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Italy's elections: a left victory?

Rifondazione candidate Livio Maitan analyses the results of last April's parliamentary elections

EVERYONE SEEMS TO THINK THAT THE April 21 elections will have unprecedented consequences. The *Financial Times*, usually sober in its assessments, spoke of a "historic outcome" (April 23). Alain Touraine, in a commentary appearing in the newspaper of the Italian business class, wrote that "the political reconstruction of Europe begins, once again, in Italy." *(Il Sole-24 ore,* April 25). Many have pointed to a parallel with the victory of Mitterand and the French Socialist Party in 1981.

Such commentaries only partially represent reality. Considering the changes that have occurred on the political chessboard during the last two years, comparisons between the current results and those of the last legislative elections are not very relevant.

A confusing electoral system

The complicated Italian electoral system allocates 75% of seats in single-seat constituencies. In March 1994, this system favoured the right. This time, it time allowed the center-left to obtain a majority of seats.

The centre-left Olive Tree coalition and the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) agreed on a "mutual stand-down" policy for the single seat districts in the Chamber of Deputies, and for elections to the Senate. As a result, Olive Tree won 42.2% and the PRC 2.7% of the vote for single seat constituencies, compared to 44% for the rightwing Freedom Pole.[1] In the election to the 25% of seats allocated through national proportional representation, Olive Tree won 34.7% and the PRC 8.6%. The Freedom Pole won 40%. The candidates of the neofascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) won 0.9% of the vote for proportional representation seats (but up to 4% in districts where it had candidates).

The regionalist Northern League of Umberto Bossi won 10.1%, compared to 8.6% in 1994. The League is now the leading party in Venice, Friuli and a part of Lombardy.

Not only did the right lose its parliamentary majority, but the vote for the two main right forces, Forza Italia (FI) and the National Alliance (AN) declined[2].

But while the Olive Tree has a majority of seats in the Chamber and (with the PRC) in the Senate, there is neither a center-left majority nor a center-left-plus-PRC majority among the voters.

A majority sector of those bourgeois layers which have been hegemonic over the last decades has finally opted for the center-left. Their motivation? A distrust of Berlusconi, judged as too directly representing sectoral interests, politically inexperienced and often maladroit; persistent reservations regarding the AN, despite the competence and flexibility of its leader, Gianfranco Fini; the taking of outrageous positions by Berlusconi's spokespeople concerning recent judicial decisions [on corruption]; and the Freedom Pole's second thoughts about the "convergence criteria of the Maastricht Treaty.

The moderate centrist inspiration of the Olive Tree platform and the leadership role of Romano Prodi, practicing Catholic, longtime member of Christian Democracy (DC) and, for many years, a top manager of nationalised companies, have also contributed. The PDS is fully integrated into the intensifying shift toward the center. And the departing prime minister, Lamberto Dini, has given the formation his stamp of approval.

And since the conflict over social security reform (which provoked a massive mobilization of workers, but was finally adopted as a result of a government compromise with trade union bureaucrats), an additional guarantee in the eyes of the bosses is that the leaders of the three largest labor federations — the Italian General Labor Confederation (CGIL), the Italian Federation of Free Trade Unions (CISL) and the Italian Union of Labor (UIL) — had rallied to the coalition. The major financial markets seemed of the same opinion. They were "calm" before the vote, and decidedly positive afterwards.[3]

The new government represents an convergence of different social and political sectors: hegemonic sectors of the bourgeoisie which had always supported the centrist governments led by Christian Democracy, (sometimes in coalition with the Socialist Party) coalition governments, major petty bourgeois layers, the traditional clientele of the center, center-left and even center-right parties, and popular layers which still represent the majority of the electorate of the PDS. They naturally accept the totality of economic and social choices fixed by the Maastricht Treaty, the "philosophy" of privatization and the body of international alliances symbolized by NATO.

Limited success of the center-left

The relief and satisfaction that many people expressed when the results were announced are fully legitimate. If the right had succeeded in winning a majority, an extremely neoliberal socioeconomic orientation would have appeared, even more aggressive toward the working class and its gains, and favoring an authoritarian, presidentialist institutional direction. The framework of a center-left government, even one visibly displaced toward the center, could in principle prove more favorable to the workers' movement, at least ensuring a respite: allowing the recomposition of the workers' ranks and creating better conditions for a relaunching of the movement.

The defeat of the right marks the failure of the attempts by Berlusconi and his allies, since 1993, to build a new bourgeois leadership, to fill the space left by the crisis of the old establishment and the collapse of Chris-

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Livio Maitan is a leading member of the Fourth International. He was the PRC candidate in Bolzano. Translation by Michael Pearlman

tian Democracy. A stabilization of the regime — via "renovation" *a la* Berlusconi or rampant technocratic bonapartism *a la* Dini - is not in the cards in the near future.

The Prodi government will not have an easy job. As we have seen, it is largely the product of a very particular electoral system and not the clear victory of one force over another in the bipolar system the partisans of the abolition of proportional representation predicted. The political recomposition has not yet simplified the sitation very much and it is difficult to believe that things will radically change any time soon. It is more likely that new ruptures and new convergences will occur against a background of persistent differentiations and conflicts.

The parliamentary majority is far from clear and solid. The Prodi government, at least in the Chamber of Deputies, needs the votes of the PRC, which contested the election with a program which differed from that of the Olive Tree on almost all important points. Unless the PRC takes a sharp turn to the right, its support for an Olive Tree government will be on a case by case basis. On some questions, the Olive Tree will need to compensate for PRC opposition by winning the support of other parliamentary groups — the former DC, the Northern League or fractions of Berlusconi's Forza Italia. Rather precarious support.

Moreover, Olive Tree itself is composed of a gamut of parties and groups that not only have very different histories, but today still maintain visibly different ideas and orientations that are contradictory on certain issues.[4] The PDS is by far the strongest and best organized formation. But it only represents 21.1% of voters,[5] while its allies inside the Olive Tree represent 13,6%. There is a PDS majority among Olive Tree's senators, but only 140 PDS deputies in the Olive Trees 286 member parliamentary group. 146 (the PRC has 35 deputies).[6]

What role will the Northern League play? Umberto Bossi has said his group in parliament will support the majority "on certain questions." But without renouncing the League's federalist [pro-decentralisation] offensive, tied to threats of secession of the Po Valley region (the rich north). Olive Tree does sees itself as federalist. But simple proclamations and minor concessions won't appease Bossi and company.

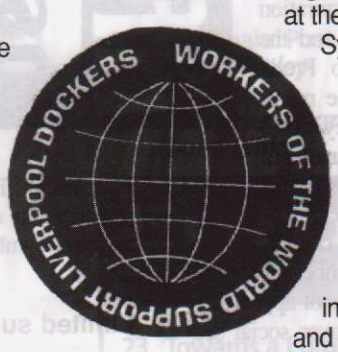
The League has a quite wide and solid social base made up of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, businesspeople, artisans, fractions of the peasant middle class as well as popular layers, even workers.[7] It is particularly rooted in the Northeast, which has seen spectacular economic growth, while the rest of the country is mired in stagnation. The region's capitalists have established multiple links with the core industrial and service regions accross the border in France, Switzerland, Austria and, above all, Germany. These are the concrete roots of the growing secessionist aspirations!

Since the election, Umberto Bossi has not disguised his intention to further radicalize his movement's attitude. He has denounced the pro-federalist statements of other parties and coalitions as purely verbal and hypocritical. And rebaptized his "parliament" at Mantua, proposing the formation of an alternative government of Padua, a Committee for the Liberation of Padua, and even a militia. In a May 3rd interview with *Corriere della Sera*, he said, "the North and South should have two different treasuries… In Italy there is a dual economy: a Northern economy and a Southern economy. It would

● Britain: Women on the waterfront

There is growing international support for Liverpool's striking dock workers (see IV#276). Closer to home, Doris McNally explains the role of Women on the Waterfront (WOW), which organises the wives and partners of the striking dockers.

Viewpoint: How did WOW form?
After the first demonstration/rally to support the men [sacked on 28 September 1995 for refusing to cross a picket line], many wives and partners spoke to the men's shop stewards about the need to set up a women's group. Two weeks later, about 50 of us attended the first meeting. Most were dockers wives, but some women came from the Socialist Workers' Party, Militant Labour, or the Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures group (one of the women's support groups formed during the 1984-5 miners' strike). These women showed us how to start a women's group.



● Is it a stable group?
Definitely. We have a hard core of about 60 wives and partners, who attend all the weekly meetings. Most of the others come when we have a demonstration, but are unable to commit themselves more because of family commitments. And because many of us have to work extra hours to make ends meet.

● What does WOW do?
As we've gained confidence, we've begun speaking to meetings across the country: more than 500 so far!. Some are arranged by trade union branches, others at public meetings organised by the dozens of dockers' support groups which have sprung up. We now organise our own public meetings, and tour the country to raise money for the strike fund. We have also linked up with a range of women's groups. It has been a real inspiration to see other women organising independently.

And we are present on the picket line every day. The police are more intimidated by us than we are by them. They don't know how to handle us.

● The dockers have done a lot of international networking. How about WOW?
We have made contact with women's groups in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada. We sent a WOW delegation to Sweden in March, at the invitation of the Swedish Syndicalist Union (SAC). We spoke to a rally of 500 people, at the end of a march through Stockholm. The Swedish media actually write more about the dispute than the British papers! We have also been invited to San Francisco, and we hope to visit continental Europe too.

● What has involvement in this dispute changed in your life?
Before last October, I'd never spoken at a meeting before, never mind a public rally! None of us have done anything like this. But now we know that we women have a place in the struggle. This fight has changed our lives. And we will not go back to the old days. This is a fight for the future. We now understand the ways workers are exploited: nationally and globally. And we know that it must change! ★

Doris McNally was interviewed by Glenn Voris. An extended version of this interview is being published by the British fortnightly ***Socialist Outlook.***

Contact: WOW c/o Transport House, Islington, Liverpool L3, Britain. tel +44 151 207 0696, fax 207 3388. **Donations** to the strike fund should be sent to "Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards", c/o Jimmy Davis, Secretary, Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, 19 Scorton St., Liverpool L6 4AS

be better for both if the treasuries were separated. The South could become the Taiwan of the Mediterranean. An agreement could certainly be made between these two treasuries, through a true federalism, with very rigid rules."

The fundamental orientation of the new government toward the economy will not be qualitatively different from that of the Amato, Ciampi and Dini governments.[8] There will be no weakening on the unemployment front, and the center-left government will have to take quite drastic, anti-popular measures to resolve the budget deficit and, more generally, the state debt problem, in the spirit of Maastricht.

The PRC faces a difficult choice

There is considerable consensus among PRC leaders,[9] even if sometimes, for example over the stand-down agreement, there are negative votes and abstentions in the national political committee. This situation has not changed since April 21; the decision to allow the formation of the Prodi government without making any agreements or seeking any medium or long term accord has been confirmed. Now, the party's attitude will be decided based on what the government proposes to parliament and is able to carry out.

All this means the PRC risks entering a stormy period. Our electoral campaign centered on the 35 hour week without loss of pay, the reintroduction of a sliding wage scale adjusted for inflation, a radical fiscal reform, the reestablishment of proportional representation, opposition to presidentialist solutions, the right to vote for immigrants, opposition to Maastricht and NATO and a severe critique of the orientation of the trade union federations. In brief, we put forward an alternative project qualitatively different from that of the PDS and Olive Tree.

The problem now is that, if we place ourselves in opposition to the new government from the start, the center-left will not have a majority and will be obliged to seek alliances on its right, paying quite a high price.

This means that the PRC might appear as the gravedigger of a centre-left government which had proposed renovation and protection (however illusory). We might be held responsible by the workers for a new crisis, and one with an uncontrollable dynamic. We risk compromising our real possibilities for future growth. And fighting for hegemony in the popular movement under more difficult conditions than until now.

If we were only a very small formation, we could legitimately choose the terrain of propaganda, reaffirm our identity, and bet on positive medium and long term effects. But this is impossible for a party that now has a large presence in parliament, and, despite its weaknesses and contradictions, is percieved by radicalized sectors of Italian society as representing their interests and demands. We must take care to accompany the experience of layers of workers who still have confidence in other parties, especially the PDS. We must prove ourselves capable of winning or helping to win partial conquests, however modest..

The PRC must strive to put forward

● Britain: Founding conference of Socialist Labour Party

SOME 600 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE 1ST Annual conference of the new Socialist Labour Party (SLP) in London on May 4th.[1]

The initial appeal for a new party had been made in mid-January by miners' union leader Arthur Scargill, following discussions among a smaller network of activists, particularly within the rail workers, public sector workers and teachers unions. Over the following four months, 1,250 people joined the party.

A small number of local and regional trade union branches, representing some 3,100 members, have applied to affiliate to the SLP, but these moves have been challenged by the trade union bureaucracy. The leadership of the Transport and General Workers Union has told one North London branch that affiliation to any political party other than Labour would be against the union constitution. The dissident branch argues that the TGWU rule book also commits the union to the struggle for the common ownership of "the means of production, distribution and exchange". The deleting of this commitment from the Labour Party constitution in 1995 was a significant impulse towards the formation of the SLP. The commitments expressed in Clause Four of Labour's constitution may have been largely symbolic, but they were a constant embarrassment to Labour Party leaders, and their defence was a rallying point for the Labour left.

Only a limited number of policy documents had been prepared for discussion, amendments and approval at this conference.[2] Policies were adopted on women, education, pensions, black liberation and anti-racism. A motion calling for an end to immigration controls was defeated by 182 votes to 114.

Concerning the Irish question, the conference approved a policy calling for an unconditional declaration of Britain's intention to withdraw from northern Ireland, the repatriation of all Irish political prisoners currently in mainland jails, and the immediate convening of unconditional all-party peace talks.

Most votes showed support for the resolutions proposed by the provisional steering committee. The party statutes were not debated or voted on.

Media attention also focused on the conference call for "the introduction of a four-day working week, without loss of pay, a ban on non-essential overtime, and voluntary early retirement at the age of 55, on full pay."

The majority of contributions to the economic debate confirmed that many SLP members see the capitalist system as such as the root problem. There was high interest in the interventions by representatives of Spain's United Left, the Italian Communist Refoundation Party (see article p.3) and Cuba's Communist Party.

SLP leader Arthur Scargill said that the party will only stand a limited number of candidates (some delegates say as few as 50) in the next general election. Given the party's limited human and financial resources, the priority will be to stand candidates where there is a possibility for left organising, and the contest includes a particularly hated Conservative or Labour candidate.

Debate continues on the British left over the timing and method of the SLP's launch, and over whether or not the party can develop into a major alternative to the Labour Party ★

Mark Johnson

Notes
1. The party was officially launched at a press conference on May 1st.
2. An initial policy conference was held in March. This body set up working groups open to all members, which met separately in the run-up to the May 4th conference.

possible solutions and short term agreements, but concretely differentiate ourselves from the centre-left (without doing so *a priori*, in our own sectarian interest). We must seek to lead struggles: counting not only on our own strength, but on the links we have established with mass movements that, we know, can't be built by propaganda alone. This is the only possible approach at this moment in time.

The dangers are serious. Enormous pressure will be exerted on the PRC at all levels. This will come from two directions: a "seductive offensive" of tempting proposals of participation in the government or the political-economic management of the public sector,[10] alternating with virulent attacks aiming to discredit and isolate the PRC, sowg disarray among our electors and within our membership.

It will be hard to avoid having a reflexive approach, acting like a besieged fortress so as not to get trapped on a slippery slope. For sure, we cannot and will not assume the responsibility for an immediate failure of the center-left government. In the initial phase of the new legislature, this will be a big influence on the PRC's tactical choices

Later, we will still support the government where this allows the adoption of measures affirming democratic rights or favorable to workers. But no strategic agreement is possible with the Olive Tree and the Prodi government. The PRC cannot endorse governmental actions that hurt workers' living standards. No budgets similar to those of the preceding government! No privatization of key economic sectors! And no Italian engagement in NATO military adventures. ★

Notes

1. Including the Pannella-Sgarbi list .
2. Forza Italia went from 21.1% to 20.6%; its best results were in the European elections of June 1994 (30.6%). The National Alliance went from 13.5% to 15.7%.
3. Even US President Clinton felt the need to emphasize that the US would collaborate with an Olive Tree government as with any other democratic government.
4. E.g. institutional reforms.
5. In 1994, the PDS received 20.4%. It gained 40,000 additional votes in absolute numbers, as well as the proportional votes for representatives of several minor parties.
6. Some examples of exaggerated effects of the electoral system; the movement headed by the incumbent prime minister, Dini, which proportionally won 4.3%, gained 27 seats in the Chamber, while the PRC (8.6%) won 35. In the Senate, the Greens (2.5%) elected 14 members and the PRC elected
11. The PPI (at around 5% of the vote) has 54 deputies and 26 senators.
7. Cofferati, the secretary of the CGIL, has spoken of a "Leaguist" danger in the ranks of his federation. At one Venice meeting of PRC leader Bertinotti, workers said they agreed with the social demands of the PRC, but would be voting for the League!
8. Italy dossier, *International Viewpoint* #274.
9. Particularly since one right-wing current left the PRC, taking with it an important number of deputies and members of the party leadership, but few ordinary members.
10. PDS Secretary D'Alema, has stressed the common origin of his party and the PRC. On May 1st, a *Corriere della Sera* journalist reminded PRC members of the definition which former CP leader Berlinguer gave in the 70's: "a party of opposition and a party of government." A *Corriere della Sera* editorial advocated "drowning [the PRC] in kindness."

French radicals create new trade unions

Recently formed, non-aligned trade unions played a major role in the December 1995 strike movement. *Christophe Aguiton* of the SUD union of post office workers explains how and why.

MOST MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR trade unions found themselves in the streets in December 1995. And militants of the CGT, the largest militant force, traditionally been very connected to the French Communist Party, found themselves shoulder to shoulder with members of Force Ouvrière (FO), a smaller movement, which identifies with the social-democratic tradition. Anti-clerical, and anti-communist.

Also present in the demonstrations and committees were members of the independent unions, like FSU (education), SUD (Post Office and France Telecom), CRC (health) and the SNUI tax collectors' union. And opposition structures and sections of the country's second largest federation, the Catholic-inspired CFDT. The CFDT was once the union which was most in phase with the ideas of May 1968. But its more recent "repositioning" has led its leadership to strive to replace FO as the government and employers' prime partner. CFDT leader Nicole Notat openly supported the government throughout the strike. She was joined by a number of small Christian and "professional" unions.

The paradox of the French trade union movement is that it has an important influence among working people — as the winter 1995 movement showed — but less than 10% of workers actually join a union. A percentage which continues to fall, even after the recent mobilisations.

SUD was born seven years ago, at La Poste (Post Office) and France Telecom, as a response to the bureaucratic repression of two very active sections of the CFDT, the Paris Post-Telecom section, and the Health section, by the union leadership. Frustrated and repressed militants created new unions called SUD (Solidarity, Unity, Democracy) at Post-Telecom, and CRC (Co-ordinate, Regroup, Construct) in the health sector.

Why did these expulsions take place? The union leadership apparently wanted to put a stop to the development of the left opposition inside the CFDT. At Post-Telecom, union bosses were also preparing an agreement with the government on the reform of the public statutes which established the post office and France Telecom as public utilities. This reform had been delayed by labour mobilisation, and the Paris regional CFDT structure at Post-Telecom was strong and confident.

This was the general situation. But what caused the CFDT leadership to expel whole sections of the confederation was their determination to split away those sections where *coordinations* (directly elected and recallable inter-union and inter-professional stewards' committees) had been established.

Coordinations first developed in 1986-88, as a way of overcoming the division of the union

movement, and to bring together unionised and non-unionised strikers. During the Autumn 1988 nurses' strike, *coordinations* allowed a very weakly unionised milieu to quickly discover the power of mass, unitary collective action. The Paris CFDT Health section was at the head of these *coordinations*. At about the same time, CFDT-Post-Telecom built *coordinations* during a Post Office drivers strike.

SUD-PTT was created at the beginning of 1989. Geographically, we were confined to greater Paris (Ile-de-France). Some CFDT oppositionists in other towns, notably Nancy and Lille, joined us, but they were few. Nine hundred of the 1,000 CFDT members who launched SUD were in Paris. A modest start for the union, considering that the PTT then had over 500,000 employees! But among this initial 1,000 were most of the militants from the old CFDT section.

Three months later, SUD was put to the test, in national professional elections. SUD won almost 5% of the vote: over 20,000 votes for the new union. Results in the Paris region were even more impressive: 25% of voting Telecom workers in the capital chose SUD to represent them. These results gave SUD a national legitimacy, and the necessary structure, to begin building "a different kind of trade unionism."

Rapid growth

Seven years later, on the eve of the recent mobilisations, SUD won 14.5% of votes in professional elections at the Post Office, and 27% at France Telecom. We were now the second largest union at France Telecom, behind the CGT (32%) but ahead of both the CFDT (17%) and FO (15%). SUD now counted 9,000 members, more than half outside the greater Paris region! We had an implantation in each region of the country. Our growth is partly explained by very specific reasons: The Post Office and France Telecom are very centralised enterprises. The debates and decisions are national. Most agents are assigned to a Paris workplace at the start of their career, and later arrange a transfer to their region of origin. So any new union created in Paris is bound to have a national effect. And members in Paris are gradually transferred to other regions, taking the union's ideas with them.

Over the last seven years, most of the opposition structures in the CFDT came over to SUD. More generally speaking, a whole generation came together in SUD-PTT. La Poste and France Telecom had recruited heavily in the 1970s, and thousands of left and far left militants had come into the enterprise. Most no longer had the same level of activity as before, but they shared a number of values which a union like SUD was able to express and defend.

Developments had also allowed employees to compare the different unions present in both utilities. The public charters of both bodies had been changed. Telecommunications had been liberalised, and competition introduced. A plan for privatising France Telecom had been drawn up. In the mobilisations on all these issues, SUD played an important role. Particularly at France Telecom, SUD was the union which made possible a high enough degree of union unity to force the government to step back. At least so far…

The last specific factor behind SUD's rapid growth is the speed of technological evolution in the telecommunications sector, combined with liberalisation, competition and looming privatisation. These changes have overturned established professional categories, including the exchange operators, who were traditionally strongly unionised. Such moves have led, in several countries, to the subsequent growth of more radical unions.

General factors

The most obvious general factor behind our success is obviously the crisis in the CFDT. The rupture in the CFDT in the early 1980s transformed the union into the most right wing of France's large confederations. The preferred union of the employers, and of those workers who vote for the right wing parties.

In reaction, a structured left opposition had grown up, over almost 15 years, coming to represent 25-25% of CFDT members, and a majority of members in some national branches and regions. A network of experienced militants, with a common history.

This was the base which enabled us to build SUD, with a structure of experienced cadres in each region of France. Cadres able to lead struggles, bring union branches to life, and to represent the personnel with management on a day-to-day basis.

But, since day one, SUD has been a breath of hope for larger sectors of workers, including many people who had not previously been in the CFDT. In workplace elections, for example, SUD scores higher than the CFDT used to do. In greater Paris, SUD represents 40% of France Telecom workers, and the CFDT represents less than 10%. Before SUD was born, the CFDT hardly collected 30% of votes!

The growing electoral support and membership is also a result of SUD's autonomy. In the 1970s, the Left Union (between the Socialist and Communist Parties) and the general desire to change society led the trade union movement to organise a large number of general movements and wide-ranging days of action. Activities which only the confederations could initiate. But in the 1980s, union activity shrank back to the level of individual enterprises, or, at best, individual professional categories. The confederations were now often perceived as heavy, completely bureaucratic bodies. Many employees came to feel that the independent unions represented the workforce better.

But this is still an inadequate explanation. Not all the autonomous trade unions have enjoyed the same rapid growth as SUD. And none of them has had the same force of attraction outside its own professional milieu. SUD was perceived as a rupture with the sclerotic and institutional practices of the old unions. As an alternative.

Most unions reacted to the *coordination* movement by stressing the need to defend the prerogatives of the "representative" unions. But SUD adapted itself to these new forms of struggle. We totally accepted the democracy of this new movement, with its coordinations and its general assemblies.

And when the unemployed began to organise themselves, and establish autonomous groups, all the classic trade unions had a defensive reaction: rejecting, for one reason or another, any autonomous movement of the out-of-work. The CGT organised its own unemployed networks, FO and CFDT "supported" the new movement, but failed to give it any real support. SUD and the other independent unions (CRC, SNUI) recognised that this was a genuine autonomous movement, with its own rhythms and demands. Its development corresponded to the situation: mass unemployment had become a stable part of the economy in countries like France. Together with the CFDT opposition, the independent unions threw themselves into the construction of a federal movement, AC! (pronounced like *'assez!'*, enough!, and standing for *Agir contre le chomage,* Act Against Unemployment). In AC!, the unemployed, peripheral workers with lousy contracts, and trade unionists work and act side by side.

The same story can be told where the defence of women's rights is concerned: SUD was one of the first trade unions to commit itself to building mobilisations like the large demonstration for women's rights on 25 November 1995.

Activities in the field, like these, combined with our approach to the general and global questions, marked SUD as the expression of a real rupture with the day-to-day activities of the big confederations. And they show the possibility of a deep and thorough renovation of trade unionism.

Similar unions

Alongside the significant development of SUD at the Post Office and France Telecom, similar unions have imposed themselves in other fields.

In the health sector, CRC, which was born at the same time as SUD, has not experienced our levels of rapid growth. CRC still represents less than 5% of health workers. But this is also because the trade union 'world' in the health sector is very local: CRC has an impressive presence in the *départements* of the Paris regions. It is the largest union in two *départements*, and won 20% of votes in the latest workplace elections in the capital's public hospitals.

Left wing members of the CFDT who were expelled from the union in 1985 have built the SNPIT into the largest union at Air Inter, the domestic airline (now part of the Air France group). And the SUPPER union formed by expelled CFDT metalworkers at Thomson has become the largest union in a plant with almost 3,000 workers.

Education

The independent union grouping FSU has different origins from SUD. It regroups teachers' unions which were already the main forces in their sector (lycée teachers) and new unions formed by minority groups in other sectors (primary school teachers). Together, they have created a new unionism in education, in a surprisingly short time. The FSU experience is another testimony to the need — and possibilities — for the renovation of trade unionism.

The experiences presented here are not conclusive enough to illustrate any "royal path" which would enable us to force the total renovation of French trade unionism. And we also have to consider all the partial

successes (ie. partial failures) and the whole range of "less impressive" results.

SUD since December 1995

The strikes of November and December 1995 represented a major trauma for the CFDT opposition. They were no longer in the position of opposing the general orientation of the confederation. They saw the CFDT leadership oppose, from day one, the most important strike movement this country has known since May 1968.

The "class struggle" networks of CFDT militants threw themselves into the December movement completely. The question of whether or not to stay in the CFDT was obviously posed. Most of these left wing "teams" have decided, so far, to devote their energies to the internal struggle in CFDT. Their new newspaper *"Tous ensemble"* (all together) takes its name from the slogan of the December demonstrations.

A smaller number of these militants have decided that they can best continue the trade union struggle in other structures. After the December strike, some CFDT rail workers formed SUD-Rail, which presented itself in professional elections in March 1996. The results are better than those we enjoyed when we founded SUD-PTT. The dissident rail workers scored 5% nationally, and up to 28% in the regions where they were able to present candidates. The union already has 2,000 members. Ingredients like this provide the basis for rapid growth in the coming years.

A range of trade union currents in other sectors have come to similar conclusions. SUD Éducation has recently been formed, again by dissidents from the CFDT education federation (SGEN). Several networks in the banking sector are trying to create SUD unions. There are similar initiatives in the private sector.

The choice to build SUD unions in a range of sectors is partly a response to the blockage of the trade union map after the November-December 1995 strikes. Two poles developed: those in and around the CFDT who opposed the strikes, and those who, despite their diverse practices and analyses, came together to support and advance the strikers' demands. Many militants wanted to see this second pole, CGT, FO, FSU, SUD and the CFDT opposition, continue the struggle, and draw closer together, in opposition to the fragmentation of the trade union movement. FSU, SUD, SNUI and the CFDT opposition have done much in the last few months to encourage all such tentative comming together. The results have been disappointing, because neither FO nor the CGT has been willing to follow the path of regroupment. FO is losing speed, caught between a "modernist" reformism *à la* CFDT and the radicalism of the other unions. The situation with the CGT is different. The union is gaining ground in professional elections, but its leadership hopes to continue to advance by playing the role of big leader. And by preferring alliances with FO and the CFDT, wherever possible, rather than with autonomous or minority forces.

Which way forward?

The creation of SUD unions could represent a real gain for the French trade union movement. But we cannot pretend to solve all the problems facing the union movement.

In many sectors, SUD unions must work alongside other independent, combative unions: FSU in education, SNUI in the finance sector. These unions do not share the CFDT origins of most of those who launched the SUD unions. This is another reason why our *rapprochement* must go through a series of stages. But it would be absurd for these unions not to work together. And absurd not to think that, one day, we will do so in some common umbrella or framework organisation. A similar situation exists in other sectors, where we meet regularly with militant teams of CGT activists, and those CFDT dissidents who have decided to stay in the confederation for the long term fight, we see that we need to adopt a long term line, working for the widest possible regroupment. This line must be addressed to all those trade union teams which want to defend workers' demands, and which put themselves at the sides of the wage-earners. The struggle for "class struggle" militants in the trade unions is a double one: renovate trade unionism, and regroup those who are willing to struggle! ★

Euromarch against Unemployment

Open letter from SUD to European trade unionists

The agenda of the European Intergovernmental Conference (EIG) is dominated by institutional questions. And far removed from the day-to-day preoccupations of Europe's citizens. Public services and employment are major concerns here in France, as we saw during the strikes of November and December 1995.

In fact, unemployment is probably the question which brings most people's interests together. After all, the number of jobless is increasing in Germany and Scandinavia, as well as in the south of Europe.

We should recognise the contradiction between the expectations linked to a re-discussion of the goals of the European project, and the demand for determined, effective policies to reduce unemployment. And we should use this contradiction to organise a broad, pan-European mobilisation.

Political problems

The most important problem is the perception that "Europe" has a far-away centre, where decisions are made, but about which it is difficult to know the details, or to establish who we can put our demands to. This reduces the credibility of a pan-European mobilisation, for large sections of the population, unless we can combine European and national preoccupations. Such demands are easy to formulate, and easy to win wide support for. This would create, in each country, points of support, and allies.

Also, the priority demands of the trade union and civic associations in the various countries of the European Union are not the same. The campaign for the reduction of the working week does not have the same contours or priority in Germany, France, and Britain.

Nor is it easy to find demands which can most appropriately be raised at the Europe-wide level. The European institutions have no "mandate" to carry out social policy. And demanding the incorporation of social demands (like unemployment levels) into existing texts (like the convergence criteria for the single currency) could separate those of us who accept such texts, and those who do not..

Thirdly, there is obviously a legitimate debate within trade unions and asso-

ciations over the content and articulation of demands for reducing unemployment and exclusion, and more global demands: is reducing the working week top priority? Should we demand that this be achieved without any loss in salary? Shouldn't we prioritise industrial policy, and job creation? What is the nature of jobs created like this? What about delocalisation, social clauses, and quotas? What about the immediate demand for a minimum personal revenue?

One solution is to draft a pan-European radical text, denouncing unemployment and its consequences, criticising the European policies which aggravate the situation, but rather general about our proposals: job creation; shortening the working week; full employment as our goal; fighting labour precarity, etc. We would leave it to those in each country to refine the detailed demands. It could also stress the co-operation agreements between trade union and associative forces in the different countries.

Practical problems

To shock people, shake up their consciousness and lift their enthusiasm, we need a mobilisation which marks their spirits. It has to be significant. Hence the idea of European marches which, over a three month period, would traverse the continent, demonstrating the extent of the unemployment problem, and the depth of our determination to fight it!

There are, of course, numerous practical problems. Including the intrinsic personal problems, difficulties in organising reception in the towns visited, logistic difficulties, and so on.

There is an unequal level of mobilisation in the various European countries. Difficulties in the initial stages become insurmountable in the final stages. Imagine the consequences of a failure of the Belgian march, or the Dutch organisation!

And what about the European co-ordination and impulsion of the marches. If this initiative is to have a sense, it cannot be simply a "collage" of national marches. They need an European identity. This implies propaganda material, logos, and speakers who are ready to move from one country to another. It also implies a "general staff" which can centralise the essential minimum, and deal with the Europe-wide finances.

The effort is justified.

Despite their limits, the 1994 French marches against unemployment were the beginning of the launch of a wide movement of the unemployed, AC! One of the specificities of this movement is the close alliance between unemployed and working members, thanks to trade union participation.

The marches we are suggesting would be the first attempt to carry out a mobilisation of this size at the European level. Previous international demonstrations have been more limited, or sectoral (farmers and rail workers, for example). So this is a real challenge, at a moment which Europe is re-discussing its own future. This is the moment for the social movement to affirm itself, and to show that it is an actor for tomorrow's Europe.

What can we do now?

By July 1995, we need to agree on the principles behind any common initiative. If we want to organise marches of this type, but we do not agree, in concrete terms by July, then we will not have the time to organise them the way we want. Obviously, the exact architecture of the project can be worked out a little later. But geography imposes a time constraint. Madrid and Rome are at least 1,600 km from Amsterdam. If we plan to walk 20 km/day, this means a minimum of 80 days. Which means leaving at the beginning of April 1997 in order to arrive in Amsterdam in the second half of June. If we want to start marching from Southern Italy, Greece, Portugal or Andalusia, we will have to start even earlier. The other main points of departure are closer to Amsterdam: Stockholm is 1,300 km away, Dublin is only 850 km from the Dutch capital, and Berlin only 650 km.

We need to fix the general route and dates by the end of January 1997. The best way to fix these details, and launch the project, would be an European meeting (conference, forum, whatever), which would enable the militant networks in the various countries to become acquainted with each other, to learn about the specific situation and social problems in each country, and launch a debate on the European-level solution to these problems. This discussion is particularly important, in that we will probably not be able to draft a platform of demands which is as detailed as we would like. This means taking the time for debates and exchanges, with the participation of a wide range of trade unionists, activists in civic associations, intellectuals, and political representatives. Once we decide what actions to take, the marches can be fixed in greater detail.

Such a meeting could be held in December 1996 or January 1997. The minimum goal should be to attract 600 participants. And maybe as many as 1,000. We need to find a place (Brussels?) which is suitable in terms of transport networks, availability of meeting space with translation facilities, and space to sleept.

Before this mid-term meeting, we need to widen support for the marches among Europe's trade unions: within the European Trade Union Congress, but essentially through a commitment of each union, on a country by country basis.

We also need to involve the associative milieu, at the national and the European level (such as the European networks of organisations of unemployed people, of anti-poverty groups, of family groups), and the various national and European political groupings (including the European parliamentary groups). We should present our viewpoint to them, and ask for their support.

The first thing we need is a discussion bulletin, covering the practical and political questions, so as to collectivise, at the essential level, our preoccupations. And this is the precondition for success of a pan-European event of this size.

Paris, 24 April 1996

The Russian Elections and the Democratic Left

The Russian left is divided in its response to the upcoming presidential elections. As an illustration of the debate, we publish this piece by Alexander Buzgalin, Andrei Kolganov and Renfrey Clarke.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA ARE taking place in a context of continuing socio-economic crisis. GDP fell more than 3% in the first quarter of 1996, in spite of the real reduction in inflation. There is a maturing crisis of state finances, a growth in social polarisation and a continuing decline in the real incomes of the majority of working people. The decline in production may be much more than official statistics indicate. Only the growing exports of fuel and raw materials are "balancing" the recession in machinery, light industry and food processing.

The main feature of social and economic life in Russia today is the struggle between different corporate clans. These clans are interconnected with industry, finance, agriculture and also with the federal and regional state elites.

Some clans are based in finance, real estate, and commerce: sectors where speculation is well developed, particularly concerning the resale of energy sources, raw materials, non-ferrous metals and steel. The elite of such clans tends towards a pro-Western orientation and attempts to carry out the recipes of advisers from the International Monetary Fund. These layers are oriented toward a continuation of the radical marketisation of the Russian economy, a continuation of privatisation and the creation of widespread private property. They are closely interconnected with the modern ruling elite by corruption, and through personal ties from the old, nomenklatura days.

Other clans are based in the machinery and agricultural sectors, sometimes in the military-industrial complex. Their style of management is bureaucratic and paternalistic. These clans are stronger in the provincial cities of central Russia than in Moscow or St Petersburg (formerly Leningrad).

While workers in enterprises under the control of clans of the first type tend to be relatively well paid, those in enterprises controlled by clans of the second type are often in dire poverty.

The new Russia's social classes are not yet fully formed, as economic and social relations are still in a process of transformation. But we can already clearly identify, huge numbers of lumpenised, extremely poor people. This layer includes ex-prisoners, people made jobless as a result of neo-liberal reforms, a growing number who have been homeless after being swindled out of their apartments, and invalids and old people on tiny pensions. These people lack class consciousness, and are liable to support any political demagogue, from ultraleft to ultraright, who voices attractive slogans.

The working class in modern Russia is not the traditional proletariat, made up of workers who freely sell their labour power to capitalists. They are still partly slaves of paternalistic bureaucracy, dependent on enterprise bosses for housing and other necessities. Seventy years of history weighs heavily on these workers' consciousness. Their self-consciousness as a class is only beginning to form.

There is a huge differentiation within the working class, because of the varying ability of different clans to maintain the living standards of "their" workers. Active trade unions barely exist, and the level of self-organisation among workers is very low. Inside the intelligentsia there is a deep contradiction between their belief in abstract democratic liberal values as the road to the status of Western-style educated middle class, and the impoverishment of the working intelligentsia as a result of shock-therapy reforms.

The so-called middle class in Russia, as measured by income, is strikingly small. Those who "make it" include employees of foreign-owned firms and joint ventures; senior bureaucrats; top employees of the financial and commercial sectors, and racketeers. This stratum in Russia has a strong pro-capitalist and pro-Western orientation.

The so-called New Russians are not a normal bourgeoisie. Some are former members of the nomenklatura, preserving many elements from the past in their socio-economic and political behaviour. The second group in the new elite is partly recruited from the commercial and financial structures, and partly connected to the criminal world and the shadow economy.

Russian society is witnessing a strong growth of nationalist and great-power chauvinist sentiments as a result of a series of factors. The most important of these include destruction of the Soviet Union and the "Third-Worldisation" of Russia; the lumpenisation of the population and the lack of class self-consciousness; the tradition of paternalistic statism and of subservience to higher authority.

As a result, the two main presidential candidates, the incumbent Boris Yeltsin, and the Communist Gennady Zyuganov now speak of restoring the "strong Russian state" in line with national traditions. Over the past two years Yeltsin and Zyuganov, supposedly political opposites, have converged in this respect. They now stand next to one another

– back to back, if not face to face – on the issues of statism and great-power chauvinism.

In such a situation there is little economic, social and ideological basis for the growth of democratic left forces in Russia. Russian working people are faced with a series of very bad choices. Either they support Yeltsin and a continuation of his policies of primitive bureaucratic capitalisation of the country, or they support paternalistic bureaucracy in the hope that a new "good Tsar" and "father of all Russia" will solve their problems.

Left-Centrist Candidates

Mikhail Gorbachev is trying to play the role of a centrist candidate, proposing Western-style social democratic policies. His typical slogan is that each of us has both left and right hands; and so society too has to have both left and right political and social forces. He himself would like to be the head, ruling both hands. For "democrats" Gorbachev is too socialist; for socialists he is too liberal. As a result, and despite the real democratic element in Gorbachev's position, he will not find support on the left or the right of the Russian political scene. He draws support only from the section of the intelligentsia that enjoyed some benefits from the first period of perestroika.

Gorbachev's popularity in the West is much higher than in Russia, where many people cannot forgive him for the destruction of the Soviet Union. For many orthodox communists, Gorbachev is also a symbol of the destruction of socialism and of the Communist Party.

Another centre-left candidate is Svyatoslav Fyodorov, the famous eye surgeon. He is also the director of a huge medical centre with high-technology equipment and real elements of self-management and employee ownership. His program includes corporate socialism, "convergence" between socialism and capitalism on the basis of collective labour-owned enterprises and social regulation of the market. There is also a good deal of social populism in his program. In the past his idea have been different. Two years ago he said Russia needs "Jesus Christ in Pinochet's uniform". The most positive element of Fyodorov's program is its emphasis on the crucial role of creative labour in the building of a new Russia, the necessity to supersede wage labour and create a situation in which every worker is a co-owner of the means of production and of the results of labour. He also stresses that the main goal of development is not capital or money but the free, harmonious development of the personality, the happiness of ordinary people. He is popular among the new generation of engineers and technicians, but not among the majority of ordinary Russians.

The main opposition candidate is Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the largest party in Russia and the accepted heir of the Communist party of the Soviet Union. Formally, Zyuganov is the candidate of a whole bloc of "patriotic" forces. In reality he is above all the representative of the orthodox Communists, and of older Russians for whom nostalgia is a dominating sentiment. Secondly, he is the candidate of various nationalistic, statist forces including Cossacks, orthodox religious believers, and of people who have lost their prosperity and self-confidence as a result of the reforms. Thirdly, and most importantly, he is the candidate of corporatist clans of the second, industrial type, led by paternalistic bureaucrats.

His program is a mixture of social democratic ideas in the sphere of economic and social life with statism, nationalism and sometimes even Christian Orthodox values in the sphere of ideology. He stands for the "regulated market economy". He is in favour of the renationalisation only of enterprises which were illegally privatised. He is a supporter of free prices in the main spheres of the economy. His program also includes some elements of Western-style selective regulation and industrial policy. Of course, there is a lot of social populism and promises of state support and subsidies to numerous social forces if he is elected president.

In the political sphere he stands formally for the continuation of democracy and for a reduction in the powers of the presidency. But these promises accord poorly with his autocratic impulses and with his past in the bureaucratic apparatus of the Soviet Union.

In the ideological sphere Zyuganov's program is a mixture of common words on the need to revive the strong national state as the central goal, plus narodnik-socialist ideas, some ideas from the orthodox church, and elements of Russian great chauvinism.

For the democratic left, whether or not to support Zyuganov is a big problem. Unfortunately, he is the only real alternative to Yeltsin. Gorbachev's rating among potential voters is 1-2%, Fyodorov scores no more than 5-7%.

Zyuganov's (reluctant) supporters on the democratic left stress that it is necessary to prevent the re-election of Yeltsin, who would lead Russia into a deepening socio-economic crisis, who is responsible for the war in Chechnya and could easily start other "local" war. A continuation of Yeltsin's power could lead to new, bloody sacrifices by working people in Russia.

Furthermore, they argue, a victory for Zyuganov would constitute a shift to the left, and might lead to some improvement in the conditions of life of working people in Russia. A third argument is that if Zyuganov wins, ordinary people will feel that they can change something through their common efforts - that the power of the state depends at least partly, on them. Many people would feel that a victory for the left candidate meant that changes in their interests were on the way, and that if these changes failed to materialise, workers were entitled to mobilise and demand that they occur. A Zyuganov victory would thus tend to set off a radicalising dynamic with potential to extend well beyond anything that Zyuganov himself had in mind.

Other democratic leftists argue against supporting Zyuganov. They point to the threat of neo-Stalinism and the growth of authoritarian tendencies and great-power chauvinism. There is the risk that after a certain time Zyuganov would become a parody of Stalin, and that Russia could lose even the minor elements of democracy it enjoys at present. Zyuganov's policies will lead to the discrediting of communism and socialism, because his real policy priorities will not radically improve the situation for working people. Zyuganov's strategy is not based not on the self-organisation of working people but on the paternalistic bureaucracy, his main supporters. And finally, these left opponents argue, Zyuganov's power will lead to the preservation of state-bureaucratic quasi-capitalism, and not of socialism. This will undermine the potential for a democratic socialist modernisation of Russia.

What can the democratic left do in such a situation? First, it can use the election campaign for the dissemination of information and for agitation in favour of socialist ideas. "Scholars for Democracy and Socialism" and the "Union of Internationalists" have taken some real steps in this direction, including pickets, seminars, radio and TV interviews. Second, the left can agitate for a vote in the first-round elections against all right-wing and centrist candidates. In the second round of elections, we have to agitate for a vote against Yeltsin or any other right-wing candidate.

For the democratic left, of course, history will not end with the elections. The polls must be seen as a stage in a continuing struggle to raise consciousness, educate a basic cadre and begin the process of building organisations that accurate reflect the interests of working people in Russia, and that can begin the work of leading a fight against Yeltsin and the country's new nomenklatura-capitalist rulers. ★

Rethinking left strategy in Brazil

Joaquim Soriano is one of the leaders of the Socialist Democracy (DS) tendency within the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT). He was the candidate for general secretary of the Left Slate, which won 46% of delegate votes at the last party congress. He wrote this article as a contribution to the internal debate on the situation facing the PT today.

AS WE ENTER A NEW HISTORIC ERA THE moving tides of this passage engulf Brazilian society and redefine its place in the still incipient new world order.[1] As a part of this re-organization we've seen an important shift within the Brazilian bourgeoisie, not merely in response to the international recomposition, but the result of a long-running political dispute — a crisis of leadership — which lasted from the end of the military dictatorship through to the government of Itamar Franco.[2] Now this situation has been overcome with the achievement of a new hegemony within the ruling class. After several years of representing a democratic and popular solution to the national crisis, we suffered an important defeat in the 1994 presidential election. The bourgeoisie succeeded in creating more favourable circumstances for imposing its project of capitalist reorganisation, of destroying the nation and recolonising the country. We now face a right-wing government which seeks to transform the electoral alliance of conservative forces into an organic power block capable of pushing through a complete reform of the Brazilian state. This conservative alliance around the PSDB[3] and the PFL[4] today unites almost the entire ruling class.

The government led by Fernando Henrique Cardoso represents the re-articulation of a strategic bourgeois nucleus much more in line with the imperialist decision-making centres than the military dictatorship, and indicates an unprecedented internationalisation of the ruling class. We have once again to accumulate forces, gather allies, reorganise strategic references, mark out the political and ideological terrain which will allow us to demonstrate to the majority of the population the link between their falling living standards and these neoliberal policies. All these are conditions for us to be able to take up once again the struggle for power in Brazil.

Neoliberal instability

In many dependent countries the state played the part of a partial counterweight to the logic of the world market, permitting some limited autonomy for national decision-making centres and support for national development policies. Globalisation, deregulation, and the strengthening of market mechanisms have unleashed a renewed colonisation of the countries on the periphery… The dynamics affecting Brazil and the world are not merely conjunctural; they suggest a change in the very character of the period, both nationally and internationally. It is not only political and social movements which are being reorganized, but the whole of society.

In Brazil, neoliberalism has replaced the "national-developmentalism" which shaped the country from the 1930s through to the 1980s.

Internationally, the world moulded under the impact of the 1917 Russian revolution and rearranged at the end of the 2nd World War has ceased to exist, whilst capitalism is undergoing a mutation comparable with that which marked its passage from the competitive phase of the 19th century to the monopolist phase of theme costs on the capitalists in order to maintain the political unity of the nation, and build up and integrate the different sectors of the domestic market. All this is called into question by globalisation and governmental campaigns against labour costs and the costs of the public sector.

The least internationalised sectors of the ruling classes suffer, in many countries, a process of destabilisation, but those most penalised are the workers.

In Brazil, this crisis has been nonviolent, though with acute contradictions. The experience in countries like Argentina and Mexico, with much more unfavourable conditions for the left, shows that the impoverishment and marginalisation of whole sectors and regions can lead to rebellions, as in Chiapas, or it can trigger spontaneous explosions of popular revolt, as in Santiago del Estero in Argentina.

In Brazil, "adjustment" did not assume the brutally deindustrialising form it did in Argentina, nor the degree of anti-national pillaging which occurred in Mexico. But the opening of Brazilian markets is already provoking the collapse of some sectors of agriculture and industry, and may impoverish whole regions. What's more, neoliberal stabilisation is subject to crises caused by frequent ups and downs in the world economy. In the case of Brazil, although there is little likelihood of an exchange crisis is the short term, this cannot be ruled out; the continuing large current-account deficits, the growing dependency on short-term capital, and a fresh increase in the foreign debt, could all put this back on the

agenda, threatening to cast adrift the current economic policy and undermine the government's legitimacy.

Thus the neo-liberal model's internal contradictions and structural instability create potential spaces for the left to struggle and develop alternative proposals.

The present challenges

The complete subordination of the media, the considerable degree of unity within the bourgeoisie around the neoliberal proposals, and its control of the institutional terrain (Congress, state and municipal governments, judiciary and the armed forces), mean that any efforts based on negotiating the "lesser evil" or trying to exploit secondary contradictions within the enemy camp, simply end up reinforcing government policies and undermining our own proposals. To change the situation we need to revitalise social struggles and restore their legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of the population. We need to develop proposals for popular and democratic reforms which can galvanise popular mobilisations and challenge the "official agenda", creating pressure outside of the institutional domain which then changes the balance forces established within it (as the MST[5] did in the struggle for land reform). One basic aspect is denunciation of the whole process of neoliberal reorganization, trying to break through the monolithic media blockade on this question. One of neoliberalism's greatest victories is when it manages to eliminate all alternatives, establishing itself, in spite of its economic and social failure for the majority of the population, as the common point of reference for both defenders and opponents of the status quo. The reaffirmation of a global alternative, based on the interests of the workers, is a fundamental condition for confronting neoliberalism in the economic, political and social fields.

New agenda

In other words, a new political agenda is needed for the PT and the Brazilian left in general. This would involve:

- a reworking of the strategic project for this country, offering an alternative to the disintegration of national perspectives produced by unprotected incorporation into an increasingly exclusionary international order;
- a new policy for accumulating social forces, one which will redefine the PT's relations with its broad social base and bring us back closer to the majority who are worst hit by the neoliberal policies;
- a deep-going organisational and programmatic restructuring which will reverse the negative consequences of our presence in state institutions and redynamise the potential of this democratic and popular participation in such institutions, re-establishing the PT's ability to build itself independently, taking as its basic point of reference the self-organization of the exploited and oppressed.

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Strategic Problems.

Globalisation, deregulation, open markets, privatisation, the crisis of public welfare and social security systems, the rapid introduction of new information technologies and new management methods, structural unemployment, the rolling back of state functions, everything that is associated with capitalist restructuring and neoliberal adjustment, redefines the stage on which we project our strategic action. The new problems we face fall into three broad categories.

Firstly, the changes in the relations between state and society in a situation where the social formation itself is in mutation, and hence the reorganization of bourgeois power structures. The power of the capitalist class is more concentrated than ever on both a national and world scale, but it is exerted through a redefinition of the tasks of the national state and through a considerable strengthening of the private economic and political power of big firms and the political-ideological power of the media.

This results in two kinds of problem: firstly, the fact that the state can no longer be the all but exclusive focus of political struggle, as it has been to date; the struggle for

● Brazil: Stop peasant assassinations

Declaration of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (27 April 1996)

On Wednesday April 19th the Military Police assassinated 23 peasants in Eldorado de Carajás, in Pará state. Autopsies show that most of them were burned alive, handcuffed. Others were killed with their own farming tools.

This latest massacre under the neoliberal government of Fernado H. Cardoso is part of the repressive offensive against the Landless Movement (MST), which demands the distribution of land to some 5 million peasant farmers. In a similar attack last year, over 50 peasants were killed in Coriumbiará, in Rodonia state.

There are more than 500 current land conflicts in Brazil, involving 22,240 families. Some 20,520 families live by the side of the road, in 22 Brazilian states. These people have nothing to live on and no land to work. The paradox is that Brazil is a country where 370 million hectares of fertile land lie uncultivated.

The country's ruling class has unleashed a virtual civil war in the countryside, as their response to the demands and mobilisations of the Landless Movement. More than two thousand peasants have been assassinated by members of the state's various repressive forces, or by the paid gun thugs of the latifundistas (big landowners).

The victims include farmers, peasant leaders, lawyers, and left-wing militants. Women and men committed to an agrarian reform which would be a synonym for social justice and dignity for the working people.

The Fourth International calls on all democratic, progressive and revolutionary organisations to unite in an international campaign denouncing this incredible situation. We must demand full respect for human rights in Brazil. Those responsible for these massacres must be tried and punished. There must also be a wide campaign of solidarity with Brazil's Landless Movement (MST) .★

popular power has deal with the non-state structures of private power with their increased relative weight. Secondly, the growing social diversity within the popular camp. On the one hand the rural population is thrown off the land into the cities, where most of them fail to gain access to the formal labour market, whilst structural unemployment mounts, resulting in a huge mass of the "excluded", surviving by the most varied means alongside the proletariat. On the other hand, there continues to be a numerical growth of the proletariat, but with the weight of the industrial working class (ie. wage-earners in industrial employment) considerably reduced; deregulation, flexibility, contracting out and other initiatives to increase the rate of exploitation, alongside the questioning of the "social wage" represented by state-supplied social services, are resulting in considerable differences opening up between the social conditions of those who are within the formal labour market.

Three further kinds of problem result from this. Firstly, it becomes much more complicated to bring together the conditions needed for the proletariat to become the central social and political subject of the revolution and the building of a new society. Secondly, the ability of the industrial working class, and even the proletariat, to bring together all the popular sectors and polarise the immense majority of the "excluded" is put into question; in the popular imagination there is an erosion of the revolutionary role of the proletariat (sometimes confused with the industrial working class), and this failure of imagination itself helps to destructure the proletariat's sense of social and political identity.

Thirdly, there is the change in the place a country like Brazil occupies in the world, a redefinition of its insertion into the new world capitalist system where the perspective of national and social development is no longer present. Transnational corporations, international communication networks, as well as regional and international political and economic organisations, come to play an ever more important role, to the detriment of national states.

These problems in turn have at least three kinds of implication: Firstly a burning need for increased internationalism in all practical areas of revolutionary struggle. Secondly, the difficulty of building a political project whose development is posed solely within a national framework. Thirdly, the need to rethink the revolution, so far understood as a seizure of power (essentially state power) which begins within a national framework, and which now has to take on board the qualitatively increased weight of international tasks (both regional and world-wide).

These three kinds of problem demand a reworking of the Brazilian and international left's strategic project. ★

Notes

1. See article by Daniel Bensaid, "Points of Reference for Analysing the New World Situation", in *Em Tempo* No. 282 June 1995

2. Brazil's twenty years of military dictatorship finally ended in 1984, although the military's withdrawal from the forefront of politics had been in preparation for several years before that. However the pact between different pro-military and opposition fractions of the bourgeoisie which enabled a controlled transfer to civilian rule quickly went into crisis, with mounting internal divisions and plummeting credibility. Aggravated by the growing strength of the Workers Party (PT), this instability of bourgeois rule continued through the impeachment of Fernando Collor de Melo on corruption charges in 1992 to the elections at the end of 1994 which brought to an end the government his successor Itamar Franco. government at the end of 1984.

3. The PSDB, the party of the current president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was originally a left split from the main bourgeois opposition party which led the opposition to military dictatorship, the PMDB. As the latter lost credibility in government, the PSDB gained ground with its seemingly progressive "social democratic" positions. When victory in the 1994 presidential elections seemed very likely to go Lula of the Workers Party, the Brazilian bourgeoisie shifted all its support to the former left-wing sociologist, Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

4. The PFL is the party of some of the most traditional sections of the Brazilian ruling class, including many politicians tie 20th century. .

5. The Movimento dos Sem Terra ('Landless Movement', is an organisation of landless peasants which has carried out hundreds of active land seizures and occupations in its struggle to promote land reform and justice for Brazil's rural poor. As such it has become perhaps the most dynamic force in Brazilian social struggles in recent years, with industrial and trade union struggles at a relatively low ebb. The MST has traditionally been strongest in the south of the country, but has now become significant force throughout the country.

● May Day in Mexico City

Demonstrations led by the dissident Foro group of unions and the radical Intersindical Primero de Mayo, converged to fill the national plaza (Zocalo) of Mexico City on May 1st. Carrying hundreds of banners and thousands of placards, chanting slogans and singing protest songs, more than 100,000 workers, peasants, and urban poor demanded a change in the government's neo-liberal economic policies.

Last year, when the Congress of Labor (CT) and the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) decided to cancel the official May Day demonstration, independent unions and peasant leagues, community groups, members of the democratic citizens' movements, and opposition political organizations held the first genuinely independent May Day celebration in Mexico in decades. Hastily organized and largely a grass-roots affair, May Day 1995 had the feel of a radical social movement calling both for political democracy and economic change.

This year, for the first time, the dissident union officials of the Foro group and May First Coalition seized the initiative.

Much smaller than the Foro group, the independent Inter-sindical Primero de Mayo (May First Inter-Union Coalition) grew out of the May Day 1995 demonstration. At the center of the May First Coalition is the Route 100 bus drivers union (SUTAUR) with something like 9,000 active members led by Ricardo Braco, the union's attorney who is currently in jail on charges of embezzlement. In 1995 as part of the Mexican government's privatization of state-owned industries, the Federal District, declared Route 100 bankrupt and laid off the 12,000 workers, also eliminating their independent labor union (SUTAUR). Many unions and other organizations rallied to the support of SUTAUR, and together participated in May Day 1995, after which they joined together to form the May First Coalition.The Frente Popular Francisco Villa turned out thousands of the urban poor, including hundreds of housewives from poor neighborhoods. Supporters of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and its new organization the Zapatista Front of National Liberation (FZLN) turned out to march with the May First Coalition.

Authentic Labor Front (FAT) leader Alfredo Dominguez read a statement from Subcomandante Marcos of the

EZLN calling for workers, peasants, and the indigenous people to join together to march against the government's neo-liberal economic policies. Meanwhile, In Chiapas, 200 EZLN supporters seized a local radio station and broadcast a message from Subcomandante Marcos in Spanish, Tzeltal and Tzotzil calling for unity of workers, peasants and indigenous peoples against neo-liberalism and for the construction of a new Mexico.

The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) marched with the May First independents, and its best known public figure, former presidential candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas spoke at the rally in the Zocalo calling for unity between the May First and Foro forces. Cardenas also called for the creation of committees for the defense of the petrochemical industry.

One interesting development in the May Day demonstration this year was the presence of two business groups, El Barzon, the organization of indebted farmers and businesspeople, and the National Association of the Transformation Industry

Renovation?

May Day 1996 demonstrated both the widespread working class opposition to the Mexican government's economic and social policies, and the increasing divisions within the official labor movement. Many commentators characterized the event as a "watershed" or "turning point" in the modern history of the Mexican union movement.

But hopes of renovation are probably premature. Given the crucial relationship between Mexico's unions and the state, true renovation of the labor movement would necessitate union participation in a broader democratic movement which would bring down not only the CT and CTM leadership, but also the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party. This would mean massive strikes, civil disobedience, and more forceful confrontations with the authorities on a regional or national scale. But the Mexican working class remains cautious. And quiet; strikes are at an all time low. ★

Source: Mexican Labor News and Analysis, e-mail: <103144.2651@compuserve.com>

Mutation and regroupment

The collapse of Stalinism and the continuing capitalist crisis has contradictory effects. Myths and illusions connected to the restoration of capitalism in the post-Stalinist societies have dissipated, faced with the actually existing market economy. But reactions to the socio-economic crisis all too often take the form of reactionary tendencies of an ethnic, nationalist, racial or religious character. Hence the urgent need to rebuild a world-wide movement of anti-capitalist struggle, taking account of the recomposition of the workers' movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

Regroupments of forces determined to learn the lessons of the historical abomination that was Stalinism and to continue, against the winds and the tides, to fight against capitalism are being realised in a number of countries.

In all the countries where such possibilities exist, the organisations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the re-groupment process. We consider this as an important step towards the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left on a world scale. At the international level, the Fourth International is an active participant in re-groupment, bringing with it the advantages of a long tradition of combat against capitalism and Stalinism. ★

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Fire in your veins...

There were five thousand of us. Young people from Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay. We had assembled in Colonia (Uruguay) to bring into life the first South Cone Meeting for Human Rights and Against Repression. A five-day youth camp. With all kinds of people. With piercing moments, and light moments. Everything was permitted. Including debates and proposals for our political, social and economic problems, and for standing up against the neo-liberal offensive. The youth of the Cono Sur (South Cone) of Latin America are beginning to make ourselves heard.

Alejandra Ferrari
Montevideo

THE CAMP SLOGAN WAS "WHEN YOUR VEINS are on fire, history changes" *(Cuando las venas arden cambia la historia)*. For five days, five thousand young people camped together, and shared their debates, recitals, theatre presentations, exhibitions, and concerts. Five days of cohabitation of a variety of currents of thinking, and a range of forms of resistance to neo-liberalism. For the campsite owner we were "the dregs of the city." For one right-wing newspaper, we were "violent elements." But the striking thing about violence was its absence from the camp. No police. No vigilantes.

Preparation for this unprecedented meeting started in October 1995, through the Youth Co-ordination for Human Rights and Against Repression, which unites about 50 neighbourhood, cultural, human rights and youth groups, alternative radio stations, a young women's group, and groups on repression, racism, and transvestites' rights.

Every evening saw cultural activities to meet all tastes: video, theatre, sculpture, poetry. And every night there was a recital in the central forum of the camp.

The infrastructure of our little village included a shop, with basic necessities at cost price, a bar, showers, bathtubs, a drinking-water truck, firewood, lights, and first aid. As well as everything needed to run the various workshops. Some groups also organised communal cooking, to feed the poorest participants.

A special alternative FM station, Radio Cortapalo, broadcast information about the meeting, with an "open microphone" where any participant could come and say whatever they wanted. The only limits were a ban on censorship and intolerance.

The workshops were the real political axis of the meeting. These small, open air meetings lasted from two to six hours (depending on the time available, the light of the moon, and the level of animation of the participants). Over 1,100 people participated actively in these workshops. Themes included personal security in the city, art, social ecology, racism, police and institutional repression, work and unemployment, sport and recreation, education, self-expression, legalising abortion, drugs, squatting and land occupation, marginalised social sectors, transvestites, mass media, non-violent direct action, human rights in Chile, political prisoners in Argentina, and, last but not least, Chiapas.

Beginning to change history...

Colonia was the meeting place for the diversity of the late 20th century. It demonstrated the need to unite, to exchange experiences, and the need for plurality. It showed that subversiveness must be shared.

The meeting denounced the lack of space for young people in societies dominated by savage capitalism, and "adult" interests. Colonia was a place we had build ourselves. A place for moulding our distinct experiences. A few days (only) of "liberated territory." Liberated from the hypocritical tyranny of the dominant ideology, and the institutions which repress the individual and the collective.

Some mass media, disinformation specialists, overnight political scientists, described Colonia as "the new fruit of the old militants." Others called us "tribes in the mist." Gustavo Leal, a former MLN-Tupamaros militant, now a wise old sociologist, defined the meetings as "a movement without roots in society." A movement so heterogeneous, he assured readers of the weekly newspaper *Brecha* (12 April), that it could never construct an alternative.

None of these experts went beyond the superficial appearance of the event. None tried to understand the deep mutations which are affecting young people in Uruguay and across Latin America.

We are witness to new forms of self-expression. To new discussions, and to a multi-

tude of new demands and expectations. Many of these were formerly taboo among militants of social and political movements. We see new ways of organising ourselves. Young Latin Americans in the late 1990s carry within them the weight of authoritarian governments, and the confusion of the decomposition of the political, ideological and strategic paradigms of the radical current in society. We saw the Berlin wall fall. And now we seek an identity of our own, which will allow us to unite in our diversity, and which will give us an image of ourselves.

Most young people do not consider that any existing politicians represent them. Nor do they identify with those organisations which proclaim themselves to be the popular vanguard.

Experimenting with time, we can open new doors, revealing new paths which lead against the grain in this society, which excludes so many and incorporates so few. This is what we started to do in Colonia. Together. In a pluralistic framework which makes space both for the youth sectors of the political and social avant-garde, and for those sectors which express themselves mainly through the alternative musical, art and media cultures, or who live their sexual identity as a rebellion.

Organised young women were part of the Colonia event from the very beginning. The Teindira group (young women from the Uruguayan section of the Fourth International) co-ordinated the workshop on legalisation of abortion. Other visible sectors included the racial minorities, marginalised social groups, lesbians, gay men, transvestites, students, the unemployed, the "rough" segment of football supporters, squatters, land occupiers, and artists. In short, all those who are usually treated as "second class citizens," in the rural and the urban environment.

In Colonia we began to absorb the concerns of the marginalised. This is the starting point of the new counter-culture, a new movement of protest, of denunciation of the hegemonic bourgeois project. A new condemnation of the consumer society. This was an audacious call to all the outlaws.

In Colonia, a reactive utopia encountered a place where it could manifest itself, express itself and organise itself, at least at an embryonic level.

The key is in the synthesis of our heterogeneity, in a collective, free and conscious process, refusing fragmentation and individualism, and refusing to reject fraternity and solidarity. Colonia introduced elements of doubt into a number of brains made rigid by old schemas. Colonia is not the end. The resistance continues. And the continuity will legitimise our day-to-day struggle. Young people have become a "subject," rather than just an "object" for the system.

One week after the Colonia meeting, Uruguay's government announced that youth was a policy priority. Meanwhile, the repressive state apparatus has invested $US 2 million to increase its patrols in the streets of Montevideo, in the name of the struggle against juvenile delinquency. The money comes from the government's counter-reform of social security and the education system. The classic double discourse.

The only effective way to fight back is to organise the resistance. To shout out, with more, new voices, that we reject the neo-liberal imperatives. Colonia demonstrates that history is not over. Far from it. History has just begun to change again. ★

The author can be contacted via the PST (Uruguay Section of the Fourth International) at fax (598 2) 481062. Full details about participation in next year's event will be published in *International Viewpoint*.

Participants: Argentina: FORA, Desde Abajo, MAS, MST, PTS, CORREPI, Frente Grande, HIJOS, EATIP, Asentamiento Agustin Ramirez. Brazil: Movimiento Sim Terra, Geledes. Chile: Comite 119, Colectivo Oveja Negra from Bolivar University, Estudiantes Tradando de Hacer Algo, Motor Rebelde Estudiantil, and the Chancleteando women's group. Paraguay: Radio Trinidad FM.

Greetings: PRT (Mexico) and youth organisations of the Fourth International: RSB (Germany), JGS/JW (Belgium), SAP (Denmark), Rebel (Zaragoza, Spanish state), JCR-RED (France), Liberation (Britain), Bandiera Rossa (Italy), Rebel (Holland) and the PSR (Portugal)

Rebellion 1996

13th European Youth Camp, Amarante, Portugal, 20-27 July

The Portuguese Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) will host an International Socialist Youth Camp in Amarante, from 20-27 July this summer.

This is the 13th annual camp prepared in common by the European youth organisations of the Fourth International. Over 1,000 participants are expected.

Themes include

- Fortress Europe
- Ecology
- Why be a young feminist?
- Mass media
- Chiapas
- Kurdistan

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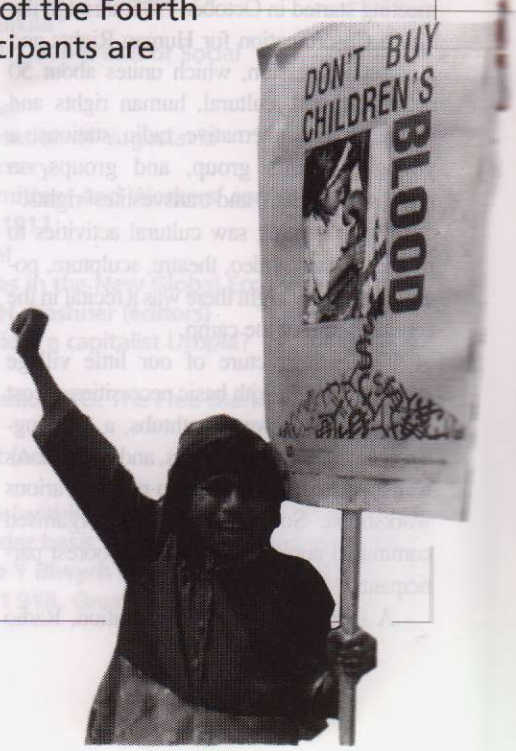


Post-conflict violence in Guatelmala

"Democratization" is under way. But, as **Dianne Feeley** explains, state violence is still a pillar of the regime

ALTHOUGH ALVARO ARZÚ OF THE PARTY OF National Advancement (PAN) won the presidency of Guatemala in the second round of elections on January 7, 1996, fully 65% of the population abstained. The choice had been between Arzú, a neoliberal whose campaign was bankrolled by the Chambers of Agriculture, Commerce, Industry and Commerce (CACIF), and Alfonso Portillo, a right-wing populist and a stand-in candidate for General Ríos Montt. PAN also won 43 out of 80 seats in Congress and controls one-third of all local governments.

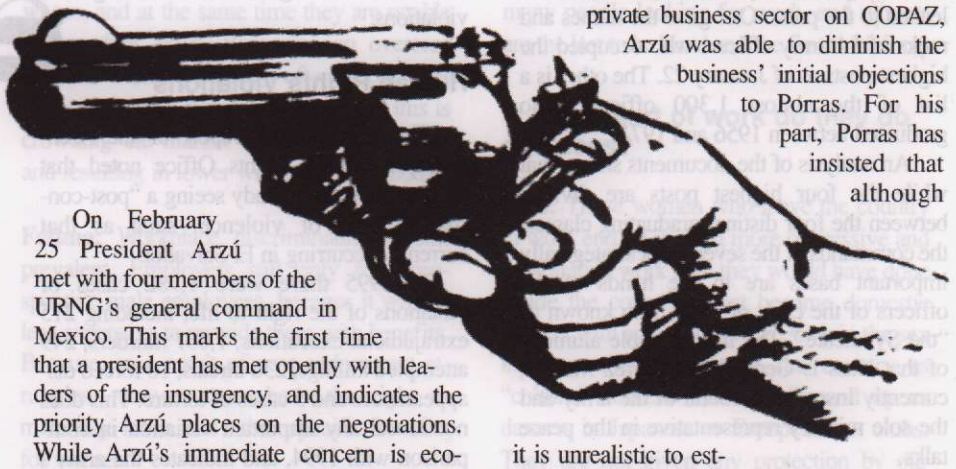
But while in the second round both parties represented a continuation of rule by the economic elite, the New Guatemala Democratic Front (FDNG) succeeded in establishing itself in the first round as a political force in the country, winning six seats in the legislature. Those elected on the FDNG slate include human rights activists and indigenous organizers such as Nineth Montenegro (Mutual Support Group—GAM) and Rosalina Tuyic (Confederation of Guatemalan Widows—CONAVIGUA). In addition, the FDNG, by itself or in partnership with local committees, won 19 of the 68 municipal governments it contested, including three provincial capitals. Of particular importance was winning Quetzaltenango, the country's second largest city.

The FDNG emerged as an electoral expression of the popular movement only last summer. Its platform was based on respect for human rights, promotion of gender equality, respect for multicultural practices, demilitarization, efforts to address the roots of poverty, environmental protection, support for the process of the peace negotiations and the devolution of state power to local governments. For its part, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) openly advocated participation in the elections and called a unilateral two-week truce leading up to the vote. Army sources affirmed that the truce was strictly observed by the guerrillas.

The FDNG had to overcome a number of obstacles — ranging from dealing with a severe shortage of funds to death threats. Manuel Saquic, an FDNG activist from Chimaltenango, was assassinated in late June. But the October 5 army massacre of 11 members of a returned refugee community in Xaman, Alta Verapaz and the wounding of 30 more was a far more direct message, designed to intimidate other returned refugee communities.

The Peace Process

With the installation of the Arzú administration it seemed that the peace talks with the URNG would remain stalled. And even when they resumed, would negotiations begin where they had been left, or would a number of points already agreed upon have to be renegotiated? On February 12 Foreign Minister Eduardo Stein revealed that Arzú and his advisors recently held five secret meetings with the URNG general command. Arzú agreed "to continue the dialogue under the previously established terms."



On February 25 President Arzú met with four members of the URNG's general command in Mexico. This marks the first time that a president has met openly with leaders of the insurgency, and indicates the priority Arzú places on the negotiations. While Arzú's immediate concern is economic —to attract investment and increase exports, particularly to the United States — he recognizes that central to that is continuing the peace process and improving Guatemala's human rights image.

Arzú signaled determination to maintain control over the negotiations by appointing only one army official to the governmental Peace Commission (COPAZ), thus reducing the army's role in those issues not directly related to the future of the army. He has appointed three civilian members:

- Gustavo Porras, Arzú's childhood friend, who studied sociology in Paris in the late '60s and joined the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) urban struggle until the army disrupted the urban fronts in 1980-81. Porras began to question the EGP's strategy and spent most of the '80s living in Mexico. When he returned to Guatemala in 1990, he worked for the new daily newspaper, *Siglo XXI*, and as a researcher for the Association of Economic and Social Investigations (ASIES). He worked on Arzú's campaign, building bridges between the right-wing PAN and more progressive sectors.
- Richard Aitkenhead, Minister of Finance during the government of President Jorge Serrano Elías, and one of the functionaries least tainted by the Serrano's self-coup in May 1993. During the past two years Aitkenhead has been a consultant with the Interamerican Development Bank.
- Raquel Zelaya, President Serrano's first Minister of Finance and an enthusiastic neoliberal. She left the post after receiving death threats, supposedly related to her investigations into "ghost" positions in the state bureaucracy. Replaced by Aitkenhead, she returned to her post as ASIES director.

By placing two trusted members of the private business sector on COPAZ, Arzú was able to diminish the business' initial objections to Porras. For his part, Porras has insisted that although it is unrealistic to establish deadlines for reaching accords, both the government and the URNG have agreed not to leave a single round of negotiations without having achieved some concrete advance.

Just before the round of talks began at the end of March the URNG declared an indefinite unilateral ceasefire while the government has reportedly agreed to refraín from offensive military action.

Pending peace discussions include socioeconomic aspects and the agrarian situation, the role of the army in a democratic society, the constitutional reforms necessary to implement the fundamental accords, and, finally, mechanisms for the demobilization and reinsertion of the guerrilla combatants to the society.

Considering the presence of two ASIES members in COPAZ, studies prepared last fall by ASIES may offer a rough outline of the Arzú administration's proposals in the upcoming talks. ASIES recommended constitutional changes that put into place "regulations on ownership of land that is not currently being utilized," modernization and decentralization of the outmoded Land Reg-

istry and creation of a land bank. To resolve the land crisis, ASIES considered that a minimum of 400,000 hectares would have to be awarded to 50,000 families.

ASIES also recommended an increase in direct taxes, a modernization of the system of tax collection and a study of a program of privatizing some state assets.

The Guatemalan Army

Alvaro Arzú is following the same approach to the army that former President Vinicio Cerezo used a decade ago: to carry out a limited purge of army and police ranks. In January Arzú dismissed 118 agents and officials of the National Police allegedly involved in corruption and criminal activities. And, according to Ronald Ochaeta, director of the Archbishop's Human Rights Office, 53 army officials were suspended for their links with corruption or human rights violations.

During February two documents were leaked to the press. One gave the names and ranks of 84 army officers who occupied the highest posts as of January 22. The other is a list of the almost 1,300 officers who graduated between 1956 and 1971.

An analysis of the documents shows that while the four highest posts are divided between the four distinct graduating classes, the commands of the seven most strategically important bases are in the hands of the officers of the class of 1966, also known as "the Syndicate." The most notable alumnus of that class is General Otto Pérez Molina, currently Inspector General of the army and the sole military representative in the peace talks.

More than 60 of the 84 officials in powerful positions would be subject to retirement by the end of the year, if pending legislation in Congress to cut the period of service to 31 years for generals and 30 for other officers is passed.

Preemptive moves by the Arzú administration to get rid of the army and National Police's most corrupt or criminal elements is also a way of deflecting pressures for more thoroughgoing changes. The government's decision to put the army on the streets of the capital to help control crime continues past governmental policies of further militarization to deal with the effects of past militarization.

The popular movement and human rights organizations do not anticipate improvement of the situation under Arzú. He may have a little more autonomy from the army than previous presidents, but the army is still the backbone of power, enjoying autonomy in strategic matters including human rights. For instance, it will send its own delegation to the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, despite the fact that the Minister of Foreign Affairs disliked the idea, and it will continue to obstruct investigation of human rights violations.

Human Rights Violations

The latest annual report of the Archbishop's Human Rights Office noted that Guatemalans are already seeing a "post-conflict" period of violence, such as that currently occurring in El Salvador.

In 1995 there were 1,782 cases of violations of the right to life, including 215 extrajudicial executions, 1,067 murders, 249 attempted killings, 236 threats, 10 forced disappearances and 5 cases of torture. This does not reveal any important variation in comparison with 1994, and indicates the army's continued impunity.

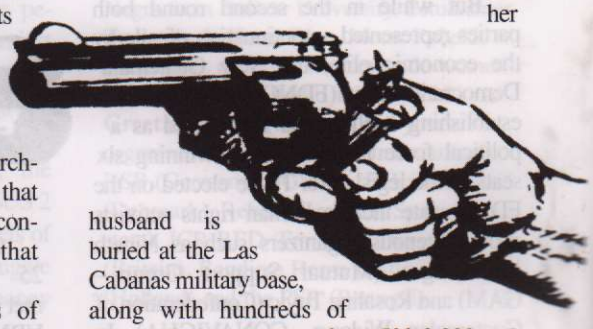
Attacks against labor leaders have continued without interruption. The most recent case is that of Reynaldo González, General Secretary of the Federation of Bank and Insurance Employee's Unions, who has received death threats ever since he testified before the U.S. Trade Representative in Washington in 1993. The death threats intensified after he met with a U.S. government trade delegation to Guatemala in November 1995. He has also been key in uniting the Guatemalan labor movement in opposition to neoliberal, anti-union policies.

On March 8 González's nephew was abducted by armed men. This attack followed the abduction of González's sister, who was forced into a black van, on February 27. She was drugged, repeatedly raped and tortured. Before her release the men told that her brother was a guerrilla and that if both of their families did not leave the country, they would be killed.

Yet the government did not initiate an investigation of the kidnapping, rape and torture of Vilma Cristina González, thus preventing her from obtaining a forensic examination from medical authorities. The González families prepared to leave the country, but were prevented when the government announced on March 8 that it had run out of passport covers!

The Case of Comandante Everardo

Jennifer Harbury — a U.S. citizen and widow of the Guatemalan guerrilla known as Comandante Everardo who was captured, secretly interrogated, tortured and executed by the army in 1992 — has mounted a campaign to uncover the truth about her husband's capture and execution. Recently declassified U.S. documents prove that the CIA knew of Bámaca's capture shortly after it happened, and may have paid for information obtained through his torture. The documents also indicate that the White House and U.S. State Department were also informed, and deliberately misled Harbury.



Harbury believes that her husband is buried at the Las Cabanas military base, along with hundreds of others. (Estimates range from 500-2,000 and the Mutual Support Group has filed a separate petition for exhumation.) However though the Guatemalan Attorney General appointed a special prosecutor to investigate the case and various court orders have been issued, the army has blocked her entry. The special prosecutor resigned after receiving death threats.

On March 7 Jennifer Harbury filed a $25 million lawsuit against CIA officials for knowingly giving her false information about her husband's disappearance. In a recent interview she insisted that there be a declassification of all U.S. government files on human rights cases in Guatemala since 1954, stating "We have to find out what our government has done in our names, with our tax dollars and without our permission. And Guatemalans have the right to know what was done to their family members." ★

Sources: *Report on Guatemala*, published quarterly by the Guatemala News & Information Bureau, P.O. Box 28594, Oakland, CA 94604 (subscription: U.S. $15, foreign $20) and *envío*, a monthly published (English & Spanish versions) by the Jesuit Central American University, (subscription: *Revista envio*, Apartado A-194, Managua, Nicaragua, U.S./Canada $32, Latin America $30, Europe, etc. $40)

Migration and prostitution

Penny Duggan discusses overseas contract labour and sexploitation with four Filipina socialist feminists from the post-Communist Party left

● Why do so many Philippine women go abroad to work?

Fatima: Mindanao women are traditionally supposed to stay at home and take care of their houses, their backyard and their husbands. They are not allowed to conduct economic activities. But, because of the very hard life that they experience, many women are forced to leave the country. For example, Sarah Balabagan [sentenced to death after killing the UAE employer who raped her] was only 15 years old when she was forced to go out and earn a living for her family. But they somehow transformed her birth certificate and she passed as a 28-year old.

Lorena: The minimum wage is 2,700 pesos but the cost of living is more like 8,000 pesos. So over 70% of the population is below the poverty line. This explains why peasants, workers, the urban poor, and indigenous people can easily decide to go abroad to be domestic helpers or sex workers (prostitutes) to earn a living for their families.

In urban poor communities, about 50% of the population do not have regular jobs. Women are the hardest hit, because it is their job to ensure a whole education for the family. So in urban poor communities you can see even pregnant women and children working twelve to fourteen hours in dumpsites to be able to get food for their families. In peasant communities landlessness is a major problem. Because without land there is absolutely no livelihood. Peasants also face "development aggression": the slow demolition of peasant communities in the interest of government infrastructure projects.

Luisa: And what about the implementation of neo-liberal policies like the "Philippines 2000" project of President Ramos? Last year more than 50,000 women were laid off in the garment, shoes and underwear industries. One can see the predicament of these women: the family livelihood depends on their wages, and at the same time they are unable to use their skills. Becoming an overseas contract worker (OCW) often seems the easiest way out. You can imagine that this is crowding the market for domestic helpers, and resulting in lower wages for everybody.

Fatima: Workplace discrimination is still prevalent. Employers still only seek prospective male employees, because it will be less expensive to provide them with benefits. Because, as a result of past and current struggles, many women have the right to maternity leave and other specific benefits for women.

Since the time of Marcos, through the Cory Aquino period and now under Ramos, the regime has always espoused some kind of industrialisation. The whole Medium-Term Development Plan is based on a concept of fast-track industrialisation. This is basically import dependent, export-oriented and debt-driven. It relies very much on debt to make it work.

Agriculture has to be pushed aside, which will result in massive land conversion. Agricultural areas are being converted into tourist spots or industrial, commercial or housing zones. The result is a haemorrhage of people from these rural communities to the cities, expecting to find work there. Women are doubly or triply victimised in this whole process. They are victimised by their own partners who are men. They are victimised in the society because they are women. And they are victimised by capitalists, because they can be used to promote something.

The expansion of the female workforce provides industry with the opportunity to blackmail us: "if you don't like your job, you can leave!" they say. Because there are so many people looking for work, and women are the last to be hired and the first to be fired.

● What sort of work do they do overseas?

Mila: Those women who leave the country to work end up in even more oppressive and exploitative work than they would have done inside the country. Most become domestic helpers with a very low wage, or join the sex industry: they go out of the country as "cultural workers" but actually end up as dancers in Japanese or European sex clubs. They are not given any protection by our government, or the government of their country of residence. Especially when they are "illegal". Which many of them are.

● What about mail order brides?

Mila: This is just another front of the sex industry. Our government is not doing anything serious about this problem. After all, the government promotes the export of cheap labour. It does not matter to them what will happen to these women once they leave the country.

There are of course some real marriages [where Westerners have contacted Philippine brides through agencies]. But many such women end up in sex clubs. In many cases their passports are confiscated or they are

---

Penny Duggan of ***International Viewpoint*** talked to Fatima (People's Communist Party in Mindanao), Luisa and Mila (Revolutionary Workers' Party in Visayaz), and Lorena (Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Luzon).

persuaded to take another name, which makes them "illegal". They cannot just return to the Philippines if they find problems in the new country, or with the men they were supposed to marry.

● The government does nothing to protect the image and dignity of Philippine women?

Fatima: The Philippine elite believe that we should welcome foreign investment with open arms and open legs. In other words, allowing not only investment in the Philippine economy but also in Philippine women. Investment here goes hand in hand with "tourism". So does the policy of sending contract workers abroad. Not only in the Middle East, but also in Japan. Many Philippine women go to Japan to work as entertainers in bars, clubs, and restaurants, entertaining Japanese men, particularly business executives. These clubs, in Japan's entertainment districts, are operated by the yakuzas (Japanese Mafia). Many women's organisations protested, because so many young Filipina women were being killed by the yakuzas. So the government was forced to stop sending Filipina women to Japan. But this ban only lasted a few months. Because many Filipinas really want to go to Japan, even if they realise the risks, because there is no opportunity to get a job in the Philippines.

● How much can a woman earn abroad?

Luisa: Domestic helpers earn from $US 150 per month in Saudi Arabia to $600 in Israel. The average is about $200. For this, they do all kinds of domestic work. Some also sew.

Fatima: In Taiwan domestic helpers earn about $US 300 dollars per month, but they don't work for only one family: in one day a domestic helper could be working as much as 18 hours. There are many cases where Filipinas arrive in Taiwan and Singapore, but immediately want to come home once they see the miserable conditions. Some come home crazy, because they can no longer take the very hard life they experienced abroad.

"Entertainers" in Japan are supposed to work only for six months. But to get a contract they are supposed to have dance lessons, and pay a fee to the employment agencies. This means investing $US 2,500, just to get a six month contract. Once they are in Japan, their legal job could bring them as much as ¥ 60,000 a night, but they work as prostitutes to earn as much money as possible. At the end of their six month contract they hope to buy a house and land, and "invest" in the documents for a second contract in Japan.

● Sexploitation of Filipina women is not just an overseas problem, is it?

Mila: The US military bases have contributed enormously to the proliferation of female and male prostitution in the Philippines. Communities of prostitutes developed outside Subic Bay base. Almost as if they were officially employed by the base to "service the sexual needs of US servicemen". This process stopped when the base was closed down by volcanic activity. But it did not stop prostitution, because the prostitutes have no other work opportunities. They were not included in the official, US-financed programme for conversion of the local economy, because they were an unofficial part of the base system. Many prostitutes moved to Burokay, a beach resort in central Visayaz, Dabao, in the south of the Philippines, and many other tourist spots.

This not only promoted the culture of prostitution, but it also becomes the channel for drugs, because US bases are not inspected by Philippines customs.

This migration also became a new channel for AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. AIDS is now rampant in the Philippines. We don't know how many people are really infected with AIDS but 80% of documented victims are women, and most of the others are gay men.

In August 1995 an Australian support group exposed sex tourism in the Philippines, particularly the flow of Australian men exploiting Filipino children as sex objects. This well-documented exposé has led to the investigation of some Australians' activities in the Philippines. It was a very positive initiative. But it created an uproar in the Philippines Senate, because these things are happening right under their noses, but they are not able to stop them. Our politicians are the unwitting culprits of all this sex tourism.

● President Ramos has clashed with the Church over contraception and abortion

Mila: The issue was certainly not the government's sincere recognition of women's rights to abortion or birth control! The church opposes the government's attitude to poverty. The state encourages artificial means of birth control as a "solution" to poverty. The Department of Health does not present the more important question of ensuring healthy foods for children who suffer from malnutrition or death from poverty!

When a Protestant like Ramos proposes contraception as a solution to poverty, it is a sort of challenge to the Catholic church. What developed was a political battle to win the support of the population on the question of artificial birth control and pro-life policies.

Luisa: Though we mustn't forget that many active Catholic women openly criticised the church and other pro-life forces. This did not develop into a mass movement, but it was a real outcry against these conservative ideas. Most of these women are consciously feminist.

● How justified is concern about "over-population?

Mila: The government and Church concern with birth control really deviates from the main issue in the country. Even the National Economic Development Authority agrees that, if only we had a just society, with a more just distribution, the Philippines would be able to give a decent life to everybody. We have abundant natural resources that could provide food for everybody and we have many skilled workers and professionals who could give a push to a very high level of development of our country.

We are second from bottom in South East Asia in terms of poverty. Sustaining the growing population is, of course, a problem, but the real issue is who controls the natural resources and the economy of a country in which more than 50 million people live below the poverty line? ★

Towards a European supranational state?

The European Union faces a major challenge: creating a unit powerful enough to play a major role in the global economic conflict. This means harmonising the contradictions between the continent's leading imperialist countries, and crossing the threshold towards a new supranational state of some kind. It is against this final goal that we should measure the Maastricht Treaty and its possible revisions.

By **François Vercammen**

At the end of the 19th Century, far sighted observers lie the Marxists like Parvus, Luxemburg, Hilferding, and liberals like Hobson, realised that the national framework was becoming too tight for capitalist productive forces. The great paradox of European capitalist unification is that the factors which push, objectively, towards unification, at the same time reveal the obstacles to effective union which lie ahead. They predicted that the new "imperialist" stage of capitalism would generate explosive economic, social, political and military contradictions. Indeed, Marxists argued that this tendency in capitalism was a powerful argument for a socialist society, which would be internationalist by definition.

One hundred years later, these "classic" observations are as relevant as ever. Modern capitalism urgently needs international coercive state-style structures, so as to contain the chaotic, violent and disruptive path of this mode of production.

Half a century of failure

This objective necessity for capitalism emerged in Europe earlier, and more forcefully than in any of the planet's other major regions.[1] Its long history is a demonstration of this and has not been contradicted by the 20th century. But history demonstrates the paradox that impulsions towards continental unification are also signals of the very real obstacles to effective unity.

Don't forget that this century has already seen two practical solutions to the problem of European unification. Both were the result of a major, historic event. The first was the proletarian revolution in Russia between 1917 and 1923. These events opened the possibility of an united Europe. Unfortunately, the defeat of the German revolution stopped the Russian-German convergence and thus socialism Europe-wide.[2]

Fifteen years later, Hitler attempted to solve the contradictions of inter-imperialist relations using fascism and war to unify capitalist Europe under the hegemony of one national bourgeoisie.[3]

The European Union of today traces its roots to a more modest 'historic moment', the post-war compromise between Britain, France and Germany, under the supervision of the United States.

Europe had been devastated, decimated and impoverished by a conflict which, among other things, resulted from the strong rivalry between the continent's three major capitalist powers. The statesmen and industrialists who organised the reconstruction of Western Europe were drawn to the idea of peaceful co-operation. And the United States, the 'liberator' of the Western part of the continent, had made such institutionalised state co-operation a precondition for its material and financial aid. The US also demanded the creation of an unified, open European market, replacing the national protectionism of the pre-war period.

Reconstruction took place on the basis of re-established nation states, still inpregnated with wartime nationalism, and mobilised under US leadership in the new struggle against the "communist bloc".[4]

The protagonists of European unification in the early 1950s recognised the difficulties of advancing *en bloc*. They opted for a strategy of European political convergence through the creation of a series of partial economic accords.

But even this "re-dimensioned" strategy, proposed by politicians like Monnet, Schuman and Spaak, soon revealed its limits.

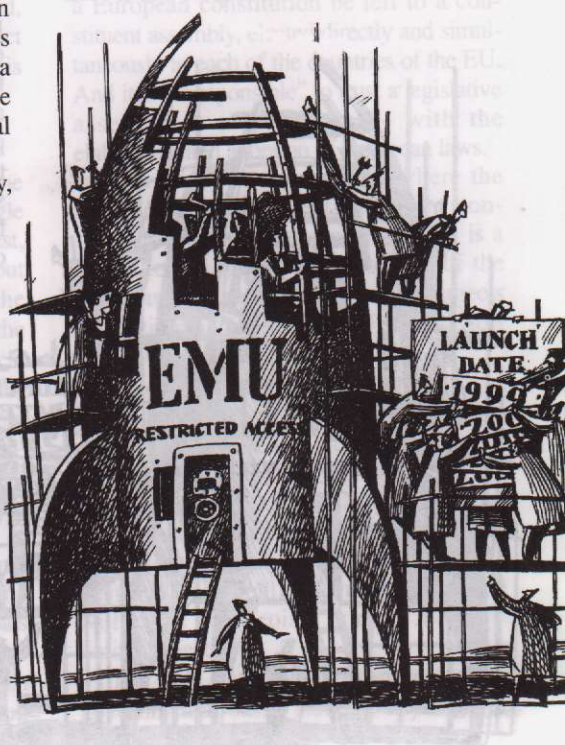
The European Coal and Steel Communities,[5] created in 1952, was a brilliant success. This structure allowed the reconciliation of France and Germany. It provided a framework for production in the two key economic sectors which were considered the "causes of the war". And it created, for the first time, super-national institutions, with real powers in a specifically delimited area of the economy.

Inspired by this success, the partisans of unification tried to extend the Communities into a mini-state apparatus, through the creation of an European Army (the European Defence Community). It was a total disaster,[6] and the trauma was long-lasting. From now on,. the Europhiles hoped that the spontaneous play of market forces would provide the necessary harmonisation. The perspective of a "political " alongside the "economic Europe" was not abandoned, but relegated to the final stages of a long process in which, it was hoped, the objective conditions of union would ripen.[7]

State without nation

The failure of these early attempts reveals the size of the problem. Europe certainly has elements of common experience and common destiny. But history has not created an European national consciousness among any significant number of people. There is no slowly-forming European nation.

The history of the 18th and 19th centuries will not repeat itself at the continental level at the end of the 20th century. In the previous two centuries, the formation of nation states in Europe drew on a widespread national identity. With the state institutions of the old order in chaos as a result of the capitalist and anti-feudal revolutions, a new politics established itself by mobilising the masses in a struggle for self determination, personal liberties, material progress, and for an end to obscurantism, absolutism and arbitrary state behaviour. "People", "nation" and "state" were increasingly identified with each other.[8]



Not today

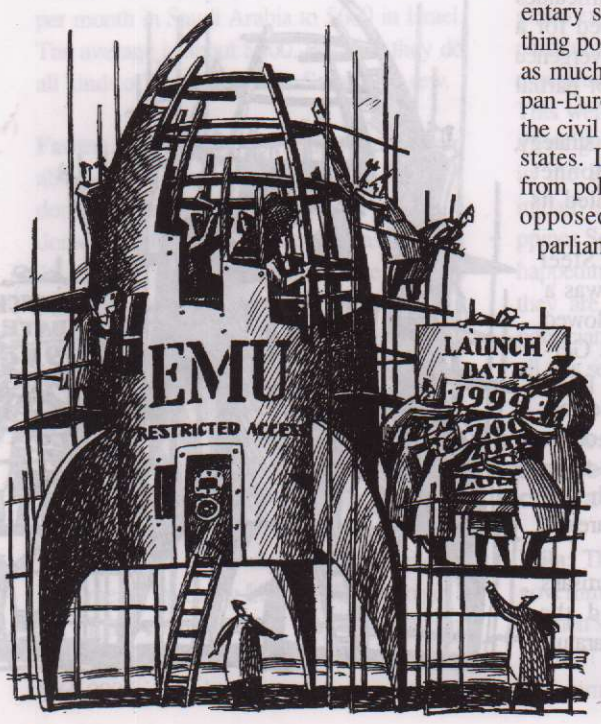
Today there is, of course, a certain layer of European consciousness, linked to fundamental ideological elements like democracy/liberty, prosperity/living standards, peace/fear of another war, and social gains, like full employment, and widespread social protection. The existence of a large workers' movement, mobilisable public opinion, endemic and institutionalised conflict, and strong cultural diversity all provided practical support to this proto-consciousness. It was, however, rather negative. It expressed itself in distinction to misery and dictatorship 'out there' in the third world, in distinction to the 'American way of life' and Japan, and, to a lesser extent, through anti-communism (accepting the division of Europe and the cold war).

This situation persisted at least until 1985. But meanwhile, important changes had taken place. In particular, economic, social, cultural, military, and media life was ever more internationalised. This trend showed us a future, with all the dangers that could threaten if internationalisation happened under an exploitative and oppressive system.

In other words, there is a clear rationalism in going beyond nation states. And an urgent need to think and act at the international level. This has had an effect on people's thinking, especially among the younger generations.

The European Union, which is of course only one, specific institutional construction, has tried to give itself an universal legitimacy by drawing on elements of this ideological atmosphere.

The Common market has been established. Its survival was never automatic. But it resisted the recession of 1974-5, which could be considered the point of no return.[9] The 1985 Single Market Act built on this success, creating the (deeper) Single Market, and fixing the date of 1 January 1993 for the opening of internal frontiers to the goods and services of the other member states.



The Single Market amplifies and accelerates economic exchanges, and favours the concentration and inter-penetration of big capital. It makes the European Union into the world's densest economic region. This is the decisive material force which is pushing in favour of an united Europe. The big industrial, commercial and financial groups have immense interests at stake.

This immense material interest explains the pro-European political will of the governments of most of the member states, and the impressive guiding power of the much-criticised "Brussels" European Commission. So the train is going forward. But it is travelling through the mist. Attempts to implement the Maastricht Treaty (1991-2) have resulted in crises, ruptures, tension, and fear of collapse.

Among the population of the European Union, there is growing difficulty. the social gains which helped create the European proto-consciousness are threatened. The European Union now appears as the opposite of the welfare state. There is no more "European social model". The European bourgeoisie is carrying out a major offensive against social gains, while wrapping its attacks in the banner of European Union. This is, obviously, incompatible with any strategy of winning the population of Europe to a position of support for the European Union.

The structure of the European Union is an insult to the "typical" European parliamentary structure. Logically enough, everything possible was done to prevent, or retard as much as possible, the development of a pan-European civil society to complement the civil society which exists in the member states. In fact, the European Union flees from political debate and public control. It is opposed to the creation of a European parliament elected by universal suffrage, and enjoying legislative powers. Instead, the population is kept as far as possible from the centre of power. Meanwhile, the employers vigorously oppose the creation at a European level of the 'national' model of social partnership (between employers, trade unions and the state), which they consider to be a costly burden.

The European Union has prevented the birth of a social Europe to complement the monetary and merchandise Europe. To say that the Union has a "democratic deficit" would be a euphemism.

The European Union offers no new historic perspective. Despite its pretentious of modernity, it is neither emancipatory nor socially generous. The EU is, rightly, perceived as a tool for the defence of the vested interests of the ruling class (the "strongest" and "richest"). It has not been able to incarnate, in the minds of the population, the values of "neutrality" and "the common interest, above and beyond the interests of social classes and nation states". And every state structure must find such ideological supports if it is to ensure its legitimacy.

In fact, the European Union is deepening and sharpening the national question in Europe. There is no internationalist /European solution on offer. So, in reaction, imperialist nationalism develops in the existing member states. The EU effectively stimulates egotistic regionalisms, in Lombardy, Flanders, Bavaria and elsewhere. In these regions, there is a demand for the right to self-determination, and threats to separate from the nation state, so as to better integrate in the coming European super-national state.

Progress nevertheless

Despite all this, the European Union is going forward, in the direction of a super-national state.[10] The main pressure is the various normative activities linked to the (still incomplete) establishment of the Single Market. This project occupies most of the time and energy of the EU civil servants in Brussels. It is also the crucible where economic legislation is formed, along with a structure of qualified community civil servants, and links between the EU administration and the administration of the member states. As work continues, there is a constant coming and going between the Community and the national level.

In essence the Single Market requires the supranational application of decisions negotiated between governments, but elaborated, applied and sanctioned by the Commission, which has an important capacity for autonomous action in this area.

The second main area of work is monetary union. This is where we are closest to a supranational state structure. As the most advanced point of co-operation between the member states, the monetary union project is also the point where all the contradictions and latent conflicts of the entire project risk emerging, as happened over the European Defence Community in 1952-4.

Monetary union has a direct influence on the monetary, economic, fiscal, financial and social policies of all the national governments. But this is a super-national influence which the national governments

actively support. And they collaborate with the Commission, in their diligent application of the neo-liberal, monetarist convergence criteria of the monetary union project.

The supranational character of the monetary union project is symbolised by the "automatic" and irreversible nature of the scenario. This was specified in the Maastricht Treaty, and refined at the Madrid summit in December 1995. The mechanism is crystallised in Ecofin, the Council of Finance Ministers of the member states. In principle, this is an intergovernmental body. In reality, it already functions as a supranational 'department', in synergy with the European Monetary Institute (the body which will develop into the European Central Bank) and the national banks of the member countries. These national banks (Bundesbank, Bank of England, etc.), have been given new statutes which free them from the control of their national governments, considered "too sensitive" to social and democratic pressure. Here, then, is one wall of the super-national European state: a wall firmly rooted in the state apparatus of the member states.[11]

And then there is the question of pressure at the frontiers of the European Union. Throughout history, external pressure has always played a strong role in the formation of states. This is particularly true today, due to the strong instability, including military instability, to the East and the South, the Mediterranean basin. EU reaction is differentiated. In both cases there is an important police and military element. Within the EU there are laws and agreements against refugees and immigrants, development of Europol. And outside, there are military 'rapid intervention' forces. Concerning the East, the empire faces another necessity: stabilising an immense continent which has been convulsed by its transition to capitalism, which is the EU's priority in the region.

The result is complex: social and humanitarian programmes, support for market mechanisms, the struggle for control over the market sectors which are emerging. Then there is the whole question of adhesion to the EU, with all its financial, budget questions. And what about adhesion to NATO? and the West European Union?

The leap to super-nationality (in other words, the abandon of national prerogative) is particularly difficult, because of the sensitivity of the national state bureaucracies, the rivalries and competition of the major capitalist groups, and the tradition and strategies of the major powers within the EU.

This is also true in the fourth domain, the need for a common foreign policy, and the establishment of institutions which are capable of implementing it. This is a fundamental element for any imperialist state. Grand capital needs a state force (diplomatic, political and military), active externally, to protect its investments, guarantee access to raw materials, help win new markets, ensure profits, and provide financial support for its operations and reorganisations. If necessary, by direct political or military intervention. This state force needs continuity, incarnated by diplomatic personnel. The weight of history and the strong internal conflicts of the EU have made the member states very jealous of their autonomy. To the point where intergovernmental co-operation is difficult, even faced with the problem of competition with Japan and the US. At this level, the EU is a real cacophony. Germany insists that the EU priorities its East-European policies. The Anglo-Saxons have united against the French in Rwanda, French President Chirac has his own nuclear policy, and, all together, the EU has made a particular contribution to Yugoslavia's death.

The European state structure needs to find enough coherence to be effective. This means a common doctrine, central apparatuses which function, and the controlled application of measures which are decided upon. And this in a generalised, global market economy, which is already chaotic enough. The EU's problem is that there is no dominant, national power at its core, like the USA or Japan in the zones they dominate (though neither country has the ambition of establishing a semi-state structure to consolidate their regional dominance).

The increasing powers of the European Union, its organic enlargement to other European countries in Eastern Europe, and the difficult implementation of its policies in the turbulent world: all these factors are arguments in favour of a small, concentrated, powerful executive power. We can expect the EU to try short term 'forcing' on this question.

Made to measure

A full-blown European state is out of the question. The bourgeoisie's current struggle is for the establishment of a more modest, "made to measure" state, with limited, but real powers. The leading spheres of the European bourgeoisie are well aware of the historical, economic, political, psychological and international factors which make their task so difficult. Their strategy is therefore twofold. The constant application of neo-liberalism, and pragmatic functionalism in the development of European unification. This means concentrating on the creation of a few state structures, which can become solid, and which can bring results in the pursuit of the major politico-economic goals of the EU.

There is still a voluntaristic thread, which forms the guideline of the project. These leading circles clearly want to see a more advanced degree of supranationality, and inter-state co-ordination.

For the moment, effort is concentrated on political-military and economic-monetary co-operation. Each national government is still responsible for "managing" the local class struggle.

Pragmatic gradualism can still be combined with audacious initiatives, as Jacques Delors demonstrated during his period as President of the European Commission. And we could still experience a more forceful initiative, if a moment of crisis presents itself.

The European Union is constantly expanding its "constitution". The appropriate organs adopt norms and laws, and new institutions and structures are created to meet specific needs. These structures develop and evolve. The constitution is being established!

This is a careful process: they have to balance the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and their states, and take into account the existing balance of forces between capital and labour, so as to avoid greater crisis and stumbling blocks. The best method is secret diplomacy. The rule in the EU is that the real objectives, the various points of view, the content of discussions, the conclusions and the decisions are hidden, except for the part they want us to see.

This is a tightly controlled process. There is a very small core in each government, particularly in the French, German and British governments, which has *de facto* veto powers. Then there is the political presentation: the "summits", the intergovernmental conferences, a session at the European Parliament, publication of "White Books", and so on.

It is "unthinkable" that the elaboration of a European constitution be left to a constituent assembly, elected directly and simultaneously in each of the countries of the EU. And it is "irresponsible" to trust a legislative assembly – a parliament – with the elaboration and adoption of European laws.

This lack of democracy is where the method and the objective of the constitutional process come together. This is a return to "enlightened despotism" of the 18th century, just before the great bourgeois revolutions in England and France. "Soft tyranny", as it has been called.

Triangle of power

This might look like a confused process, with its spectacular failures, and its hysterical crises, like the mad cow business. But we shouldn't underestimate what has already been achieved, and what is being planned. We should recognise the real will within the bourgeoisie to meet the EU's limited objectives.

The EU is still run on an intergovernmental basis. Nothing important is

decided without inter-governmental co-ordination, except where the governments have agreed to forego consultation.

It is time to destroy the Euro-myth that the Union is controlled by a triangular structure: Council of Ministers, European Parliament and European Commission. The governments, the people, and the incarnation of the European spirit? Far from it. Europe is run by the Council of Ministers, the European Court of Justice, and the emerging financial government of the EU, represented by EcoFin (the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers of the member states), and the European Monetary Institute, the prototype of the central European bank.

This inter-state government is not a counterbalance to the 'threat' of supranational structures. The Commission, which likes to drape itself in anti-nationalist colours, lives, on a day to day basis, with the diplomatic representatives of the member states. A spirit of opposition-complicity runs through all the European structures. The governments might have limited the powers of the European institutions. But they have also allowed these bodies to exceed their powers, so as to better nurture the "Community spirit".

The same is true for the Commission (Article 235). And even more so for the Court of Justice. This is appointed by the member states, but relatively autonomous. Its role is to ensure the impartial operation of the other bodies of the EU, on behalf of the member states. This gives the court a key role in the development of the constitutional and legislative system. The accumulation of norms (linked to the Single Market and the preparation of the common currency) and the jurisprudence of the Court are generating the new European proto-state's structures and procedures. This has caused a kind of alchemy between the community, inter-governmental and national level.

This process has created an experienced bureaucracy, relatively independent of the national governments, and linked (through ideology, privilege and career) to the EU itself.

Over the last 40 years, solid links have been built with the state bureaucracies at the national level. Many "European" civil servants return to their national base before the end of their career. And, of course, the multiple contacts between the European bureaucracy and the national bureaucracy has generated a strong pro-EU core within the civil service of the member states. Ideological links are being made, not just practical ones. Brussels is not floating somewhere up there, whereas the national civil servants. are "rooted" and devoted to their people.

This group is re-organising national government structures in a more authoritarian direction. It uses its European authority to paralyse or defeat opposition within the state, or from the national parliament. And, within each member state, it is those ministers with the European links: the Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs, Interior/Home Affairs, Finance, Economics, Defence, which have the real power. A remarkable return to the way governments looked in the 19th century![12]

And then there is the evolution of repressive apparatuses. The process is young, but we can already see a certain convergence at the European level. Decision making is still problematic, and the application of common decisions is often chaotic. We are still a long way from the transfer of national sovereignty to the EU. These national bureaucratic corps are still entirely national. They are jealous of their independence and welded to their respective governments. In this respect, the EU still has a considerable comparative disadvantage, compared to American and Japanese imperialism.

But where it functions, the current degree of political co-ordination between the nation states, resting on the existing level of interdependence of the national state structures, can be extremely efficient.

We should not judge the EU only in terms of the degree of supra-nationality achieved.[13] What counts is the (growing) operational coherence between the EU, intergovernmental and national levels. This is what the EU will try to assure during the revision of the Maastricht Treaty, and the drafting of a constitution for the Monetary Union. The EU will struggle hard, because the goal is worth a crisis or two. ★

Notes

1. The American historian Charles Tilly illustrates this through the series of chronological tables aligning foreign wars, civil wars, revolutions and revolts in a range of major countries and sub-regions published in his book, ***Les révolutions europeéenes 1492-1992*** (1993), Paris, Ed.Seuil.
2. Pierre Broué, ***La révolution allemande (1917-1923),*** 1971, Paris, Ed. Minuit. Leon Trotsky discussed this problem in its wider historical perspective in ***Europe et Amérique, 1928***, Ed Anthropos, Paris, 1971, and in "Critique du programme de l'Internationale Communiste", published in ***l'Internationale Communiste après Lénine,*** Ed. PUF, Paris 1969, pp.88-101.
3. Jean Freymond, ***Le III Reich et la réorganisation économique de l'Europe, 1940-32. Origins et projets,*** Leiden, uitg. Sijthoff, 1974.
4. The leap in European consciousness which some people predicted did not take place. "Stabilisation" took place under American supervision, with American dollars, American aid, and American military protection. The European governments only gradually regained real political autonomy. French-German antagonism remained virulent. And the defeat of the working class, by violent means in some countries, squashed social liberation, and the linkage between this liberation and a new European consciousness, based on a generous and common future.
5. Founded in 1952, regrouping the core countries of the original EU (Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg and Italy, and without Britain.)
6. The blockage came over the question of German rearmament, the role of NATO, and the relationship with the USA. Political struggle over this project dominated the political debate between 1950 and 1954.
7. The Treaty of Rome evoked the necessity of a common monetary policy. The idea of a single currency appeared in a Commission report in 1962. But, at that time, this was presented as a good idea, but without immediate implications.
8. Hagen Schulze, ***État et nation dans l'histoire de l'Europe,*** 1996, Paris, Seuil, pp.171-184.
9. See chapter 9 of Ernest Mandel's ***La CEE et la rivalité entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis, 1968***, and ***La crise 1974-78***, Paris, Flammarion, 1978, pp. 137-138.
10. As well as the more general factor of the increasingly "transnationalised" and centralised needs of big capital.
11. All depends on the success of monetary union, and its geographical application. But it already seems unavoidable for the core of the EU: Germany, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxemburg.
12. During the long transition from feudalism to capitalism, the absolute state emerged, characterised by the contradiction between the two exploiting classes, the land-owning aristocracy, which dominated, and the new bourgeoisie. Under the pressure of the bourgeois revolution and the inextricable conflicts between "reactionaries" and "modernists", the state apparatus established itself as a far-seeing "arbitrator", with the best "global view".
13. G. Courty, G. Devin, ***L'Europe politique***, 1996, Paris, La Découverte, Coll. Repères, Yves Salesse, ***Institutions européennes, déficit démocratique et intérêt général,*** L. Cartelier, J. Fournier, L. Monnier, ***Critique de la raison communautaire***, 1996, Economica, pp. 35-68, and Renaud Dehousse, ***La Cour de Justice des Communautés Européennes***, 1994, Montchristien, Coll. Clefs, 155p.

Unemployment in Europe

by Henri Wilno

The European Union is a high-unemployment region. Government policies that are undermining hard-won social programmes and cutting back growth rates offer no hope of a way out.

According to official statistics based on International Labour Organisation (ILO) methods,[1] the EU's average unemployment rate is approaching 11 percent. This figure gives a very restrictive picture of the real proportion of jobless. Realism would require adding in first of all the "discouraged workers", i.e. those who think they have practically no chance of finding a job and therefore in normal times make no concrete efforts to look for one (though they may return to the labour market when the economic situation improves). These people live off welfare payments and petty, short-term, under-the-table jobs. Other people should also be counted as unemployed: e.g. those whose countries' laws do not allow them to look for work (older unemployed people in France for example) and people taking part in various employment programmes: training schemes and part-time, low-pay jobs in the non-market sector (administration, social services, etc.). Finally, in addition to all these hidden jobless, there are growing numbers of part-time workers who would like to work more: 40 percent of part-time workers in France, amounting to 16 percent of all wage earners.

Table 1
Unemployment in the EU

	1993	'94	'95	1/96
Germany	7.9	8.4	8.3	8.7
Italy	10.4	11.5	11.9	12.4
France	11.7	12.3	11.5	11.6
Belgium	8.9	10.0	10.1	10.1
Holland	6.7	7.4	6.9	7.2
Britain	10.3	9.5	8.7	8.6
Spain	22.9	24.1	22.8	22.6
EU (15 states)	10.8	11.2	10.8	10.9
USA	6.8	6.1	5.6	5.7

Source: Eurostat, OECD.

The American Model

High levels of unemployment in Europe are contrasted with the situation in the US (table 1). This gap would be smaller if discouraged workers (a greater proportion in the US) were counted, but it would still be significant. Besides, growth seems to create fewer jobs in Europe than in the US: from 1983 to 1991, one percent growth meant 0.7 percent more jobs in the US, but less than 0.4 percent more jobs in Europe (table 2).

To explain this situation, neo-liberal economists and international economic institutions like the OECD blame "Eurosclerosis": all the mechanisms that regulate layoffs, minimum wages and social insurance programmes. These provisions are supposedly preventing Europe from experiencing the same job growth (particularly in services) as in the US. In order to create jobs, they say, Europe should dismantle the welfare state and accept greater inequality, which goes together with greater economic dynamism.

Margaret Thatcher's and John Major's Britain put these precepts into practice. The results were devastating on the social level. Despite self-satisfied pronouncements by Britain's rulers, the results in reducing unemployment are not so clear. Although unemployment is lower in Britain than the rest of the EU, it is still high. In any event, there is no way to distinguish the aspects of Britain's performance that are due to attacking social programmes from those that result from devaluation of the pound. US economist Richard Freeman (of Harvard and the London School of Economics) maintains that the case of the UK proves in fact that labour-market "flexibility" does not solve unemployment.[2] Despite the inconclusive outcome of the British experiment, the same kind of reasoning still inspires, in different degrees and dressed up in different plumage, the policies advocated by the European Commission in Brussels and the various EU governments.

The neo-liberal arguments basically boil down to the idea that the US works well and Europe works badly. But as another well-known US economist, Paul Krugman, asks, "If the welfare state is so terrible for employment, why were European countries able to keep unemployment so low before 1970?"[3] In Krugman's eyes, the economies are dysfunctional on both sides of the Atlantic: on one side the dysfunctionality shows up as unemployment, on the other side as low wages. The US minimum wage lost a third of its buying power between 1968 and 1989, was not raised at all between 1980 and 1989, and since 1991 has been stuck at $4.25 an hour (about £2.80). The "working poor", who work in particular without health insurance, make up an increasing proportion of the US labour force. According to Krugman, the same cause that led to the crisis of the European model accounts for the sad results in the US as well: the cause is the new market logic that reduces demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Even if one considers this last point debatable, this does not invalidate Krugman's conclusion: that the American system is not a positive alternative that can solve Europe's problems.

Another high-level US economist,

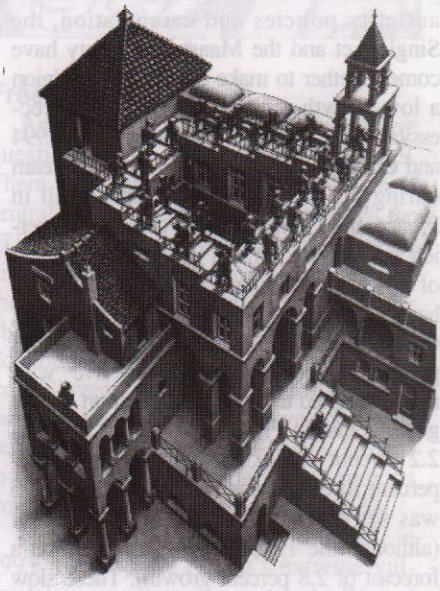


Table 2
Productivity and employment: the relationship

	Productivity	Jobs	Elasticity
Germany	3,3	1.4	0.4
France	2,5	0.5	0.2
Britain	2,5	1.1	0.4
USA	2,8	1.9	0.7

* Elasticity of 0.4 suggests that a 1% growth in production will cause a 0,4% increase in jobs.
Source: Average yearly stats. (1983-91) by Eurostat

working along the same lines, stresses two points:

- Even if unemployment in the US is low, there is a high number of discouraged workers and people employed in illegal trade (particularly the drug trade).
- Unskilled US workers have experienced

declining wages and a simultaneous rise in unemployment: unemployment among unskilled workers has risen from five percent in the early 1970s to 12 percent today.[4]

Overall, the US and Britain are examples of societies that are more and more broken up and characterized by deep inequality, without any real ensuing economic benefit. We have already mentioned that part of the job creation in the UK can be attributed to devaluation of the pound. For its part, the US used its budget deficits and the weapon of high interest rates, particularly against Japan: this made possible more sustained growth than in Europe since the early 1990s and presumably has something to do with the employment situation.

Maastricht versus Jobs

Europe is managing to combine slow growth with social regression. National austerity policies and deregulation, the Single Act and the Maastricht Treaty have come together to make the European Union a low-growth region. After the 1993 recession, there was a limited recovery in 1994 and early 1995. But the recovery lost steam during the course of 1995, first of all in France and Germany: both countries experienced negative growth in the last trimester of 1995, and economic forecasts for 1996 have been revised downwards. In Germany, GDP growth is officially forecast at 0.8 percent, and at 0.5 percent by the five "wise men" assigned to do an annual report for the government. In France, the growth rate was 2.2 percent in 1995 (as opposed to the 2.9 percent forecast), and the forecast for 1996 was set early in the year at 1.3 percent (although the 1996 budget was based on a forecast of 2.8 percent growth). These slow European growth rates obviously have something to do with the limited buying power of wages and benefits, which cuts effective demand, and something to do with high real interest rates resulting from central banks' one-sided fear of inflation.

Neither France nor Germany meets the Maastricht criteria for monetary union today. This explains the two country's announcement in early May of budget cutbacks (and cuts in social benefits in Germany). Having inflicted major defeats on British and Italian workers, capital is aiming today at sweeping changes in the social ground rules in France and Germany in order to unleash free-market forces completely.

None of this helps reduce unemployment. It is clearer than ever that the only hope to reduce unemployment in Europe is for the workers' movement to impose a shorter work-week and a policy of economic growth based on satisfying social needs. ★

notes

1. The ILO defines an unemployed person as someone without a job who has not worked one hour during the week when the survey was made, is available for work, and is actively seeking work.
2. Richard B. Freeman, "La flexibilite ne mene pas loin", *Alternatives Economiques* no. 135, March 1996.
3. Paul Krugman, "Europe jobless, America penniless?", *Foreign Policy* (Washington), summer 1994.
4. *Le Monde*, March 12, 1996.
5. Interest rates have fallen recently in Europe, but they are still pushing up budget deficits: debt service constitutes a growing share of government spending and produces no economic growth.

Can the EU absorb the East?

by **Catherine Samary**

THE LEADERS OF EVERY CENTRAL AND Eastern European country repeat at every occasion that their country's future lies within the European Union. The eleven Phare[1] countries already have association agreements with the EU. "We'd rather be the poorest in town than the richest in the village" say the more realistic partisans of rapid integration. Many others naively believe that integration into free-market Europe will bring them 'Western' living standards

The Polish intellectual Karol Modzelewski[2] warns that even Germany, "the richest country in Europe... could not stop the collapse... of the Eastern Länder, when the socialist economy was attached, overnight, to the western economic system. The Germans might have enough resources to construct a completely new economy on the ruins of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). But the other post-Communist countries cannot dream of doing the same".[3]

But the extent of the failure of the "socialist" countries, and the absence of any credible left alternative to Maastricht, are powerful arguments against remaining outside "the only show in town". So does the 1995 entry of Austria, Sweden and Finland into the EU. Unless and until some new monetary or socio-political crisis reshuffles the cards, the "pro-European" sentiment of the decision-makers in Eastern Europe legitimises their policies of "structural adjustment" inspired by the Maastricht convergence criteria.

Enlargement of the EU to the East would bring new problems, at an unprecedented price to the existing members. This is not just a result of the quantitative "backwardness" of the various candidates, nor the important role agriculture plays in many of them (agricultural subsidies consume a large part of the EU budget). Integrating the central European countries as members would involve the EU much more closely in the unique mutation process which is underway in the region.

There is, of course, already a relationship between EU membership and "the transition to the market economy" — the restoration of capitalism. The perspective of membership accelerates the rate of change. Can the EU integrate hybrid societies? To what extent? And at what price? Would integration stabilise, or destabilise these societies?

Transition

The Hungarian economist Janos Kornai has called the 20-50% drop in production across the region since 1989 the "crisis of transition". But it does seem that the countries bordering on Germany and Austria are coming out of the tunnel. Poland's economy has grown consistently since 1992. In 1994 all the economies of central and Eastern Europe grew, apart from Bulgaria, which did however stop contracting.

The return to power, via elections, of the former Communist parties is a sign of stability: there is clearly a possibility of alternation without challenging the new rules of the game. In Poland, Kwasniewski's socialists are continuing the privatisation programme. In Hungary, the ruling Socialist Party has imposed a particularly harsh austerity programme, and accelerated the privatisation of key sectors, like energy. The Czech Republic was the first post-Com-

munist country to enter the "rich countries' club", the OECD.

All these factors underpin the increasing number of optimistic forecasts, suggesting that these countries have escaped from the chaos and disruption which afflicts the rest of the former "Soviet bloc".

Things are not so simple.

Beyond their legal appearance, privatisation and restructuring often hide remarkably familiar structures of decision-making. There has certainly an impressive "small privatisation", with the continued creation of new shops, service companies and small workshops. But the major industrial enterprises still face one central difficulty the newly-forming bourgeoisie, with its roots in the nomenklatura and the middle classes, has very little real capital at its disposition.[4]

And yet, the process of privatisation, monetisation, price liberalisation, and the development of market relations requires that these means of production leave the state-owned sector and become "capital."

This means exposing these enterprises to the risk of bankruptcy, and workers facing the threat of redundancy and unemployment. Managing such a situation requires new management techniques, in a framework of new social relations. We are a long way from this in the region's major industrial enterprises, and in entire regions of central and Eastern Europe.

Total savings in the region represent no more than 20% of the sum needed to buy the enterprises which are being privatised, even at the knock-down prices being asked. And many individuals would prefer to invest in something more stable and profitable than their country's industrial sector. In Hungary, foreign capital has played a key role in privatisations so far.5. Elsewhere, foreign money is marginal, either because the local markets do not offer sufficient profitability and security, or because local authorities have tried to protect certain sectors from foreign domination.

To legitimise the transfer of public property to the private sector, and to "capitalise without capitalists", the Czech Republic pioneered the mass distribution of virtually free privatisation coupons to the population, enabling the purchase of shares in companies, or indirect investment through a private or bank-managed Privatisation Investment Fund. The state, and the major banks, still have a dominant role in the effective management of these funds, but a part of this potentially lucrative sector will surely pass, sooner or later, into foreign hands.

The "coupon privatisation" enabled Czech Premier Václav Klaus to announce that privatisation is over, since more than half the GDP is now produced by non-state owned enterprises. In fact, the extent of effective privatisation, and the future of the "stability" Klaus and Kwasniewski are so proud about, depend on the social relations behind "popular privatisation", and the balance of forces between the new social classes. Where market discipline is imposed, growing unemployment will continue to increase the size of public deficits. Liberal economic orthodoxy will continue to squeeze the social and cultural budgets, with the Maastricht convergence criteria the ultimate and absolute goal. The "Mexicanisation" of central Europe is not the same as its "stabilisation".

Agriculture: a delicate question

Agriculture is a problem for everyone. For the rulers, it is a central, apparently insoluble dossier in the process of integration into the European Union. For households already hit by declining real wages, food and drink is consuming an increasing part of the family budget. Any further increase in food prices (which are still significantly lower than in the EU) could have explosive social effects.

If central and East European and EU agricultural markets were integrated, the Eastern countries would represent 12 to 30% of total production. This would not only complicate the continent's persistent overproduction, but put sever strains on the extensive quota and subsidy system.[6]

The "destructive" phase of the transformation of the region's agriculture has caused an unprecedented peacetime fall in production, particularly in Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary (which is no longer self-sufficient, and is suffering from a growing trade deficit as a result of food imports.)

"Transition" has also been marked by a legal traffic-jam, caused by the "restitution" of certain categories of state and collective property to certain categories of former private owners. The average parcel thus distributed is very small (under 2 ha in Rumania, Albania and Bulgaria). Many former collective farmers are extremely reticent about the supposed values of individual responsibility

The larger co-operatives and state farms have been "privatised" in the same unclear way as many state companies. And some co-operatives have been maintained, at least in name.[7]

This is probably in contradiction with the logic of the EU's Common Agricultural Programme, "which does involve a high degree of intervention... but in the context of a market economy, without monopoly, and with control over transfer payments... How could one distribute aid per hectare or per head of cattle in state farms, in production co-operatives, or in the numerous cases where land ownership is very imprecise?"[8]

At the other end of the scale, is the EU willing to give subsidies to the mushrooming numbers of micro-farmers? Don't forget that the existence of this rural employment sector dampens the pressures towards social explosion, by enabling a degree of self-sufficiency in the countryside, and providing the capacity to integrate a certain number of the unemployed or under-employed.

Free trade hypocrisy

Agriculture is linked to another sensitive questions: trade relations with the EU.9. There has been a massive reorientation of central and east Europe's trade towards the EU over the last five years, as a result of the dismantling of the old price system, opening the economy to foreign trade, and the abolition of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance ("Comecon"). Apart from Slovenia and the Czech Republic, all the countries of the region developed trade deficits with the EU in 1990-1993. Exports to the EU increased by 60%, but imports from the EU increased by more than 90%!

A rapid decline in exports to the EU in 1993 revealed the region's extreme vulnerability: a modest recession in the West of the continent had an immediate, significant effect on the export capacities of the Eastern countries.

Meanwhile, the new imports from the EU have not, essentially, contributed to the modernisation of the means of production. Instead, the import boom reflects the consumption of Western consumer goods, at prices which most of the central and Eastern European population cannot afford.

The most dynamic sectors of the region's economy are already the sectors most dominated by EU companies, who have sub-contracted a large amount of production to the region.[10] Central/eastern Europe's clothing and shoe exports doubled between 1988 and 1993, mainly through the re-localisation of West European companies sub-contracting facilities from Asia to Eastern Europe. A similar process is under way in the machine tools sector, which represented 21.8% of the region's exports in 1993, compared to only 14.3% in 1988.

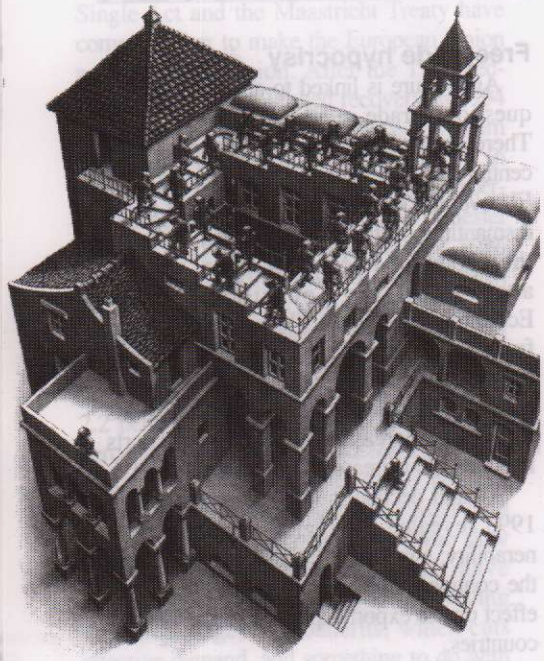
Western companies have preferred to

concentrate their sub-contracting in the most advanced countries in the region. In 1993, 80% of identifiable sub-contracting exports from central and eastern Europe came from the "Visegrad Four", Poland, Hungary, and both halves of the former Czechoslovakia.

These sectors were less touched by the export collapse of 1993 than the region's other, traditional export sectors like steel and agriculture, which are subject to particularly strict protective measures where import to the EU is concerned.

The Association Agreements with the EU have liberalised access to EU markets.[11] But there is a long list of exceptions, subject to special restrictions; textiles, coal, steel, certain raw materials and "sensitive" foodstuffs. These are precisely the sectors where the East European countries have a comparative advantage

EU restrictions allowed under these



protectionist amendments caused a 10% fall in imports of East European steel and foodstuffs in 1993. A double discourse, and a double policy in "free" trade, it seems. Eastern Europe is obliged to suppress its protective legislation, while the west maintains its powerful protectionist measures.

The enlargement of the EU to the East will, sooner or later, force the EU to make a choice about central and east European agriculture. One European Commission report to the member states suggests accelerating the reduction in EU food prices, bringing them closer to east European, and world levels, but without increasing subsidies to EU farmers to compensate.[12] This could be the first step towards dismantling the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Clouds on the horizon

Extending the EU to the East seems to be the only possible strategy. But it will increase the tensions which an already weak union must face.

The reality is that privatisation has made the central and east European countries poorer, and sometimes less industrial and more agricultural, than they were in 1989.[13] This regression increases the potential cost to the EU's CAP and regional development funds, if these countries are allowed into the Union. These funds would have to double in size if Central and Eastern Europe was integrated tomorrow.[14]

Much depends on the timetable for integration. Will these countries be considered as a bloc? Should Slovenia and the Baltic countries be treated with Eastern Europe, or later, with the rest of former Yugoslavia and the ex-USSR? If some countries are to be on a "fast track" towards integration, which ones? And how to choose them? What will be the consequences of such a "downgrading" of Slovakia compared to the Czech Republic, or Rumania or Bulgaria, which formally have the same association agreements as Poland or Hungary?

Those in the EU who are opposed to an "over-selective" differentiation of the treatment of the eastern countries warn that such division of the region would encourage the growth of nationalist, far right tendencies. But this apparently open and egalitarian approach to the region may hide a deeper truth: a broad, but necessarily shallow extension of the EU to a wide range of countries in the East could only occur if the EU itself became more of a simple free-trade zone, with a consolidated DM-zone integrating the most developed parts of central and Eastern Europe.

But what is the alternative for the European powers? To delay the integration of these countries indefinitely, so as to concentrate on the consolidation of "fortress Europe", or its core countries?

As Poland's Karol Modzelewski has argued, the left in the East and West of Europe should warn against the effects of unprotected integration into a capitalist world where efficiency is directly related to the dismantling of the social gains of the working population, and companies become more productive by disposing of more workers.

The problem is, obviously, that opposing the membership applications of the East European countries would mean identifying ourselves with those in the West who, in reality, wish to build a "rich man's Europe". The only way to avoid falling into such a trap is to develop proposals for the construction of another Europe, combined with a radical critique of the "efficiency" criteria of global capitalism. ★

Notes

First published in ***Avancées démocratiques,*** January 1996

1Originally the EU's "Poland and Hungary Aid for the Reconstruction of the Economy" programme, Phare has since been enlarged to cover the Czech Republic, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. This is a rough selection of the most credible candidates for integration into the EU.

2Karol Modzelewski, ***Quelle voie après le communisme***, L'Aube, 1995, p.87

3Op. cit, p.84

4 In the previous system, money was an income (one could buy consumer goods), but it was never capital (it could not be used to gain control of the means of production, nor could it accumulate into capital-money. The partial market mechanisms which existed did not impose budget discipline on enterprises. In the USSR, the most extreme case, most enterprise managers did not even know the balance sheet of their company's "profits and losses".

5 Half of investment into the region since 1989 has gone to Hungary. This sum, about $20 bn., is about ten times higher than total foreign investment into Russia, but ten times lower than total external investment into the Länder of former East Germany.

6Except in Poland and ex-Yugoslavia, this sector controlled more than 80% of arable land. From 12% (Czechoslovakia) to 30% (Rumania) of the population was employed in agriculture, producing 15-30% of GDP.

7See LP.Mahé, J.Cordier, H.Guyomard, T.Roe, "L'agriculture et l'élargissement", ***Economie internationale***, n°62, 1995, and RECEO, 1995, n°3, Edith Lhomel ; ***AGRA-EUROPE*** n°1851, July 1995.; cited by Pierre Lenormand, "Relations sociales et acteurs sociaux dans les campagnes de l'Est européen", paper presented at the IRM seminar called ***Relations sociales et acteurs sociaux à l'est***, held in Paris on 25-26 November 1995.

8 ***Economie internationale***, Op.cit, p.249.

9 Françoise Lemoine, "La dynamique des exportations des PECO vers l'UE", in ***Economie Internationale***, Op. Cit, pp;145-171.

10 Cf. Françoise Lemoine, Op.cit, p.161.

11 These accords propose the creation of a free trade zone between the EU and Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Rumania and Bulgaria by the year 2002. The June 1993 European Council meeting agreed to accelerate the process.

12Cf. Philippe Lemaitre, "l'élargissement de l'UE à l'Est imposera de nouvelles baisses des prix agricoles", ***Le Monde***, 28/11/1995.

13 The GDP of the central and east European countries only represented 4% of the size of the 12 original members of the EU. Agriculture represented 12% of the region's GDP in 1989, which makes it 20-50% of the size of the equivalent EU sector. Per capita GDP varies from $1,130 in Rumania to $2,970 in Hungary, compared to $8,000 in Greece, and an EU average of $17,000. However, if we compare actual buying power, the difference is smaller. The average EU citizen has a buying power of 16,500 ECU, compared to 8,000 ECU in Slovenia, 6,800 ECU in the Czech Republic… but only 1,400 ECU in Albania

14Cf. Bertrand Saint Aubin, "Le coût budgétaire de l'adhésion des PECO", ***Economie internationale***, n° 62, 1995, p.255-265.

Opposing the G7

Representatives of the governments of the world's seven richest governments met in Lille in April 1996 to find solutions to unemployment. As **Gustave Massiah** reports, they decided that the best strategy to follow is the globalisation of the economy, the deregulation of work, and the replacement of "archaic" job security. In other words, more of the same policies that have created mass unemployment in the "advanced industrial democracies".

ECONOMIC POWER IS LESS SUBORDINATE TO government than it ever was. But this doesn't make the G7 irrelevant or redundant. Over the last 20 years, these "industrial democracies", as they now call themselves, have become an increasingly visible actor. They also represent the major stake-holders, and provide the top bureaucrats in the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organisation (formerly GATT).

The G7 is a club, which exists above all to impose the will of those in the club on those outside it. The institutional framework of the world economy has been progressively adapted as the result of discussions within the G7. This club pilots, and guarantees the regulation of the globalisation of the world economy.

The first summit of "the major, free, democratic industrial countries" took place in 1975, at the initiative of the French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing. The goal was to ensure "stable and durable growth", through a struggle against inflation, and through action to reduce unemployment.

From summit to summit, the club's doctrine developed, around key elements like neo-liberalism, crisis management for the new world disorder, managing the debt crisis, liberalising trade, and expanding the world market.

Structural adjustment was the first element of this strategy. In 1976, the G7 approved the World Bank's plan for reorganising Third World economies through; opening to the world market, and prioritising exports rather than the internal market; privatisation and opening to international investment; and the reduction of "unproductive" budget posts like education and health. Structural adjustment does allow for corrective social programmes, producing the impact is minimal. And increasing military and police spending is permitted.

Over the years, Structural Adjustment has been applied everywhere, East, West and South. The result is increasing inequality, marginalisation, and poverty. Including in the G7 countries themselves.

In 1980, the G7 began to express its interest in the world's raw materials. The result of the G7 reorganisation of the recycling of petrodollars was an expansion of the speculative financial sphere. This weakened the world economy, and allowed corruption and drugs trafficking to become structural parts of the world economy. Downward pressure on the price of raw materials became a constant factor. This was, of course, one of the motivations behind the Gulf war.

The debt crisis

In 1982, the Third World debt crisis combined with a surge in interest rates. Monetarist policies caused a massive international debt crisis, which was to dominate summit discussions for the next ten years.

Principles for debt treatment were established. Country by country negotiations: never group negotiation; refusal of any notion of joint responsibility; refusal of any discussion on the illegitimacy of a part of the debt; subordination of all negotiations to the imperatives of structural adjustment to the world market, and imposition of debt rescheduling (repayment of the same sum, plus interest, over a longer period) as the only technique for reducing the size of repayments..

Three innovations in debt treatment did emerge in 1992. Russia's debt problem was selected for priority treatment, for openly political reasons; Poland and Egypt were rewarded for their militant engagement in the free market crusade, and their role in the Gulf war.

The G7 even made a hypocritical appeal to the Paris Club (the northern state creditors of the third world: i.e. themselves) encouraging efforts to find solutions to Third World debt.

The international monetary system has stabilised over the last ten years. Some of the larger countries now make regular payments, and borrow new sums. The others are even more marginalised than before. As for the creditors, they have made provision for bad debts (at the cost of a few bankruptcies). The international banking system is no longer in danger. Debt isn't scary any more.

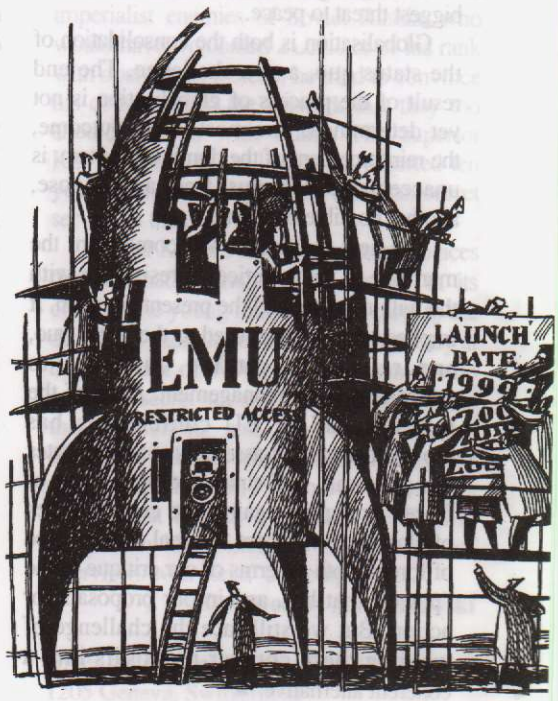
Not that the problem has gone away completely. Debt management has had a significant deflationary effect. Financial flows still go from the producers in the south to the bank deposits in the North. A weakening exchange rate for the south, and the decline in their export earnings combine with the debt system to cancel out almost all development financing.

The media talk less about the debt crisis than they used to. And yet, the current situation is increasingly similar to the debt crisis of the 1890s, which led to the expansion of direct colonialism, and the crisis of the 1920s, which was a key factor leading to the second World War.

Regulating globalisation

A series of G7-sponsored discussions have re-shaped the world economy, in agreement with the general interests of big business. The main purpose of the United Nations conferences in Rio (environment), Istanbul (habitat), Copenhagen (social), Vienna (human rights), Cairo (population) and Beijing (women), was to establish an agreement in principle on the priorities proposed by the G7 countries for the integration of the southern countries in the world order.

G7 economic priorities (expanding the world market, liberalisation of financial flows and exchange rates, mastering monetary disorder, containing inflation) have weakened the social gains of working people (stable employment, housing, social security) and increased marginalisation and precarious contracts. The G7 club does not just have an economic and social vision. It's



ideological preoccupations have been refined over the years. In the South, the priority is breaking the hope born out of decolonisation, so as to enable stable management of the debt crisis. It is surely clear today that the Gulf war was neither about democracy not about the elimination of Saddam Hussein. In the East, the G7 must bury is the hope born in 1917.

The club has also enabled a relative regulation of the international political science. They have opened a discussion about the future of the various international institutions, including the United Nations. Within the G7, the seven most powerful countries have been able to discuss their differences of interest, and seek a way to master the growing role of "emerging economies" like India, Mexico, Brazil, China, Russia, and the countries of Southeast Asia.

New contradictions

The Berlin Wall collapsed, the Gulf war was won. Today, there is no significant Eastern or Southern threat to Western dominance. But discussions on commerce and the world recession reveal a number of divergences between the great powers.

As the liberal system reaches its ecological and social limits, these conflicts may intensify. What is left in a country which has been forced in to a strategy of "everything for export?", scapegoating of immigrants, prioritizing debt repayment, the impossibility of developing internal markets, and the control of international institutions by the new world order. Revolt and conflict. Ethnic cleansing and genocide. And the slow rise of more serious confrontations. With their doctrines and their privileges, the rulers of the seven richest countries are the world's biggest threat to peace.

Globalisation is both the consolidation of the status quo, and a challenge. The end result of the process of globalisation is not yet determined. The most likely outcome, the reinforcement of the dominant system, is unacceptable. We must find, and impose, another possible outcome.

The new radicalism will come from the marriage of the practice of resistance with the will to go beyond the present situation. It implies refusal to get used to the status quo, and refusal to confine ourselves to permanent crisis-management. Each of the last UN, G7 or EU conferences has provoked a counter-assembly, rich in debates and proposals, and supported by a range of forces struggling against the consequences of globalisation. There is a real convergence of forces, both in terms of our critique of the "powers that be", and in our proposals for action. But we still face the challenge of welding these counter-proposals into a coherent alternative. ★

Sri Lanka: Police raid NSSP headquarters

Armed police officers raided the Columbo headquarters of the Nava Sama Samaja (New Socialist) Party on 1st June. The Central Committee was in session when thirty policemen armed with automatic rifles, grenades and sub-machine guns broke into the building, saying that they suspected illegal activities.

The real reason for this aggression is that the NSSP, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International, is the key organisation supporting the electricity workers strike, which began on 29 May, causing a total blackout for 4 days.

The 14,000 strong workforce went on strike demanding that the government give up its plan to privatise the Ceylon Electricity Board.

This is the second time in one month that the government has tried to intimidate the NSSP., the first being a police attack on the May Day demonstration (see page 34).

On Friday May 31, President Chandrika Kumaratunga, said that she will resort to any means "short of killing" to get the strikers back to work. She declared the strike illegal and ordered mass arrest of the strikers.

Within hours of her threat, unidentified gunmen attacked J.B.P. Dissanayaka, a leader of the telecommunications union leader. The attack was clearly aimed at intimidating other public sector trade unions which have expressed solidarity with the striking electricity workers. Dissanayaka, who escaped unhurt, is also a leader of the public sector trade union movement opposing privatisation. Members of the NSSP have also received death threats.

Pro-government forces, including some members of Parliament, have tried to rouse chauvinism among the masses by staging anti-strike demonstrations depicting strikers as a hindrance to the war effort against Tamil separatist forces.Major General Anuruddha Ratwatte, a maternal uncle of the President, is both the Deputy Minister of Defence and the Minister for Power and Energy.

Unfortunately, these acts of intimidation are likely to discourage many workers from carrying on their strike action.

The NSSP is calling for renewed efforts in the campaign against state terrorism, war and privatisation. A picket will be held in the heart of the capital, Colombo, on 05 June. ★

Worker attacked by police at NSSP 1st May March (see page 34 for eye witness report).

The NSSP appeals to all socialists and trade unionists

- To protest and condemn the raid against the NSSP headquarters
- To protest and condemn all forms of intimidation against the Electricity workers and public sector workers in general.

Please write or fax: The President of Sri Lanka, H.E. Chandrika Kumaratunga, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 01, Sri Lanka. FAX (941) 333 703. Send copy to the NSSP fax (941) 334 822.

book notes

***L'extrême droite contre les femmes*, Jo de Leeuw and H. Peemans-Poulet (Eds.), Éditions Luc Pire, Brussels, 1995**

This collection of papers presented at a recent seminar on Women and the Extreme Right organised in Brussels is an exhaustive analysis of the rôle of "the woman question" in far-right ideology (Hugo Gijsels) and the attraction of a number of women to these extremist views (Ann Carton on Belgium's Vlaams Blok, Fiammetta Venner on the far-right electorate in France).

How to unravel this paradox? Colette Guillaumin demonstrates the negative side to naturalism, the 'common religion' of a left-wing which has ignored women's viewpoint. Magda Michelsens argues that a culturalist approach can challenge the traditionalist ideology of the far right. While Bérengère Marques-Pereira shows the slide from nationalism to anti-feminism as a key pole of right-extremist ideology.

Back on more familiar, but no less important ground, Michel Husson outlines the economic and social crisis which underlies the growth in extremist views. Hedwige Peemans-Poulet looks in detail at the fiscal and social reforms which, in the context of this crisis, have helped cultivate a family-centred ideology, aiming to persuade women to remain in the kitchen.

Reviewed by Maxime Durand

***Del Moncada a Chiapas: Historia de la lucha armada en América Latina*, by Daniel Pereyra, published by Los Libros de la Catarata, Madrid, 1995, 254 pages.**

The title and chapter structure are intended to focus attention on one specific experience, that launched by the EZLN just over two years ago. But this Argentinian author's work is in fact much more ambitious. It has great documental value, though it is no mere collection of texts. Pereyra has condensed into some 250 pages the entire history of guerrilla movements in Latin America, over the last few centuries, and including the present day. No more, no less. And no country and no guerrilla movement escapes his meticulous work.

Scientific rigor combines with the viewpoint of a left veteran, a front-line participant in the evolution of the armed movements of Latin America. This book is hard to put down. Pereyra puts the guerrilla phenomenon which continues to characterise this content into context, and interprets it, from an "engaged" standpoint.

The book is dedicated to "los desaparecidos". But it is not simply a proud record, or a list of dates of the various armed groups. ***Del Moncada a Chiapas*** leads us, documents in hand, through the economic, political and social reality of Latin America. It examines the role of the US in the continent. It discusses the various *coups d'etat*. Pereyra also explores the differences between armed and politio-military movements. He analyses their social origin and their method of struggle. He also considers the contradictions and limitations.of the counter-insurgency operations and peace processes

Pereyra's work is without a doubt the most complete publication on this subject to date. It demonstrates the common thread linking the first indigenous struggles against colonisation with the struggle which the EZLN and other guerrilla forces continue today. This book demonstrates the possibility that armed struggle will continue to emerge, as long as the New World Order continues to condemn most people in the countries of Latin America to repression and misery.

Reviewed by Roberto Montoya
Reprinted from *El Viejo Topo* #1/1996

***Macedonia: Its Disputed History*, by Neil Simpson,**

A useful contribution to the ethnic and nationalist debate which developed among progressive Australians during the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Self-published. Available for US$ 23 (inc. postage) from the author at PO Box 121, Victoria 3068, Australia

***Ignace Reiss: Life and Death of a Revolutionary*, by Daniel Künzi**

Ignacy Poretski was assassinated by Stalin's agents near Lausanne Switzerland on 4 September 1937. A Ukrainian Jew, and a member of the Polish Communist Party, he was better known as "Ludwig" or "Reiss:" the names he used as director of the Soviet spy network in Western Europe.

Six weeks before his death, Reiss wrote to the central committee of the Soviet Communist Party, resigning his position, and returning the Order of the Red Flag he had been awarded in 1928 for services to the proletarian revolution. "It would be against my dignity to wear this medal, alongside the murderers of the best representatives of the working class," he wrote.

The collapse of the Tsarist and Austro-Hungarian empires during WWI, and the growing white terror had thrown Poretski's homeland into chaos. His brother joined the army of Poland's Marshal Pilsudski. Ignacy joined the Russian revolution.

By the time he understood the danger the Stalinist bureaucracy represented to the revolution, "Reiss" was already established at the head of the spy network in Western Europe. The Stalinist betrayal of the Spanish revolution finally convinced him that Soviet power had degenerated. He resigned, knowing that killers would be despatched to hunt him down. "I should have written this letter a long time ago," he wrote. "Until now, I marched with you. Not one step more! Those who remain silent now become Stalin's accomplices, and betray the cause of the working class, the cause of socialism…

"I still have enough force in me to start all over again. And this is what we must do if we are to save socialism…"

Reiss never considered going over to the imperialist enemies of Soviet Russia, who would have welcomed a defector of his rank with open arms. Instead, he tried to convince his colleagues in the network that they too should break with Stalin. His superior Krivitsky, refused to listen (but deserted ten years later, to work for the American secret service in the cold war).

Daniel Künzi's film documentary places this fascinating fragment of history in its context: the young militant who reacts to the disastrous capitulation of social democracy at the outbreak of WWI; the Communist who accepts a secret mission to defend and extend the revolution, and the seasoned revolutionary who breaks with Stalinism and seeks to build a new, Fourth International.

Vanessa Redgrave narrates the English version, which includes a number of interviews with Reiss' contemporaries.

Reviewed by Jan Malewski

Order from Daniel Künzi, 5 rue Dancet, 1205 Geneva, Switzerland

Indian elections

India's new parliament is dominated by the Hindu right wing Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP), which won 25% of the popular vote, taking 185 seats in the 545 seat Lok Sabha (Parliament).

The meteoric rise of these Hindu communalists and their fascist allies is vivid proof of the ignominious fall of the Congress (I) party which has dominated the country since independence from Britain in 1947.

Congress was undone by the Hawala scandal, which demonstrated that Congress (I) leader Narisimha Rao's government was not significantly less corrupt than the country's endemic norm. A more diffuse popular discontent among the poor and lower middle class resulted from the New Economic Policy implemented by Congress (I) Finance Minster Manmohan Singh in 1991. This radical new policy opened India's protected economy to trans-national plunderers, and challenged the middle classes' "patriotic consumerism".

Electoral pressure forced the BJP to tone down its virulent attacks on Muslims, and provocative campaigns to "reclaim" the sites of Hindu temples in Muslim areas in the North of the country (100 million Indians, 11% of the population, are Muslim). Even so, they were unable to form a parliamentary majority, and attention has now passed to the possibility of a "third front" of all the secular parties except Congress (I); from the bourgeois populist Janatha Dal through regional and lower cast/dalit parties to the country's two mass Communist parties.

This will not be easy. It has proved impossible to sustain a bourgeois centrist alternative to Congress (I) for longer than one term in office. India's dominant party has a well-oiled electoral machinery, national presence, and considerable financial assets. Obituary writers beware!

The only cement in the potential "third front" is political pragmatism, and a common antipathy to Congress (I) and the BJP extremists. The Communist Parties' main interest is in protecting their bastions in the states of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Elsewhere, they are all too often content to be junior partners to "secular democratic forces," which include a proportion of crooks, charlatans, landlords and other scoundrels.

[JD, KG]

May Day police attack

May Day marchers in Colombo, were attacked and teargassed by police who dispersed demonstrators, seriously injuring several of them.

Two days before, all demonstrations (though not "rallies") had been banned by the police citing unexplained "security considerations".

The Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International) defied the ban, together with comrades from Diyasa, Samajawadi Janatha Party and the (Maoist) Lanka Communist Party.

Slogans included "Defeat World Bank-dicated policies!" and "Stop the racist war!" Marchers carried a coffin symbolising the death of democracy, less than two years into the Peoples Alliance government of Chandrika Kumaratunga. The NSSP was drawing attention to the steady erosion of the promises to respect human rights and democratic liberties that had won the ruling coalition popular support against the previous regime.

What the marchers hadn't realised was that they were going to be the latest casualties in the Government's increasing authoritarianism and use of Emergency powers. Numerous eyewitness accounts report that without any provocation or prior notice, hundreds of police baton charged and teargassed worker, breaking up the coffin and assaulting the marchers.

Over 150 workers were badly beaten, including Trade Union Leaders Saranapala Palihena and Municipal Councillor Brito Fernando. Ten workers needed surgical intervention at Columbo General Hospital. More than ten others recieved out-patient treatment, including one broken arm.

Meanwhile hundreds more who had assembled at De Mel Park (the rally point) waiting for the marchers were teargassed by police. The crowd included children having their lunch while watching the march.

Despite this brutality, the Government failed to stop the demonstration. Over 500 workers marched and fought their way up to Dawson street, while a crowd lead by Comrades Dr Wickramabahu Karunarathne and Dr Sunil Ratnapriya completed with the rally.

The May Day demonstrations of the goverming Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and a section of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) were free of police thuggery. These events were, of course, just as "illegal" as the NSSP's.

The NSSP was targeted because its slogans, "Stop The War Against Tamils" and "No To Privatisation" embarass those in power. And because the party is a militant pole of attraction for workers and youth disenchanted by the current government. .

K. Govindan and Linus Jayatilaka

Write or fax the President of Sri Lanka, H.E. Chandrika Kumaratunga, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 01, Sri Lanka, fax (941) 333 703 1) To protest and condemn this May Day outrage, 2) to demand an independent and accountable inquiry into the events, 3) to demand compensation to injured workers. Please send a copy to the NSSP fax (+941) 334 822.

N.O.W. March

Over 40,000 people of all colors and ages marched in San Francisco on April 14 to protest the right-wing assault against the poor, people of color, women, gays and lesbians.

A key purpose of the march was to create momentum for the defeat of the anti-affirmative action initiative that will be on the November ballot in California. This mobilisation is of national importance, since opponents of affirmative action in other states are trying to place similar proposals on their own ballots. There are also efforts to weaken or eliminate affirmative action through the federal courts, in the U.S. Congress and in the state legislatures. To say nothing of the policies of President Clinton.

About 600 civil rights, labor and community organizations supported the April 14 demonstration, in an unprecedented show of multi-racial unity. Speakers included the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Dolores Huerta of the United Farm Workers, and Patricia Ireland, President of the demonstration's main sponsor, the National Organization for Women (N.O.W.)

Ann Menasche

Factory "death traps"

A recent survey by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions revealed that in recent years, over 90,000 people every year have died as a result of industrial, traffic and fire accidents. Industrial hazards in coal mines, construction, metallurgy, chemical fertiliser industry, fuel and mechanics have not decreased. There have been serious gas explosions in Guizhou and other provinces. So few enterprises respect the State Council regulation that enterprises should apply 10-20% of their technological renewal fund to improvement of labour conditions that it has been removed from the accounting system.

Industrial hazards are an even bigger problem. In the last decade, polluting industries have become subject to stricter control in the West. Many have moved into China.

The situation is particularly serious in the Special Economic Zones (SEZ). According to the newspaper *Ming Pao,* Jan 18-19, 1996, triphenylmethane-polluted air puts 230,000 women wor-

kers directly at risk in shoe factories in Putian, Quanzhou, Shishi and Jinjiang, (Fujian Province).and is a latent threat to the lives of several million residents of these districts. Most shoe factories refuse to install even basic cleansing facilities which would cost only RMB 560,000 Yuan (around US$67,000). The Taiwanese Factory Owners Association has even threatened to re-move their factories if they were forced to install such facilities.

Fire hazards remain a serious threat to workers' lives, since most factories have their workplace, workers' dormitory and storehouse in the same building. The 1993 fire in the Zhili Toy Factory in Shenzhen, when 87 workers burnt to death, is notorious. But what about those who have died in similar incidents since? The 61 workers who died in a fire in the Gaofu Textile Factory in Fuzhou ? Or the 93 who died in a fire in Yushan Textile Factory in Zhuhai? Or the 22 deaths in a fire in a rural workshop in Shunde Township in Guangdong Province? ★

Source: October Review

Austrian FI discussion with 'Militant'

Over 4,000 people participated in Vienna's May Day march this year. The most striking thing about the March was the common contingent of Socialist Alternative (SOAL, Austrian section of the Fourth International), the Vorwärts (Forward!) Socialist Offensive (SOV), which is part of the Committee for a Worker's International, the international tendency around Britain's Militant Labour, and the preparatory committee for the Austrian section of the Turkish ÖDP party (see IV #275)

At the beginning of this month, SOV (formerly called simply Vorwärts) formally abandoned its entryist work in the social democratic party (SPÖ), arguing that the creation of "a left wing" in such parties was no longer possible. So far, discussion within the group seems to be concentrated on tactical questions, rather than a re-evaluation of the nature and role of social democracy.

SOV and SOAL have a similar analysis of the situation in Europe, but a different appreciation of the various struggles of the working class. SOV argues that the recent, unexpected resistance to the bourgeois offensive against the public sector indicates a polarisation of society, and a possibility for the growth of revolutionary organisations. SOAL warns against excessive optimism in a situation where even the most radical struggles have an essentially defensive character. Growing frustration among trade union members does not necessarily indicate the development of revolutionary class consciousness. ★

IMF: Resist or Perish!

1,200 trade union delegates and left activists participated in an "All Workers' Conference" on the negative effects of IMF-WB-WTO and government policies on working people in Mauritius on 26-27 April 1996.

The confrence was jointly organised by all the country's trade union federations. "A proud, historic event," said Mauritius Labour Congress President Lutchmaun Roy, who called world bank policies a sword of Damocles over the heads of Mauritius' workers.

According to Rajni Lallah of the Ledikasyon pu Travayer association, "the current government won all the seats in the December 1995 parliamentary elections, and they thought they had a mandate for a full neo-liberal programme. This conference represents the first platform of resistance to the coming offensive."

The conference was inspired by recent European initiatives like the "Other Voices of the Planet" counter-summits in Brussels and Madrid. The keynote address was given by Michel Chossudovsky of the Campaign to Abolish Third World Debt (COCAD). COCAD, together with the Amsterdam-based IIRE institute, also provided copies of their recent publication "IMF, WB, WTO: The Free Market Fiasco, to enable delegates to continue their education and organising work on these themes.

Union militants from Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros also attended. Organisers hope the conference will stimulate interest in regional activities challenging the IMF-WB-WTO. ★ **[JD, RL]**

Conference notes

***Revolution Betrayed*, 60 years on**

A conference organised in Moscow on Nov. 22-24, 1996 by the International Committee for the Study of L. Trotsky's legacy, to mark the 60th anniversary of the publication of *Revolution Betrayed*. Themes include

- The book's significance for the development of Marxist thought.
- The nature of the USSR, its development and its demise.
- Socialist theory and practice in the revolutionary and reformist wings of the workers' movement
- Post-totalitarian society.
- Trotsky's biography.

Those wishing to participate should send an application and a synopsis of their proposed contribution (up to 5 pages) by 1st Sepember to <mvogt@igc.apc.org>, or to Professor Mikhail Voeykov, Room 620, The Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Ulitsa Krasikova 27, 117218, Moscow, Russia, ✆ 332 4525

PK Naimar 1930-1996

He always started the conversation with: 'Anything new?', in the hope that somewhere, somehow, there might be a 'break-through'. So many others either succumbed to the prevailing liberal panaceas or joined the growing crowd of cynics.

PK Nambiar was not what might be called a subdued individual. PK, when aroused, was a tough, in-the-trenches fighter for what he believed. He was a revolutionary Marxist, polemicist, in-your- face Trotskyist, man-about-town, gourmet chef with proletarian resources, devoted parent and husband, lover of life, and a true believer in the betterment of all working people. He was a constant, unmovable force for the left, an inspiring individual, sometimes sectarian, oftentimes right and oftentimes wrong.

Emigrating to Canada from the political and cultural sophistication of the scene in Bombay, PK found himself deposited in Brandon, Manitoba, a backward, semi-rural, right-wing, Christian, socially conservative and racist farm community on the Canadian prairies. Imagine the shock to his senses. Yet out of that Kulak community, because of the good work done by PK, came a whole cadre of young revolutionists dedicated to the cause of the world revolution. Yes, comrades, PK Nambiar was the nightmare that conservative parents have when they think about the future of their children. A true despoiler of youth, the red menace, the yellow peril all rolled into one clever, charming and effective human being and social revolutionist. Is it??!! **[MP]**

Alex Acheson

A lifelong supporter of the Fourth International, Alex was active in Spain, and fought in Malta and Egypt. After WWII he joined the Labour Party and the National Union of Teachers. He continued to inspire class struggle in Leicester until his death at the age of 84. **[PW]**

Clinton & the Shame of the Left

David Finkel

reminds us of Bill Clinton's recent initiatives. And exposes the sorry response of America'sleft and labor movement

CLINTON'S DRAFT "ANTI-TERRORISM" BILL authorized such sweeping surveillance that the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Rifle Association joined forces to modify it. Even so, the new bill enables the deportation of non-citizens suspected of "terrorism" on the basis of secret "evidence" which they will not be allowed to scrutinize.

It also sharply curtails federal appeals for death-row prisoners, ensuring accelerated death schedules, including the executions of some falsely convicted.

"Line-item veto" legislation will vastly expand the powers of an already imperial Presidency. This is truly one of the few reforms that could make a badly run system even worse. In the name of budgetary responsibility and eliminating Congressional pork-barreling, future Presidents will have nearly unlimited powers to blackmail legislators, further breaking down what remains of representative democracy at the federal level.

"Welfare reform" is forcing recipients of cash assistance into "Work First" programs. Under the guise of promoting "dignity" and "ending welfare dependency," many of these programs aggressively force people out of educational programs and into dead-end minimum-wage jobs, for which they must compete with the already desperately hard-pressed working poor.

Clinton did veto the monstrous "partial birth abortion" bill. But only after women's groups mobilized to present testimony of patients whose lives had been saved by a procedure which the bill would have specifically outlawed. This kind of pressure was been missing when it came to death-row appeals or the rights of those subject to deportation without due process.

Surely Clinton is under no pressure from the new leadership of the labor movement, which has given away its endorsement without any conditions or demands at all. The executive council of the AFL-CIO labor federation was virtually unanimous in its early backing of Clinton.[1] One United Auto Workers (UAW) regional officer in Missouri even circulated a memorandum instructing locals throughout the Southwest not to support state ballot propositions to raise the minimum wage, since this could damage Clinton's reelection![2]

Until the downing of the "Brothers to the Rescue" adventurers, the U.S. embargo against Cuba appeared to be on its way out. U.S economic terrorism is now not only a presidential order, but the law of the land. By imposing penalties on non-U.S. corporations doing business with Cuba, the Helms-Burton bill seeks to turn the clock back to the turn-of-the-century Platt Amendment.

Because the legislation was so purely opportunist (essentially a rush to win the Florida vote in response to a manufactured crisis), countervailing political pressure could have stopped Clinton. There was none, in part because virtually all of what passes for the broad U.S. left is committed not to push the President on anything.

Clinton has consolidated his great "foreign policy success," the military political intervention in Haiti, by cutting off desperately needed assistance to the post-Aristide government. This action has been taken to punish Aristide's successor Preval for failing to "privatize" rapidly enough — that is, failing to sell off all of Haiti's state property at flea market prices to local and transnational elites in proper neoliberal fashion. The resulting misery is of small importance to Clinton since it has no material impact on the U.S. election.

Finally, the left in this country has disgraced itself by the lack of protest against Israel's murderous bombing of Lebanon. Perhaps no protest movement could have forced Washington to reverse its all-out support for Israeli terror. But the moral fiber of the U.S. peace movement has been tested and found wanting. A deeply depressing indicator of how much of the lifeblood of the peace movement has been sucked dry during the Clinton years.

Not the least of Bill Clinton's contributions to ruling class America has been his administration's success in stilling most criticisms from liberals and much of the left. Those critical voices were already weak, but their yawning silence now allows the right wing to amalgamate Clinton with the "left." Small wonder then that popular anger over corporate destruction of working people's lives tends to flow toward the likes of Patrick Buchanan rather than independent movements of resistance. And even smaller wonder that corporate capital itself looks favorably on the prospects of a second Clinton term.

All this goes to show how far back the left has fallen and how vast our task of rebuilding is. It would a welcome change if the major institutions of labor and the left in the United States could demonstrate the independence and political backbone of Ralph Nader. In U.S. journalism, Ralph Nader's name is always prefaced by his semi-official title "consumer advocate." Since the mid-1960s, working through numerous organizations and campaigns, Nader has targeted corporations for deadly defects in automobile designs and other products, false packaging and lying advertising, forcing new regulations and winning lawsuits that have probably saved several million lives.

To most people, until accepting the invitation of Green party activists to seek their party's presidential nomination Nader has not been known as a political figure in the electoral arena. He has now emerged as a left-wing populist, with more political backbone than 99% of American liberals. In a meeting in Rhode Island on April 29, when Nader was asked to respond to the argument that he could only be a "spoiler" of Clinton's reelection, Nader repeated his now familiar observation that it's difficult to spoil a system that's "already spoiled rotten."

Nader's critique of corporate greed and the political disenfranchisement of ordinary people may attract voters away from both establishment parties. Some feminist and anti-racist activists are disturbed by Nader's early reluctance to address controversial social issues like reproductive freedom. But he has now accepted a dialogue, which may resolve these tensions. ★

Notes

1. Ron Carey (Teamsters) called the endorsement as premature; Bob Wages of OCAW (the main union backing Labor Party Advocates) left the room during the vote

2. Peter Downs, "How Labor Loses When It Wins," *Against the Current*, May 1996. Reprinted from *New Politics*, P.O. box 98, Brooklyn, NY 11231. 1 yr. $20 (USA), $24 (world). Pay by US cheque/Visa/MC/Amex