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international
VIEWPOINT
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Sud
Défense
de l'emploi
et des
services
publics !

Bosnia's Pax Americana

Tahiti :
Paradise and the bomb

France :

Back to 1968 ?

Introduction

For the first time since May 1968, France has been washed with strikes and other struggles, touching all the public sector, and meeting with real sympathy among working people. A new cycle of struggle is opening.

The striking railway workers, postal workers, electricians, teachers, and civil servants virtually paralysed France. They had a general goal: withdrawal of the "Juppé plan" for dismantling social security, and their own demands, particularly on the railways, where the government's "Plan-Contract" threatens thousands of jobs and thousands of kilometres of socially useful railway services.

But behind all this, the movement expressed a more fundamental unease in society: a feeling that the mutation of social protection in Europe today is a historic moment, almost a change in civilisation.

President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppé had decided on drastic austerity measures to bring France's state budget, social security deficit, and public sector spending into line with the "convergence criteria" which the Maastricht Treaty establishes as pre-conditions for the adoption of the Euro as a new international currency within the European Union.

Despite its dilapidation, the social security and pension system still represents concrete social advances of the working population, and the basic balance of class forces in French society. The Juppé plan is part of a historic modification of the relationship between worker, employer and state. If it passes, the Juppé plan clears the way for other regressive moves from employers and the state.

The media have presented this movement as an amalgam of sectorial, professional and "corporatist" demands. The following articles show that this was a united movement. By rejecting the Juppé plan we cried "stop" to the neo-liberal policies implemented over the last 20 years.

One journalist at *Le Monde* called this "the first revolt against globalisation". It is certainly the most important strike in a capitalist country since the fall of the Berlin wall. The class struggle is back!

The limits of this movement are the result of the disintegrative effects of the crisis which has characterised the last 20 years. Strong in the public sector, enjoying the sympathy of working people all over the country (despite the paralysis of public transport), this never became a general strike. Unlike May 1968, there was no domino effect leading to a general strike in the private sector. Some commentators talked of a "delegate" or

"proxy" strike. Private sector workers supported the strike, but did not join it. This is one of the consequences of the economic crisis. Past defeats, the fear of unemployment, insecure and part-time contracts, all this has a negative effect on struggles in the private sector.

The strength of the movement is provoked a polarisation in the trade union movement. The leadership of the CFDT federation headed a bloc which supported the Juppé reform. A left opposition in the CFDT supported the movement, as did the CGT, FO and FSU federations, and the new radical unions like SUD (post-telecom) and the CRC (nurses). The effects of this polarisation are still playing themselves out.

The trade unions have gained strength in this movement. But despite all their claims, most union leaders "surfed" on the waves of mobilisations, rather than trying to help lead them. There was no inter-union co-ordination body: which made the striking railway workers into the "natural" leadership of the movement. Leaders of the CGT and FO union federations spoke about the "generalisation" of the strike but never called clearly for a general strike in both public and private sectors. CGT leader Louis Viannet refused to call for the resignation of the Juppé government.

Socialist and Communist Party leaders tried desperately not to "politicise" the movement. The Socialist Party prefers to wait for the 1998 elections, rather than take the responsibility of power backed by a mass movement. The French Communist Party spoke vaguely of an alternative policy, but never called for the resignation of Juppé's government, nor for the mobilisation of the left to force through an alternative policy. Like the Socialists, Communist Party leaders are paralysed by their fear of the coming elections. The parliamentary left has striven to contain this social crisis, refusing to transform it into a political crisis. And yet, this social crisis posed the question of an alternative policy to the capitalist liberalism which lies behind the Juppé plan. This strike gives credibility to policies which call for a break with the logic of the Maastricht Treaty, and which propose to finance the deficits of social programmes by taxes on capital, and fight unemployment by a massive, generalised reduction in the working week. The task now is to articulate that political alternative, and present it to the tens of thousands of women and men who led the struggles of December. ★

by **François Ollivier**

Contents

- 12 **Russia: Moral defeat for the right**
A. Buzgalin and A. Kolganov
- 16 **Poland: Post-election truce?**
Jan Malewski
- 19 **Spain: Fight for the soul of the union**
J. Albarracin and P. Montes
- 22 **Bosnia's "Pax Americana"**
Catherine Samary
- 25 **Sri Lanka: After the "great victory"**
Vickramabahu Karunaratne
- 27 **Vietnam: Neo-liberalism is Party policy**
by Tuan
- 29 **Tahiti: Paradise and the bomb**
Laurent Durose
- 33 **Conference notes**
Trotsky in St Petersburg
- 35 **APEC meeting in Osaka**
- 35 **Book notes**

Three weeks in France

- 2 **Introduction**
- 3 **Upsurge**
Christian Picquet
- 6 **CGT: Pleasure & Passion at union congress**
- 7 **Unity is strength!**
José Perez on the Rouen strike committee
- 8 **Communist Party: No alternative?**
Georges Villetin
- 9 **Left regroupment fails "acid test"**
Christian Picquet
- 10 **Attack on the value of labour**
Claude Gabriel

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Three weeks in France



Banner lists the participating trade unions, and continues "railway workers on strike for public service, the protection of their [special public sector social security] status, the universal nature of the SNCF [railway network] and against the dismantling of their retirement pension and social security system".

THESE EVENTS MARK THE END OF A period of liberalism, in which social advances won over decades were sliced away. The major industrial centres were dismantled. The index-linking of salaries to inflation was abandoned. Salaries came under constant downward pressure, under the pretext of austerity. The government finally began to make tentative moves towards dismantling core programmes of social protection.

Hard battles were fought against government and employers during this period, but they generally ended in defeat. This provoked a decline in the fighting spirit of the working people. The number of days "lost" to strikes in 1994 was the lowest since the end of World War Two. Workers

Millions of working people and students participated in the events of December 1995. Christian Picquet analyses France's widest social movement since 1968.

seemed to have given up the fight against the system. The Socialist Party, in power for 14 years, had convinced them that there were objective, "impassable limits" to the social market economy.

A FEW SHORT WEEKS OF STRIKES AND demonstrations have led millions of men and women to question the neo-liberal, monetarist conception of "post-Maastricht Europe". Any illusions in Jacques Chirac's proclaimed (pre-election) concern about the "social fracture"¹ in society have been dissipated. Since his election as president in June 1995, Chirac has presided over strict, liberal orthodoxy in economic policy. Reducing the public deficit has been the top priority. The goal is to meet the "convergence criteria" according to which European Union countries will be judged ready to adopt the common currency or "Euro".²

The rigidity of these criteria have panicked part of the French

bourgeoisie. Conservative (RPR) Deputy Pierre Lellouche campaigned for the "Yes" vote in the 1992 referendum on the Maastricht Treaty. He now worries that "People's lives are completely different from these robotic [automatic timetables]. Even the most rigid legal mechanism cannot resist for long against the kind of social contradiction which we can see forming all across Europe, and particularly in France".³

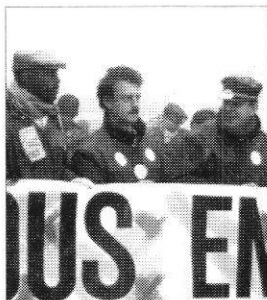
The big mistake of Chirac, and Prime Minister Alain Juppé, was to ignore the catalytic effect on social discontent of their simultaneous attacks on the public sector, working conditions in the public sector and, above all, the social security system, the social advance which symbolises the "Welfare State".

Margaret Thatcher's strategy for beating Britain's miners was the model Chirac and Juppé chose to follow. They thought that the workers' movement was so weakened after

★ France

years of failure, so impotent, that all they would face would be a strike in one sector, the public railway network SNCF. They did not realise at all that twenty years of social disaster provoked by economic policy had brought the country to the verge of an explosion.⁴ They also underestimated the encouragement which the highly visible, tangible strike of transport workers would give to the rest of the social movement.

In 1986-87 students, train drivers and Electricité de France workers fought one after another, without



really finding elements of convergence in their struggles. This time round, government clumsiness made it easier for workers in struggle to link up with each other.

AT THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, university students began agitating against cuts in the education system, and the resulting restrictions in access to certain courses. At about the same time, civil servants and public sector workers held two one-day strikes to protest the freeze in their salaries. Then came Juppé's statement on social security, the release of his plans for reforming the retirement pensions of public sector workers, revelations about measures to close 5,000 km of rail track and shed 15,000 jobs at the SNCF, and leaked plans for "reform"

at Electricité de France/Gaz de France and France Télécom. This could only favour the convergence of struggles in the various sectors. A large number of workers understood that, given the size of the government's attack, only a determined and massive movement could hope to win.

The first to join the railway workers' struggle were the employees of the Paris bus and metro company RAPT. Then there was almost a contagious jump to the electricity workers, postal sorting workers, civil servants at the tax office, and some teachers. Withdrawal of the Juppé plan quickly became the element which united the various sectors, and the slogan most able to spread the struggle to new sectors.

GENERAL STRIKE?

For the first time in years, a general strike became objectively possible. It didn't happen, for three reasons.

The strike paralysed the railways, and bus and metro transport in Paris, Marseilles, Grenoble, and other towns. But it was never total in the civil service and the public sector. More importantly, the private sector did not strike. There was sympathy, complicity, even walkouts from private sector workers on the days of major demonstrations. But the weight of the crisis, and of the defeats of recent private sector struggles, the extent of

"restructuring", the growing proportion of workers on insecure contracts, the omnipresent fear of unemployment, and the terrible decline in trade union presence in private sector workplaces, all combined to exercise a terrible pressure the majority of private sector workers, who sympathised with the movement from start to finish.



The second obstacle to the general strike was the lack of leadership. The trade union confederations (CGT, CFDT, FO, FSU) never called for a general strike. Such a call would not have guaranteed success. But it would have given the most militant workers an indispensable guarantee. They would have been able to throw themselves into action, in the conviction that this would start an avalanche. But there was no leadership. There wasn't even an inter-union co-ordination at the national level. Centralisation, co-ordination between sectors, the dates and routes of demonstrations were set in parallel by each union (with the occasional fax or telephone call). The movement was so strong that union leaders were obliged to "behave" in public — shaking hands with each other at demonstrations, and so on. But their ambivalent attitude to co-operation was a major factor in the lack of self-organisation.

The strike movement basically worked on the basis of general assemblies in each enterprise. But there were few strike committees at the sector or national level. Nor did we have the inter-union co-ordination committees which carried forward the railway strike in 1986 or the nurses' strike in 1988.

The third reason why there was no general strike was the lack of a political alternative to the left of the government. The Socialist Party refused to do anything which might "politicise" the strike, or disrupt the electoral calendar. Socialist leader Leonel Jospin counts on being elected in 1998, if things go smoothly. The

Document

CFDT: Unity and action!

This declaration appeared in *Le Monde*, 12 December 1995, signed by 400 local and regional CFDT representatives.

WE DECLARE OUR TOTAL SUPPORT FOR the actions undertaken against the negative consequences of the Juppé plan, for the defence and the renovation of social protection, old age pensions, employment and salaries, and the public sector. We welcome and support the extension of these actions across the whole public sector, and in the private sector too.

FOR HIGH-QUALITY SOCIAL PROTECTION

High-quality health insurance for all!

Abolish payments for hospital treatment!

Old age pensions after 37.5 years of contributions. Private sector pensions to be based on the ten best years of earnings!

Finance part of social security by taxes on capital! Employer's contributions to be based on the wealth of the enterprise!

Control health care spending through prioritising preventive medicine, and through a struggle against the super-profits of the pharmaceutical industry, and the abuse of the system by independent medical practices!

Renewed democratic control!

AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT AND PRECARIETY, AND FOR A REDUCTION IN THE WORKING WEEK!

A framework law covering a gradual reduction to a 32 hour week, together with new hirings, and the right to work for all!

FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Yes, the time is right for general, global action! It is time to widen the strike! Time to prepare a large, unitary, national, inter-professional demonstration, like the 16 January 1994 demonstration in support of the state school system. All the structures, all the militants, and all the members of the CFDT should take part in this action!

most he has been willing to do is criticise the authoritarian style with which Juppé is introducing his reforms. It was left to Juppé to point out that his proposals are only a continuation of the policies implemented by successive Socialist Party governments under President François Mitterrand between 1988 and 1992.

The Communist Party (PCF) might have ended its strategy of "constructive opposition". But it was clearly worried about the new movement going beyond social protest over social security. Party leader Robert Hue refused to support "anything which would bring into question the Juppé government, or open the possibility of the dissolution of the national assembly". As for the left alternative, Hue still insists that the rest of the left "is not ready... for the progressive alternative".⁷

So there was no general strike. A few days before Christmas (25 December), there was a return to work in most of the paralysed sectors.

SHOCK WAVE

Hundreds of thousands of "ordinary" women and men participated in the strike. On 12 and 16 December, more than two million people demonstrated against the Juppé plan. In many towns, these were the largest demonstrations, not just since May 1968, but since the liberation of France at the end of the second world war.

The strength of the movement in Marseilles, Rouen, Bordeaux, Lyon, Toulouse, Rennes and other towns also suggests a refusal of the centralising, elitist domination of French life from Paris. Geographer Hervé Le Bras argues that "this was the refusal of a Paris scheme, imposed by elites less and less connected to the social body. For the demonstrators, Alain Juppé is the incarnation of this 'arrogant' authority".⁸

PARTIAL VICTORY

Even if the Juppé plan has not been scrapped, the withdrawal of proposed reforms in public sector retirement pensions and plans for cuts in the railway service, and the freezing of a number of European Union Directives on the liberalisation of telecommunications and electricity provision do represent a partial victory for the social movement. So do

the promises of new credits for the universities. And a partial victory makes a real change from the catalogue of defeats of the 1980s and early 1990s!

The class struggle is back on the national stage. Solidarity between different categories of workers seemed to have been destroyed by the crisis. Not any more. The mobilisation renewed the traditions of struggle of the labour movement, and refreshed peoples' memories of past struggles. Demonstrations bristled with red flags. You could hear the *Internationale* again.

Where they existed, inter-professional strike committees had an incredible effect. In Rouen, the general assembly of railway worker delegates

public appeal calling on CFDT militants to join the mobilisation. Notat has responded by starting expulsion proceedings against a number of militants. There will probably be pressure for an extraordinary CFDT congress, which will only accentuate the polarisation in the federation.

New trade unions like SUD (post-telecom) and FSU (teaching), formed by those expelled from the CFDT for "excessive" militancy during the 1980s, played a key role in the struggle.

France's leftist intellectuals were deeply divided in their response to the strike. Some of those who have recently been carried away by fashionable theories decided to



rapidly incorporated other sectors in struggle, becoming the crucible of the struggle in the region.

Political debates on the need for a left alternative, the European dimension of the current crisis, and the place of women in society blossomed, no longer the preoccupation of a hyper-active minority!⁹

[...] The cards have been shuffled, and are being re-dealt. Take the trade union movement: there is greater unity than ever at the base of the various federations (CGT, FO, FSU). The shameful support of CFDT leader Nicole Notat for the government has provoked a real polarisation in that federation. There is now, to all effects, a second CFDT, symbolised by the five hundred shop stewards and regional representatives who signed a

support the government's "modernisation" drive. Many more vocalised their support for the striking workers.

THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING...

The end of the strike is not the end of the social movement in France. Juppé is planning to implement his reforms by decree, avoiding a debate in parliament. First on the list will be the imposition of a new tax on all incomes (including social security benefits and pensions). It will be followed by a reform of the public hospital system. Each measure is a challenge to the social movement. There are plenty of opportunities to re-launch the struggle, if we can find the right initiatives to bring people together again. ★

CGT Congress, 5-8 December

Pressure and passion at union congress

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A CGT CONGRESS like this one. Each session of the congress of the [Communist-led] Confédération Générale du Travail (General Labour Confederation, CGT) was heavy in tension and suspense. While the leadership, under General Secretary Louis Viannet, never lost control, there were a number of moments when, following spirited interventions from the floor, congress almost became what it is supposed to be — the confederation's sovereign leadership.



Viannet remains at the centre of the life of the CGT. The confederation needs its traditions, of which Viannet is the incarnation. But dozens, sometimes hundreds of the 1,000 delegates demonstrated that they were no longer willing to follow blindly, without democratic control over the leadership.

Rouen, 11 December

Juppé must cede!

"Everyone on indefinite strike! Together we can win! We will get the withdrawal of the Juppé plan. And that will be a real springboard

- to re-appropriate social security, the essential social victory of the working population.

- for a retirement pension after 37.5 years of contributions, public and private sectors!

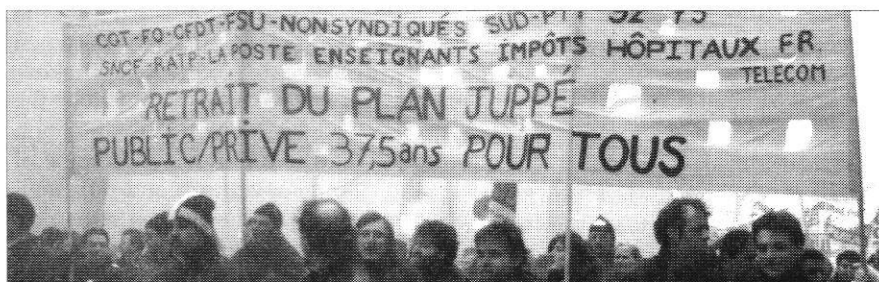
- to rebuild real public services in all sectors (education, health, mass transport).

- for the withdrawal of the Contract-Plan for the SNCF, and all the other privatisation plans (Telecom, hospital reforms).

- for victories over salaries, the reduction of the working week without loss of earnings, and the abolition of unemployment!

More than ever, all together, general and indefinite inter-professional strike until we win! Withdraw the Juppé plan!

Drafted by the unitary assembly of railway workers, and signed by the majority of union branches and co-ordination bodies of sectors in struggle. [Rouge, 14 Dec. 1995.]



This counter-current was motivated and strengthened by the current social struggle. But it is also the fruit of a deep analysis of a significant minority, fed up with years of bureaucratic management of the movement.

THE MAIN DEBATES

The response the CGT should take to the ongoing social struggle came up four times during the congress, culminating in the Appeal approved on the last day. The basic question: is the CGT in favour of a general strike? If so, how to build for it? Delegates were forced to pay constant attention, and object each time the leadership attempted to pass resolutions on the current situation, composed and read at top speed from the platform, carefully omitting any mention of "generalisation" of the struggle. Each time, the congress floor protested. Each time, the leadership backed down.

On the evening of Thursday 7 December, Viannet comes to the microphone, in a hall tangibly unhappy. The news from outside was that the strike had been larger, and more determined than before. But the CGT leadership was still unwilling to make a clear commitment to the struggle. Direct interventions by delegates during the evening obliged Viannet to modify his text on the spot, making it more radical.

DEMOCRACY AND LEADERSHIP

What kind of union do we want to build? Delegates knew that, outside, workers were spontaneously creating links of solidarity between different sectors, while militants of different unions and no union were working together in co-ordination committees. Natural trade union unity at the base, but a lack of project at the summit of the workers' movement. Trades unions can't just respond to the crisis, they have to participate in the formulation of alternatives. How should a union like the CGT struggle against capitalism? How can we create the conditions for a new breakthrough by the movement?

WE NEED UNITY

A number of delegates argued that the recent policy developments of the CGT

have been insufficient. Sylvie Salmon-Thareau, Secretary of the Transport Federation, expressed her concern about "the capacity of the union movement, not just the CGT, to bring together, in solidarity, continents of wage-earners... we have no time to waste... nor do young people with precarious contracts, nor do women, struggling for equality, struggling to protect the right to choose."

Salmon-Thareau expressed the view of a militant minority that "the trade union pluralism we have in France is destructive... It is nothing more than a means of division. There is a difference between plurality of opinions, [and multiplication of parallel organisations]. This is shaking the other confederations, and it is shaking us too," she said. "Like many other people here, I want to see a process of unification of the trade unions".

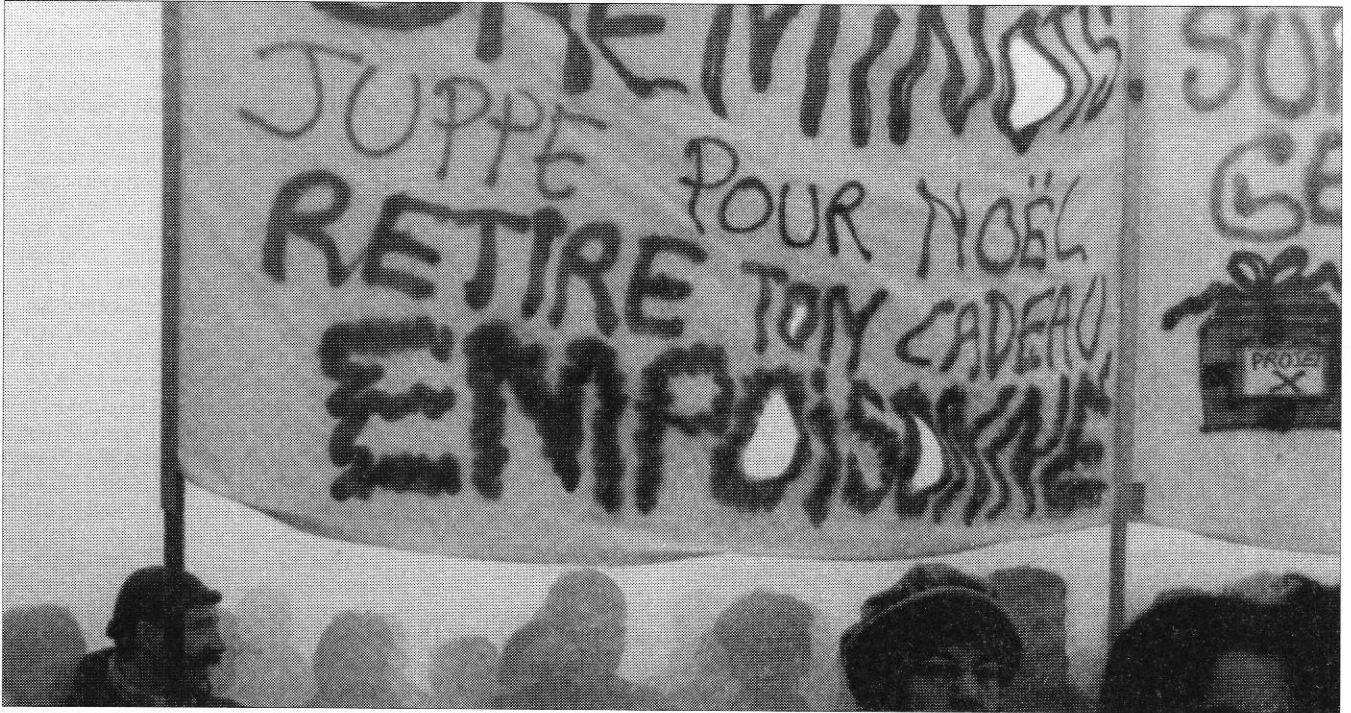
MASS, CLASS...BUT CONFUSED

After a long debate on the statutes of the confederation, 68% of delegates approved amendments confirming that "the CGT acts for a democratic society liberated from capitalist exploitation and other forms of exploitation and domination, against all kinds of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and exclusion of all kinds" Only 30% of delegates wanted to drop the traditional definition of the union as "mass, and class-based".

The CGT is the most left-wing of France's three major confederations, and it has re-discussed its identity at all the key moments of struggle (1906, 1919-20, 1936, 1969). But years of Stalinist hegemony have confused and complicated the terms of debate. After years of assimilation and confusion between CGT identity, judgements on the policies of the French Communist Party, and the role of the East European Stalinist regimes, redefining the union is fraught with problems. Some refuse to change, others clearly want to "throw the baby out with the bath water". Let's hope that the leadership will finally agree to open a stable, pluralist framework for debate in front of the membership. ★

Reprinted from Rouge, 14 December 1995

Unity is strength!



CGT militant Jose Perez explains how, rather than follow instructions from trade union bureaucrats, railway workers in Rouen created their own strike organising committee. By opening its meetings to representatives of other sectors, they created France's most dynamic example of worker self-organisation.

● *International Viewpoint: How did you create the "organising committee"?*

Jose Perez: First, we put forward an appeal at a general assembly of SNCF workers. The text proposed the withdrawal of the Juppé plan as the basic axis around which to build for a general strike. Once the general assembly had approved the text, we worked on it in a commission that had representatives of all the trade unions present among the workers. We were unanimous in our conviction that we had to spread the movement across all categories of railway workers. So we visited the SNCF repair workshops at Quatre Mares (with 800 workers, one of the region's largest workplaces).

When we explained the SNCF Contact-Plan, the workers got very excited. All this at 5 o'clock in the morning! Some of the Quatre Mares workers came to strengthen the central picket lines. At that day's general assembly, there were new tensions. For the first time, we had

about 700 participants. The emotion, and combativity were incredible. There were cheers as we voted to strike. Groups of workers left the meeting to hold demonstrations in all the region's SNCF depots. Those who marched past the post office sorting centre walked right in and invited the postal workers to join us.

That afternoon, we found ourselves in an all-plant general assembly, with all the unions represented. The atmosphere was crazy. People were drumming, trumpeting, whistling. Nothing had been organised, except speeches by representatives of the CGT, CFTD and FO [trade union federations]. We tried to "regularise" the situation by creating a strike organising committee (though we had to be very careful not to use the taboo words "organising committee").

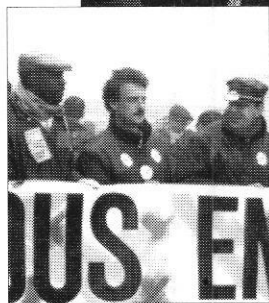
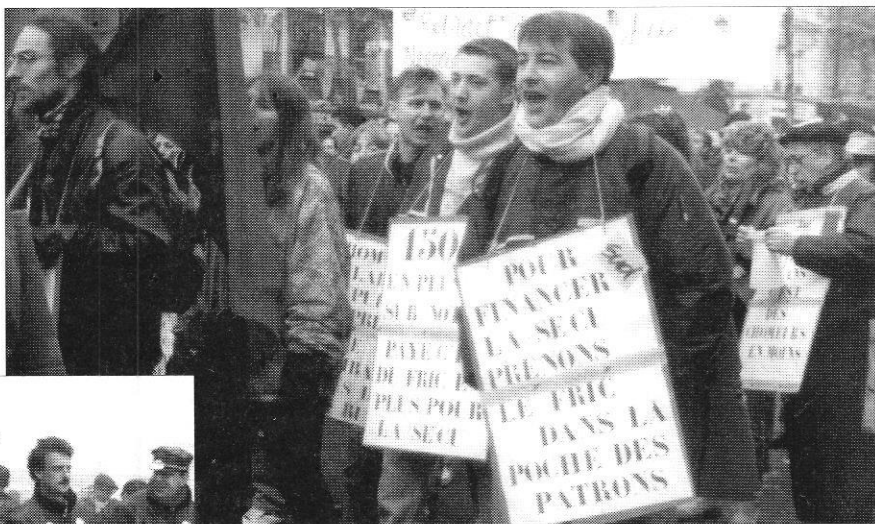
The initial members of the committee were the shop stewards from all the unions, and a few better-

known individuals. But at that first meeting we decided that the committee would be an elected one, with five or six representatives mandated by the general assembly of each sector, plus the regular representatives of each union.

And so it was, from day three of the strike onwards! Each morning the unitary organising committee in each sector, together with the shop stewards, organised the general assembly. At the beginning of the afternoon, the central committee planned that afternoon's inter-professional unitary meeting. After that meeting, the committee worked out the details of each of the initiatives that had been approved.

The afternoon meetings were held in the "ditch" — a 100,000 m² yard where we normally park trains waiting for repairs. The atmosphere was incredible. Of course, these weren't general assemblies in the strict sense — it's difficult to discuss things here the same way as in the base committees. These big assemblies were more like rallies. But they did

José Perez was interviewed by Dominique Mezzi. This article first appeared in *Rouge* on 14 December 1995.



represent the heart of the strike, the heart of working-class democracy. This

was the place for everyone who wanted to take part.

And it was through this daily meeting that all the workplaces and all the trade union bodies were gradually infected with the spirit of the strike. At the beginning, you had two or three workers coming from a particular company or depot. Then they started to bring their work mates! And, for three weeks, this railway yard was THE meeting place for all the sectors in struggle. The Rouen Post Office sorting centre was the first to join the strike. Then there was Electricité de France. The Renault auto plant at Cleon decided to join us after 800 of us decided to go talk to them! We held a meeting in front of their gates. The local CGT representatives arranged for us to speak at a general assembly in the plant the following day.

● *A kind of inter-professional general strike committee?*

No, you can't say that it became a general strike committee. It wasn't thought of in that way. That was not the mandate that those of us in the committee had from our sectoral general assemblies. But it certainly did represent a meeting place, a forum for initiatives by all the sectors in struggle. This was the place where the demonstrations were organised.

The committee brought together workers from more than 20 different enterprises and sectors in struggle. Working people with different professional identities and backgrounds. There was a very strong presence of railway workers and

secondary school teachers. From the private sector you had Grande Paroisse (an important local chemical factory), the CGT comrades from the Alsthom engineering plant at Petit-Quevilly, workers from a number of smaller engineering plants. Then Renault, of course, and the postal workers, and spokespeople for the various teachers' strike committees.

Together, we drafted a leaflet [see below], which was distributed on 11 December, when blocked all the roads into Rouen. More than 1,000 workers from all the sectors met at the SNCF depot at 4 am. Teachers, postal workers, Renault workers... we blocked the town that day! The next day, we organised a "forum of enterprises in struggle", just in front of the town hall. A situation like this dramatically changes your way of thinking. How couldn't it? ★

notes

1. Chirac was elected after pretending to break with the liberal orthodoxy of the preceding Balladur government. He even won an absolute majority of votes in the 18-34 age group.
2. We return to this theme in the next issue of *International Viewpoint*
3. *La Tribune*, 18 December 1995
4. Axa financial group manager Claude Bébéar even spoke, earlier this year, of a "pre-revolutionary situation".
5. In 1993 the Balladur government increased the number of years private sector workers must contribute to the state pension scheme from 37.5 to 40.
6. When Chirac was elected president, Communist Party leaders were worried that the Socialist Party would be the main beneficiary of what they expected to be a rapid decline in the popularity of the new government. So they tried to position themselves as the main "constructive opposition" to the new government.
7. *L'Humanité*, 7 December 1995
8. *Le Monde*, 27 December 1995
9. Forty thousand people demonstrated for women's reproductive rights in Paris on 25 November (see *International Viewpoint* #272, December 1995)
10. *L'Express*, 7 December 1995
11. According to the financial daily *La Tribune* (19 December 1995), Juppé's propositions for reducing the social deficit "would mean 150,000 more unemployed". This is because any reduction in welfare payments and pensions reduces effective demand for goods and services. This reduces consumption, which causes capitalists to cut investment in production. Hence, unemployment.

CP has no alternative

The moment came for a general strike. But all the French Communist Party (PCF) wanted to talk about was its project for a referendum on the European Union. As George Villetin explains, the PCF is desperate to avoid the "politicisation" of the social crisis.

Every night, the satirical programmes on television take pleasure in reminding us that the traditional left has no alternative to propose. Rubber puppets representing Leonel Jospin (Socialist) and Robert Hue (PCF) nourish their common impotence in the face of a tidal wave which has challenged the legitimacy of the government and society itself. The PCF goes a little bit further than the socialists. At least Robert Hue admits that he has no alternative to offer. And he declares his party willing to rebuild such an alternative. But this is where the weakness starts. At the Party's National Committee meeting on 5 December, J-C. Gayssot reported on the party's initiative in favour of an alternative. "We have met all the left organisations. There are differences of evaluation and policy concerning the construction of Europe, and on the idea of a popular consultation by referendum". [In effect, the party has made the need for a referendum on Europe into a sectarian obsession]. Gayssot informed the world that the PCF was still willing to discuss Europe with its partners "though not now, of course". What an admission! The middle of a general strike, and all the PCF wants to talk about is its own plan for a referendum in France about the European Union. All the other questions we might think important are to be discussed in the famous "forums" set up by the PCF, where individuals can come and express their views.

Robert Hue has decided that there is no possibility for co-operation with his main partner, the Socialist Party. So he is willing to build some kind of alternative on the left, but only round "forums" controlled by the PCF.

On 6 December, journalists asked Hue if he thought we should "demand that Juppé resign, and parliament be dissolved?" His answer: "these are not the questions which the movement is putting forward at the moment". They were, of course, and everyone knows it.

Like Socialist Party leader Leonel Jospin, Robert Hue doesn't want to see a general strike which would create a political crisis. The problem is that the only way out of the current crisis is for the left political forces to develop a common platform which expresses the essential demands of the social movement, and then to defend that platform at every level. A political solution is the only solution to this social crisis. ★

Reprinted from *Rouge*, 14 December 1995

Left regroupment fails "acid test"

The second Convention for a Progressive Alternative (CAP) failed to recognise the importance of the massive social movement sweeping France. Christian Piquet reports.

ONE YEAR AFTER ITS FOUNDATION, THE *Convention pour une alternative progressiste* (CAP) met in Lyon on 9-10 December for its second national hearings. CAP was a unique kind of organisation, made up of organisations (Citizen's Alternative (Alternative citoyenne), ADS, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the dissident Communist current Refondations, Futurs), local groups of activists, personalities, and individual, "non-organised" militants. They came together in the local and regional assemblies of CAP to explore and develop the Progressive Alternative. This meeting in Lyon, then, was the occasion to draw a balance sheet of our common activity, set some new perspectives, and to approve a common manifesto.

At the start of the meeting, the LCR and others argued that we should not limit ourselves to one session, because so many CAP militants were absorbed elsewhere, because of their role in the social movement. This proposition was rejected. Which created the risk that the hearings would prove to be a false representation of the reality of the regroupment project on the French left. And that we would be out of step with the political situation in the country.

Our fears were quickly confirmed. The assembly approved a declaration of general support to the social movement, but it was only after much debate, and a card vote, that we could include the demand "for a rapid reduction in the working week to 32 hours, without loss of purchasing-power".

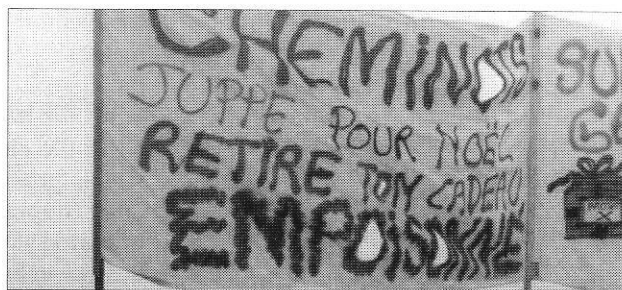
My feeling of dislocation from the actual political situation was deepened by the incessant debate on "Europe" and "Maastricht". All the assembly could do was condemn "the forced march" towards the single currency. But this is surely the time to denounce the convergence criteria of the Maastricht Treaty,

which forms the heart of the Europe-wide process of "liberalisation" and social regression.

The LCR argued that "the building of CAP is very different from region to region. The organisation is still only embryonic in a number of important départements. In this period of confusion, CAP has not been able to build significant bridges towards militant sectors of the social movement, or towards young people. The search for a recomposition on the left continues to manifest itself in a range of different organisational frameworks... For all these reasons, CAP should not at this time transfer itself into a new political formation, into which the various components would dissolve themselves. Going too fast, proclaiming a new political movement, abandoning the consensus-based decision-making process, none of this would change any of the above-mentioned problems. Such a move would be largely artificial. As a result, it would carry within itself the risk of splits, and the wasting of those advances we have already made."

THIS ADVICE WAS NOT HEEDED. A few minutes before the end of the assembly, an amendment to the motion on procedure fixed that, from now on, those organisations which do not dissolve themselves can only be considered as "associated" with CAP, rather than integral components. Such organisations, including, of course, the LCR, will no longer be represented on the CAP executive committee. With one stroke of a pen, the assembly has liquidated the pluralism which was a fundamental part of CAP.

You can understand the motivation of those who supported the amendment, even if you disagree. But nothing changes the hard fact that the group of people who identify with the new conception of CAP is smaller than before the meeting: ADS, Charles Fitterman and his supporters, a few personalities, and a few local groups. The LCR and Citizen's Alternative would have preferred to keep the initial "contract", while Futurs suspended their participation in CAP after the presidential elections, demanding clarification of CAP's direction at this meeting.



Unfortunately, it is clear that CAP no longer represents a lever for the emergence of a new political force to the left of the Communist and Socialist Parties.

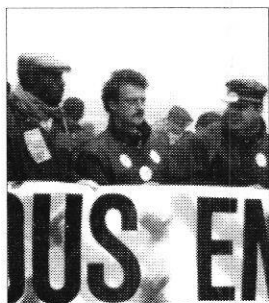
SO WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR CAP? The representative of Convergence écologie solidarité (formerly part of Génération écologie) effectively argued for a "reformist alliance for sustainable development and citizenship". There are plenty of temptations which could pull CAP away from its original project, and transform it into just one more of the little boats accompanying the Socialist Party towards some kind of "alternative".

The dilapidation of this unique experience of co-operation on the radical left does not disprove the absolute imperative of building a political alternative to the Socialist and Communist parties, corresponding to the needs of the social struggle. Debate and action towards such a goal can and will continue! ★

Attack on the value of labour

De-regulation and privatisation are a reaction of governments to the new needs of capital. What differs from one country to another is the political and social form of the implementation of this mutation. Claude

Gabriel explains how French peculiarities combined to transform a "normal" protest over the government's plan for the reform of social security into a mass social movement, unprecedented since 1968.



Most French "experts" absorbed and regurgitated government propaganda about the need for these "just" reforms, in order "to prepare the future" by "re-

absorbing certain privileges". But the claimed rationality of these reforms evaporates as soon as you begin to analyse them. Which is hardly surprising. Because the real rationality is elsewhere. The needs of capital, and the political and economic requirements of the Maastricht treaty for European integration, are accelerating a number of processes which have been underway for a number of years. French employers have been arguing for years that the social charges they must add to the wages they pay out are too high. In effect, they are trying to force down not just the direct cost of labour, but also its indirect cost. For social security in a country like France represents the socialisation of certain needs of the working population.

THE MAIN REASONS BEHIND THE deficits of many social programmes are this devaluation of labour, coupled with the high level of unemployment. This is because social security payments are largely financed by taxes on wages. Less workers means less income for the social security system, as well as

Average annual growth in wages, productivity and GDP (%)

	1987-90	1990-93	1993-95
GDP	4.0	0.3	3.1
Wages	1.3	0.8	0.1
Productivity	2.7	0.8	2.2

Source: OECD

more claimants of unemployment and low income-related benefits.

The way the government approaches the problem of public debt reveals very clearly the class nature of the system we live in. A "right" has suddenly become a "privilege". Abolishing this "privilege" is only a measure for reducing the running costs of the state. This is the message from the bourgeoisie, relayed by all the well-off and privileged opinion-makers.

A BIT OF HISTORY

In the old days, salaries used to rise as productivity rose. Sooner or later (depending on the struggle) prices too would rise. This is no longer the case in France, and in a number of European countries. Since the 1981-2 recession, salaries have been disconnected from productivity gains. Inflation has been consistently low, which means that productivity gains have mainly increased company profits. There has been only a marginal contribution to labour, in the form of wage increases.

This tendency has persisted, both in periods of economic growth and during recessions (see table one). During the upturn of 1987-1990, salaries grew slower than productivity and GDP. In the recession of 1990-1993, salaries, productivity and GDP grew at the same rate. Since then, productivity and GDP have again risen much faster than wages. Indeed, the rate of growth of wages is even lower than in 1987-90.

This structural change in the creation of wages is common to a number of European economies. But it is particularly marked in France, thanks to years of Socialist Party government, during which there was little if any resistance from the workers.

DEVALUATION OF LABOUR

This new mechanism has slowly spread through the various sectors of the economy. Only a minority of professions and categories of workers are exceptions. Whole levels of qualification are being progressively devalued in a process of industrial restructuring which draws on a "reserve" labour force, created as a result of persistent unemployment in all professional categories. The final result is, of course, that the value of labour power as such is being pulled down.

The structure of the labour market is changing too. New kinds of contracts are exploding the concept of minimum wage. For this is what the growth in part-time work represents. The French government even sought to speed the process in 1993, by proposing to set a special minimum wage for young people, lower than the previous universal minimum, now reserved for adults only. New public services, particularly those of a social nature, and those controlled by local and regional governments, are increasingly carried out by sub-contracted labour earning less than the minimum wage. These are not special training schemes or make-work programmes. These are necessary jobs, being carried out at a new, lower price.

PRESSURE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

The logical consequence is that the whole idea of labour contract is being unravelled. Why not consider each employee as a mini-company, proposing a service on the marketplace? Why not break through what is now called the "straitjacket" of labour contracts? In 1994, Minister for Enterprise Alain Madelin argued that "we will not go back to full, salaried employment. But we will create new forms of work, and liberate initiative... replacing the traditional salary contract with a commercial contract



and an individual entrepreneur" (*Les Echos*, 6 September 1994).

Watch out! Because this is what governments and employers mean when they start talking about "reducing the working week" in order to "avoid job-loss" and "save jobs". Over the years, amendments to regulations and collective agreements have increased the flexibility of labour. Workers are increasingly contacted for a period of work defined in a yearly or monthly, rather than a daily bloc. This makes it easier for the bosses to manage their labour resources, in eliminating "surplus labour costs". This all means increases in productivity. And reducing the value of labour, in the name of saving jobs.

In 1980, salaries represented more than 70% of the value-added of enterprises. Today, the figure is 61%. This is less than the average of the European Union, and the OECD countries. Over the last 12 years, the share of wages in value-added has fallen by seven percentage points. The share of profits has risen by the same amount.

TRANSFERS TO COMPANIES FROM WAGE-EARNERS AND THE STATE

You can see how difficult it has become to maintain a high level of social protection when such protection is financed from the labour bill, in a period when labour is being devalued. The relative decline in salaries as a percentage of GDP is having serious consequences on state revenue. The number of jobs increased

slightly in 1994. But because these were mainly part time and precarious jobs, there was virtually no increase in the revenue of the social security system. Which is what the government was counting on.

In other words, the devaluation of labour has direct consequences on the budgets of social programmes, and the total revenue of the state. The outrage of the Juppe plan is that it would require the same people who's labour has been devalued to cough up for the resulting shortfall in state revenue. The public sector deficit

The state has to save money. The press obediently lectures us that, in the end, all these wasteful state programmes are financed by the taxpayers. So everyone should benefit from reforms. The message is that the state's lifestyle is too extravagant, mainly because of an excessive mass of civil servants.

The opposite is true. In France, increases in the public sector deficit have gone hand in hand with economic growth. The deficit was about 2% of GDP until 1990. But the subsequent upturn in the economy was accompanied by a worsening deficit. The state was faced with stagnant sources of income, and increased expenditure on aid to companies (to help them reduce unemployment!). Increased rates of interest had also increased the service charges for the debt. The running costs of the state caused only a small part of this increase (22% of GDP in 1987, 21.9% in 1994). Civil servants' salaries represented 22.3% of GDP in 1987, and

only 22.4% in 1994. So it is clear that the public sector deficit is not caused by a "bloated" civil service, nor by an "explosion" in social security and other spending.

The media neglect a number of interesting statistics.

- Tax on company profits fell by 37 billion francs between 1990 and 1994. And this despite a 50 bn FFR increase in profits in the same period!

- The loss of workers' and employers' social security contributions as a result of persistent, high unemployment has cost an estimated 100 bn FFR over the last five years.

- Two thirds of this year's deficit is made up of interest and service charges paid - at free-market rates — on state debt.

- no-one seems to have noticed one "non-productive, privi-leged" group — the military. Nor is the government proposing to cut the nuclear weapons programme. The latest budget maintains all existing military projects at their current spending levels.

The "need" to increase the number of years contributions needed for access to old age pension is justified by reference to conditions in the private sector. But the higher limit was only imposed in the private sector two years ago. This is why the determination of public sector workers to defend their own pensions has quickly taken the form of the wider defence of the pension and social security rights of all categories of workers. ★

Russia

Moral defeat for right

Alexander Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov report from Moscow on Russia's election results

RUSSIA'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF DECEMBER 1995 brought few surprises. Analysts had anticipated the success of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), headed by Gennady Zyuganov. They also correctly predicted that the left (more precisely, social-chauvinist) centre would receive about 40% of the total vote when the results in single-member territorial electorates were taken into account, and that an unstable equilibrium would come to exist in the Duma.



What was surprising was the scale of the defeat suffered by the parties of the right and centre in the party-list elections. The bloc *Our Home is Russia*, headed by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, received fewer than 10% of the votes, while *Russia's Democratic Choice*, led by the favourite of the Western

media Yegor Gaidar, attracted fewer than 5%. This represented a powerful moral defeat for the rightists, with their policies of "shock without therapy" (Gaidar), and then of war in Chechnya and "depressive stabilisation" (Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin). The majority of Russian citizens came out in clear opposition to such "reforms".

For the present, however, this is only a moral defeat. The forces of the political right are still powerful even in the present Duma, where if so-called "independent deputies" from single-member electorates are taken into account, the rightists will have about a third of the seats (this was written on 20 December, when the authors still did not have final figures available). Among the forces of the right we include the Yabloko bloc headed by Grigory Yavlinsky. We stress that the differences between the real policies of this bloc and the policies of the present authorities amount only to nuances within a shared pro-bourgeois strategy. Yavlinsky's current radicalism is mainly the result of his wish to present himself as an oppositionist.

In the Duma as in Russia as a whole, a situation close to chaos and collapse has emerged as the presidential election approaches. The rightists have already ceased to exercise straightforward control over the situation, even though at the same time they retain administrative and political power and control over property. The left is far from real victory. Circling above this "scene after a battle" is the right-wing social-populist Zhirinovskiy, who has the ability to shift the relationship of forces in the Duma decisively in one direction or the other...

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE ELECTIONS

The political equilibrium (naturally, very unstable) which has come to exist in the present Duma reflects in many ways the wider social and economic relations within Russia. It is important to note that since the winter of 1993-1994 the model of nomenklatura-corporatist capitalism that arose in our country during the process of "reform" has begun gradually to change. From the speculative pursuit of a pro-Western course, the Russian authorities have begun a gradual turn to a chauvinist-paternalist orientation. This turn has proceeded slowly and in contradictory fashion, but its causes are profound. Now it has yielded its first results.

So what is happening? By 1995 noticeable changes had begun appearing. They were called forth by the fundamental rejection by the Russian economy and the people of the attempts to implement the program of "shock therapy"; by the concentration and monopolisation of private capital, processes hastened by violence and corruption; and by the regrouping and partial adaptation to the bureaucratized and corrupt market of a significant sector of the "old" monopolies (primarily in the fuel and raw materials sector).

Partly through the rapid grouping together at the local level of numerous small speculative firms, large corporate clans have arisen, not only in the sphere of material production but also of trade and finance. Within these clans property rights and real power are distributed among various groups of the clan elite. These groups include corrupt elements of the federal and municipal authorities that support a particular clan; the banks that serve and control a given clan; managers of enterprises that are part of the clan, and various private individuals. In most cases these clans bind "their" workers and the residents of "their" cities tightly to the clan structures using ties of patronage and fear. It is significant that in the elections virtually all the present provincial governors were re-elected irrespective of their political orientation.

As the clans consolidate themselves (and the process of their formation is not yet complete) they enter into fierce struggles over the division of property rights and economic power. Naturally, in this struggle (and it is proceeding, we should remember, in a country with a state-bureaucratic capitalism in which a great deal depends on official structures) it is extremely important for the clans to make the breakthrough to political power. As a result, each of the clans has placed, is placing or will place its stake on one or several political forces, which are called upon to lobby for the clan's interests. The abundance of clans (and if we take into account the republican and regional elites, they number many dozens) and their wish to diversify their representation provides one

(Translated by Renfrey Clark)

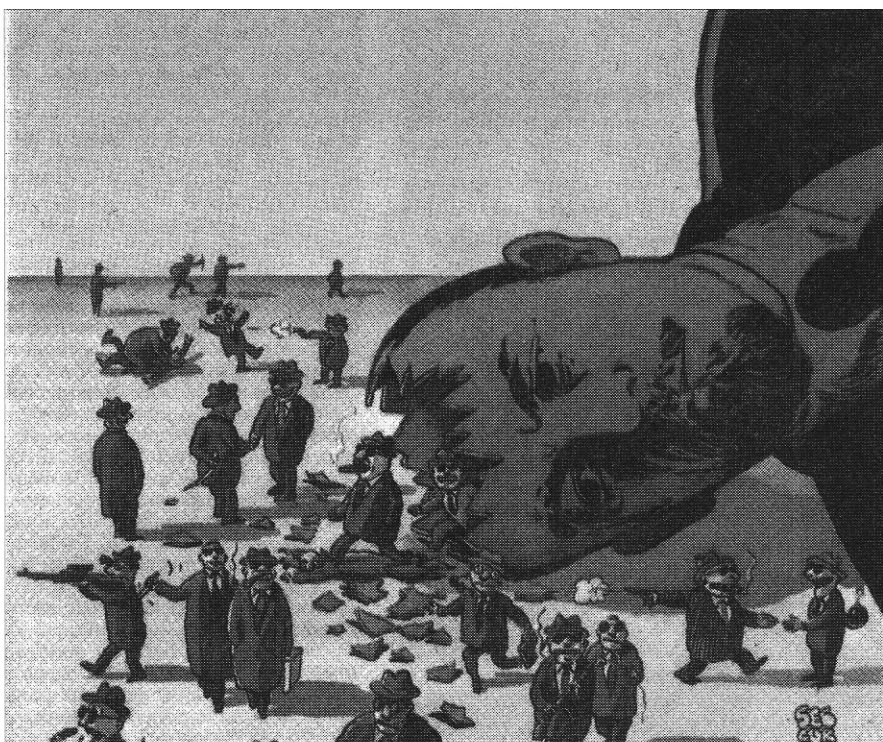
of the reasons for the multiplicity of electoral blocs with extremely similar political programs.

Meanwhile, in the course of 1995 two poles of attraction for these corporate structures began gradually to emerge. One, close to the present authorities, is linked to the paternalist-minded bureaucracy, is oriented toward a compromise with the workers (hence the social populism of the programs) and toward the maintaining of national production through state support, limitations on foreign competition, cheap credits and so forth. On the basis of personal ties and of sectoral and regional affiliations the clan-corporations of this type put their stakes on one of the social-chauvinist blocs, for the most part, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) or the Confederation of Russian Communities (KRO). There are also clans of a second type -- capitalist corporations which have already adapted to the market through monopolising exports of raw materials and energy sources, through intermingling with the current authorities, and through strengthening their position in the financial and banking sphere as a result of the concentration and monopolisation of capital. These clans supported Our Home Russia, Russia's Democratic Choice and other right-wing blocs, competing not only with the paternalist (social-chauvinist) structures, but also with one another. Nevertheless, it is impossible to understand either the results of the elections or the prospects for Russia's future if we "forget" the position of the working people who make up the bulk of the population.

It should be recalled that 1995, despite the official optimism of the authorities, was a period of continuing economic decline. Over the first eleven months of the year the fall in GDP amounted "only" to 4%, while the real wages of workers, following a temporary stabilisation in 1994, began dropping sharply (by 15%). The government's successes in the fight against inflation were truly memorable -- prices in 1995 rose by "only" 220%! Already, the majority of workers were simply exhausted by the unceasing crisis. Apart from that, more than a quarter of the population were below the poverty line, which the Russian authorities defined in very simple fashion: people were considered poor if they lacked the minimum of low-quality foodstuffs needed for survival "over a certain period of time".

There is no doubt that the Russian population today remains atomised and indeed enslaved by clan paternalism. Yes, the workers of Russia as before show little capacity for self-organisation, while economic crisis and the need to work at two or three jobs for twelve to fourteen hours per day strengthen tendencies to conformity and passivity. Yes, our country has already seen the formation of a "worker aristocracy", consisting of employees of a number of raw materials branches and of the banking and finance sector who receive from five to ten times the pay of workers in machine-building, education or science. All this is true.

However, the workers of Russia are already beginning, even if only passively, to protest against such policies, to protest



against such an economy and against such ruling authorities. One sign of this is the fact that in the parliamentary elections as many as 70% of electors came out to vote in the so-called "less favoured" regions. Another sign is the massive support that was given to the KPRF as almost the only party possessing mass grass-roots structures and working (above all in the case of the regional organisations) with ordinary people (for the present, mainly with pensioners, but all the same...). Parties of the same political stripe which lacked such structures failed in the elections, as was shown by the example of KRO.

Even if passively, the working people who make up the majority of the Russian population are thus becoming the decisive factor in the political struggle. The workers are not yet capable of joining forces independently in order to defend their own interests (the KPRF is a party of mass passive support for the "good" -- that is, paternalist -- nomenklatura). But the support, rejection or indifference shown by workers is becoming a decisive factor in the struggles of the corporative elites.

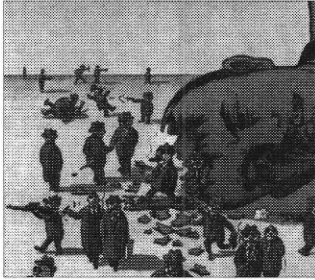
THE DISPOSITION OF POLITICAL FORCES IN THE DUMA AND SOCIETY

In order to understand the results of the 1995 parliamentary elections one needs to keep in mind the bases of the political system that came into being as a result of the coup d'état of September-October 1993. This political system is based on the combining in the hands of the executive power (the president and government) of the prerogatives enjoyed by the ruling authorities in both parliamentary and presidential republics. The rights of the parliament (the Duma) have been curtailed not only compared to parliamentary systems of rule, but even compared to presidential ones. The Duma is restricted even in its legislative functions. In order to overcome a veto by the upper house, the Council of the Federation, a two-thirds majority is required; a presidential

veto can be overcome only by a two-thirds vote in both houses.

The Duma can scarcely be regarded as a force equal in standing to the executive power. The only substantial functions it possesses are the rights to adopt the budget and to confirm in office three key officials nominated by the president -- the Prime Minister, the Chairperson of the Central Bank and the Prosecutor-General. Meanwhile, a refusal by the Duma to pass the budget or an expression of no confidence in the Prime Minister may provide grounds for early dissolution of the Duma.

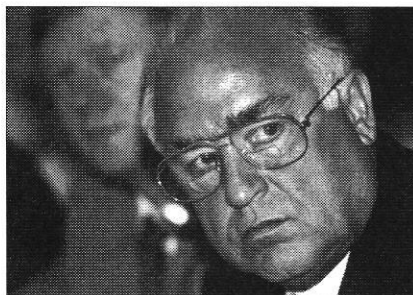
Even though the number of Duma seats held by various political forces is of great importance to the ruling elite, in these circumstances the disposition of forces in the Duma clearly lacks decisive significance. It is no accident that during the election campaign the observation was often heard that the Duma elections were merely a full dress rehearsal for the presidential election of June 1996.



The Duma elections were held on the basis of relatively democratic legislation. A mixed electoral system was used. Half the positions (225) were to be filled by proportional representation according to party lists, while the remaining 225 would be filled by candidates who had run for election in a particular electoral district and had received a simple majority of votes. The party lists were divided into a general federal list (consisting of only 12 candidates) and regional lists. This was done in order to prevent an undue concentration of Moscow politicians in the Duma.

The electoral procedures were also relatively democratic, and appear generally to have been adhered to, at least in regions where conditions were more or less "normal". (Journalists, however, reported numerous and glaring violations in the Chechen Republic, where the elections took place under wartime conditions. Press reports also suggested major shortcomings in the election practices used on military bases elsewhere in Russia). The main source of disquiet was the question of the fairness or otherwise of the vote-counting, since there was almost no possibility of independent control over this aspect of the electoral procedure.

According to figures released on 20 December, the KPRF gained first place in most regions, attracting 21.9% of the party-list votes. It is expected that together with 59 deputies elected in local constituencies, the KPRF will have about 157-158 Duma seats -- more than one third of the total, and almost twice as many as in the previous Duma. Second place in the elections was taken by Zhirinovskiy's LDPR with 10.5% of the votes, half as many as before. Because the LDPR had only an insignificant number of candidates elected in local



Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's *Our Home is Russia* bloc received under 10% of votes.

constituencies (despite having run more candidates than any other party), its parliamentary fraction will make up fewer than 10 per cent of the total number of deputies. The pro-government NDR came in third with almost 10% of the vote, but won only ten territorial seats. Yavlinsky's Yabloko bloc received 7.3% of the vote and had 14 deputies elected from local constituencies. The other electoral blocs failed to make it over the 5% barrier.

Most experts were surprised not only by the KPRF's level of success, but also by NDR's degree of failure. The vote for the LDPR was expected to be considerably smaller. Also mistaken were the near-unanimous predictions that the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO), the Agrarian Party (AP), Gaidar's DVR and the Women of Russia group would surmount the 5% barrier. On the whole, however, the trend of the voting was predicted correctly. All the forecasters put the KPRF in first place, predicted a substantial gap between the KPRF and NDR, and pointed to a significant drift of voters away from the LDPR, DVR and AP.

The only major, fundamental error made by the experts was their exaggeration of the political strength of the KRO. It was predicted that this organisation would rank among the leading factions in the future Duma. But as in the previous elections, a political organisation resting on industrialists and declaring its moderate, centrist character (at that time this role was played by the Civic Union) saw its hopes dashed. It is interesting to note that in 1993 the majority of experts also failed to predict the failure of the Civic Union.

What conclusions do the election results allow one to draw about the mood of the voters?

In the first place, there was an unmistakable rejection of the government's course. This was despite an extremely powerful propaganda campaign waged by NDR, openly supported by state television, and despite real signs that the economic decline was slowing.

Second, the right-wing parties which overcame the 5% barrier received only 27.8% of the party-list vote compared with 52.7% in the 1993 elections. An unstable right-wing majority (unstable because of discord within the fractions) was replaced by the absence of a clear majority for any political current. We include in the category of right-wing parties not only Yavlinsky's bloc, but also the nationalist LDPR, since the LDPR gives its firm support to Russia's capitalist path, and despite spouting anti-government rhetoric and voting with the KPRF on some questions, has also supported the government on all of the most important issues (the budget, confidence in the prime minister etc.).

Unlike the situation in 1993, the organisations Women of Russia and PRES, which have basically supported the government, did not pass the 5% barrier.

The defeat suffered by Gaidar's DVR was particularly crushing. After having gained 15.4% of the party-list votes in 1993, it attracted only 4.1% in the 1995 elections. Confidence in the miracle-working powers of the free market has dissipated like smoke. Even Yabloko, which made a show of opposition to the government, managed only to keep its losses to a minimum, recording 7.3% compared with 7.8% in 1993.

Third, not a single centrist party (whether left-centrist in the style of the social democrats, the Ivan Rybkin bloc and

"Power to the People", or right-centrist like the KRO) has managed to overcome the 5% barrier. This means that for the Russian voter the question is not one of choosing between economic tactics for market reform. The question is one of socio-economic strategy. Once again, the question on the agenda is that of where Russia should be heading. A very significant part of the population is certain that the government is taking Russia in the wrong direction, and that mere adjustments to the reform process are no longer sufficient. In order to be successful, the Russian social democrats need to study the example of Salvador Allende, not of Mitterrand.

Fourth, the failure of Vladimir Jirinovsky's LDPR, KRO and a series of smaller blocs using nationalist slogans has shown that the concept of great-power chauvinism, at least in itself, does not attract significant sympathy from voters. Nor was there significant support for those blocs (the same ones plus a number of small formations of a straightforward right-wing character) whose leaders called for the use of authoritarian political methods. This is a very encouraging sign.

The effect of the elections on the disposition of forces within the left is a particularly complex question. All of the relatively small — or minuscule — left and left-centrist groups failed to surmount the 5% barrier, though two of them, Svyatoslav Fyodorov's Party of Workers Self-Management, and the bloc "Communists — Toiling Russia for the Soviet Union", received more than four per cent of the votes. It is clear that a united left bloc could have received from 45 to 50% of the vote.

The elections confirmed the undoubted fact that the KPRF overshadows all the other left parties and groups taken together. Orthodox communists and supporters of various versions of democratic socialism have only a very weak influence on the masses. At the same time, supporters of "small" orthodox communist and left parties and groups outside the KPRF — people who in many cases did not vote because "their" (democratic socialist) party was not running — could have contributed some 5 to 7%. Together with the social democrats, this might well have provided the vital 10 to 12% of additional votes which the KPRF needed for victory.

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN Russia?
It is not known whether Yeltsin, after the failure of the bloc

The Duma

	1993			1996		
	vote (%)	total deputies	% of deputies	vote (%)	total deputies	% of deputies
DVR	15.38	56	21.3	(4.1)	8	1.78
LDPR (Jirinovsky)	22.79	11	15.6	10.5	1	11
Communists (KPRF)	12.35	33	14.2	21.9	59	34
NDR	-	-	-	9.98	10	11
AP	7.9	26	10.4	(3.9)	20	4.4
Yabloko	7.83	13	7.3	7.27	14	9
PRES	6.76	9	6.0	(?)	?	?
Women of Russia	8.1	4	5.6	(4.65)	3	<1
Power to the People	-	-	-	(?)	8	1.78
KRO	-	-	-	(4.1)	5	1.1
Independents	-	30	6.7	-	77	17.1

*On the basis of figures released on 20 December. The first column shows the percentage of votes received on party lists. The second column shows the number of deputies elected in territorial constituencies. And the third column predicts the probably number of deputies from the fraction as a percentage of the total number of deputies.

led by the "Yeltsinite" Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, will decide to hold these elections. If not, will the opposition and the elites that are dissatisfied with Yeltsin have enough strength to force the elections to be held despite the resistance of the "party of power"? For the moment, it seems very likely that the presidential elections will go ahead. There are too many clans anxious to force the present minority away from the presidential feed-trough, and most importantly, the majority of working people reject the current course. In addition, the presidential team is beset by contradictions, and Yeltsin himself is not in good shape.

In the event that a more or less democratic model is employed for the presidential elections (at least while the election process is under way), the opportunity will arise for leftists, social democrats and the more moderate social-chauvinist forces (from Toiling Russia through the democratic left to the KPRF as the main force of the coalition, and beyond to the Agrarians, various social democrats and "pink" chauvinists of the type of Nikolai Ryzhkov's bloc, etc.) to establish a powerful coalition. This will be possible if there is good organisation, if various disagreements are overcome, and if compromises are reached between the clans supporting the political groups. On the path to this objective there will be numerous obstacles, both the "old" ones that prevented such a coalition from being formed and achieving victory in the parliamentary elections, and also new ones linked to pressure exerted on the KPRF by the authorities and the centrists. Both these forces will try to "buy" the leaders of the KPRF with official positions and with the promise of compromises. It can only be hoped that this effort fails.

For the present, it is unclear around whom the rightists will rally, or whether they will unite their forces at all. In any case, this process will probably exclude Zhirinovskiy, who at least in the first round will probably make his own effort to finish ahead of the pack. The ferment and vacillation in the right-wing camp, and the lack of an obvious favourite, are among the symptoms of the overall crisis of right-wing politics in the past few years. Nevertheless, the "party of power" as in the past concentrates in its hands the support of the bulk of corporative and speculative capital, of officialdom, of the "middle class" (in Russia this consists of employees of commercial firms, of the majority of the "elite" intelligentsia, and of workers in some privileged sectors) and of a minority (though a substantial one) of workers.

As a result the possibility is not excluded that in the presidential elections a more or less even balance will arise between right and left, and that Zhirinovskiy with his 10 per cent will play the role of arbiter. If this is to be prevented, a democratically organised left-centrist coalition is necessary. This the main task of leftists today. ★



Poland

Post-election truce?

by Jan Malerwski

THE ELECTION OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT (post-Communist) candidate Aleksander Kwasniewski as President of Poland closes a chapter in Polish history. It is the mark of popular deception with politicians from the Solidarnosc (Solidarity) movement. And of people's rejection of neo-liberal policies for the restoration of capitalism. But the paradox is that Kwasniewski is committed to pursuing just such policies. His election leaves the field free for those who lead the struggle against the phantoms of the Stalinist past to try to mobilise those who pay the price of neo-liberalism. Outgoing President Lech Walesa has opted for a strategy of de-stabilisation. Before leaving office, he primed a number of time bombs...



Supporters of former President Lech Walesa gather signatures for the overturning of the election of ex-Communist Aleksander Kwasniewski.

Poland in 1996 is a country transformed. In 1989 the richest 20% of households had an average income 3.5 times higher than the poorest 20%. The ratio in 1995 was 1:5. Back in 1989, apart from a small private sector and the top circles of the bureaucracy, higher incomes were grouped in certain economic sectors, and some regions of the country. These differences have disappeared. Today the differentiation reflects something closer to the social structure of an underdeveloped capitalist country. Entrepreneurs are the richest, followed by the liberal professions, followed by workers and pensioners. Farmers and the unemployed come at the bottom of the income ladder. 1 Fifteen percent of the labour force is out of work, a slight improvement on recent years.

Ownership of the means of production has also changed. By the end of 1994 54% of GDP was being produced in the private sector, which employed 61% of the work force. 2 Not including the "grey" economy, which employs between 1/4 and 1/3 of the real work force, and produces 20-30% of GDP. 3 In 1989 there were 8,400 state enterprises. By July 1995 1,596 had been privatised, and privatisation was formally under way in a further 3,297. The rhythm had slowed in 1994, but increased in 1995.

In 1989 most of Poland's trade was with the Soviet Union and the East European countries. Today, the European Union is the source of 64.4% of Poland's imports and absorbs 71.2% of the country's exports.

The Polish currency, the Zloty, is now convertible inside the country. The exchange rate against foreign currencies is fixed by the market, and is relatively stable, despite high inflation (estimated at 26% in 1995). This stability is the result of a financial surplus in Poland's current account

dealings with the West. 5 The National Bank's status makes it independent of government (and the Bank's president even intervened in the election campaign).

Political officers in the Polish army have been replaced by Catholic chaplains. The officer corps is pro-NATO, and hopes the country will soon join the alliance. The General Staff campaigned for Walesa during the election.

The police, particularly the political police, has been restructured. The directors of the new Office for the Protection of the State (OUP) have made declarations of loyalty to the new state. To Walesa.

ALEKSANDER KWASNIEWSKI DOES NOT PLAN TO REVERSE THESE changes. He is an apparatchik of the 1970s generation. One of those who helped reorient the old order towards the market economy in the 1980s. Kwasniewski is no old Stalinist. Nor is he a Communist militant. His electoral programme was spectacularly similar to that of Jacek Kuron, a neo-liberal candidate from the Solidarnosc movement. Like Kuron, Kwasniewski is in favour of the rapid social transformation which is under way, for Poland's integration into NATO and the European Union.

Kwasniewski's party colleagues have been in government for two years, so there are plenty of examples of their "true nature". As Prime Minister Jozef Oleksy comments, "Poland is a land of paradoxes: a centre-left government with post-Communists like me is introducing the market economy,

while the trade unions, like Solidarnosc, which toppled Communism, put forward populist slogans.⁶

Kwasniewski benefited from the record of two years of Social Democratic government, in which his party, while not deviating too much from the policies of its right-wing predecessors, was better than they had been in managing social tensions. The rapid growth of the Polish economy, after a deep crisis and savage restructuring of industry, gave the new government more room for manoeuvre than their predecessors had enjoyed. Real salaries rose 2.8% in 1995 (the first such year since 1989). Unemployment fell (-1.5%). GDP is estimated to have risen 6-7%, industrial production 10.8% and investments 20%. The budget deficit is lower than in 1994. [...]

The incumbent president Lech Walesa launched his campaign with a virulent anti-communist campaign, and allied himself with the conservative, populist current in Polish politics. He was even willing to challenge or block the Social Democrat's privatisation drive, imposing a referendum on their 'coupon' privatisation programme for February 1996.

Walesa demanded civic and judicial sanctions against members of the former ruling Communist party (several million persons). His current received more votes in this presidential election than in the general election of 1993. This has reinforced his position within the conservative, populist bloc, which has developed round the Solidarnosc trade union and the non-parliamentary right.

Some leading bishops have virtually declared war on the new president. The Abbot of Czestochowa, a symbol of Polish nationalism during the years of partition and subjugation to foreign powers, has ceremonially closed his doors to Kwasniewski, as his predecessors did during the 17th century invasion of Poland by the Swedes.

Poland is now polarised between two political camps: a neo-liberal bloc dominated by Kwasniewski's "post-Communist" social democrats, and an anti-Communist, traditionalist bloc, dominated by Solidarnosc and supported by the Church. Neither of these camps represents a social polarisation: the working class, the entrepreneur group and the peasants are divided in their support for the two blocks. In many enterprises each bloc is represented by a different trade union.

Lech Walesa and the leaders of Solidarnosc seem to want to develop this polarisation into a "cold war". This would oblige the Agrarian Party and the Union of Labour (the left-wing from Solidarnosc) to choose their camp or split into fragments. Both these parties did much worse in the Presidential elections than they had done in 1993.

The Agrarian Party (PSL) is torn between its clientelist tradition (it was a puppet party under the Stalinist regime), its opposition to the capitalist restructuring of the countryside, and the Catholicism of its supporters. The PSL has 29% of deputies, which makes it the second largest party in the parliament. If it joins the opposition, it would de-stabilise any Social Democrat government.

A DIFFICULT YEAR

This year will see referendums on the 'coupon' privatisation and on a new Constitution. Kwasniewski is committed to liberalising the law on abortion. The Social Democratic government has promised to increase the speed of privatisation in 1996, particularly in the key sectors of heavy industry, and the banking sector. Solidarnosc's own bastions of support are in Poland's iron, chemical and petrochemical plants.

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Walesa profited from his last two weeks in office to place a few time-bombs for his successor. He convinced the Constitutional Tribunal to annul the June 1995 law on privatisation. Then he submitted the law on taxation to the same tribunal. This made it impossible to implement a law on state finances for 1996.

Since the elections, Walesa's support committees, together with Solidarnosc, have collected over 600,000 signatures demanding the cancelling of Kwasniewski's election, on the grounds that he mis-represented his educational record. Finally, Walesa produced from his sleeve a dossier accusing Prime Minister and Social Democrat leader Jozef Oleksy of having, until very recently, collaborated with the Russian secret services.

WALESA AND HIS GENERALS

Years of conflict between President Walesa and the parliamentary majority allowed the military hierarchy to gain a level of autonomy incompatible with a democratic state. In March 1995, the General Staff was able to force the resignation of the Minister of Defence. In June, the army's newspaper published an article presenting the left as the enemy of the army. This summer, representatives of the General Staff joined Walesa's election campaign.



General Wilecki repeatedly condemns the "politicos" who are leading Poland to ruin. The general is rumoured to have ambitions beyond the purely military...

Until now, the civil power in Poland has always ceded to pressure from the military. The conflict between "the street", mobilised by the populist and reactionary slogans of Solidarnosc, and "the institutions" managed by the Social Democrats risks to de-stabilise the institutions. The parliamentary character of the young Polish democracy risks to suffer. The General Staff may even open the way for a 'Bonapartist' solution. ★

notes

1. Danuta Zagrodzka, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16-17 July 1995.
2. Central Planing Office (CUP) report, cited in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31 July 1995.
3. "Grey" meaning here not registered for taxation, particularly for Value Added Tax (a sales tax). See Danuta Zagrodzka, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16-17 July 1995.
4. Due to heavy spending by residents of Germany at the numerous "grey" bazaars. The official balance of payments is in deficit.
5. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13 July 1995.
6. See this author's article in *International Viewpoint* #251, December 1993
7. After five years study at Gdansk University, Kwasniewski left before defending his degree.

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Spain:

Fight for the soul of the union

The Sixth Congress of Spain's main trade union confederation CC.OO. takes place on 17- 20 January. For the first time, the present majority faces a full counter-programme, prepared by the radical left

"critical sector". It will be a close contest. Whichever current dominates, the minority will continue to have a substantial influence. Jesus Albarracin and Pedro Montes report from Madrid.

THE POLITICAL AND economic changes of the last few years have had a negative effect on trade unions and on working class struggles all over Europe. On the one hand, the events in the East - the collapse of the USSR and of the Soviet bloc - have provoked an ideological retreat of the left and a weakening of its forces. The absence of a social project embodying an alternative to capitalism has demoralized militants and, by depriving them of a liberating perspective, has weakened the momentum and intensity of many struggles.

On the other hand, the crisis of capitalism, neoliberal economic policies, new technology and "globalization" have gravely affected the labor movement through the growth of unemployment, the deepening of job insecurity, the "flexibilization" of labor relations and the ever growing fear of losing one's job. Working class demobilization has deep, objective causes.

The bourgeoisie, seeking to avail itself of this new international situation and of the devastating effects of the crisis, has launched an offensive against labor legislation and market regulations. This offensive endangers the historical conquests of the working class while also fostering a growing disarray within the traditional sectors of the class, weakening our solidarities, and promoting our atomization. Insecurity and fear have installed themselves in the world of labor. Significant sectors have been marginalized. Factors which promote division and disintegration have become more visible, and divergent or



sectoral interests are more keenly felt than our collective interests.

As a result of these transformations, the labor movement faces great difficulties in defending itself and advancing new demands. It must face those obstacles without the stimulus which had been generated by the belief that there existed an alternative social model, within which the development of the productive forces was at the service of the well-being of present and future generations. In spite of its sinister degeneration, such was the space "really existing socialism" occupied in the consciousness of many workers.

Neoliberalism has now achieved a degree of hegemony that cannot be ignored. Its theories and arguments have deeply permeated society, including many left currents and considerable sectors of the trade union movement. It has succeeded in turning its underlying values, proposals and objectives into the parameters within which the problems which affect many countries are approached.

Then there are the consequences for the labor movement of the break-up of the social reform policies, which were largely made possible by the intense economic growth of the post-war period and which can be seen as culminating in the notion of the welfare state. The same welfare state which is now under siege by the neoliberal offensive.

In general terms, the trade union movement has adapted badly to these changes. This has contributed to its decreased influence in society and to a weakening of the pre-eminent role which the working class has played within the 'social whole'.

In the Spanish State, the trade union movement also confronts certain specific problems. The economic crisis has had graver consequences here than in other countries of Europe. It has impinged

November 22, 1995 (translation: R. Bernabe)

★ Spain

on a weaker and less productive capitalism, in the context of heightened international competition. The adoption of neo-liberalism by the (ruling) Socialist Party (PSOE), against a background of the European Union and its Maastricht Treaty, has led to extremely harsh and misguided policies, which, adding insult to injury, have been applied in the name of the left. These policies have led to much

g r e a t e r unemployment and labor market deregulation than in other European Union states. This has had deep repercussions in the labor movement, labor relations and the situation of the trade unions.

Those organizations committed to the construction of a world ruled by reason and solidarity, including the trade unions, key actors in the class struggle, are moving against the current in Spanish society. Given their basically reformist role, the trade unions confront a situation in which reforms are blocked and formidable reactionary forces have been unleashed. The offensive launched by capital against the rights and living conditions of the working class seeks to undermine the cohesion of the class, thus attacking the fountainhead of trade unionism. For the reigning neoliberal doctrines, unions constitute an undesirable institution which must be neutralized and reduced to a social and organizational minimum. It is precisely this situation which fully justifies the struggle for a strong and militant trade unionism, capable of articulating a viable and credible alternative and of morally and ideologically rearming itself to adequately act in accord with the needs and aspirations of the labor movement. Such objectives cannot be attained without a struggle for a more participatory and democratic trade unionism. Present circumstances demand the continuous analysis of complex and changing reality, formulation of the necessary adjustments and understanding of new challenges and problems. Nevertheless the changes that have occurred do not in any way invalidate the fundamental objectives practices or principles of the trade union movement.

IN THIS UNFAVORABLE CONTEXT, TRADE unions have made certain mistakes in recent years. Their critical support for the Maastricht Treaty (including their refusal to promote a plebiscite on it), the semi-general strike of March 28, 1992 and the fashion in which the unions have entangled themselves in repeated rounds of negotiations - first the "pact of competitiveness", then the "pact of employment" — were important aspects of a mistaken strategy. Though they pale in comparison with the way in which the general strike of January 27, 1994 was organized, and the tacit policy of social peace which has reigned since.

According to official estimates, participation in the January strike was higher than in the strike of 14 December 1988. This testifies to the capacity of resistance which the labor movement still retains. Nevertheless, seen from a wider perspective, the strike was only an accident within an ongoing process of demobilization.

During the months which preceded the January strike, the CC.OO. and the General Union of Workers (Unión General de Trabajadores - UGT) had been ensnared in a frustrating process of negotiation which led nowhere. Since January, the trade unions have simply turned their backs on the struggle against the labor counter-reform, limiting it to the fight against it in the *convenios*. With the exception of some sectors where jobs are particularly threatened, paralysis has been the norm within the labor movement.

This paralysis has combined itself with further mistakes of the trade union leadership. These include their complete passivity in the face of privatization; fiscal changes, the "Toledo Plan" and the attacks on the pensions which it will bring; the refusal to join other civic, social and political forces in a common platform; unjustified conflicts with left organizations which have always supported the labor movement; underhanded support of "felipismo". All this have undoubtedly opened the path to new aggressions, lessened the credibility and leadership capacity of the trade unions, and undermined the morale of many trade unionists. As a result, the government of the PSOE has had its hands freed to go forward with its neoliberal project — deepening the labor counter-reform, ransacking the public sector (Iberia, Telefónica, Renfe), generalizing the

privatization policy (Repsol, Argentaria), undermining social services (unemployment insurance, health), thus creating the conditions for further attacks on pensions as well as an even deeper labor "flexibilization".

The determinants of the present situation are many and complex. They include the economic crisis and the advance of neoliberalism, which through the growth of unemployment, job instability and the growing fear of losing one's job, has had a devastating effect on the labor movement. Demobilization, therefore, has an objective basis. But that, in itself, cannot explain the return to passivity after a potent general strike. We must also consider the effect of the advance of neoliberal ideas among significant sectors of the working class and its leadership. Mostly, this does not occur because the latter agree with those doctrines, but rather because they have come to accept the world of neoliberalism as a given, unchangeable reality. For example, while workers don't like the concept of competitiveness, the idea has nevertheless sunk in that if one is going to have a job, one will also have to be competitive. This recognition is only a step away from accepting the government's economic policies, labor-law deregulation or the need for all sorts of restructuring. Such ideas affect the behavior of many left-wing political and trade union leaders, both of the UGT and the CC.OO. And these attitudes in turn generate tensions and conflicts within their organizations.

These conceptions largely permeate the proposals which the present majority in the CC.OO. will try to establish as the official line of the organization at the forthcoming Sixth Congress.

The dominant elements in the official proposals break with the CC.OO.'s critical and fighting tradition. Among other things, the majority document proposes an excessive accommodation to the limits imposed by neoliberalism, and refuses to struggle for a more just and caring society. The proposals are permeated by the notion that the neoliberal model of European union, as formulated in the Maastricht Treaty, is inescapable. The majority offers only a weak response to the government's economic, industrial and social policies, including

privatization. There is an implicit acceptance of the labor counter-reform - by relegating the struggle against the new measures to the arena of the *convenios*).

Such an orientation has organizational consequences. It confirms the role of the unions as actors within the existing system of institutions. The present majority expect to be the decisive element behind the trade unions' influence. They would like to centralize and bureaucratize the unions' decision-making processes, at the expense of wider participation, pluralism, and the autonomy of local and sectoral union bodies. Some CC.OO. leaders have, however, recognised that "one cannot be in the government and the opposition at the same time".

Carrying out these policies demands the neutralization of all criticism, and considerable limitations in internal democracy, and the role and the influence of the rank and file within the union.

Proposed changes in the statutes of the CC.OO. would limit the rights of the members, increase the powers of the apparatus, and eliminate all dissident voices from the executive organs.

THE LEFT ALTERNATIVE

The critical sector has elaborated a set of amendments to these proposals. The alternative trade union project acknowledges the difficulties of the present situation, but rejects everything which contradicts the interests of the working class. This project does not renounce the struggle for social transformations and attempts to elaborate an analysis, a program, and the alliances and the methods capable of effectively orienting the struggle to improve the living conditions of the working class. In concrete terms, this means reducing unemployment, defending and extending social services, and abolishing the perverse situation generated by the labor counter-reform.

The starting premises of the critical sector's proposals are a refusal to accept neoliberalism and the ground rules it seeks to impose, and an insistence on the need to struggle for a more just society. This perspective rejects the neoliberal project of construction of the European Union. Instead, the critical sector proposes a referendum after the anticipated revision of the Union Treaty (in 1996).

A referendum would open a debate within society (which was blocked when the Union Treaty was originally approved).

The critical sector proposes an alternative economic policy oriented to the growth of employment and the extension of social protection, radically opposed to the tenets of neoliberalism. It favors an active industrial policy which would promote employment, as well as a re-industrialization policy within which the public sector would play a key role. It favors a systematic defense of the public sector. The issue of the reduction of the working day is taken up through a proposal for a reduction of the work week to 35 hours without loss in pay.

The labor counter-reform is not accepted as an irreversible reality, and its repeal is maintained as an objective which must not be abandoned. An effective mechanism for collective bargaining is proposed. The proposals of the critical sector also promote trade union action at the level of the enterprise while also redefining the relations between the committees and the sections.

MOST IMPORTANTLY OF ALL, reconstructing the social networks of the left as well as rearming them ideologically is retained as a main general objective. The potential of the class struggle as a means of radically changing society is retained as a key notion, a notion which the role of the unions as negotiating and bargaining organizations does not disprove. In terms of autonomy, pluralism, democracy and participation, the changes in the statutes proposed by the critical sector would pass any democratic test. They contradict the centralizing and bureaucratizing proposals of the majority, while seeking to deepen the model of a participative and democratic trade unionism, which until now has been one of the distinguishing features of the CC.OO. It relies on a growing activity and empowerment of the enterprise committees, the *juntas de personal* and the union sections and it favors the development of direct forms of rank and file participation through assemblies, consultations and the elaboration of decisions from below. It favors the adoption of stable criteria, which could only be modified by majority vote, to govern the structure and election of all leadership bodies, thus preventing the formation of

homogenized executive organs which would threaten pluralism. It advances several measures which would increase the weight of the principle of proportional representation in the election of the *Consejo Confederal* (leading council) of the CC.OO.

In other words, the organizational project of the critical sector implies a commitment to the modernization of the CC.OO. as well as its adaptation to the existing situation through a deepening, not abandonment, of its original characteristics. Such an unhesitant commitment to trade union democracy can only be conceived as part of a wider orientation whose programmatic objectives correspond to the immediate and the historical interests of the working class and which, furthermore, considers both mobilization and struggle as key elements of trade union action.

International Viewpoint goes to press before the Sixth Congress of CC.OO. It is too early to draw any conclusions. Nevertheless, it is possible to advance certain considerations in the light of the pre-congress discussions.

CC.OO. IS NOT JUST ANY UNION. Compared to trade unions which exist in other European states it retains several sharply defined distinctive features. It was organized and consolidated during the clandestine struggle against the dictatorship. It brought together the most militant and combative workers. Democracy, pluralism and a socio-political conception of trade unionism, are key features of the organization. In spite of the mistakes it has committed since 1977, for a majority of the workers CC.OO. is still *the* state-wide mass organization that could deliver a mobilizing response to the government's and the bosses' offensive while decisively contributing to the laying of the conditions necessary for building a radically different society.

It is not easy to transform such an organization into just another trade union. So it is not surprising that the policies followed by the leading majority after January 27 have provoked so much discontent. Many organs at different levels of CC.OO. have pronounced themselves against the line being followed, against the tripartite document on social peace ("*sosiego*") or the refusal to participate in the Civic Platform (NGO initiative

against unemployment). Similarly, it is not surprising that the critical sector has been able to open a wide ranging debate on trade union policy and on the organizational model, or that its proposals have obtained majority support in many pre-congress discussions, particularly in those assemblies with a large degree of rank and file participation.

This support will not be fully reflected in the number of delegates at the Congress. The numerous irregularities in the selection process will favor the present majority. Thus, for example, there are many designated



delegates, but none directly elected by the rank and file. Many preparatory assemblies are mere formalities. The outgoing leadership is both judge and participant in any dispute. In spite of all this, the strength of the critical sector at the Congress will be such that the present majority will not be able to ignore it. Furthermore, the critical sector stands behind a solid and coherent alternative which will have an impact far beyond the Congress.

Pluralism has always been a defining element of the CC.OO. Strong debates on trade union policy have taken place at all its congresses and in some, as in the Third Congress, as many as four separate lists have been presented for the Executive Commission. The result has been the election of pluralist and inclusive leaderships, as well as a united - because democratic - organization. One of the distinctive features of the CC.OO. is the notion that given the plural and diversified nature of the working class, pluralism and diversity are not only not obstacles but are, on the contrary, necessary values in the defense of the interests of that class. The same will surely happen at the Sixth Congress. Sharp as the pre-congress debate may have been, there is no risk of a split. As in the past, the result of the congress will be a stronger, more democratic and more combative CC.OO. ★

Bosnia's

by Catherine Samary

Those who support a massive military intervention by the Western powers generally argue that it has been NATO's "hard line" against the Bosnian Serbs which has brought the war to an end. Reality is different. The Dayton/Paris agreements are branded with the realpolitik and double-discourse of the Western powers. The new "peace" is fragile and contradictory.

The peace plan was negotiated at Dayton (Ohio) on 21 November 1995 and signed in Paris on 14 December under intense pressure from the US government. Clinton needed a quick diplomatic success for domestic reasons. As a result, the hurried peace accord effectively establishes Bosnia as "one nation, divisible". With no clear winner in the ground war, Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian leaders each hope to implement the accord in a different way. Clinton combined promises with threats to extract the signatures of the three warring parties.

Without directly implicating the US in the war, in one camp, he exploited the military-political balance of forces on the ground in a very cynical way. NATO bombing certainly weakened the position of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. But in favour of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, not in favour of the opponents of Serbian nationalism. The Paris accord even recognises Karadzic's Serbian Republic, allowing it control over 49% of Bosnia-Herzegovina (more or less the territory it controlled after the autumn 1995 Croat-Bosnian offensive).

These accords could only be implemented once Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic was able to speak in the name of all Serbs. When Bosnian Serb leaders delegated their power to Milosevic, they did not know that the accords would include a clause preventing "War Criminals" (as defined by the Hague Tribunal)

from holding office anywhere in the new Bosnia. Hence today's resistance by Radovan Karadzic and General Radko Mladic to a plan which, in all other respects, confirms the success of the war they have waged these last four years.

But NATO bombings played only a secondary role in the modification of the political and military balance of forces. One transformation was the slow construction and reinforcing of the Bosnian government's army (Armija BiH). Superior in numbers (but weak in heavy artillery, tanks and aircraft), the Bosnian Army was also handicapped by geography - the territory controlled by the Bosnian government was only the heart of Bosnia, surrounded by Serbian and Croatian forces. But the main transformation in the military balance of forces was essentially in favour of the Croatian army, which benefited from US and German aid.

For President Franjo Tudjman, this was all part of the affirmation of his "Greater Croatia". His strategy combined the creation of an anti-Serb Croat-Muslim bloc, with a tacit agreement with Serbian President Milosevic to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina into Serbian and Croatian spheres of influence.

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic was the most reluctant to sign. He had been mandated to refuse any ethnic partition of Bosnia. But nothing which the Paris agreement promises for the multi-ethnic Bosnia has yet been implemented. And the situation on the ground, recognised by the agreement, confirms the logic of separation.

The Sarajevo government had neither the political capacity nor the military means to resist both Serbo-Croat and US pressures (accompanied by a significant financial "carrot"). Clinton has certainly also agreed to aid the Bosnian Army, so as to achieve a more stable balance of forces on the ground, which, he hopes, will allow

Pax Americana

the withdrawal of NATO troops in a few months. His problem is that the (Republican dominated) Congress demands that the US develop an unilateral aid programme for the Armija BiH, despite the opposition of the Russian and European Union representatives in the "Contact Group".

HIGH RISK PEACE

The NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) is only supposed to stay for 12 months. But what will the situation look like, one year from now? Clinton's apparent diplomatic success carries very high risks. He might have been the main author of the peace plan, but he had to accept the deployment of large numbers of US ground troops in Bosnia. And he had to assume the role of leadership in the NATO intervention. His goal now will be to get the "boys" out of the Balkans without too much loss of life, and before he stands for re-election, if at all possible. US public opinion will not be able to support another bloody or drawn-out intervention, and is likely to turn against Clinton if US troops are still in Bosnia when he stands for re-election.

This is why Clinton is insisting on the massive deployment of heavy artillery (rather than infantry), against the council of those generals who know that such weaponry is of limited use on Bosnia's snow-covered mountain roads. It is also the reason behind IFOR's "tough" image — unlike UNPROFOR, IFOR say they will shoot first if they face hostility from "locals".

Despite these obvious risks, the peace accords and the troop deployment do represent a new legitimacy for NATO, "the peacemakers", who are taking



the place of the discredited United Nations Protection Force in Former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR).

ONE AND DIVISIBLE

Some on the left expect miracles from this latest intervention of the great powers. They should instead recognise the exorbitant power which the USA and the other powers have appropriated, on the backs of the local populations. Because the Dayton accords don't just concern the ceasefire and transitional period leading to a constitutional re-foundation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the return of full sovereignty to its peoples. Instead, they impose an American (quick) timetable for the establishment of a whole new constitutional system. Elections are scheduled for June-October 1996 to governing organs defined at Dayton. There is no role for any kind of constituent assembly, where the representatives of all Bosnians could take the decisions which could ensure a real peace.

It has already been decided that the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina will

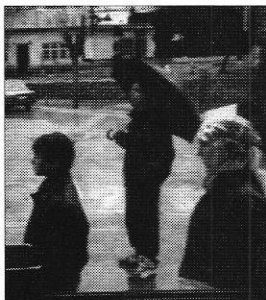
be composed of two distinct entities — a Croat-Muslim Federation (51% of the territory, and the Serbian Republic in Bosnia. Each of the three armed forces (Bosnian Serb, Croat HVO, and Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina) will come under the control of one of the members of the collective presidency (to be made up of one Serb, one Croat and one Muslim).

Bosnia will have some central institutions (though these have yet to be created, unlike the structures already build up in the three separate zones). New common organisations will theoretically be responsible for foreign policy, foreign trade, and monetary policy. But the Serbian and Croatian zones will have the right to develop direct relations with the neighbouring states of Serbia and Croatia. And the only currency circulating in all three zones so far is the German Mark! The first governor of the Central Bank of Bosnia-Herzegovina will soon be appointed — by the IMF!

Citizens in the Croat-Muslim Federation and the Serbian Republic in Bosnia. will vote separately in

★ Bosnia

elections to the Chamber of Representatives (one third of the 42 seats will be filled from the Serbian Republic). Legislation can be overturned by a 2/3 majority of deputies from either of the constituent parts. Such guarantees for national groups, inherited from the Tito era in former Yugoslavia, can offer important guarantees to minorities in multi-ethnic states. But there are three problems with the specific structure proposed for Bosnia.



- the territorial separation of Bosnia is based on supposedly ethnic criteria (hence ethnic cleansing).

- the main political parties appeal for votes on an ethnic, rather than a political platform. This encourages each community to vote for "its own" party.

- each citizen is assigned to one or other of the ethnic groups on the basis of family origin or father's surname. Those who object to their classification will have to "prove" that they are who they say they are.

Such a system squashes all political choices and "imperfect" identities. Those who are non Serbs will find it hard to get representation in the Serbian Republic. So will those who don't fit the norms in the Croat Muslim Federation. This doesn't just mean all the local minorities. It includes all those who identify with a mixed identity [...]

A DURABLE PEACE

The reactionary aspects of the Paris accords may provoke a new outbreak of hostilities, or render the rights accorded under the accord null and void. What is the sense of the "right" to free circulation, or the "right of return" of the three million refugees and displaced persons, in a state where the great powers are negotiating (ethnic) "corridors" to link the various parts of the (ethnically defined) Serbian and Croat-Muslim components of Bosnia.

Having said this, the cease-fire, and the exercise of the rights provided for under the accords do also widen the

forum for political struggle. We should be sensitive to the development of two types of activity by those in Bosnia who refuse the construction of ethnically exclusive states: developing control "from below" in the new Bosnia, and rebuilding an egalitarian and democratic society.

- Monitoring and criticism of the role and the effects of the deployment of IFOR may develop into denunciation of that role, and demands for the withdrawal of NATO troops. We can certainly expect conflicts generated by the contradiction between the population's desire (and right) to move freely across the entire territory, and IFOR's logic of building miniature Berlin walls between the "ethnic entities". Nor should we neglect the tensions caused by the presence of 20,000 relatively wealthy US soldiers in a society sick and deformed by a long war.

- Anti-nationalist forces may decide to agitate for a delay in the elections, to allow them to campaign better and in all parts of Bosnia. We should be ready to help relay this demand. Free circulation of ideas, as well as people, is a precondition for the elections.

- Western governments are exploiting the Paris accords as a justification for expelling their Bosnian and other ex-Yugoslav refugees. Elections (of any kind) will only encourage this cynical policy. There are no guarantees on the conditions refugees will face after repatriation.

- Aid distribution should be transparent. We should support those who's projects are for bringing communities together, rather than those private interests who, in situations like these, invariably come to an arrangement with those nationalist forces which are intent on dividing the country.

ACT NOW!

If peace is to last, radical forces should help in the reconstruction of an egalitarian, democratic society.

- the independent media should be allowed to circulate in all parts of Bosnia — these are the publications which will make it possible for anti-nationalist forces to be heard. Anti-nationalists include those who, in the Croat-Muslim Federation, came

together in September to publish the "Declaration of Principles for Establishing a Durable Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina". This document sets out the conditions for the creation of a "non-confessional, multi-cultural and multiethnic" state, with "decentralised federal units" rather than "mono-national" units. It would be logical to demand a referendum on these questions. And for democrats in Bosnia to link up with anti-nationalists in Croatia and Serbia, and make sure these values are presented to the population in the zones controlled by Serbian and Croatian nationalists.

The "right to return" is only credible if it is solved at the level of former Yugoslavia. The process of return should be supervised by non-governmental organisations, which should make sure that all collective guarantees are respected. The right of return is crucial, because the resettlement or repatriation of refugees is so closely linked to the rights of minorities. So far, each refugee population has served to "clean" the minority from the region where it finds refuge.

The Hague Tribunal should take real action against all the war criminals. Free elections and the return of the refugees can only take place if the terrorist chiefs in Herceg-Bosna (Croat-controlled) and the Serbian Republic in Bosnia are removed from positions of power.

A series of international conferences of those non-governmental organisations which share these objectives should assure control over the process, and develop initiatives for further mobilisation. Tuzla has already hosted such a conference (see IV 272). Now we should try to impose such events in Mostar (Herceg-Bosna) and Banja Luka (Serbian Republic in Bosnia). ★



Sri Lanka

After the "great victory"

by Vickramabahu Karunaratne

THE PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT¹ "liberation" war [against the Tamil Tigers] is claimed to be a great success. Unfortunately, Tamils generally refused to be liberated. They ran away from the Sinhala "liberation" army as if it was the Devil's army advancing on them. Many Tamils have abandoned the Jaffna peninsula altogether, and come to the Vavuniya district. Some half million people have been made into refugees. PA leaders claim that the Tigers forced these people to flee. There is some truth in this. But, in general, people started leaving when they realised that the Tigers were incapable of resisting the attack of a well-equipped traditional army. The moment Tigers started retreating, the exodus started. Obviously, the Tigers did not want only the lame and the loyal to be left behind: hence the order for everyone to leave. Thus we had the ridiculous spectacle of a Sinhala army "liberating" the virtually empty city of Jaffna from the escaping Tamil people.

Whatever Prime Minister Chandrika claims, the reality is that she has occupied the hub of the culture and identity of the Lankan Tamil people *sans* Tamil people! The purported victory over the Tigers is an illusion. But she has so severely hurt the Tamil that the TULF [Tamil United Liberation Front], the Tamil liberal bourgeois party, has withdrawn its support for the PA. All upper class Tamil intellectuals, like the feminist Radika Kumaraswamy, have broken off their romance with the PA with a sigh of grief.

Certainly, this is a defeat for the Tigers. They used to have illusions about their ability to resist the attack of a conventional army. They under-estimated the Sinhala army's potential. We have now seen how, with enough resources, it can become a ferocious military machine. The Tigers also over-estimated the support and sympathy they can mobilise within the imperialist countries. In recent years they have repeatedly claimed that they only represent a national liberation force, and that their heroes are of the Napoleon type. They clearly tried to avoid being classified as Marxists. And they expected Western protection for their "genuine" national liberation struggle.

Actually, Chandrika's reform "package", her noises about devolution, and her unwavering support for the IMF "development project" for Sri Lanka enabled her to mobilise military aid from imperialism. Besides, imperialism today is



not interested in liberating oppressed nations. All capitalist leaders in the Third World have agreed to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Special economic zones are appearing to facilitate this new international division of labour. And, on top of all this, the Tamils are now accused of helping international troublemakers. It appears that they are now hunted throughout the world.

IN THIS ACTUAL SCENARIO, THE TAMILS HAD TO RETREAT, AND the Tamil people were evicted from their famed city. Chandrika agreed that this called for celebrations. The people, burdened by rising prices and vexed by the sell-out to capitalism, did not respond enthusiastically to this call of the racists. But state-sponsored celebrations went ahead, at great expense.

This went far beyond a general chauvinist act. Supporters of Deputy Defence Minister, Colonel Anurudha Ratwatta, hope to promote him as an alternative prime minister to replace the ailing Sirimao Bandaranaike, Chandrika's mother. They dug deep in his genealogy to establish a connection to the historic Sinhala war hero Leuke Bandara Deiyu. It is now claimed that the would-be descendent "did the job", while the commanders of the war drive, Generals Gerry de Silva and Rohan Daluwatte, are treated as the errand boys from the South. All this is not only chauvinist, but vulgar and pretentious. After hurting so many people in this manner, Chandrika and her adjutant started clumsy talk about devolution and her famous "package". This

¹The author is a leader of the NSSP (Nava Sama Samaja Party — New Socialist Party), the Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International.

could only appear to the Tamil nation like an offer of true love from a rapist to his victim.

This governmental military victory has multiplied many problems. The war continues, as a protracted guerrilla activity. Half a million Tamils have become refugees. Almost all Tamils are alienated. Chauvinist militaristic forces have gained strength. Last but not least, the burden on the masses has increased many fold.



The rise of the right wing inside the Cabinet is shown in the rise of the Minister of Industry, C.V. Gunaratne at the expense of the "liberal" Peiris, presently Minister of Constitutional Affairs and Deputy-Minister of Finance. "CV" is openly supported by a substantial section of the right wing UNP [United National Party] opposition. This has put UNP

leader Ranil Wickramasinghe in crisis. In fact, the rise of right-wing forces within the PA means that the objective need for a Ranil-type UNP has ceased. The UNP will not vanish, but for the moment it is clearly in the margins.

THE OPPORTUNIST LEFT IN THE PA IS FEELING THE KICKS ON their backs. They compromised too much on the issue of war, and are now totally incapable of challenging the occupation of Jaffna and the eviction of the Tamil people. However, on the issue of privatisation, there is no way they can back down. All workers' parties in the PA, including Thondaman's CWC [Ceylon Workers' Congress, the dominant force among Tamil plantation workers in Sinhala majority areas], have challenged Chandrika's privatisation plans. In fact, a common campaign has been launched by a joint committee of all sectors under threat.

In particular, the Tamil plantation workers of the Maskeliya areas came out on strike against their private sector managers. They demanded 25 days work per month, jobs for their children on the plantations, and a gratuity at retirement. Perfectly reasonable demands. Though plantation management companies' representative Sepala Illangakoon claims that these are "impossible" demands.

The "old" bonded labour is on the march, for their destiny and their children. These workers will not relinquish their right to this land without adequate compensation. When the plantations were nationalised, the State undertook to safeguard their right to land and work. The State cannot change this agreement unilaterally. War and racism have temporarily dampened the agitation against privatisation and other dictates of the IMF. But it will certainly gain momentum in the coming period. When that happens, opportunist left leaders may get dragged out, at least for a period. At the moment, while the opportunist left leaders are howling within the PA, Chandrika is using public money to advertise the sell-off of public property.

With the rise of militaristic forces, workers also faced new repression and attacks. In many work-places employers used police, and sometimes paid thugs, to drive away protesting workers. Police visited the houses of agitating or striking workers in the middle of the night, to threaten them. Many female workers were threatened in this manner, after employers complained to the police. Police often came in the middle of the night to take workers into

custody, threatening everyone in the household. Peaceful marches were dispersed.

IN THE PARLIAMENT, JVP [PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT] MPs consistently spoke and voted against the war, though their party took a dubious position in relation to the devolution of powers to the provinces. At first, they condemned devolution for dividing the country into eight parts (though theoretically they stood for Tamil autonomy). But as the NSSP persisted in raising the question of autonomy and referendum, JVP leaders hastily retreated, and raised the slogan of equality. We had several debates with JVP leader Wimal Weerawansa, who defended their position by claiming that "socialism will resolve the national conflict". But the question remained: if a hypothetical JVP government granted autonomy, which area would come under this home rule?

But there has nevertheless been a very important development at their rank and file level. A significant section of JVP membership came over totally to our position. Some took almost an ultra-left position, of uncritical support to the LTTE. The journal *Hiru* is the indirect voice of this tendency, which is supported by several student leaders from Colombo, Japura, Kelaniya and Peradeniya. In addition, there is dissatisfaction on the way the JVP leadership handled the student struggle during the war period. Only lukewarm support was given to the struggle against war and privatisation. Many JVP members feel that their party has made concessions towards Janatha Mithuro [Friends of the People], the Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalists. Will the JVP break from the racists and come to a revolutionary alliance with the proletarian organisations? This will depend on a number of factors, above all on the strength of the independent workers' movement.

ON 13 DECEMBER 1995, THE NSSP PARTICIPATED IN A common campaign to mark Human Rights Day (which fell on 10 December). After a long hesitation, the opportunist left in the PA agreed to a common picket in defence of human rights. But we were unable to agree on a common document. The NSSP insisted that it was essential to condemn the government for its attack on Tamil people, and to demand the withdrawal of the army to allow the self-government of the Tamils. The opportunist left in the PA rejected our requests.

Nevertheless, the picket was a success. We marched to Hyde Park, Colombo, where we held our meeting. The opportunists did not participate officially, but over half their people came with us, which exposes the weakness of their leadership. Despite all the setbacks, 13 December was a new beginning for the left alternative. We can expect the movement to grow, both on the political side and on the mass action front.

Can the government take a sharp turn towards reforms? Or contain inflation? With the growth of the right wing inside the PA, and the strengthening of the racist militaristic forces, such a scenario is very unlikely. The revolutionary left remains optimistic, though the mood is still against us. ★

notes

1. The PA is the "popular front" type of coalition that came to power in Colombo, in the summer of 1994. See this author's article in *International Viewpoint* #264, March 1995

Vietnam

Neo-liberalism is Party policy

Jean-Michel Krivine speaks to emigré activist Tuan

● *Do you still have family in Vietnam?*

Two brothers, who symbolise the evolution of the Communist Party cadres, north and south. My brother in Hanoi has important position in the civil service. He is part of the Nomenklatura, and enjoys a number of their privileges. He's pure Stalinist, and refuses any questioning of the role of the Communist Party.

My brother in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) is retired now. A Communist Party militant for many years, he made his way north to Hanoi after the Geneva Accords of 1954. In 1968 he was due to move back down south, to participate in the Têt offensive. But new orders came, when his bag was already packed. The security services had realised that he had a relative abroad, employed by a large capitalist firm. So he was no longer "sure" enough. He only returned to the south in 1975, with the northern troops.

He is an idealist. Unlike most of his former companions, he still doesn't own his own house. He is starting to realise a lot of things now. When I started visiting him again a few years ago, he still had Ho Chi Minh's portrait, and his own medals displayed on the altar to the family ancestors. This year, they were gone.

● *What is the economic situation?*

Michel Chossudovsky was right to argue (in the February 1995 issue of *International Viewpoint*) that neo-liberalism is now official Communist Party doctrine. And it is certainly true that the state economy is being destroyed, and the industrial base of Vietnam sold off to foreign capital. Gross Domestic Product (GDP, the total value of goods and services produced) is only increasing due to increased export sales. The education and health system are collapsing.

But however seriously you study the secondary (English language) texts, you can't fully grasp a country like Vietnam, where everything changes so quickly. I disagree with Chossudovsky's comments on the "impoverishment" of the Vietnamese people. For sure, people have started living a little better since 1990. And this certainly has an effect on their behaviour. For example, until recently, all everyone thought about was how to earn money, how to get by. Everyone dreamt of getting a job in a foreign company, where the salary was not just higher, but was at least paid regularly. Now, some people are more hesitant. A new feeling of dignity, of national pride is emerging.

People don't want the country to be auctioned off to foreign (mainly Japanese) capitalists. Obviously, this is only the case of a small minority, but it is significant nevertheless.

● *What about free speech and the free press?*

In Ho Chi Minh-City you can speak freely. It's different in Hanoi. There is a constant debate in the "pavement restaurants" - what people now call "pavement radio". No subject is spared when people gather round a cup of coffee or a bowl of pho soup "Minister Dô Muoi is an honest man, but you can't say the same about those close to him", "I can't tell you anything about [Deputy Prime Minister] Phan Van Khai, but his son in Hanoi is responsible for a hotel project financed by foreign capital..."

The newspapers are read avidly, above all *Saigon Giai Phong*, *Tuôi Trẻ* (Young Age), and *Thanh Nien* (Youth). A "supervised free press". You still can't create a new newspaper, but the existing publications can be more critical. In Ho Chi Minh-City, *Thanh Nien* and *Tuôi Trẻ* compete for. They investigate financial scandals, pollution, the degradation of the hospitals and education, and so on. But they present this information, more than denounce anybody. All under the vigilant regard of Special Section A25 of the Security Service, which is responsible for all literary activity.

You can now criticise Stalinism, if you are careful. But Stalin himself is untouchable. To say nothing of Ho Chi Minh.

● *Is the security service still as important?*

Yes, but technical progress means they can no longer control everything. Until 1991, all international telephone lines were supervised by operators, through a manual telephone exchange. There were no fax machines. Now there are hundreds of fax machines, and automatic telephone exchanges, installed by Alcatel and some Australian companies. The network of personal computers

Tuan left Vietnam for France in the late 1950s. He was active in the anti-war movement, later joining the editorial board of *Chroniques vietnamiennes* (the magazine of Vietnamese supporters of the Fourth International). He first returned to Vietnam in 1990. He has since visited the country at least once every year. He was interviewed on 15 October 1995 by Jean-Michel Krivine



has developed considerably over the last year. Some people are already connected to the internet.

A savage private education industry is expanding in three areas: computers, business management, and foreign languages (mainly English).

Most of the young people in Ho Chi Minh-City want to earn more money, and enjoy life. The "heroic struggle for independence of the Vietnamese people" is already ancient history.

● *Emigré writer Nhung Agustoni-Phan recently wrote that the principle concern of the old guard of the party is maintaining its absolute power.*

True, the Nomenklatura wants to keep power at any price, while it assures the capitalist transformation of the economy, like in China. The leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party took a sharp turn towards neo-liberalism in 1987, under the influence of "perestroika" in the Soviet Union. But trying to respect a "Vietnamese style". Everything was controlled by the Communist Party. But the leaders were divided. Half became "conservatives", which led the "liberals" to send their children off to Harvard and Oxford to learn "management". And since 1992-1993, it is "Harvard arrivals" who run the economy.

At the top, close attention is being paid to developments in China and the former "real socialist" bloc. The Institute of Social Sciences in Hanoi has translated a number of Chinese works on the "socialist market economy", for the strictly internal use of the Party. I was able to consult them, but not take them away with me. They would have been confiscated by the customs authorities.

There is no industrial "hard core". The domestically-owned private sector is producing new riches, but only in what the economists call "value added". The only real industries of transformation are geared towards export, particularly in the textile fields (clothing, footwear) GDP might be growing, but, since this includes export earnings (oil, raw materials, tea, coffee, rice, rubber) and service earnings (tourism, hotels and catering), growth in GDP does not at all prove that there is an economic "take-off" which is benefiting the population.

A law on foreign investment was passed in 1987, to allow the easy repatriation of profits and capital. Texts regulating Vietnamese investors have only recently appeared.

● *What about political repression? Have people heard about the arrest of Hoang Minh Chinh?*

Only some intellectuals have heard about Hoang Minh Chinh [see *International Viewpoint* number 270]. The press has practically ignored his case. The man in the street knows nothing about it. But the minority who follow the affair are convinced that it is a set-up job: The Communist Party

leadership is gunning for the opposition, in preparation for the June 1996 eighth Party Congress. As we can see, the introduction of the market does not at all imply the introduction of democracy.

● *Could there be an explosion of social discontent?*

The social situation has been deteriorating for several years. Over the last two years, Ho Chi Minh-City has seen a number of spontaneous strikes. These are provoked by working conditions which hark back to the colonial period. Foreign (especially South Korean) firms squeeze their workers as much as they can, paying \$20-25 a month, for a working day in excess of eight hours. (The official minimum monthly wage is \$35 in joint venture companies, and \$15-20 in state enterprises. Women workers in the new private companies are often beaten by their "superiors". And the official trade unions do nothing...

The government recently decided to "make our towns more attractive" by "freeing" the alleys and pavements of itinerant and unregistered traders. Of course, something had to be done to improve security in some districts, but this was done in a brutal way, insensitively. And it provoked many of those who make their living from a pavement "shop," or any enterprise which spills out onto the pavement. The banning of rikshaws (bicycle-taxis) from a number of main roads had a similar effect.

Nhung Agustoni-Phan is right to be concerned about the possibility of a social explosion. But when? The Communist Party knows there is a risk. They are trying to diffuse the situation by ensuring a modest rise in the standard of living.

● *Does anyone still identify with anti-imperialism, with socialism?*

There are semi-socialist groups among Vietnamese emigrants, particularly in Germany and the former Czecho-Slovakia. But in Vietnam itself, there are only isolated individuals. The anti-imperialism of the national liberation struggle is dead and buried. And the government constantly presents the USA as an economic partner which we cannot do without.

Having said this, some young people are again interested in a more spiritual, non-violent and moral alternative, inspired by a mixture of Confucianism and Buddhism.

● *But there is more interest in our recent Vietnamese editions of Trotsky's works² than our Russian or Polish editions³.*

True. There is a real Trotskyist tradition in Vietnam, particularly in the south. Nationalists there worked with the Trotskyists (so did the Communists, for a while). There is a certain respect. No-one in the south believed the lies that were heaped on our current. Our documents circulate quite well, especially among the intellectuals. ★

Notes

1. Nhung Agustoni-Phan, *Viet-Nam, nouveau dragon ou vieux tigre de papier?* (Olizane, Geneva, 1995)

2. Including *Cuoc cach mang bi phan boi* (The Revolution Betrayed), published by Tu sach nghien cuu, 1993, distributed by La Breche, 9 rue de Tunis, 75011 Paris, France. Price 120 FF/US\$20 per copy plus 20FF/\$3.20 for orders of five copies or less. Larger orders and deliveries to Vietnam or Eastern Europe: write for details.

3. Write for our price list for publications in Czech, Polish and Russian

Te Ao Maohi (Tahiti)

Paradise and the bomb

Tahiti, the last paradise of the travel guides, is also France's nuclear test centre. Laurent Durase exposes the colonial regime in "French Polynesia"

THE FIRST NUCLEAR TEST LED TO NEARLY TWO DAYS OF RIOTING, of a violence rarely seen in Polynesia.¹ The airport was set on fire, halting all air traffic. The centre of the capital, Papeete, experienced widespread damage. Several dozen people were wounded, after confrontations between supporters of the independence movement and the "forces of order". One Tahitian had his hand severed by a tear gas grenade. The next day, emergency trials began. Numerous pro-independence activists, trades unionists and unemployed, were interned, one trade union was declared illegal. What's wrong in "paradise"?

The "Overseas Territory"² of French Polynesia is made up of 130 islands — 3,600 km² of dry land spread over an area the size of Europe (4 m. km²) in the south Pacific, 17,000 kilometres from Paris. The islands are divided into several archipelagos: the Society Islands (including Tahiti and Moorea), Gambier, the Australs, the Marquesas, and Tuamotu (including Mururoa). Tahiti is the biggest island (1,042 km²), eight times smaller than the French *département* of Corsica).

People from south east Asia settled in Polynesia in successive waves of migration, starting in the 4th century. In 1521 the explorer Magellan landed in Tuamotu. In 1767, Captain Ellis took possession of Tahiti in the name of king George III. The explorers Bougainville and Cook also visited the archipelago. But the Europeans only installed themselves definitively at the end of the 18th century, with the arrival of the London Missionary Society, which repressed local priests and destroyed temples in its drive to replace local religious beliefs by Protestant Christianity. In the process they imposed certain European rules of behaviour and certain "values": work, money, morality, repentance, modesty.

CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES FROM FRANCE LANDED ON THE Marquesas in 1834, to try and supplant the British Protestants. Behind this religious battle³ was a struggle for influence in this part of the world between France and the British empire. In 1838 the pastor Pritchard encouraged Queen Pomare IV to demand English protection. But in 1842 the French admiral Dupetit Thouars put pressure on her to sign an agreement with France. One year later the first governor, Armand Bruat, arrived. Expecting a British reaction, Queen Pomare wrote a letter asking the people to remain patient until the arrival of British ships. Her letter provoked the opposite reaction to that intended, and the winds of revolt began to swell. The combat was unequal, with villages being bombarded from ships, and some thousands of inhabitants being deported to Kanaky (New Caledonia). The British never came. The resistance laid

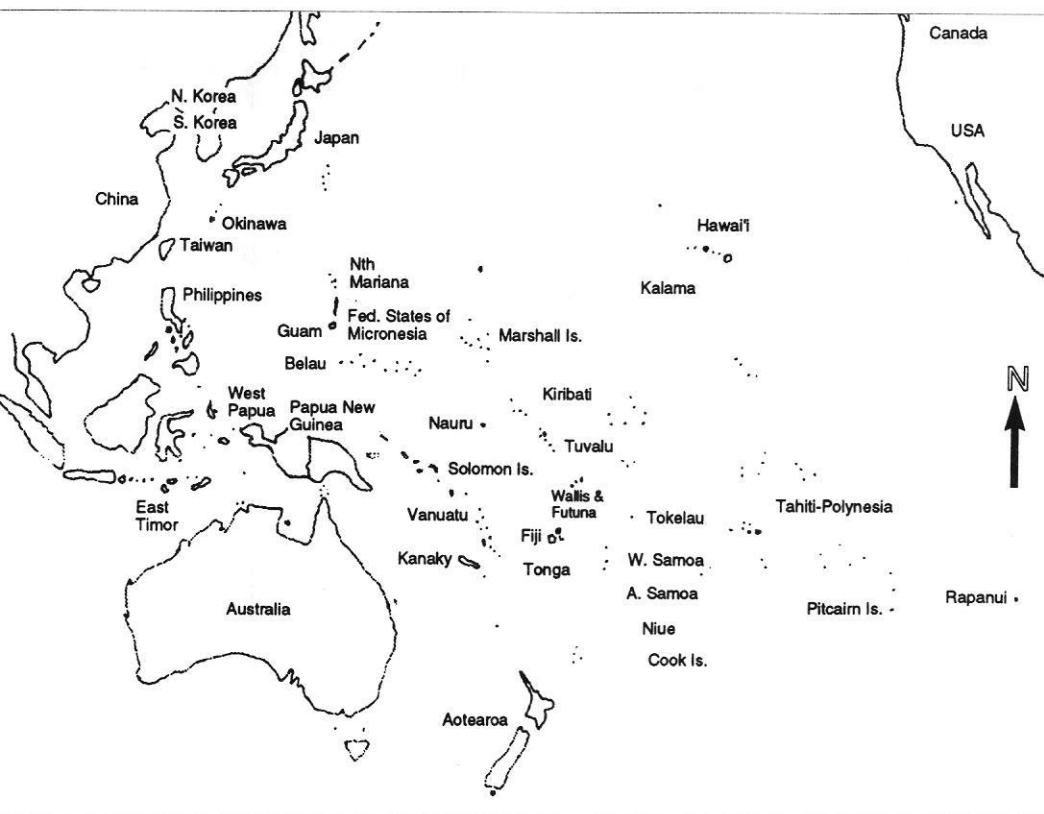
down its arms in 1847. The Maohi people were decimated, not only by weapons, but also by European diseases like influenza and smallpox. The population of the Marquesa islands fell from over 20,000 inhabitants at the arrival of the westerners to 2,000 in 1916.

In 1901 the territory was established as the French Settlements of Oceania (EFO). Polynesian volunteers fought (and died) in Europe during the first and second world wars. One survivor of the Pacific battalion, Pouvanaa, became the first autonomist leader, winning the legislative elections of 1949. He was very popular because of his past record, but also because he made constant reference to the Bible. There was an ambiguity in his "tiamaraa" programme; was he demanding autonomy or independence? In the Maohi language, the word means both.

In 1950 he set up the Democratic Rally of the Tahitian Peoples (RPDT) which obtained 18 of the 25 seats in the Territorial Assembly. In 1957 the EFO took the name of French Polynesia. One year later General De Gaulle organised a referendum on the future association of France's Pacific colonies with the "mère patrie". Pouvanaa campaigned for a no vote, but state radio was forbidden to him and official maritime transport strangely disrupted. The Gaullist regime was determined to install the Pacific Test Centre (CEP) in Polynesia.

Pouvanaa was framed — he supposedly wanted to burn down Papeete — and imprisoned in France.⁴ In 1961 the airport at Faa'a was built, allowing France to import the necessary material for the CEP. One year later, the journalist Jaques Gervais, was expelled from Tahiti for having revealed rumours of the imminent installation of a nuclear site at Gambier.⁵ We will see later the influence that the implementation of the CEP (the first bomb was exploded in 1966) had on the social and economic structure of the region.

Te Ao Maohi today has 212,000 inhabitants, more than two thirds of them living on Tahiti; the urban zone of Papeete alone has a population of more than 100,000. According to the 1988 census, 50% of the population are under 20. The ethnic breakdown is as follows; 83.8% Polynesian and assimilated, 11.4% Europeans (98% of them French), 4.3% Asian (largely Chinese⁶) and 0.5% others. Of the Polynesians and assimilated, 66% are Maohi and 17% mixed race or "demis". This notion of "demis" is complex — for some anybody of mixed ethnic ancestry is a *demi*, for others, like Michel Panoff⁷ "... in this population of mixed race, everyone is always somebody's *demi* and somebody else's native at the same time! It is moreover this decidedly relative character which shows, if there was a need, that the line of divide between the two is a social and not a biological one". Unlike in Kanaky, there are no "French colonists"



even the French minimum revenue (RMI).⁸ Nearly 40,000 people live in poverty, and the island of Tahiti has an unprecedented housing crisis. Educational problems amplify this phenomenon. Only 0.4% of Polynesians go to university, compared to 2% of *demis*, 7% of Asiatics and 21% of Europeans. The imported educational system takes little account of the local culture; Maohi Reo only became an official language in 1980. For many years children were forbidden from speaking it at school, even during playtime, under threat of severe punishment!

The social consequences are numerous. Papeete's Nu'utania prison, has become a rite of passage for the young unemployed. There is both alcoholism, with the emphasis on the consumption of the local beer, and the growing and trade of "pakalolo", the local cannabis. One youth in three uses the drug.

dominating power. Virtually all the economy is controlled by the *demis* to the benefit of French imperialism. Though some elements of the *demi* bourgeoisie have challenged this tutelage, since the profits they draw from it are falling.

The installation of the CEP has considerably transformed the economic status of Fenua. From 1962 to 1965 the number of Europeans doubled, while the need for workers led France to send boats to the islands to recruit. Rapidly, the administration became the premier enterprise of the territory. The demand for consumer goods progressed at dizzying speed at the same time as exports fell; the phosphate mine of Makatea closed in 1966, while there was a fall in agricultural production (copra, vanilla, coffee) because of the massive migration of Maohis to Tahiti. The trade balance went significantly into deficit, which led to a total dependence of the economy on the external world.

Despite the reduction of the activities of the CEP starting from 1975, the rural exodus continues. The plans for recovery by the state and some efforts at industrialisation, notably in tourism, cannot absorb this population influx, which is reflected in the shantytowns which have grown up in Papeete and Faa'a. A minority has rapidly enriched itself, by speculation and corruption. On the other side, a majority, cut off from its culture and its traditional family structures, vacillates between temporary, unskilled work and unemployment, without successfully integrating into western values. The Gross Domestic Product is now one of the highest in the Pacific, but the richest 10% has an income 15 times higher than the poorest 10%. The changes of status of the territory in 1977 and 1984 only slightly modified this situation, social tensions continued to sharpen and in October 1987 violent riots broke out during a strike of dock workers in the port of Papeete.

Today, unemployment is running at between 15 and 20% of the active population (7000 unemployed in 1988, mainly women and youth). There is no unemployment benefit, not

WOMEN FACE A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS. Access to contraception is complicated. Polynesian women today do not want more than 5 children, not 10 or 12 like their mothers. But the health education service is under-resourced, and only 56% of sexually active women use contraception. Finally the French law on abortion⁹ has not been extended to this overseas territory. The second problem which affects women is the growth of alcohol consumption among men. It has gone from 4 litres of pure alcohol¹⁰ per year per inhabitant in 1958, to 10 litres today. The immediate effects are the growth in the number of rapes, of battered women, and increasing female alcoholism. A third scourge, prostitution, has developed with the massive influx of military servicemen, and also with the development of tourism.

In the area of social protection, the situation is hardly any more encouraging. There is a more or less private fund, the CPS¹¹, reserved for waged workers. Tax policy was until very recently based uniquely on indirect taxes, thus strongly weighted against those on low incomes. In 1992, the territorial government negotiated a "pact for progress" with the French state. But, as local activist Gabriel Tetiarahi explains, this pact "was very quickly translated into a framework accord which ceded several areas of economic activity, drinkable water, electricity, household garbage, and tourism to the multinationals... the 'Pons Flosse' law offered those close to the French right the possibilities to create joint ventures and enjoy subsidies and tax sweeteners if they invested in France's 'Overseas territories'... The big hotels privatised the coastal areas and built without thought for environmental impact..." Polynesia was obliged to stump up extra cash, hence the creation of the CST (territorial social contribution), the first direct tax, supposed

to respond to the need of the most needy, by demanding a contribution from all incomes. In reality, the big earners, the bosses, and the rich pearl farmers escaped completely

In this complex situation, social struggles multiplied. After the riots of 1987, significant movements emerged in sectors like the hotels and commerce. General strikes were declared against the freeze on wages in 1993, and against the installation of the CST in 1994. At the beginning of the this year, barricades went up in Papeete, and some violent conflicts with the forces of order took place following some sackings at an enterprise in the capital.

The last statute of 'internal autonomy' dates from 1984. A high commissioner represents the French state. A territorial government is elected inside the territorial assembly (composed of 41 members elected by universal direct suffrage); there is also a economic and social council. The local authorities are competent in a few areas only: health, education, public works, the French state taking care of the rest. The "Overseas Territory" is represented in the French parliament by two deputies and a senator.

The party in power today is *Tahoeraa Huiraatira*¹². This organisation is in fact the local section of France's ruling (conservative) RPR. Its principal leader is Gaston Flosse, who is also a deputy and president of the territory. A former schoolteacher, his political trajectory has been above all one of corruption and intrigues of every kind. He has already been investigated more than 15 times and is nicknamed 'Mr. 10%' in Fenua. But he can count on one faithful friend — today president of the French republic. Jacques Chirac has called Flosse his "brother"¹⁴. *Tahoeraa* can affirm its power thanks to the local media. The two dailies belong to the Hersant group, and the only television is *RFO*, which the Maohis call "*Radio Flosse Overseas*".

There are a number of smaller bourgeois parties, which serve in general as active supports for local notables like Vernaudon and Leontieff, whose political careers are based essentially on opportunism and corruption.

If the right is very much present, the left in the French sense is very weak. The Communist Party does not exist. The small Tiro Party is close to the French Socialist Party. Its principal leader, Jean Marius Rapooto, characterises himself as a "left social democrat".

The "autonomist" movement gradually lost credibility after the arrest of Pouvanaa in 1958. It only demanded independence in order to put pressure on France. Moreover, its electoral calls in French elections were dictated solely by tactical interests.

New, pro-independence organisations, began to emerge in the 1970s. Some, like *Te Toto Tupuna* and *Te Taata Tahiti Tiama*, were very radical. Several of their leaders were imprisoned at the end of the 1970s following a bomb attack on the central post office at Papeete, and the assassination of a marine officer. Both action were claimed by the *Te Toto Tupuna*, but Charlie Ching¹⁵ (head of the *Te Taata Tahiti Tiama*) was also imprisoned as one of the plotters! In 1975, the *Ia Mana te nunaa* organisation arrived on the political scene, with two very new orientations. It was a secular party (its meetings did not begin with prayers) and it described itself as socialist and in favour of self-management. It aimed to introduce the concept of class struggle into Polynesia. But it rapidly committed many errors. In 1981, it called for a vote for Mitterand, who continued the nuclear tests!

In 1982, *Ia Mana* won 9% of the vote, and sent three deputies to the territorial assembly. But in 1987, after the eviction of Flosse, they made an alliance with Alexandre Leontieff (a dissident RPR deputy). Their leader, Jacques Drollet, became minister of health and *Ia Mana* ended up discrediting itself. At the 1991 elections it only got 2% of the votes and lost its deputies.

Today two pro-independence parties are particularly active. The Pomare party is a somewhat "traditionalist" and "conservative" organisation, led by Joinville Pomare,

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★ *Te Ao Maori (Tahiti)*

descendant of the Pomare kings. It defends the Maohi tradition, and fights for the return of all the lands of Fenua to the Maohis. It carries out land occupations and pursues legal actions at the international level, basing its arguments on the victories of the Maoris, who recently regained some thousands of hectares from the big New Zealand companies.

The principal pro-independence organisation is Tavini Huiraatira — the Front for the Liberation of Polynesia, founded in 1977 by Oscar Temaru. In 1983 Temaru became mayor of Faa'a, the most populous commune of the territory, basing himself on defence of the excluded. He was re-elected in 1989 and 1995 (this time with 70% of the vote). Tavini has had four deputies in the territorial assembly since 1991. Independence is the base of the party programme, though religion is also accorded a significant place. The symbol of Tavini is a cross carrying the words "God is my master". Its programme envisages nationalisation and the extension of free basic services. The party's areas of struggle are the mobilisations against the tests, and also the installation of the big hotels which they fight through the occupation of lands.

Tavini also demands that the UN put Te Ao Maohi back on the list of countries to be decolonised. There is a debate inside the party, with some wishing to define who is Polynesian and who is not, while others, like Patrick Leboucher, argue that all those who love Polynesia should be accepted as Polynesians. Oscar Temaru is a popular man, on account of his charisma and simplicity. But his methods are sometimes authoritarian, as shown in a recent demonstration in Tahiti. He decided unilaterally to set up barricades, without informing the other organisations of the peace flotilla¹⁷.

Turning to the trade union movement, there are a multitude of organisations. The biggest federation of the territory is the USATP/FO¹⁸, led by Pierre Frebault. This fought against a wage freeze agreement in 1993 (employers had promised a freeze on layoffs in return) but on the contrary has also supported the CST, a direct tax which hits wage earners above all. Two federations are close to the pro-independence movement. First, there is A Tia I Mua (more or less close to France's CFDT federation¹⁹), which, following the recent rioting, has been declared illegal and its leaders arrested, including its general secretary Hiro Tefaarere. In 1991, A Tia I Mua led an important battle against the tax measures of the Flosse government by blockading Papeete. But in 1993 it supported the agreement on "employment" involving a wages freeze, while Tefaarere, because of his status as a civil servant, received a 5% increase! A former policeman (RG)²⁰, Tefaarere is capable of leading "muscular" actions, like breaking the social movements. In 1992, he intervened to end a strike that A Tia I Mua had called in the civil service and expelled six trade union leaders! Some of them then joined the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Polynesia (CSIP), one of whose leaders, Roland Oldham, participated in the antinuclear demonstration in Paris in July of this year. This organisation wishes to work a little in the manner of the Kanak organisation USTKE²¹. The CSIP is antinuclear and for the right of self-determination of the Maohi people. It has fought against both the wage freeze in 1993 and the CST in 1994. It is very much present in the hotels and in Tahiti's two Continent supermarkets. Since the beginning of the year, its militants have been very active; in the struggle

against dismissals at the Tahiti Brewery in February (some confrontations took place with the mobile guards following the erection of barricades at the entry to Papeete), mobilisations against the resumption of nuclear tests and so on. The CSIP was also present during the confrontation with the gendarmes at Faa'a airport.

The federation has an original approach to the associative movement, participating in the Unity of National Liaison (UNL), which regroups about 50 Maohi Non-Governmental Organisations. Founded in 1992, by seven organisations, the UNL is very wide. It brings together associations for the defence of the environment, human rights, a trade union federation, and so on. Actions focus on cultural identity, right to self-determination, development micro-projects, protection of the natural and social environment. Since 1994, Hiti Tau has had several commissions; on women, durable development, culture and other issues. This network participates in the Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO). It is in the ranks of Hiti Tau that thinking on the future of Fenua Maohi is the most advanced, and it is here also that progressive ideas are most present in Polynesia. ²² ★

Notes

1. Te Fenua Maohi or Te Ao Maohi in the vernacular language. The name of the people of this region is Maohi and not Maori (the inhabitants of New Zealand). The correct name of the atoll occupied by the CEP (Pacific Centre for Experimentation) is Moruroa, from moru, a net to trap fish, and roa which means big.
2. The remaining French colonies are classified as either "overseas departments" (DOM) like La Réunion, French Guyana and Guadeloupe, which are legally part of France or "overseas territories" (TOM), including Polynesia and Kanaky (New Caledonia)
3. Religion has always had a considerable importance in this area. 50% of the population are Protestant (the church is antinuclear), 34% Catholic. Political meetings often begin with prayers.
4. Bameltes prison in Marseilles.
5. For the best account of how the French state imposed its nuclear presence in Polynesia, see *Moruroa, notre bombe coloniale*, by Bengt and Marie-Therese Danielsson, L'Harmattan, 1993.
6. Naturalised in the 1970s (for electoral reasons) they account for 90% of trade.
7. *Tahiti metisse*, Denoel, 1989.
8. Revenu Minimum d'insertion.
9. Birth control is a controversial subject in Polynesia Men are more doubtful than women. Their fear that the Maohis will become a minority in their own country.
10. A litre of alcohol is the equivalent of 25 litres of beer.
11. CPS; Caisse de Protection Sociale.
12. Tahoeraa has 18 seats out of 41 in the territorial assembly, but enjoys an absolute majority through an alliance.
- 13/ His first spell as deputy was thanks to Poniowski, then minister of the interior, who allowed him to create a gerrymandered constituency.
- 14/ Flosse was then secretary of state for the DOM-TOMs in the 1986-1988 Chirac government, where he contributed significantly to the repression in Kanaky.
15. This current only demands a little more autonomy in relation to France.
16. See note 5.
17. The Polynesian collective against the tests brings together pro-independence forces, trades unionists, associations and so on.
18. Affiliated to Force Ouvriere, one of the principal French trades unions.
19. Democratic French Confederation of Workers, another French trade union federation.
20. RG; Renseignements Generaux, a branch of the national police. Tefaarere has been relieved of his functions following the recent events in Papeete.
21. USTKE; Union of the Trade Unions of the Kanak Workers and the Exploited, the principal (pro-independence) trade-union federation in Kanaky.
22. Hiti Tau/UNL activists' liberties are constantly violated; in 1993 a teacher, Jacky Bryant, who intended to challenge incumbent Gabriel Tetiarahi for the post of mayor of Bora-Bora, was subjected to administrative harassment for having debated the nuclear tests on the Franco-German TV station *Arte*.

Conference report

Trotsky in St. Petersburg

A conference commemorating the 90th anniversary of the 1905 St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers Deputies was held in St. Petersburg, (formerly Leningrad, formerly Petrograd) Russia on December 4, 1995.

The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies, of which Leon Trotsky was a President and a key political leader, was established on October 13, 1905 as a product of massive worker rebellions. It survived for 50 days as a council of workers' delegates and an incipient organ of a workers' government before it was suppressed by the Tsar's police. The idea for this conference originated with the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy (CSLTL) which was founded at the first conference on Trotsky in Russia held in November 1994 in Moscow.

The 1995 conference, "An International Symposium on 'The Fate of Soviet Democracy'", was intended to have a special focus on the possibilities for the rebirth of such councils of workers' rule today, with a special focus on Trotsky's enormous contribution in connection with it. After all, he developed his theory of the permanent revolution as a result of his experiences in the 1905 revolution. He realized from that experience that the councils of workers delegates or deputies formed the basis for the dictatorship of the proletariat which he explained was essential to replace and overthrow the hegemony of the capitalists and their bourgeois dictatorship not only in the developed capitalist countries, but in the colonial countries as well.

The symposium was jointly sponsored by the CSLTL, the History Faculty of St. Petersburg University—which hosted the conference—and Scholars for Democracy and Socialism. Addressing the conference were professors and political activists from Russia and abroad. About 60 people gathered as the Conference was opened by local academics.

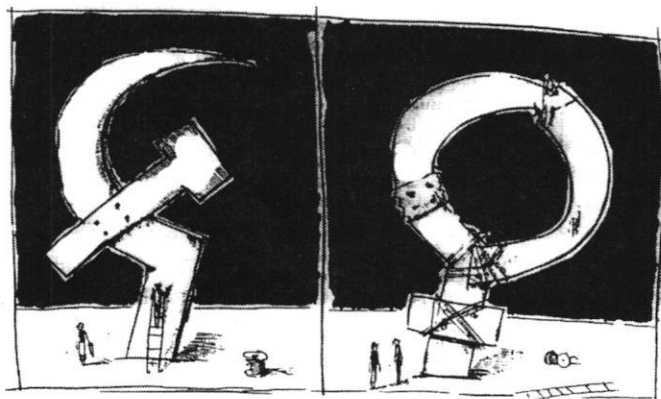
V. V. Kalashnikov, a professor at St. Petersburg University and also the co-chairperson of the Socialist Party of Toilers—one of several parties to have emerged from the ruins of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—made the opening remarks. He discussed the rise of workers democracy from 1905 through the Russian revolution of 1917 and its immediate aftermath and the subsequent repression of workers democracy to the present time. It is noteworthy that Kalashnikov managed to cover this history without once mentioning Leon Trotsky, either for his role in the 1905 or October 1917 revolutions or his struggle in defense of workers' democracy from 1923 as leader of the Left Opposition until his assassination by Stalin's agent in 1940. It is precisely such selective, falsified versions of history that have characterized the Stalin and post-Stalin periods in the Soviet Union and Russia, and that the CSLTL was established to correct.

Kalashnikov also offered some useful remarks about more recent Russian history. In particular he dealt with the problems of an historic tendency for Russia to try to catch up with the West by the use of a strong state. Such a state undermines the possibilities for democracy.

Kalashnikov was followed by S.I. Patolov, a professor of history and department chair at the Russian Academy of Sciences speaking on "The Revolution of 1905 and the First Soviets in Russia;" N.V. Mikhailov, also a professor of history at the Russian Academy of Sciences speaking on "The Petersburg Workers and the Organization of Workers Councils 1905-1907;" N.N. Smirnov a professor of history at St. Petersburg University on "Soviets and the Crisis of Power in 1993;" sociologist M.P. Rubinchuk on "Culture and the Soviets"; and history professor Geoff Barr of the University of Exeter in England on "An Old Story, Trotsky and Democracy: Soviets versus Parliaments."

The speakers were asked to confine their remarks to roughly ten minutes which most did, with many—but not all—of the reports translated into either Russian or English. Serving as indispensable translators were Nikolai Preobrazhensky, a Marxist historian of the workers movement who lives in St. Petersburg; Rob Jones, a member of the Militant Labor Party who lives in Moscow; and Alexei Gusev, who also addressed the meeting. The morning session was meant to focus on historical aspects of the theme with the afternoon session devoted more to the relevance of the lessons of the 1905 revolution today.

Nearly 90 people attended the morning session, most of them young students in the history faculty. Unfortunately, the audience shrank considerably to some 25 after the lunch break, seven of whom were international guests. Afternoon speakers included Alexei Gusev, candidate of historical sciences at Moscow State University and an International Coordinator of the CSLTL, who spoke on "L. Trotsky, the Trotskyists, and the Problem of Soviet Democracy: 1923-1940;" Gusev raised some interesting questions about the policies of the Trotskyist opposition from the early 1920s through to 1933. He pointed to



the evolution of the opposition's thinking under the pressure of events. He argued that while Trotsky favored party democracy he did not favor Soviet democracy in the period of the Left Opposition (1923-5). He suggested that the Trotskyists only favored full Soviet democracy after 1933.

This contribution led to vigorous debate. Some argued that Trotsky's position was far more democratic than Gusev had suggested. Others thought that Gusev was accurate in his assessment and that there was no basis in the 1920s for Soviet democracy.

Hillel Ticktin, a Reader at the University of Glasgow spoke on "The Permanent Revolution of Leon Trotsky and Soviet Democracy;" He spoke of the rigor and persistence of Trotsky, and sharply outlined the theory of permanent revolution and related it to Marx's ideas. The backwardness of the Soviet Union meant that a cultural revolution was needed before the kind of workers' democracy envisaged by the Russian revolutionaries could work. Ticktin pointed especially to the international aspects of permanent revolution and argued that the Soviet revolution was unsustainable without revolutions in the West.

Alexander Buzgalin, Professor of Economics at Moscow State University spoke on "The Fate of Democracy on the Eve of the Twentieth Century." He argued that the key question was workers' self-management. He pointed out that under both the New Economic Policy of the 1920s and under Gorbachev's Perestroika there were struggles by workers to manage their own factories.

Geoffrey Caveney, a young political activist and student of Russian revolutionary history from Chicago spoke on "Trotsky, Youth, and the Call for 'Stability'"; Boris Tamarkin, a young student, on "Trotsky the Polemicist." The latter speaker appeared at the conference unexpected with a very large collection of notes on works of Trotsky's he had just recently read while preparing his report.

The symposium was chaired throughout by Professor Mikhail Voweikov, Economics Professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow who is a key organizer of the CSLTL in Moscow. After the reports, time was allowed for discussion.

The weak attendance at the conference's afternoon session reflected above all the fact that the CSLTL had no cadre in St. Petersburg to organize the event and had to rely on the History Faculty of St. Petersburg University to organize and publicize the conference there. Unfortunately, that Faculty, aside from providing the lecture hall—which was, of course, much appreciated—apparently confined its publicity efforts to inviting some of the professors' classes with students who seemed unfamiliar with the conference theme. One reporter from a "mainstream" paper attended the afternoon session and requested more information.

The Russians attending and those involved in the conference from both St. Petersburg and Moscow were not discouraged by the small attendance. Immediately following the conference they and the international guests met to review ways to improve efforts. Local working committees need to be formed not only in Moscow and St. Petersburg but in the U.K., France, Greece, and elsewhere, which most of those attending seemed ready to do.

Just how much work remains to be done to revive the buried history and Trotsky's role in it was apparent the next day when some of those who attended the conference, led by Professor Voweikov, set out to tour some of the historic sites of the 1905 revolution. The tourists arrived at the Technological Institute, where the plenary of the 1905 St. Petersburg soviet of workers deputies was about to meet when the building was surrounded by the Tsars police. The executive committee of the soviet, with Trotsky as its president, were meeting inside. They were all arrested on December 3, 1905 and the uprising was defeated.

What we learned at the site was disappointing. The only museum there—which was closed due to renovations—is devoted to scientific achievements by scholars such as Mendeleyev who also worked in that building over the years. Although there was a wall that held pictures of apparently political importance, that wall was covered over, also due to renovation. No one at the Institute seemed to know which was the room the Executive Committee and Trotsky were meeting

in when the police arrested them. The allegedly learned women in charge claimed not to know who the presidents of the 1905 soviet were and would not credit Trotsky with any role in it. She finally assigned one of her lower-ranking assistants to guide the tourists in their search. They think that they managed to find the historic room but it was closed, unmarked and also under renovation. History in the former Soviet Union is still buried deeply, behind closed doors.

The Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, whose working committee met in St. Petersburg in conjunction with the conference, voted to continue its efforts and will sponsor its next conference in Moscow November 22-24, 1996 on the subject "The Revolution Betrayed, 60 Years Later." It will focus on the book by Trotsky *The Revolution Betrayed*, published in exile in 1936, when Trotsky was in enforced exile. Many feel this book, Trotsky's scientific analysis of the degeneration of the Russian revolution and of Stalinism, is the most crucial expression of Marxist thought in the twentieth century, indispensable to understanding the evolution of the class struggle in our epoch, particularly in the former Soviet Union. There are at least three, small editions of this book available in Russian in Russia.

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey (with additional information contributed by Geoff Barr).

Announcement

The International Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy has agreed that it will return to Moscow for a larger conference from 22 to 24 November 1996.

In 1936 Trotsky wrote *The Revolution Betrayed* Sixty years later this classic will be assessed against the passage of time. It will provide an opportunity for us to examine the historic importance of Trotsky's works and it will be a time to look at where the countries of the ex-Soviet Union are going now.

The Committee has resolved to expand its work among academics in Russia and in the wider world. The main focus of the publications program remains publishing Trotsky's work in Russian. 'The Case of Leon Trotsky' in Russian is the next major project. The key papers of the 1994 Conference are also being prepared for publication in Russian. After some discussion it was also agreed to start a program of publication of Trotsky's writings in Ukrainian. For more information, contact: Professor Mikhail Voweikov, Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Ul. Krasikov, 27, 117218 Moscow, Russia; Tel: 095-332-4525 (w) or 095-326-3497 (h) or Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009; tel: 718-636-5446 or e-mail: mvogt@igc.apc.org or fax: 212-807-1832.



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BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

APEC meeting in Osaka

OThe "free trade" and "free investment" clique gathered in Osaka from 16-19 November for the third Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference. With the prodding of the world's two largest imperialist powers, the USA and Japan, APEC barricaded itself into the GATT-WTO, swearing to liberalise trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region. In fact, APEC adds more to GATT-WTO in that it seeks a "comprehensive" trade and investment programme, which calls for a "policy co-ordination and co-operation programme" among the member states. Such programmes go beyond the objectives of GATT-WTO.

In the 1994 APEC meeting in Bodor, Indonesia, member states committed themselves to lift trade and investment barriers by 2010 (for developed countries) and 2020 (for developing countries) 1.

APEC's "free trade and free investment" attitude advocates more wealth accumulation for a rich few, more wealth extraction from the poor countries, more domination and exploitation of poor countries and people, more displacement of farmers and indigenous peoples, more destruction of the local environment, more marginalisation of women, and more oppression and restriction of workers and peasants, who are denied their right to form their own organisations. For example, trade unions may not be formed in the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) which APEC praises so much. Many Trans National Corporations and local governments now operate a "no strike, no union" industrial policy.

Just before the official APEC gathering, several meetings and conferences were held in Osaka by trade unionists, students, youth activists and NGO people. The "parallel" gatherings cam out with the conclusion that APEC's free trade and free investment policy is socially unjust, ecologically unsustainable, and restricts people's fundamental democratic and political rights. ★



1. See the Bodor declaration, "Comprehensive and Concrete Plans of Action for APEC members".

Source: Asian Students Association (ASA) *Movement News Round Up*. Published monthly in English and Japanese by ASA, 353 Shanghai St 4/F, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

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Book notes

The State of the Planet, 1995-1996 (Worldwatch Institute)

There is no hesitation in the success of this yearly publication, now translated into 27 languages. This year, we are offered a range of in-depth studies, some extremely useful, others less so, on the exploitation of the sea (P. Weber), the human and ecological equilibrium of mountain regions (D. Denniston), renewable energy (C. Flavin), raw materials and recycling (J. E. Young and A. Sachs), building (N. Lenssen and D Malin), China (M. Ryan and C. Flavin), population shifts and refugees (H. Kane), arms production (M. Renner) and international institutions (H.P. French).

The introductory chapter on the limits of nature is signed by WorldWatch Institute patron Lester Brown, who tries to advance a synthesis between ecological and economic concerns. He strikes one nail firmly on the head: the ecological crisis is an integral part, a direct factor of the socio-economic crisis. But he also avoids any radical criticism of the "productivist" logic of the dominant system. It is almost as if he saw this system we live under as an invariable historical "given" fact. This obliges him to simplify, even reverse the links between cause and effect. He ends up identifying demography as the main cause of disorder in the world, up to and including Rwanda. In consequence, demography becomes also the main field in which "we" can "act".

Brown opens with a discussion of the Cairo UN conference on population, and closes with some comments on the "China [demographic] factor". But what about the dictatorship of the market? Or the "World Trade Organisation Factor"? Brown's introductory chapter reveals the limits of the WorldWatch Institute. The level of their theoretical analysis seems to be slipping back. Nevertheless, this book is an indispensable source of information and arguments, even if they are rather fragmented.

Reviewed by Pierre Rousset (editor of the French weekly *Rouge*)

The Reality of Aid 95, an Independent Review of International Aid, Earthscan, London, 1995, 120 p.

The state of "aid" to the third world, in the wake of the UN "social summit" in Copenhagen. Produced by networks of Non-Governmental Organisations in 21 OECD countries. This annual report covers a selection of major themes, analysing the behaviour of the "North", country by country. Valuable reference work. [reviewed by P. Rousset]

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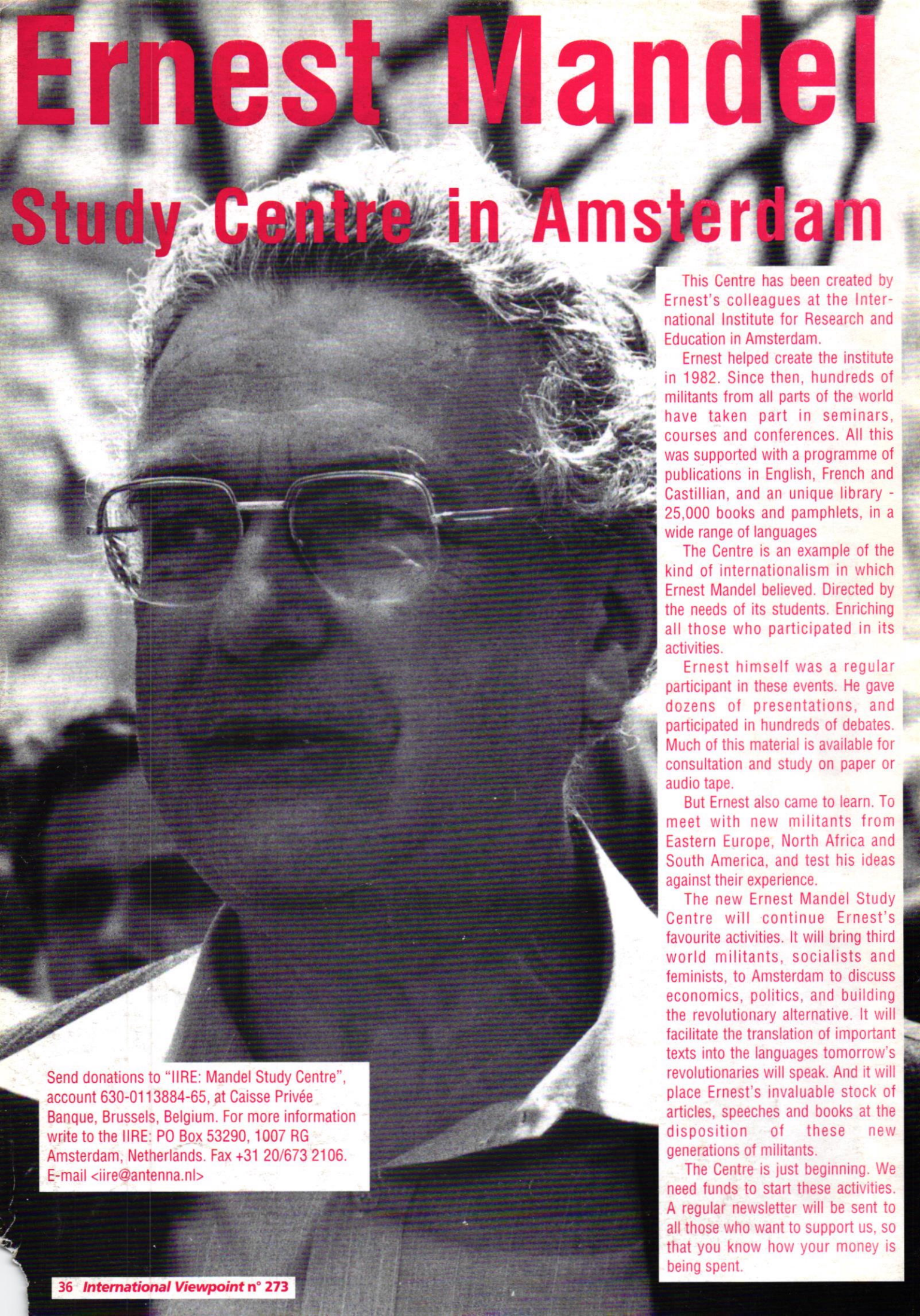
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Ernest Mandel

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