

The plenary session on theoretical issues, held on the first day, drew a large audience. Mary Leontsini and Antigoni Lymberaki's presentation, "Feminism and Difference", which discussed the fragmentation of the social category "women" in the "post-modern" period, provoked intense argument, so much so that the subsequent discussion was dominated by the expression of conflicting positions. This unfortunately left less space for discussion of the — rather theoretical, but extremely rich — presentation on "Feminism of Equality, feminism of difference" by Bianca Beccali from Italy. Among other things, she showed how the feminist movement has, over the years, developed four distinct uses of the concept of "difference".

The second morning opened with reports from the country representatives of the forum., discussion of our 1994 conference in Berlin, and of the 1995 UN Conference on Women, in Beijing. Conference then discussed the reality, and perspectives, for women in this multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Europe. Reports from tormented Bosnia and marginalised Northern Ireland presented the reality of women's experience in the framework of war and national conflict, in two very different parts of our continent.

The speakers from Sarajevo and Tuzla gave general political presentations, and requested the solidarity of the women present for the defence of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of Bosnia in this present, crucial phase of the peace negotiations.

Marie Malholland from Northern Ireland described the real existing examples of networking among women from her country's two opposed communities, on the basis of their common problems. She denounced the absence of women from the current peace negotiations.

The workshops were undoubtedly one of the strongest features of this conference. An ad hoc workshop, on minorities in Greece, was organised in order to meet the need for debate that emerged during the conference. The other, planned workshops included the Balkans ("cross-roads of peoples, cross-roads of women"), Fortress Europe ("Deterring or enforcing multi-culturalism among women?"), Women's

Organisations ("Solidarity: alliances and networking"), Strategies towards the European Union and Other Inter-governmental Bodies and their policies, and Women and Fundamentalism.

According to Sissy Vovou of the Greek organising committee, "the discussion was rich and interesting... It gives hope for the development of the network at the European level."

The basic weakness of the conference was the absence of decision-making, concerning the numerous proposals for networking, political solidarity, and development of initiatives directed towards the various institutions (including the idea of creating a centre, or a 'Parliament of Balkan Women'). This inability to take decisions is obviously connected to the character of the Forum as a loose communication network for feminist collaboration. But there is nothing which prevents participants from creating concrete international initiatives following on from our discussions.

As in previous years, the main introductions and presentations from the conference, and the sharpest points of the discussion, should be published in book form in the coming months. We also hope to publish a selection of materials in a future issue of International Viewpoint.

by Maria Karamessini and Sissy Vovou

For more information contact either Jo Brew (101 rue des Deux Tours, 1030 Brussels, Belgium) or Jane Pillinger (16 Graham Av., Leeds, LS4 2LW, Britain). Annual membership in the Forum costs £10/500BEF/3600 DRA. Make cheques payable to "European Forum of Left Feminists"



## Internationalists' World Congress

The resolutions of the 14th World Congress of the Fourth International, held in June this year, have been published in Spanish by our sister publication Inprecor para América Latina. English and French editions will soon be available.

To order any of these editions, send £5/\$10/60FF to your local IV agent, or write directly to P.E.C.I., at the same address as International Viewpoint.





## "Civic Society" meets in Bosnia

Over 500 participants came together in Tuzla from 20-22 October, for the fourth Assembly of the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly, a mainly-European network of "civic" and human rights activists. Tuzla Civic Forum organiser Vehid Sehic set the tone for the meeting in his opening speech, asking whether or not "Europe is dying, here in Bosnia".

Other Bosnian participants, including Circle 99 from Sarajevo, and the Zenica Civic Forum used this rare opportunity to discuss with Serbian democratic and pacifist activists. A large majority of participants stressed the importance of continuing to defend the idea of a plural, united Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite the obvious difficulties ahead. Such a defence, they resolved, must include a right of return for refugees and displaced persons (or a fair compensation), and the prosecution of war criminals. Many said that humanitarian and development aid must be distributed according to criteria which contribute to co-operation and union, rather than to separation of the various ethnic and political components of Bosnia.

Participants from the territory under the control of the Bosnian government were optimistic that such a policy would contribute to the weakening, in the not too distant future, of Radovan Karadzic's "Serbian Republic" in Bosnia.

These same participants also signalled their growing unease with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, who recently told *Figaro* newspaper of his desire to bring the Moslems "under [his] wing" so as to "westernise them".

According to Bernard Dréano of the French HCA delegation, the conference "was also preoccupied with the internal evolution of the part of Bosnia under the direct control of the legitimate government (Sarajevo, Zenica, Tuzla, Bihac), where the majority of the population, and not just the Moslems, live. Of course, the SDA party of [Bosnian President] Alija Izetbegovic has hegemonic temptations, and contains active radical currents (more Bosnian-Moslem nationalist than Islamic fundamentalist). But as a whole the "SDA regime" respects pluralism and democracy...

"When the dynamic major of Tuzla, Selim Beslagic, came to greet the departing delegations in the early hours of morning, each of us was conscious of the importance of the work still to do to realise the commitment we have made to civic society..."

This conference attracted significant support from the liberal wing of the European establishment. Tadeusz Mazowiecki chose this event to make his first public statement since he resigned as UN Reporter on ex-Yugoslavia. "Even if the political solution does not divide people", he argued, "Bosnia-Herzegovina will not manage to overcome its divisions if civic society remains weak and divided. It is therefore of crucial importance that the international community makes aid to civic society a priority in the reconstruction project."

The conference was also attended by Hans Koshnik, European Union-appointed Administrator of Mostar, US Ambassador Peter Galbraith, and the British actress Julie Christie. ★ [AN]



## CIA: \$0.5 bn. on covert action

The CIA will have spend \$0.5 billion on covert action in 1995, in Iraq, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, according to *CovertAction magazine*. Smaller sums will also be spent in Afghanistan and Angola.

Most covert operations in the post-Stalinist region resemble the CIA's 1980s hundred-million dollar per year Poland programme — lavish but targeted distribution of fax machines, printing presses, and computers. So there is little probability of a Congressional inquiry.

CIA agent Fred Woodruff was killed in April 1994, riding in a car with the Head of Security of President Edouard Shevardnadze. Georgian dissidents suspect that pro-Russian circles had exposed CIA aid in building an independent Georgian security force to block Russian influence in the Republic.

Some money is certainly being spent in Bosnia, too. European media have repeatedly alleged that the US is secretly training and assisting Bosnian government ("Moslem") forces, and providing them with satellite intelligence.

It sometimes takes years before the extent of CIA interference in a country is known. The agency probably spent \$US 500,000 per year in Ethiopia between 1981 and 1986, but media coverage was almost nil. ★

*Based on research by John Pike, published in CovertAction Quarterly Number 51. CAQ can be reached at 1500 Massachusetts Ave. NW #732, Washington, DC 20005 USA fax (202) 331-9751, mail <caq@igc.apc.org >*

## French Trotskyists ask government for \$400,000!

The Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) is applying for 2m francs from a government programme which finances the activities of political parties.

To be eligible, the LCR (French section of the Fourth International) must collect at least 10,000 individual donations, totalling at least 1m. French francs (\$200,000). At least 500 of the donations must come from elected representatives of local, regional or national government. If it meets these conditions by 31 December 1996, the government will match these funds with a 2m. FFR contribution.

After a slow start, the campaign is picking up speed. The results so far: 588,687 FFR from 5,082 donors, including 285 counsellors, mayors and deputies.

Source: *Rouge*, 16 November 1995. For more details contact the LCR: 2, rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. tel. +33.1.48704222, fax 48592328

## 50th Anniversary of Japanese SDP

Many question marks hang over the future of "the party which anchored one side of Japan's post-war political spectrum" (*Nikkei Kezai Shimbun*) as it enters its 51st year.

Back in 1945, the party platform saw the party as representative of the working class, striving to secure political liberty for the people, establish a democratic system, oppose militarism, and eventually replace capitalism with socialism. Out of the deep confusion that gripped Japan after its defeat in World War II, the Socialists emerged advocating rehabilitation and reconstruction, a



review of the war's causes, and a "fresh start" as a "peace-loving nation".

But US occupation and the cold war meant the party was immediately plunged into ideological conflict, and an intense internal struggle for the soul of the party. The left, supported by government and public sector trade unions, did for a time have considerable influence in the party leadership.

The party split in 1960, over the issue of extending the Japan-US security treaty (those who left founded the Democratic Socialist Party). For many years the party seemed confined to permanent opposition, and a slow decline in popular support.

According to *The Nikkei Weekly*, the dissolution of the pro-Socialist General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (Sohyo) and its replacement by the "more centrist Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) in 1989 sent the Socialists into a terminal decline. The end of the Cold War also brought an end to what could be called its domestic equivalent — a political system characterised by Socialist opposition to the conservative policies of the Liberal Democratic Party". That role is increasingly played by the omnibus opposition group Shinshintō.

Source: *The Nikkei Weekly*

## Solidarity Subscriptions

*This magazine is too expensive for readers in many countries. For many political prisoners, International Viewpoint is the only link to the socialist movement outside the prison walls. Until recently, we have been able to distribute one third of our print run to these activists and prisoners. But our current financial difficulties have forced us to reduce the number of magazines we distribute free to the bare minimum.*

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## Obituary: David Cooper

David Cooper, a veteran socialist and member of Socialist Action, died on Sept. 29, 1995, after an eight-month fight against cancer. He was 76 years old.

According to Dave, "One of the first events I attended was a memorial service to honour two strikers killed by the cops. Over 10,000 workers massed in the streets... Minneapolis in 1934 was a city where the workers had confidence in their leaders and the leaders had confidence in the workers. There was a kind of electricity in the air."

Dave's parents had left Czarist Russia around 1905. They were the only Jewish family in town and were often the victims of prejudice. More than once, the boys defended themselves with their fists, even after Dave lost his right leg to a football injury at the age of 13.

At the University of Minnesota, he became the president of the campus Socialist Club. He was also a member of the executive committee of the Minneapolis branch of the Socialist Workers Party. He graduated in 1942, and for a year, he taught social studies and American history in Litchfield, Minn. He was fired after telling his students that in years to come they would be ashamed of the cartoon distortions of the Japanese that were popular at the time.

He moved to Chicago, where he married Eleanor Hirsh. Cooper became vice-president of the local Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) committee. He was fired again, after being arrested during a demonstration against the Rev. Gerald Smith, a well-known racist and reactionary.

Cooper then became a salesman at Weiboldts department store. He joined the fight of the retail clerks for representation against the existing company union. But when the company union won the election, he joined it and waged a successful campaign to affiliate to the Building Service Employees International Union (BSEIU), part of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Cooper was elected local (branch) president, but was later expelled from the union in a red-bating scare (this was the beginning of the Cold War)

In 1951, Dave and Eleanor moved to Los Angeles with their children. Dave became a manufacturer's representative in the garment industry, a position he held for many years. He was elected to the board of directors of Pacific Coast Travellers and eventually became the organisation's president. In recent years he became one of the country's few honest commodity broker.

Cooper was an active member of the SWP for many years. Later on he became a founding member of Socialist Action and a member of its National Committee. He was instrumental in Los Angeles in organising the Labor Alliance Against Concessions, an umbrella organisation that actively supported striking pilots, retail clerks, flight attendants, Teamsters, and others. He remained politically active to the end of his life, dedicating much of his time to the fight against Proposition 187, the racist anti-immigrant California ballot measure of 1994.

There was a sense of steadfastness and principle in Dave Cooper. His optimism was profound yet gentle, steeled as much in his natural empathy for human beings as it was in socialist principles.

*By Mark Harris, with research by Eleanor Cooper.*

Note

1. *My Brother, My Comrade: Remembering Jake Cooper*, Walnut Publishing, 1994



**ON 6 NOVEMBER, BUS DRIVERS IN ESBJERG ENDED THEIR NINE** month strike against Ri-Bus, a company which had taken over the city's buses only to sack their drivers, for refusing to accept wage cuts and authoritarian management.

The strike was sold out by the leadership of the unskilled/semiskilled workers' federation, SiD. Behind the back of the drivers, SiD leadership struck a deal with the union of bus company owners. This deal meant not only that RiBus kept their contract, but even letting the scabs stay, with a dozen jobs being offered to the original drivers at the manager's discretion. SiD leaders argued that this was all they could get, and that the bosses' union had promised to refrain from wage cuts in future contracts on public services. Although the hard struggle of the Esbjerg bus drivers and their supporters has real positive spin-off results for other workers, this betrayal concluded a bitter defeat for those concerned.

The conflict started after Liberal-dominated local government handed Esbjerg's buses to Ri-Bus, owned by some of their friends. Eighty-two bus drivers were sacked after 17 days of strike in February. Their struggle soon took on the character of a test. The Danish bosses' union acted correspondingly, pumping some 67 million kr. into Ri-Bus, to cover their loss due to the daily pickets.

The solidarity movement peaked on 20 April, when 250,000 private and public sector workers struck in sympathy. Even if sympathy strikes were not repeated, a turn-out of 500-1,000 made the picket effective on days of action in Esbjerg. And a series of regional and national shop stewards conferences during the conflict marked a progress in the level of working class solidarity.

Denmark is not the only country where workers experience the "opening" of public markets as a tool for slashing wages and working conditions. That is why several days of action were dedicated to international solidarity. Bus drivers' unions in Britain, Sweden, Germany, and above all Norway sent delegations to the mass pickets. Norwegian and other unions contributed financially to the strike fund.

Since April, the "real Esbjerg bus drivers" and their supporters have had to face anti-union attacks ranging from daily police violence and media slander to the final stab in the back by the top union bureaucracy. Hundreds of activists have been bitten by police dogs, even more have been arrested. Zealous police defence of scab drivers regularly imposed virtual state-of-emergency conditions in the centre of Esbjerg. Harassment of activists (or supposed activists) included the two month detention of three trade union militants. Incidents of buses getting their windows smashed, or the painting-over of a scab's were blown out of proportion, in order to criminalise the conflict.

At the same time, a campaign was waged against the trade unions over their financial support to the bus drivers, and their organization of pickets. Danish labour courts impose fines on any strike that is not a part of collective bargaining. They also fine any trade union that fails to condemn such a strike by its members! The unions took on a defensive stance, in spite of the fact that the bus drivers were not striking in any legal sense of the word, as their employment had been terminated on 27 February!

Several unions and work places responded to the SiD sell out by offering to "adopt" bus drivers and even

threatening to redirect trade union fees to sustain the strikers. But with their own trade union federation joining the opposition, and each driver having accumulated debts of 80-90,000 kr. to the union, the drivers decided to call off the strike in an orderly manner. Hundreds of shop stewards met again in Copenhagen a few days before the decision to end the strike, and voted a resolution in protest against the capitulation by the SiD leadership. As a salute to the struggle of the Esbjerg bus drivers and as a promise of continued resistance, a 500-strong picket and demonstration was organised on the following

## Danish bus strike sold out

Saturday. No buses left the garages that day.

The fight over Esbjerg city buses had an immediate warning effect on politicians all over the country, putting a brake on privatisation projects at the local level, at least for the time being. But Social Democratic policies today still include selling off state enterprises and generalising "free competition" in services like telecommunications and transportation, along EU guidelines.

The Ri-Bus conflict highlights the growing gap between Social Democracy, adapting to neo-liberal ideology, and the live forces of the trade union rank and file. Local unions led by left Social Democrats played an important role in extending solidarity but in the end proved unwilling to keep up the mobilisation because it was becoming an embarrassment to the Social Democrats, in government with two small Liberal parties. Also, unions have put up verbal resistance, at best, to the budget agreement concluded on 30 November between the Nyrup government and the Conservative Party. This package deals a heavy blow to the unemployment insurance system and sets out to impose harsh labour discipline in the form of compulsory, low paid job and training schemes.

**FOR THE FAR LEFT AND MANY TRADE UNION MILITANTS WHO** have been involved in solidarity work, the main goal is now reorganising the trade union left. A healthy, dynamic trade union left will only be rebuilt as a result of more struggles and at least some victories. Wage workers who are confronted with privatisation or lay-offs in the future must be able to rely on immediate support.

A number of active work place branches have started to build a network which can meet this challenge, independently of their union bureaucracies. One of the supporters of this initiative is Karl-Erik Petersen, shop steward of the Esbjerg bus drivers through out the conflict. At a recent seminar on European Workers' Struggles organised by the SAP (Danish section of the Fourth International) Petersen was asked why he was still a member of the Social Democratic Party. "Come next election, I won't be!" he answered. Three of the active bus drivers have joined the Unity List (a broad alliance of left socialists, revolutionary Marxists and communist reformers). ★