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VIEWPOINT
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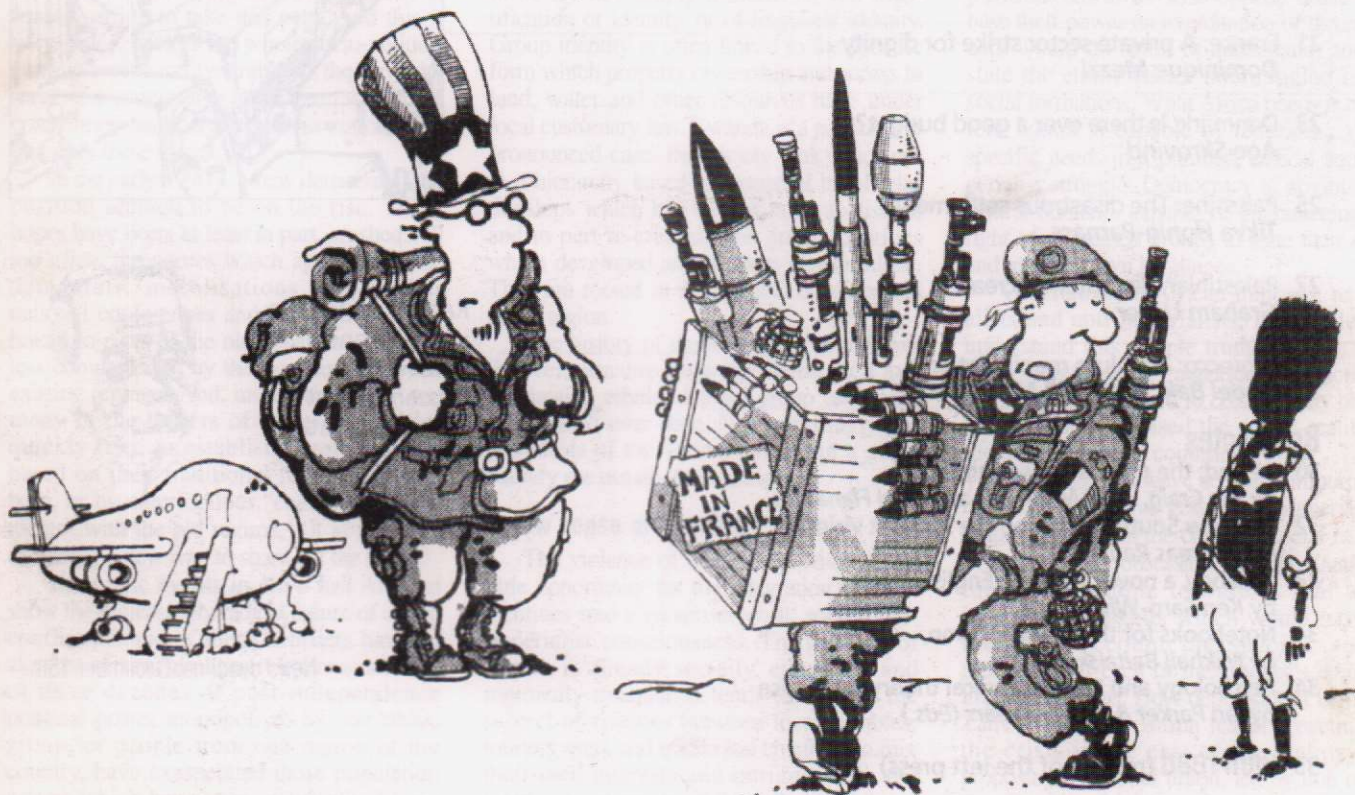
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- French truck strike



bankers • advisers • arms dealers

The West backs Africa's butchers



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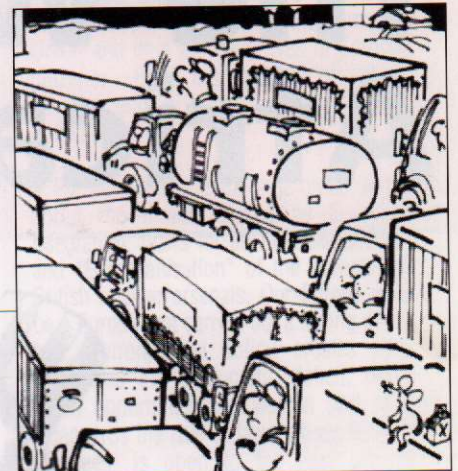
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News deadline: December 15th

The ethnic issue in Africa

Claude Gabriel

Sub-Saharan Africa has seen ten years of economic catastrophe. States have less resources available for re-distribution, even through traditional clientelist networks and booty-extraction. Agricultural revenue has fallen, and in some parts of the continent there is a severe land shortage. Nationalised companies are on the brink of collapse. Unemployment is increasing, and so is hunger.

Among the multiple mechanisms of dependence which keep Africa in chains, there is the chronic weakness of the ruling classes, and their tendency to exclusively search short-term returns on their investments. Corruption at the highest level of state and corporate power has never really been suppressed. As a result, many oppositionists have come to support World Bank measures which, they say, will at least ensure the regularisation and transparency of economic procedures like privatisation.

Africa is excluded and ignored in the international division of labour. Its natural resource now only represent a few percent of world trade. She is paying the price of a late colonisation, by a system which is in crisis.

What is the alternative ?

Which social and political forces can respond to the challenge facing African societies, and begin the long, difficult process of rupture with the current situation. There is no other solution to the development of forces willing to take this path. And this is why, today, even if the whole socio-political context seems unfavourable to the development of a progressive alternative, we should concentrate our analysis and our concerns on precisely these forces.

In the early 1990's, a new democratic opposition seemed to be on the rise. These hopes have been, at least in part, crushed. All too often, the parties which appeared in the democratic mobilisations and various national conferences and conventions were linked to parts of the old apparatus, more or less compromised by their connection to the existing regimes. And, more importantly, too many of the leaders of these new parties quickly tried to establish a new income, based on their traditional regional power-base, or by entering into "coalition governments" with the old regime. All in the hope of finding a new way to share out the booty.

The tragic events in Kivu last Autumn show the increasingly radical nature of ethnic conflicts. Some of these conflicts have an element of struggle against oppression. Two or three decades of post-independence political power monopolised by one ethnic group, or people from one region of the country, have exasperated those population groups which have been marginalised from



the ruling party and the state redistribution system. In other words, ethnic identity can represent real social consciousness, not just a "false" hangover from the past.

In Rwanda, Zaire and other countries, the ethnic dynamic draws its vitality from the co-existence of a triumphant market economy, state institutions modelled and re-modelled by imperialism, and traditional social structures and power relations, characterised by ethnic and clan power relationships.

The personal and group loyalties which have become so important in countries like these are not simply a matter of self-identification or identity, or of linguistic identity. Group identity is often linked to the specific form which property ownership and access to land, water and other resources have under local customary law. Rwanda is a particularly pronounced case: the society was structured in a hierarchy based on ancestral tribal relationships which had in part been abolished, and in part re-created. The group identities which developed are far from anachronistic. They are rooted in the unequal development of the region.

The history of these conflicts also shows that relationship between dominated and dominating ethnic or tribal group can easily be reversed over time. Not surprisingly, the prejudices of the various groups in a given country are usually symmetrical.

A new sense of identity

The violence of the current crisis leaves little opportunity for the integration of these identities into a more universal, social, anti-imperialist consciousness. The division of wealth is already socially, ethnically and regionally unequal. It tends to become the subject of rivalries between local notables, military men, and traditional chiefs, who mix their own interests and intrigues with the legitimate interests of "their" populations,

which they claim to represent. In Chad, Somalia and Liberia, the state as such has disappeared as a result of this growing fragmentation of the ethnico-military authorities. In Zaire, the army is today nothing more than a network of bandit groups, living on the back of the population.

Some African countries have been lucky enough to avoid this degeneration. But there has nowhere been a social struggle which has proved strong enough to show a way forward which would counter-balance the de-structuring effects of such a crisis of decomposition. All of us who oppose those who base their power on exploitation of the ethnic card would do better to understand, and re-state the ethnic issues intermingled in the social formations. What Africa needs is a current which is capable of federating these specific needs in a pluralist, radical anti-imperialist struggle. Democracy is obviously a central demand, capable of guaranteeing the right of oppressed groups to state their case, and use their own languages.

Generations of African militants, nationalists and anti-imperialists, have failed to understand this simple truth. Instead, they have stressed their "patriotic" convictions, and rigorously refused to consider any observation which criticised the ethnic reality of life in most African countries.

These currents have set more importance on the manipulative gestures of imperialism (e.g. borders) than the complex social reality. Thanks to their obsession with the "nation", they were unable to build a real anti-imperialist struggle, which would have to take into account the specific social aspirations of each of the country's ethnico-linguistic groups. How depressing it is to see Zaire's main opposition leaders reacting to the crisis in the east of the country by proposing a national union, led by non other than President Mobutu. ★

No imperialist intervention in Zaire and

An armed intervention seems less and less likely. But the West is still more concerned about the stability of Zaire's dictator Mobutu than Rwanda's refugees.

Alain Mathieu

Hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees returning to Rwanda have pulled the rug out from under all the Western "armed humanitarians."

This development has shown the world that even after a genocidal massacre, sensible political decisions can defuse a seemingly hopeless frenzy of "us against them" hatred.

Two years ago, the Hutu extremists in Rwanda imposed their "final solution" by killing at least 800,000 Tutsis. With their arms, baggage, and genocidal ideology, they fled into Zaire, dragging a part of the Hutu population with them as hostages. In this, they were assisted by the "international community," in particular the Zairian dictator Mobutu and France.

The Hutu chauvinists exported their

"model" to the region, trying to create a "Hutuland" and destabilize Rwanda. This was "the low point of the century" in Africa. It could be feared that the survivors in Rwanda would be drawn into a "Zionist" ideology of ethnic separation.

If this did not happen, it is because the FPR [Patriotic Front of Rwanda] resisted any tendency toward a Bosnia-like "ethnic partition." In two years, Rwanda was rebuilt by trying to meet the great challenge of living together again, of healing the scars, of assuring the rights of all citizens by eliminating the "absurd ethnic point of reference." Rwandan "civil society" had to remobilize in order to survive. Meanwhile, the UN concentrated on aiding the *Interahamwe* Hutu militias.

Rwanda has 6.5 million inhabitants, 80

percent of whom, it should be remembered, are Hutus, as is the president of the country, *Pasteur Bizimungu* and two-thirds of the government ministers. It had to defuse anger and vengefulness, resist tendencies to retreat into ethnic self-centeredness, and to organize the return of 600,000 Hutu refugees from Zaire.

The returning refugees were met at the border by the Rwandan president, who greeted them with an emotional expression of sympathy, government ministers, and a Rwandan army that talked about reconciliation and about their going back to their villages. The return of the refugees was in fact the only political and social solution other than perpetuating separate development on an ethnic basis.

Rwanda is not Somalia. Its standard of living has already climbed back to a higher level than that of the Zairian population. The salaries of soldiers, teachers, and government functionaries are being paid. Sufficient goods are reaching the markets.

This very fertile country needs labor in the villages in order to reap the benefits of its relatively prosperous agriculture. It has enjoyed investment from the Tutsi Diaspora that is returning to the country or investing in it. The land question is less vexed in Rwanda than it was in Kivu, where two million refugees were trying to rob the Zairian peasants of their lands and livestock, which is what sparked the rebellion there.

Of course, there will be problems in Rwanda, conflicts, situations that get out of hand, attempts at infiltration by the Hutu militias, excessive jailings and harsh sentences. This will happen above all if justice is not done on a regional scale: if those really responsible for the outrages are not sentenced by the Arusha international tribunal, which has not even begun to charge anyone.

Above all, chaos will ensue if Rwanda is not afforded the means to develop itself. French imperialism, Mobutu, and all the mercenary scum of the continent have not made their last attempt to destabilize Rwanda and reconquer Kivu.

We can trust the French media to highlight anything that goes wrong in Rwanda, to try to kill hope. Three Rwandan women were in Paris recently to accept the UNESCO Prize for Tolerance, in recognition of work done by 32 Rwandan women's organizations since 1994. One of them said: "Since 1994, I have had the impression of having gone through an experience lasting 30 years. With the women of Rwanda, who now make up 60 to 70 percent of the population, goaded by terrible suffering and the need to surpass ourselves in order to survive, we have carried through a fundamental change.

"We Hutu and Tutsi women together

Business is business

Western profiteers fuelled the genocide

The killing started on April 6th 1994. Eleven days later, the British company Mil Tec Corporation delivered a shipment of Israeli ammunition to the Rwandan army. On May 3rd, they supplied the butchers with mortars and AK 47 rifles. On May 9th, Mil Tec delivered 2,500 Albanian-made AK 47's, 500,000 bullets and 2,000 60mm mortar shells.

On May 17th, the United Nations decreed an arms embargo on the region. The next day Mil Tec supplied another cargo, this time including RP G7 rocket launchers. The last recorded Mil Tec shipment to the authors of the genocide was on July 13th, when another Albanian cargo was delivered, via Kinshasa, to the town of Goma, at that time controlled by the French army.

Belgium

The old colonial power contributed to the slaughter through Fabrique Nationale de Herstal, a subsidiary of the French state-owned arms producer GIAT. Rwandan Hutu extremists hidden in the Kivu region of Eastern Zaire were the lucky recipients of 1,500 Chinese and Rumanian kalashnikov assault rifles, officially destined for Saudi Arabia.



Belgian authorities provided this shipment with an export certificate for Saudi Arabia. Proof of the deal was uncovered when soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (APR) overran a position of soldiers of the former Rwandan army on Iwawa island, on lake Kivu. The Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has so far refused to respond to a United Nations Commission enquiry about the motive for the delivery.

France

Evidence of French military and diplomatic support for Rwanda's Hutu regime in the years leading up to the genocide is available from a range of sources.

On May 5th, the part-nationalised SOFREMAS company quoted its price and conditions for the delivery of spare parts for the armoured personnel carriers of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR).

In late May and early June, after the UN embargo on arms deliveries, French suppliers landed artillery, machine guns, assault rifles and ammunition at Goma airport on at least five occasions. In each case, the customer was the genocidal Hutu regime. Jean-Claude Urbano, the French Consul in Goma, justified these deliveries as representing contracts signed with the Rwandan government before the embargo. [ET] ★

Sources: (Britain) *The Times*, 18 November 96. (Belgium) UN Commission on arms deliveries to the belligerent parties. (France) Human Rights Watch report, May 1995. Francois-Xavier Verschave in *Rapport 1995 de l'Observatoire permanent de la coopération française*, published by Desclée de Brouwer, May 1995.

Rwanda!

have taken charge of thousands of orphans, and widows, and of the work of rebuilding homes. We are continuing to take charge of receiving the refugees from Zaire. The experience we are going through will not have an effect only on Rwanda but on all of Africa and beyond. It is a message of hope for all of humanity. After the nightmare of genocide and war, we are convinced that we are going to find a solution."

What has just happened is also a defeat for the monstrous system of French domination, which has based itself on the worst kind of dictatorships and survived a succession of governments without changing. It is from France that Mobutu in his villa is trying to regain control of the situation. It is here that he is receiving his various pawns.

At the same time, Chirac, the French premier, has been expelling planeloads of Zairian workers to a dictatorship propped up by his government. Chirac is claiming that "Mobutu is the best man to represent his country and to find a political solution."

For a "political solution," Mobutu is reorganizing his army with the objective of reconquering Kivu. Swiss TV has revealed that Charles Pasqua [the reactionary anti-immigrant French minister of the interior] met Mobutu in Geneva to reorganize the recruitment of mercenaries.

The French army is waiting for the opportunity to send its paratroopers to the Bukavu airport, the strategic heart of the Zairian rebel forces. In the Belgian press, you can read that French officers, French and other European mercenaries, whites from the apartheid-era South African army, and from UNITA in Angola are helping Mobutu rebuild a military force around his elite presidential guard, trying to rally the remains of his defeated army in Kisangani, Zaire.

The coming weeks may sound the death knell of the 30 years of military dictatorships in central Africa that have robbed the peoples there of the fruits of independence. If the UN scales down its intervention, it cannot be excluded that, even if it is diplomatically isolated, France will intervene in Zaire to preserve its threatened bailiwick.

We have to be ready to mobilize against intervention in Zaire, to support the Kivu rebellion, to demand the immediate withdrawal of French troops, to call for sending doctors, food, and medicine to Rwanda and not to the paratroopers, to demand immediate and unconditional aid to Rwanda so that it can handle the return of the refugees. ★

The author is a leading member of the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*, French section of the Fourth International. Source: Socialist Action (USA)



Aid, armaments, and interference

Eric Toussaint

Over the last two years, much Western "humanitarian aid" supposedly destined for Rwandan refugees in Eastern Zaire has been used to buy arms for their butchers. The racist *interhamwe* militia and the remnants of the armed forces of the deposed Habyarimana regime used "aid" funds to prevent hundreds of thousands of refugees from returning to Rwanda. The refugee camps in Eastern Zaire became a virtual dictatorship. The imperialist governments were well aware of all this. But Northern arms-dealers couldn't resist the opportunity to cut deals with local warlords, before, after, even during the genocide.

In 1990, Habyarimana accepted an International Monetary Fund "structural adjustment" plan. This, and related World Bank measures, hit Rwanda's small (mainly Hutu) coffee producers particularly hard. Younger men flocked into the armed forces (which grew 400% between 1990 and 1994) and the *interhamwe* militias. Wages and weapons were paid for by money borrowed under the international financing agreement which had destroyed the coffee-growers' livelihood. The result was a meticulously-planned genocide, obliterating almost one million lives in three short months between April and July 1994.

Today

The World Bank and IMF expect the new regime in Rwanda to honour the debt run up to finance the genocide. The governments and financial institutions which closed their eyes to the preparation and realisation of genocide now demand repayment of money borrowed to buy French, British and Belgian



weapons used to slaughter the Tutsis.

The massive spontaneous return of Rwandan refugees from Zaire has upset European and North American military strategy for the region. But there is no question of extending humanitarian aid to Rwanda unless the country accepts the stationing of foreign troops as well.

France and other Northern governments are extremely concerned about the effect of this crisis on the Mobutu regime in Zaire. France has troops in the region, ready to help the old dictator re-impose his corrupt regime on this vast, mineral-rich country.

Time to act

There are no simple solutions to Rwanda's problems. But here are a few suggestions...

- Open the books! We have the right to know the detailed truth about past and present "aid" which has benefited the region's butchers.
- The *interhamwes* and the remains of the Rwandan army should be disarmed.
- Those suspected of genocide should be tried, in Rwanda.
- No to any foreign military intervention!
- Send the necessary humanitarian aid to the refugees, without the imposition of an expeditionary force.
- International support for Rwandan efforts to re-insert the refugees.
- Cancel the foreign debt of Rwanda and Zaire, and the restrictive elements of their structural adjustment programmes.
- Establish an international programme for reparations to the families of the victims of genocide. The Northern governments and multi-lateral institutions which share responsibility for the slaughter should pay compensation to the people of Rwanda.
- Support efforts in Zaire to topple the Mobutu regime. Expropriate the Mobutu clan's property abroad, and return these riches to the people of Zaire, from which they were plundered. ★

The memory of the movement: Black Cubans in east Zaire Che Guevara knew what to do

In 1965-66 Che Guevara brought 800 Black Cuban soldiers to the aid of the national liberation movement in the lake Kivu region of the Belgian Congo, as Zaire was then called. Alain Mathieu explains.

The "Congolese" insurgents claimed the heritage of Patrice Lumumba, the premier of the independent Belgian Congo, who was murdered in 1961. The imperialists wanted to maintain their control over the Congo's enormous resources. They had supported the secession of the rich province of Katanga under Moïse Tshombe. To fight the independence forces, they sent European mercenaries to help Tshombe's forces. These were commanded by a certain Mobutu. He later took power, and has held it ever since.

From June 1965 to January 1966, the Cubans fought alongside the Congolese resistance. So did 700 Rwandans, who were fighting in the ranks of the Congo liberation forces with the intention of returning later to Rwanda to overthrow the dictatorship there. Between 1959 and 1962, the Belgian colonial regime organized a "Hutu revolution" in Rwanda, to drive out and massacre the Tutsis and those Hutu oppositionists who wanted independence.

Guevara and Cuban leader Fidel Castro asserted a Cuban internationalist policy largely independent of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies, and based on the liberation struggles in the third world. The Cuban revolution had developed in the context of third world revolutions whose linchpin was the liberation of African states. "Perhaps the most important battle field...with great chances for victory, but also with many dangers," Che said. The Congo was the key.

In December 1964 at the UN, Che issued an angry indictment of both the treatment of Blacks in the United States and of "white racist imperialism" in Africa, which had just been responsible for the massacre of 10,000 civilians in the Congo during what was supposedly a humanitarian operation to evacuate Europeans from Stanleyville (now Kisanjani.) Columns of white mercenaries recruited in South Africa, Rhodesia, and Europe were the striking force of this operation. They were supported by U.S. bombers piloted by white Cuban exiles from Miami.

In New York, Guevara had a long meeting with Malcolm X, and was supposed to speak at a rally in Harlem organized by Malcolm's organization. He was prevented from appearing, but he sent a message that was read from the platform by Mohammed Babu, a Tanzanian minister. "Dear brothers and sisters in Harlem, I would have liked to be with you. I send you warm greetings



from the Cuban people United we will win."

Malcolm was coming back from a tour of Africa, and wanted to strengthen the fighting solidarity between American Blacks and their African brothers. In November 1964, he mobilized Blacks by saying: "If the Western powers have the right to send anti-Castro Cubans to pilot the airplanes that are bombing African people, then the Afro-Americans also have the legitimate right to aid their African brothers."

He was looking forward to Afro-American volunteers from the U.S. ghettos going to reinforce the struggle in the Congo. Che left for a tour of Africa. In Algiers, together with Ben Bella, he set up the infrastructure of an expedition to the Congo, and participated in the conference that was preparing the Tricontinental Congress, which was to be coordinated by the Moroccan rebel Ben Barka.

On Feb. 20, Che gave his famous Algiers speech, in which he criticized the Soviet Union's third world aid policy. "By engaging in the same mercantile practices as the capitalists, the socialist countries are making themselves, in a way, into accomplices of imperialist exploitation." In March 1965, Che disappeared from the political scene. He did not reappear until 1967 in Bolivia. "Che Guevara is where he is most useful to the revolution," Fidel Castro had said.

But while Che entered the Congo clandestinely, the imperialists were already engaged in a large-scale international counteroffensive, in the wake of the Cuban and Algerian revolutions and the rise of the African independence movements.

Che's plans were upset. Malcolm X was assassinated in February 1965. Ben Bella was overthrown by Boumedienne in July 1965. Ben Barka was murdered. In March

1965, U.S. Marines landed en masse in Da Nang, Vietnam, to launch a merciless war. When the Cubans arrived in the Congo, the Congolese rebellion was already in retreat before the advancing forces of Mobutu. The Congolese rebel organizations were splitting. They were also suffering the impact of the conflicts and pressures of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies, which looked with a jaundiced eye on the Cubans defending the cause of the third world.

After eight months of fighting, when the white mercenaries had only just missed killing him, Che had to make up his mind to leave Congolese soil for Tanzania, along with the Cuban soldiers. Shortly afterward, they returned to Cuba, and some of them accompanied

Che to Bolivia.

Several books have dealt with this episode. These are fascinating accounts, even if they are not always free from a condescending attitude toward Africa and Africans. Hopefully, Cuban authorities will publish Che's diary of this episode. Che ended his diary by writing "this is the story of a defeat." But it also is the story of an internationalist involvement that left an imprint.

One of the Congolese leaders who worked with Che Guevara to organize the resistance was Laurent Kabila. Today he is the spokesperson of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire, the force that controls Kivu after repelling Mobutu's army. Today, you see youngsters in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, wearing Che Guevara t-shirts bearing the slogan "Ever onward until the victory!"

In the minds of many Rwandan and Zairian veterans who fought with Che, the episode remains an inspiration. Some of them are among the fighters in Kivu. Thirty years later, it is striking to see the same actors. Mobutu, with the help of genocidal Rwandan militiamen and European mercenaries trying to uphold his dictatorship and imperialist domination and hiding behind the pretext of humanitarianism.

But this time the story may become one of victory. It is up to us to draw strength from Che's example to build solidarity with those who are fighting the oppression that the Zairian dictatorship and French imperialism have maintained for 30 years. This year will mark the 30th anniversary of Che's death. The African witnesses of those inspiring months of 1965-66 will have to be given the opportunity to recount this experience from their point of view. ★

Source: *Socialist Action (USA)*

Mauritius: "All Workers Conference"

Unions united against privatization

The Third All Workers Conference held in Mauritius on 21st November united the trade union movement in a stand against privatization.

Lindsey Collen

A majority of the 700 delegates, representing trade unions from most of the country's 300 traditionally disunited unions adopted a 40-page "White Paper" document that had been prepared with input from about 30 unions in sectors faced with privatization.

The Government had promised in the Budget speech in May that it would bring out a White Paper on privatization, but it has still to come up with one. Now, the united trade union movement has brought out its own "White Paper", which is a profound onslaught against privatization, from both a philosophical and down-to-earth point of view. In effect, a national campaign against privatisation has been launched.

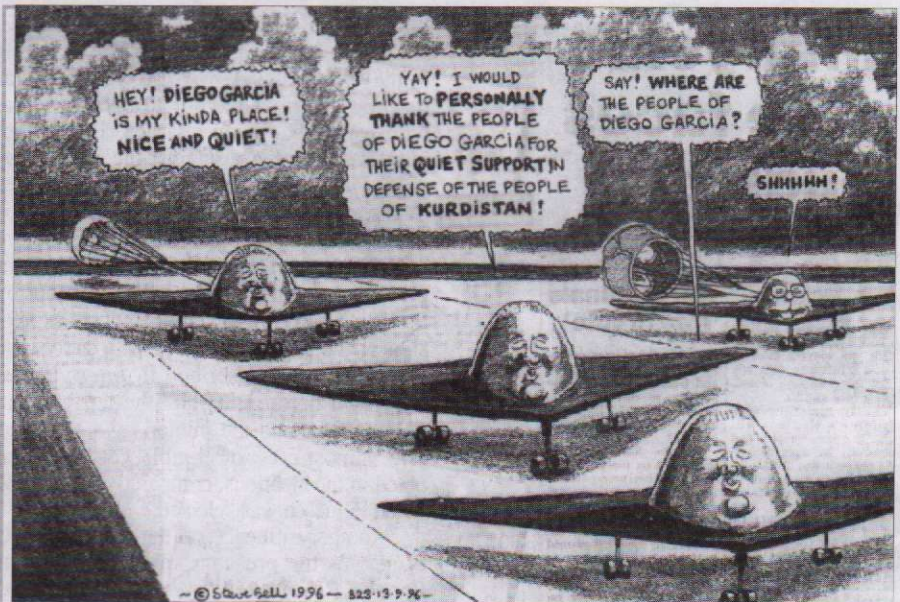
In a population of 1.2 million, the response to the three successive All Workers Conferences has been surprising.

The first All Workers Conference, held in April, was on the impact of IMF, World Bank, WTO and government policies on working people. It attracted 1,200 delegates. The second, in June, was on the Government Budget. Once the delegates start to become active, as they have since about March this year during preparation for the first Conference that was attended by 1,200 delegates, this involvement then, in turn, works towards further unity of the trade union movement.

Delicious Mauritius?

The Republic of Mauritius, already portrayed for some fifteen years by the international media and by tourist advertisements as a multi-island paradise state, has for the past five or six years got a new identity. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have decided to call Mauritius a "model" for other African and Asian states. "The Mauritian miracle" they call it. And proceed to tell how Mauritius was a country that was submerged in problems like over-population and unemployment, and has been transformed by the Washington-based money-lenders into a modern wonder of full employment, high average wages and fairly steady economic growth.

True, until recently there was full employment in Mauritius. Why? For the simple reason that protectionist measures (the very opposite of the IMF and World Bank philo-



Britain severed the Chagos and Diego Garcia Islands from Mauritius territory before allowing independence. Now Britain rents the islands to the US Armed Forces, which has used Diego Garcia to launch bombing raids on Iraq.

sophy) kept the sugar industry and the free zone textile factories in business.

Wages, it should be mentioned, are not high in paradise: in free zone factories are \$US 100 per month for machinists and less for unskilled workers. For hotel workers, the wages are similar, and for agricultural labourers around \$120-150 per month. Conditions are not good either: overtime is compulsory, and there is a generalized, if illegal practice whereby bosses make new recruits sign forms that they will not join a union. In addition, all strikes are illegal.

Average wages are as high as \$300 per month partly because of social inequality. It recently became known that a restaurant manager who took an industrial dispute against her boss to a Court had been earning US\$6,000 per month, for example.

Proud tradition

Mauritian workers have consistently opposed and rejected the IMF and World Bank conditions. Until today, for example, flour and rice are subsidised. The government removed these food subsidies in 1992 under pressure from the IMF and World Bank, lost a by-election, and had to reinstate the subsidies. Health and medicines are still universal and free. Education up to university level is still free. The Government has not had room to manoeuvre.

This resistance to the destructive conditions and dictates of the IMF and World Bank seems to be what has kept Mauritian society going relatively well.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of

poverty. Successive Governments have, as a result of their own politics and the pressures in the same direction from the IMF and World Bank, gone ahead and closed down the social housing programme set up in 1960, even before Independence. And the new profit-making housing programme means that monthly rentals are higher than peoples' whole monthly incomes, as defined by government legislation.

One in five head of household is a woman, and women's wages are often less than \$100 US per month. Prices are as high as any capital city in Europe. This means that more than half of the country's people live below the poverty datum line, a minimum to stay alive, calculated by a church organization.

The full employment depended on exceptional protectionist measures, like those introduced by other countries that split at the time of gaining independence. Such protectionist measures, whatever their historical reason are measures that the WTO will not tolerate.

And so, it is very important that the trade union movement in Mauritius has started to mobilize its entire working class base, to build up a national challenge to the conditions of the Washington based institutions and to the supposed logic of the WTO and its politics of "free trade" and "markets" and "economic growth". ★

The author is a member of the Lalit revolutionary socialist group, and a supporter of the workers education organization Ledikasyon pu Travayars.

Transformation 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. ★

Price: £5/\$10/60FF plus 10% postage charge for orders of 1-4 copies. Order from your local agent, or directly from International Viewpoint, BP 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France

Mexico Fightback in Guerrero

Municipal elections in October and November were a serious setback for the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Pablo Perez Severiano and Efrain Cruz

In the state of Guerrero, there was a popular reaction against governor Ruben Figueroa, whose rule has been characterised by an increase in violence against the indigenous population and the various social movements. Sustained protests obliged Figueroa to step down "for health reasons" just before last October's municipal elections. This unprecedented jettisoning of a PRI governor by the ruling party was an eloquent local expression of the crisis of the Mexican party-state which we have described in *International Viewpoint* before.¹ Despite the terrible economic crisis, and the militarisation of Guerrero, almost 50% of eligible voters participated in the elections, compared to only 20% when Figueroa was "elected."

Another influence on the Guerrero elections was the presence in the state of the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR). However irresponsible this group is, it clearly reflects, in its own way, the deteriorating living conditions of the people of Guerrero. This hang-over from the 1970s has become a part of the very 1990s crisis of the Mexican state and its ruling party.

The EPR widened its space for political manoeuvre by declaring an unilateral ceasefire during the elections. This obliged the new governor, Angel Aguirre Rivero, to recognise the existence of the group, and offer, on behalf of the Mexican state, the opening of a dialogue with the EPR. For their own reasons, the rebels refused this offer, and have resumed their military actions.

The regime enlisted the support of the "legal" parties for measures which make it much more difficult for new political forces to participate in the elections.

When the day came, the PRI was the main loser. The new governor failed in his attempt to wipe out the memory of the Figueroa administration, by inviting the PRD, PAN and the nationalist Popular Socialist Party (PPS) to participate in a PRI-dominated "pluralist" state administration.

The main winner was the PRD, which now controls 19 municipalities. Unfortunately, these elections also saw the PRD (and the smaller PT) adopting undemocratic PRI-style tactics of fraud, vote-buying, and character assassination politics.

The opposition won a majority on three other municipal councils, including Acatepec, an indigenous community which was recently incorporated as a municipality after a successful struggle led by the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), and Copalillo, already held by the PRT. A further six PRT supporters were elected in other municipalities. The PAN won control of one municipality.

The anti-democratic manoeuvre which has effectively stripped the PRT (the third largest force in municipal politics in Guerrero) legal registration is undoubtedly a setback for the party.

Both PRT-run municipalities represent indigenous communities, as do a majority of PRD-run councils in Guerrero. PRT leaders argue that this shows that the party has been able to respond to, and be part of the growing indigenous struggle in Mexico, without dissolving itself into the Zapatista National Liberation Front, as some other revolutionary currents have done.

Since 1994, Mexicans have expressed heightened democratic and political expectations. These latest elections suggest that the current trend is still favourable to the development of the popular movement. The PRT agenda in Guerrero will include efforts to translate this popular energy into a campaign to reverse the anti-democratic restrictions on electoral participation, and allow the people of Mexico a choice from outside the narrow realm of the established parties. ★

Notes

The authors are members of the Political Committee of Mexico's Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), Mexican section of the Fourth International

1. The left-wing Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) and the rightist National Action Party (PAN) together deprived the PRI of its majority of seats in the country's richest state, Mexico (the capital region) The opposition PRD won 25 seats, and the PAN 23, from a total of 122 elections.



Nicaragua: electoral fraud

How Alemán stole the election

Sympathizers of the Nicaraguan revolution were divided in their opinions about the politics of the 1996 election campaign.

Did Daniel Ortega's campaign for presidency represent a creative response to the extremely difficult situation the Nicaraguan people face after six years of neoliberalism or did the FSLN abandon the revolutionary project in favor of a glitzy, personalistic and pro-capitalism one?

Outside the context of a real discussion of what actually happened during the campaign and on the day of the October 20th election—all of which has been grossly underreported—this is a sterile debate.

Dianne Feeley

On November 22nd, more than a month after the Nicaraguan elections, Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) president Rosa Marina Zelaya announced after "extensive review and investigation" of charges of fraud that the October 20 elections were "perfectly valid, clean and legitimate." She acknowledged minor fraud but said it was confined to a few precincts and a few individuals.

The CSE thus rejected the demand of the Sandinista Front (FSLN) that the election be annulled in Managua as well as a second challenge by ten parties (including the FSLN) that the election in Matagalpa be invalidated. Zelaya stated that the major problem was not fraud but differing interpretations of the electoral law. The CSE then proclaimed Arnoldo Alemán, the candidate of the right-wing Liberal Alliance (AL), president elect (with 51% of the vote to Daniel Ortega's 37.7%). He will take office on January 10.

Of the 93 members elected to the National Assembly, 42 were elected on the Liberal Alliance ticket and 36 are Sandinista Front candidates. Nine other parties/coalitions have the other 15 seats, including 4 for the Nicaraguan Christian Way Party, 3 for the Conservative Party, 2 for the National Project, and one each for the Liberal Independent Party, National Conservative Alliance, Nicaraguan Resistance Party, Sandinista Renovation Movement, Unity Alliance and UNO '96 Alliance. Since the election, however, two National Assembly members elected on the AL ticket (an alliance of three right-wing parties) have



resigned from the AL. Members of the National Liberal Party, they accuse Alemán of unilateral decision-making.

The CSE Organizes the Election

As defined by the 1987 Constitution, the CSE is actually a fourth branch of government, enjoying an independent and equal status with the judiciary, the legislative and the executive branches. And until now the CSE has enjoyed the reputation as the one branch most free of partisan politics and unblemished by scandals.

In February 1996 Mariano Fiallos resigned as president of the CSE, stating that he could not guarantee clean elections. He felt that the new election law opened the door to partisan influence (with political parties nominating officials for the various Departmental Electoral Councils) and he was also concerned about the inadequate funding and governmental attention given the difficult process of voter registration.

In addition to the lack of funding, there was very little time to organize the election process (registration of voters, issuing new voter identification cards, registration of candidates and electoral coalitions, organizing and staffing polling stations). For example, the CSE based its estimates for ID cards and polling stations on the most recent census—which, as it turns out, vastly undercounted the population. At every stage in the election process the CSE was faced with more obstacles.

But since Fiallos' replacement by Zelaya, the CSE has come under suspicion:

- Presidencies of the departmental regions seemed to be unjustly awarded. Last August the FSLN protested that the Liberal Alliance ended up with being awarded the lion's share. The AL was appointed Departmental Electoral Council presidencies in areas such as Managua, Jinotega and Matagalpa—where 42% of the population lives—while the FSLN was awarded presidencies in regions representing only 14% of the population.

- The company that submitted the highest bid received by the CSE to print the ballots was given the job. (The rumor is that Zelaya's husband Jorge Samper owned stock in that company.)

- In the October 20 election the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) won one seat in the National Assembly from Carazo. However, in its November 22nd statement on the elections, the CSE claimed an irregularity in that race—without providing any evidence—and took the seat from the winner, MRS member Adolfo Arguello, and without explaining why, assigned it to Jorge Samper, an MRS member and Zelaya's husband.

- The CSE's "fraud-proof" system was contaminated. After the polls were closed and before proceeding to the count, officials in each polling station were to reconcile the unused and used ballot papers. Each step was to be documented. When the final figures were ready, the figures were to be sent to the local CSE by telegram, phone or fax so that the overall results could be compiled. The original documents were then to be taken to the local CSE for verification.

The main mechanism for fraud was through the officials using their authority to doctor the provisional results sent to the CSE. Interestingly enough, the CSE instructed international observers not to remain at the polling stations for the counting of the votes or the delivery of the tallies to the departmental CSE offices.

But when the FSLN began to detect discrepancies between the provisional figures and what their poll watches reported, Ortega urged the CSE to use the official tally sheets rather than the provisional figures. However the CSE continued to release provisional figures and the right wing proclaimed quick victory.



Yet the provisional figures were obviously wrong. For example, one polling place in Jinotega reported that the Liberal Alliance received 1,085 votes. The electoral law

states that no more than 400 can vote at any polling place. When the provisional figure is compared with the vote tally, there were 233 valid votes cast! According to a Nov. 4 FSLN statement, 853 provisional "telegrams" were altered in this way.

Poll watchers for eight parties, including the FSLN, submitted a request to annul the elections in Matagalpa, reporting that there were no final tallies for 132 polling places, 314 tallies were written in pencil and showed signs of erasure, 137 tallies showed a larger number of votes than registered voters, 593 tallies had altered data, 88 polling places were not in authorized locations and 280 polling places were not legally constituted. 72% of the departmental polling places registered some irregularity.

A report submitted by the majority of the Managua Departmental Electoral Council describes the election as "chaotic," and outlines a wide variety of irregularities. It cites that the results from over 200 electoral booths, representing more than 50,000 votes, have disappeared, points out that thousands of tally sheets were lost or calculated incorrectly, and documents that security codes and verification signatures on the ballot papers where not identical to those on the tally sheets for the same polling booth. The FSLN has calculated that 84% of the Managua polling stations had "grave irregularities."

The Sandinista Assembly pointed out that the greatest number of irregularities occurred in those departments where the Liberal Alliance was in charge: Managua, Matagalpa and Jinotega. In both Matagalpa and Jinotega armed bands have campaigned in favor of the Liberal Alliance and prevented other parties from campaigning. At least seven members of the FSLN were brutally killed in these regions during October and November. On November 8th, the twentieth anniversary of FSLN founder Carlos Fonseca's murder, thirty thousand Nicaraguans gathered at his tomb to protest the electoral fraud.

Was the fraud significant enough to alter

the results? Clearly it was enough to hand victories to the Liberal Alliance in races for mayor of Managua and Matagalpa as well as some National Assembly seats. It also may have been enough to give Alemán a victory on the first round (a candidate had to win more than 45% of the vote on the first round to avoid a runoff).

Why Was It Necessary for Alemán to Steal the Elections?

At the beginning of the 1996 electoral campaign thirty-two political parties, some grouped into coalitions, registered presidential candidates. By August nine had withdrawn or been declared ineligible. (The CSE ruled Antonio Lacayo off the ballot on the basis of a constitutional article barring relatives of the incumbent president from running, while Eden Pastora and Alvaro Robelo were barred because both had given up their Nicaraguan citizenship at one time.) No "center" force had been hobbled together to compete with Alemán and Ortega.

More importantly, by August opinion polls revealed that Ortega's FSLN ticket was gaining while Alemán's support was stagnating. CID-Gallup poll's June survey pinpointed Ortega's support at 26%, but by early August it had risen to 30%. By the end of August Alemán and Ortega were running neck-and-neck. In Managua, for example, the difference between Ortega (33.8%) and Alemán (34.4%) was 0.6%. Carlos Denton, a director of CID-Gallup, commented that "the

pro-FSLN vote is highest among people who feel that they are in a worse economic situation now than in the past."

I would suggest that as the polls revealed Alemán's majority beginning to fall, Alemán felt it was necessary to do what was necessary to win in the first round. The extent to which the U.S. government and members of the CSE were involved in the fraud is not clear, but it will be impossible to sweep the evidence under the rug no matter what the CSE has declared.

On August 13 several political analysts declared that "Alemán lost the elections yesterday." Why did they come to such a conclusion?

On the afternoon of August 12 every presidential candidate *except* Alemán signed a document entitled the "Commitment of Nicaragua to a Minimum National Agenda" in the presence of representatives from all four branches of state, including Vice President Julia Mena. The document is an assessment of the country's situation and sets general priorities and solutions. It represents a months' long discussion by over 150 organizations (unions, producers' associations, religious and women's organizations, etc.) and attempts to press political leaders into drawing up their governmental plans within the context of this assessment.

Alemán's justified his conspicuous absence by saying "I already have my own agenda. I'm not a lamb that travels in a flock... That's a Sandinista document since its creator is [former economic minister Alejandro] Martínez Cuenca, who destroyed this country's economy and should be brought to justice for it." And "no one should come dictating to any serious party what procedure it should follow in its government plan." Deprecating the minimum agenda, Alemán changed the tone of his campaign, becoming, in the words of *envio*, "both more aggressive and more defensive. Alemán's speeches have become a mix of challenging triumphalism and desperate warnings not to trust *Sandinismo*."

The Liberal Alliance's Constituency

Alemán's electoral base was composed of three separate, even contradictory, elements:

- The visceral anti-Sandinista forces who want to wipe out all vestiges of the revolution—from its land reform, organizations, institutions and laws to names, people, dates, murals.
- The small and medium rural and urban producers, middle-class merchants, technicians and professionals who have been made poorer over the last six years and sidelined by the Chamorro-Lacayo economic policies and their cronyism and corruption.
- The marginalized urban and rural poor who see Alemán as someone who gets things done, who guarantees heavy-handed law and order, who is hard-working and always out there hustling. His crudeness also works for him: he seems to have some passion and therefore represents the polar extreme from the neoliberal technocrats.

Summary of the Minimum Agenda

- A national agreement to ensure governability.
- An all-out fight against corruption, and a commitment to integrity, openness, and the responsible execution of duties by public servants.
- Guarantees of personal safety; legal measures to reduce people's desperation and defenselessness and promote democratic development, regardless of ideologies or parties.
- Stimulation of production through the promotion of coherent and efficient policies which encourage production. A fair solution to the property problem, guaranteeing future security.
- A better standard of living for all Nicaraguans.
- An emphasis on training, science and technology.
- The preservation of the environment and improved management of natural resources.
- A national emergency program to fight against poverty, generate productive jobs, and provide relief for children.
- A guarantee of citizens' participation.



Of these three elements, the anti-Sandinista component is the strongest, and therefore can work to undermine his appeal to the others. The large capital that supported the Liberal Alliance reinforces this element: the *Somocista* and Cuban exiles living in Miami along with some non-Somocista capitalists whose property was confiscated during the revolution. The best known and most representative figure of the latter is Alemán's vice presidential mate, Enrique "Churrucó" Bolanos. While all of these elements are heavily anti-Sandinista, those who stayed in Nicaragua during the '80s have investments in the agricultural sector while the other, larger force is speculative capital. Obviously small producers are left out. In fact, although Alemán has portrayed himself as an opponent of the Chamorro economic policies, an Alemán government will represent a continuity of neoliberal policies.

The FSLN Builds Alliances

The Sandinista Assembly had stipulated that the vice-presidential slot was to be reserved for an alliance with a political sector outside the party. Yet when Juan Manuel Caldera accepted that slot, it was a surprise. Caldera is a large-scale cattle rancher whose land had been confiscated in the '80s and has long been a member of the High Council for Private Enterprise (COSEP), a group of big businessmen who opposed the Sandinista government.

Caldera explained to reporters that he accepted the FSLN vice-presidential slot because "we believe that if we can get this country to start producing again, we can save it," and stated that the Alemán forces "don't believe in production."

The FSLN's fifteen-point electoral program outlined how to rebuild the economy "with social justice." It also emphasized prioritizing health, education, housing and developing a program to provide electricity to rural communities and urban squatter neighborhoods. The platform represents a radical, producer-centered alternative to the neoliberal agenda that has been implemented under the Chamorro government. The plat-

form recognizes the particular need for women's rights, labor rights and the continued development of autonomy for the Caribbean coast communities. The FSLN also pledged that there would be no reinstatement of military conscription, that they would work to solve the property problem by legalizing all urban and rural properties legitimately redistributed during the '80s with compensation and no further confiscations. The platform advocates pan-Americanism and demands that Cuba be included in continental affairs. The full program, in English and Spanish, is available at <http://spin.com.mx/hvelarde/nicaragua/fsln/> the FSLN Internet site.

Throughout the campaign the FSLN can-

Nicaragua at a glance

Population: 4.2 million, 50% under 18 years old
• life expectancy: 66.7 years • **infant mortality** 52‰ • **illiteracy** 34.3% • **secondary school attendance** 54.5% • **doctors:** 0.56 doctors per 1,000 people.

Development: 117th among the 174 countries on the UNDP Human Development index • 22% of the urban population and 62% of rural people lack access to running water.

Economy: GDP per capita \$ 1,850 • **inflation** 11% (11,000% in 1990) • **unemployment** 53% (44% in 1990) • **Imports** (1995) \$949 m., **exports:** \$525 m. (50% less than in 1987) •

Source of imports (1994): Latin America 51%, USA 25%, EU 7% • **Destination of exports** (1994): USA 26%, EU 24%, Latin America 18% •

Major imports: consumer goods, machinery, petrochemicals • **Major exports:** coffee, cotton, sugar, bananas, meat, seafood, gold.

Foreign debt \$8 bn. including \$3 m. of Russian debt which may be cancelled • Between 1990 and 1995, \$1.45 bn. of a total \$3.9 bn. of foreign aid was used for debt repayments.

Source: *La Croix*, 18 October 1996

didates saw the need to reach out beyond its activist base. It sought to do that by actively seeking unity with other political forces, particularly in attempting to pose an economic alternative to neoliberalism. That was the basis of the FSLN signing onto the minimum agenda August 12. On August 28 the FSLN signed an agreement with representatives of youth organizations (50,000 productive jobs created for youth, to establish a 25% quota for hiring young people in municipal and national government structures, to have young people head vice ministries of education, social action, environment and the Institute of Culture and Women, no re-institution of a draft).

On September 18 the FSLN even signed an agreement with former contra leaders "El Indio" and "Mack," in front of 5,000 former *contras*, who then added their individual signatures. While Arnoldo Alemán's forces attempted to play down this alliance, MRS's Sergio Ramírez denounced the pact for including "Mack," who was noted for his particularly brutal killing of FSLN soldiers and supporters. But the point is that you don't need to make pacts with your friends, only former enemies.

The September 18th agreement formulates a plan to disband existing armed groups, pledges to honor the 1990 agreements that the Chamorro government never carried out and guarantees stable property ownership by issuing land titles and "access to credit under conditions that permit the recipients active incorporation into production. Landowners whose properties were unjustly confiscated will be appropriately compensated." Had the FSLN won, this section of the Nicaraguan Resistance, in supporting the FSLN slate, would have received three ministries (Ministries of Government, of Agrarian Reform, of Natural Resources and the Environment) and would have had "ample participation in all governmental institutions and autonomous organizations at all levels (national, regional and departmental), as guarantors and proponents of the country's economic development."

It was the building of this triple alliance—the FSLN, agricultural producers and the former *contras*—that made the FSLN so dynamic a political force in the 1996 elections. Their closing electoral rally brought out 300,000 people—far more than anticipated.

Conclusion

There are three conclusions to draw from the elections, electoral challenges and response from the Supreme Electoral Council:

1. The widespread accusations of fraud, documented by official reports and a number of the country's political parties, were not seriously reviewed and resolved by the CSE. This damages the reputation of the CSE, which, until recently, was unblemished. It is thus a big blow to representative democracy in Nicaragua.

2. The FSLN played an exemplary role in challenging the elections, reinforcing their

image as a party that is for democratic rights. It is the main opposition political force in the country. In contrast to 1990, when the FSLN was totally unprepared to lose, the Sandinistas have gone through a split in its ranks and a process of political re-evaluation and reorientation. Today it is prepared to be an opposition party, which defends the interests of the vast majority of the population and it has an economic program to counter the neo-liberal economic model Alemán will support.



Following the CSE proclamation of Alemán as president elect, Daniel Ortega explained in a TV interview that the FSLN recognizes the "legality" of the elections but not its "legitimacy."

Ortega has outlined a series of fourteen points that, he says, could provide

the basis for the country's genuine reconciliation. These are based on a "minimum agenda." In addition, Ortega has called for the CSE magistrates to resign in the face of incompetence and fraud.

3. The fight to defend the gains of the Sandinista revolution — particularly legalizing the land reform — will continue, even with the election of Alemán.

The Sandinista land reform is still in place, although the neoliberal economic model does not allow the small- and medium-sized producers access to credit. That was a major problem under the Chamorro government and that will not be adequately addressed by Alemán either.

In so far as the poor voted for Alemán, he represented for them the possibility of returning to a time "when there was plenty of work and even if you only had four cordobas, it was still worth the same when you woke up the next morning...." They don't want *Somocismo* without Somoza. But given his financial backers, it doesn't look like Alemán will have the flexibility to govern that he desperately needs. ★

Note

This article is excerpted from *Against the Current*, January/February 1997.

Dianne Feeley is a member of the U.S. revolutionary organization Solidarity. In 1984, just before Nicaragua's first democratic elections were held, she spent a month working in Managua as part of a tree-planting brigade.

She would like to gratefully acknowledge (and recommend) the following sources:

- *Barricada Internacional* (English-language monthly), *envio* (a monthly published in Nicaragua)
- Stephen Marks' articles in *Green Left Weekly*
- *Nicaragua Monitor* (published by the Nicaragua Network Education Fund, particularly the article "Stability Threatened by Electoral Fraud" by Lisa Zimmerman in the November 1996 issue, #63).

Haiti in search of an alte

The great merit of Jean-Bertrand Aristide after his return to Haiti was to show tenacity in pursuing his project of dismantling the army. On the other hand, he allowed corruption and cynicism to grow around him. Arthur Mahon reports that, deprived of the prestige of Aristide, his successors are sliding into stagnation.

When he assumed his functions on February 7th, 1996 the new president of the republic, René Preval, had to confront colossal problems. Even the legacy of Aristide was heavy to bear. For example, one of the reasons for the criminal behaviour of numerous members of the new police force is that Aristide had placed in charge of it some figures who, although perhaps loyal, were also implicated in a number of corrupt rackets.

The government formed after Preval's assumption of power thus had a considerable job to do. It has not shown itself capable of meeting its responsibilities. After several weeks of negotiations Preval named as prime minister Rosny Smarth, a leader of the Lavalas Political Organisation [OPL], which enjoys a parliamentary majority. The government has striven to find an impossible consensus between popular interests and those of the bourgeoisie.

One of the great defeats suffered by the government has been its inability to resolve the question of justice. The report of the "Truth and Justice" Commission has still not been published. The United States has still not given back the archives confiscated during the military intervention. The trial of two notorious criminals of the old regime ended in their acquittal. The situation of paralysis is such that Preval has pronounced himself in favour of a closure of the Ministry of Justice "for restructuring".

But it is in the economic field that the government has suffered the most criticism. It is in the process of implementing a neo-liberal austerity programme. A whole string of negative factors underlie this policy;

- Three years of dictatorship have left the country in a catastrophic situation. The economic policy followed by Aristide after his return, with its expenses and undelivered promises, has hardly improved things.
- The Bretton Woods institutions and the principal "donor" countries have continued to exert an intolerable blackmail.
- The composition of the government does not render it able to negotiate seriously with the international financial institutions. In reality, the majority of ministers undoubtedly share the ideology of those institutions. Aristide's old organisation, the Lavalas Political Organisation (OPL) has some ministers, but doesn't have a coherent alternative to the neo-liberal plan.
- The left and the popular movement is dispersed, heterogeneous and disorientated. It has been weakened, yesterday by repression and today by the participation of some of its leaders in the state structures. Though the struggle against the adoption of a structural

adjustment plan allowed some progress to be made in regrouping and "rearming" the left.

A great part of the population has shown itself hostile to the privatisation projects. But it is concerned above all with the everyday struggle to survive. The masses are disillusioned, and increasingly uninterested in political questions.

Rather than seeking money where it is, the government has surrendered to the directives of the International Monetary Fund. 10% Turnover Tax (TCA, a value added tax) has been extended to basic products like flour, oil and sugar.

Public finances are drained, but very little effort has been put into rectifying the situation on the income side. The unit which was supposed to combat tax evasion and fraud by the big companies has achieved little and large scale evasion continues. Haiti needs tax reform, which should involve the elimination of the TCA, a socially unjust tax, and its replacement by higher import duties, taxes on luxury consumption goods and a tax on higher incomes and wealth.

The government has abandoned the key instruments of development policy, by promising to the International Monetary Fund that Haiti will maintain freedom of trade and exchange. On the latter point, liberalisation is proceeding apace; since the return to constitutional order, quantitative restrictions on imports have been eliminated and import duties reduced; last May the maximum custom tariff was reduced from 15% to 10%. The proclaimed long term objective is a new reduction, although, with this 10% maximum, Haiti, the weakest economy on the continent, is already the country most open to competition from imports.

Since 1986, the liberalisation of foreign trade has thrown hundreds of thousands of rice and bean growers, artisans and workers out of work. Such a policy will transform Haiti into a drip-feed market for the maximum benefit of foreign enterprises, in particular those of the United States and the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

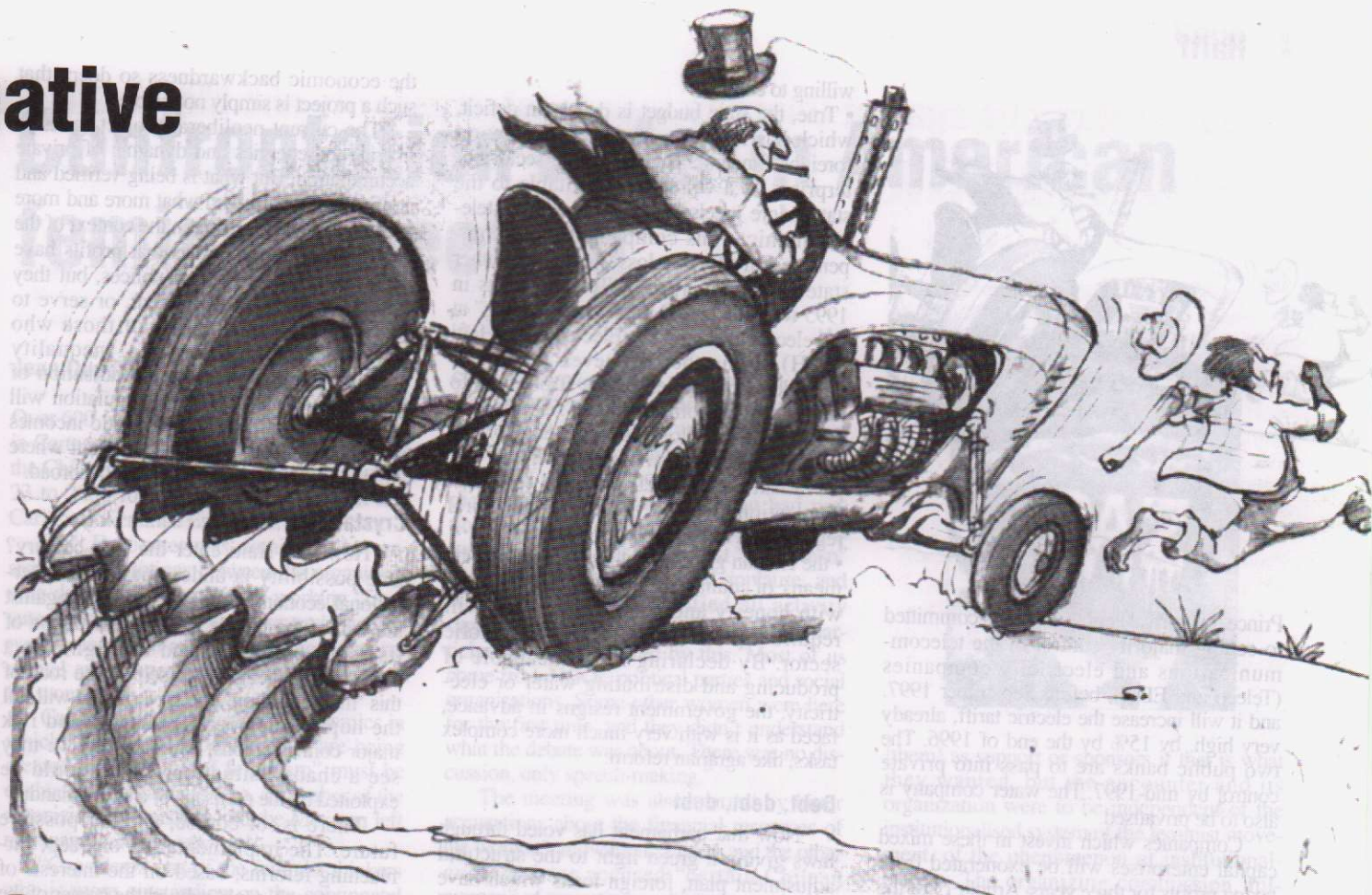
Because of its small size, its economic backwardness, its technological handicaps and the ease of commercial transactions in the current world economy, Haiti needs a policy of selective protection of its products. It also needs antidumping laws and controls on imports and exports through public trading companies. This is the only way to avoid the exploitation of producers and consumers.

Only public initiatives, whether taken by the state or other collectivities, responding to a democratically developed, executed and

US Labor Party Founding Convention on video

↳ Labor Beat, 37 Ashland, Chicago IL 60607, USA. 26 minutes. \$25.00 (outside US \$30.00)

Alternative



RAPID MODERNIZATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE.

EL FISSO

controlled development policy, can allow Haiti to progress. The unmodified dynamic of the market economy, greased by the profit motive, ignoring the needs of the people and the environment, offers no future. Haiti does not need a 'minimal' state in the service of profit but an 'optimal' state capable of taking the initiative.

The incomes policy which is being overseen by the IMF reflects the same class priorities. "The principle comparative advantage of Haiti continues to be low labour costs" says the World Bank.¹ In these conditions, maintaining the lowest possible labour costs, competing with dozens of other countries to whom the Bank says the same thing, becomes a priority objective.

The minimum wage, fixed at 36 Gourdes, or around \$2.40 per day, at the time of Aristide's return, made Haiti the most attractive country in the region for subcontracted assembly operations. These currently employ around 20,000 workers). The minimum wage is even lower now than in 1986, the year the Duvalier dictatorship fell. The minimum hourly wage has fallen by 30 cents, but even this minimum is not respected in half of the fifty assembly factories working for export. For example, a worker making Walt Disney pyjamas will earn 7 cents, while the pyjamas are sold at \$11.97 in Wal-Mart shops in the United States.² Doubling or eventripling Haiti's minimum wage would not significantly affect the profit margin of exporting

companies.

And yet, the government has embarked on a policy of wage restraint! The structural adjustment program drawn up in Washington envisages a three year wage freeze, combined with an increase in petrol prices and increased taxes on consumption. The government made a commitment to the IMF to reduce the number of civil servants by 2,500 and to suppress 4,500 phantom posts, that Aristide had tolerated or created, all before September 1996. By March 1997, 2,500 supplementary posts are to be suppressed. In the absence of the creation of durable and properly paid jobs, this "slimming down" will have cumulative social, economic and political effects in the capital.

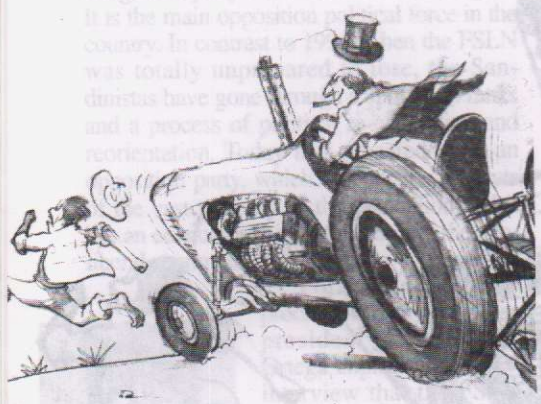
A programme for agrarian reform, essential from the point of view of both justice and productivity in the countryside, has not been developed, despite the creation of an Institution of Agrarian Reform more than a year ago. Worse, the government has made a commitment to the IMF not to use the state budget to grant credit to farmers. Given the extortionate interest rates which strangle these peasants, the future of agrarian reform is grim indeed.

Even if it stops short of attacking poverty and reducing the rate of exploitation, in the factories and in the countryside, the government could at least act to introduce tax reform, the control of commercial transactions, or ensure the provision of free or

cheap essential services for the masses. But it is proceeding in the opposite direction.

An austerity policy is also being implemented in education. In a framework document prepared by the Haitian authorities together with "experts" from the IMF and the World Bank, the colonised Ministry of Education includes among its objectives "the introduction of an educational system which is open and accessible, but fee paying".³ In July 1996, the ministry announced the closure of several schools and the halting of work on new ones. But everyone knows that just putting an end to the plundering and corruption in several, not all of the country's ministries would be enough to find the money necessary for national education.

Privatisations is the centrepiece of the structural adjustment programme. The seven most important public enterprises and two banks are affected. After some months of polemic, in September Parliament voted for an amended version of the "modernisation of the public sector" law. Though, presumably for fear of criticism, nearly half the deputies did not turn up to vote. In any case, the government had already entered into some commitments without waiting for the "formal" parliamentary vote. It has selected a majority buyer for the national cement company. The government proposes the transformation of the airports at Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien into lucrative private concessions. It is committed to rapidly handing the port in the capital, Port-au-



Prince, to a private contractor. It is committed to ceding majority control in the telecommunications and electricity companies (Teleco and EDH), before September 1997, and it will increase the electric tariff, already very high, by 15% by the end of 1996. The two public banks are to pass into private control by mid-1997. The water company is also to be privatised.

Companies which invest in these mixed capital enterprises will be exonerated from tax on profits for three years. Article 13 of the privatisations law even stipulates that in these semi-state enterprises the state will *never* hold more than 50% of shares, and even where it controls 50%, the state will only exercise a minority vote in the board of directors.

the government has repeatedly stressed that the privatisation law envisages the distribution of a part of the dividends and income of these mixed-capital utilities to the municipalities and rural *sections* (districts). This may provide some support for the political and administrative decentralisation, measures envisaged in the constitution. Assuming, of course, that there will be dividends! After all, it will be the private partner who controls the management of the new utilities. The siphoning-off of profits thought over-billing and biased choice of suppliers and sub-contractors could well reduce these dividends to next to nothing.

Préval and the members of his government have often argued that privatisation is essential, because the poor management of the public enterprises is a burden on the state budget. But this argument is unacceptable, for several reasons.

- the detailed accounts remain hidden from the Haitian people, and even their elected representatives. The study by SFI, a financial investment society affiliated to the World Bank, which was asked to evaluate the real condition of these enterprises, remains secret, more than a year after it was submitted. Why the successive governments kept it secret? Presumably because some public enterprises are strongly in debt, but at the same time they have unpaid credit in the state and private sector. Credit which the government is un-

willing to call in.

- True, the state budget is deeply in deficit, which has led to a great dependency on foreign "funders". But the public sector enterprises as a whole are profitable to the state. More precisely, the profits of the telecommunications company Teleco compensate fully for the losses of all the other state-owned enterprises. Teleco profits in 1995 were about \$42 m. "Housecleaning" at the electricity company Elec-tricité d'Haiti (EDH) during the first seven months of Aristide's government made it possible to project annual profits of about \$1.5 million.

- Some of the "lossmaking" enterprises clearly have a mission of public service. The privatisation of electricity and telecommunications will hit the poorer and rural regions, and hinder their development.

- the Haitian government must give itself the means of managing its public enterprises with honesty and competence. This will require a profound reform of the public sector. By declaring itself incapable of producing and distributing water or electricity, the government resigns in advance, faced as it is with very much more complex tasks, like agrarian reform.

Debt, debt, debt

Now that parliament has voted through laws giving a green light to the structural adjustment plan, foreign loans which have been frozen for some months will presumably be freed. But who is going to use them, and for what? What part will go to public investments? We fear that, in their obsession with marginalising the Haitian state, the "funders" will seek to channel as much finance as possible through their own contacts. And then, of course, there is all the money "for Haiti" which will go straight back to the companies and experts of the "funder" countries.

Part of the IMF structural adjustment loans and other multilateral and bilateral loans which should follow are earmarked for the repayment of previous loans. Foreign debt was 33% of GDP at the end of September 1995, but will rise to 44% by September 1999. According to IMF figures, in 1995-6, debt servicing already represented 22% of Haiti's export income.

Some leaders of the democratic movement have often said that their objective was to make Haiti a "normal country". This expression would be correct if it expressed simply a will to respond to the elementary demands of the Haitian people, both political (the conquest of democratic rights denied since slavery times) and economic (the conquest of extreme poverty). But the underlying idea is all too often that the road to political stabilisation and economic development should be based on the system in Haiti's neighbours, like the Dominican Republic. In other words, the creation of a "modern" capitalist society, on the ashes of the social formation inherited from Duvalierism. But in Haiti the need for a break with the past of political oppression and economic exploitation are so strong, and

the economic backwardness so deep, that such a project is simply not viable.

The current neoliberal project seeks to liberate the energies and dynamic of private accumulation. But what is being verified and confirmed in Haiti (and what more and more countries are discovering in the context of the globalisation of capital) is that profits have been raised by neo-liberal policies, but they are either invested elsewhere, or serve to increase the consumption of those who possess capital. Meanwhile, inequality grows. To expect that the liberalisation of foreign trade and internal deregulation will stimulate investment and domestic incomes is a great illusion, especially in Haiti where the ruling class already has one foot abroad.

Crystal ball

How will Haiti enter the 21st century? One possibility is under quasi-total international economic tutelage, imposed against the will of the people, through corruption of its representatives, and through direct repression. By engaging itself on the road of this 'modernisation', the government will kill the hope of democratic change, and risk major confrontations. Alternatively, we may see a chaotic situation, which could be exploited by the partisans of a strong hand;

There is, of course, another possible future. The implementation of deep, far-reaching reforms, based on the interests of the oppressed, could subvert the power of the oligarchy and imperialism. This could not be done without the revival of the popular movement, and at the very least, without significant changes in the composition of the government.

Unfortunately, this last hypothesis is the least likely, and no one can exclude another coup in the years to come. Certainly the neo-Duvalierist networks are raising their heads again. In recent months, they have multiplied their assassinations and intimidation. For some analysts, this new upsurge of violence was linked to the approach of the US presidential elections, the Republican party seeking to show that Clinton's Haitian policy is a fiasco. In any case, this tense situation will doubtless serve as a justification for the United Nations Security Council to prolong the mandate of UN forces, for a third time since they were supposed to quit Haiti last February.

There are currently no US soldiers in this force, but Washington has several hundred soldiers in Haiti, in various missions, and it is more than symbolic that, since September 1996, the protection of President Préval has been assured by US State Department security agents, while a purge is carried out within his own security service. ★

Notes

1. Draft strategy paper of the World Bank group for Haiti, Washington, 11 April 1996.
2. National Labor Committee, New York, 30 January 1996. For information on the Disney/Haiti Justice Campaign, see last month's issue of IV, or PO Box 755, Fort Washington Station, New York, NY 10001, E-mail <bloom@soho.ios.com> ☎ (212) 242-0986

Confrontation at Latin American feminist meeting

Jean Dupont

Over 600 women from 20 countries gathered in Cartagena, a beachside town 200 km from the Chilean capital, Santiago from November 23 to 28th, for the 7th Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter.

This Encounter was dominated by tension and accusations between the organisers, who described themselves as working "from autonomous positions", and several hundred participants who are active in non-governmental and government-funded programmes for women.

Cartagena was the forum for polemics in which "the feminist policies that are being created in the name of feminism" must be evaluated, Margarita Pisano, a member of the organizing commission told the Mexican left newspaper *La Jornada*.

"Considered one of the feminist thinkers who is more outstanding on the continental level," writes Rosa Rojas, "Pisano spoke of the founders of the organization of the Encounter. 'we are not saying that we are the only ones,' says Pisano, 'but we are trying to show that there are two different global strategies. This does not have to be a problem, providing that these visions be explained and discussed, since one part of feminism – the institutionalised part, which emphasises emphasis pressure group politics and lobbying, with a strategy very much oriented towards the United Nations, participation in large summits, and dialogue with governments, speak as if in the name of all the feminist movement.

'With this strategy,' Pisano continues, 'they have abandoned the policy of orienting towards the social movements, rather... they speak and negotiate in its name. It seems to me that one of the large current challenges of the feminist movement is to make a great cultural process, of imagination and installation of another culture, more than a reductionism to be requesting equalities from a civilising system that I find terrible.

'A feminist that says to me that her interest is to seek justice, equality with men, is someone with whom I do not have much to do because she is proposing that the prevailing culture is valid, that the only thing that we have to do is accede to that culture, which we are a little outside of.'

Sara Lovera was one of the many dissatisfied participants. "By making the 'need' to expose the differences between the various feminist currents one of the main themes of the Encounter, [the organisers] suppressed the festive, happy atmosphere which has

characterised similar meetings in which feminists in various countries have come together to experiment with ways of improving the lives of millions of women in this continent. The *autónomas* organised a set-piece trial of those women who had participated in the Beijing UN conference on women. And all this in the best "boys' own" style, with shouting out, loud applause, and whistling. They disqualified all activity organised through NGOs. Many of the participants were bothered by this. Most of us come from NGOs, political parties and social organisations. Some other women were here for the first time, and they didn't understand what the debate was about. There was no discussion, only speech-making."

The meeting was also marred by bitter accusations about the financial resources of the women's movement. Pisano and the other *autónomas* accused "certain Chilean women" of mounting a whispering campaign not only to block the Encounter, but to discourage institutional donors from financing its deliberations. Other participants claimed that it was the organisers' own sectarianism which led to this meeting receiving only about \$30,000 in outside funding, considerably less than the 1993 meeting in El Salvador.

Pisano replied that "the institutions did not have either a political or an organisational interference in the encounter. We accepted

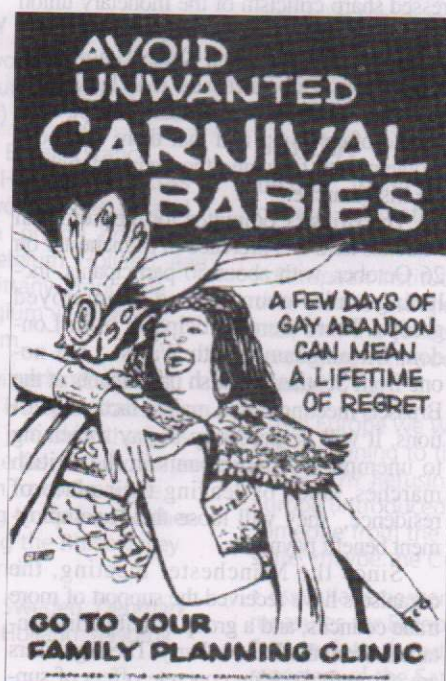


[them] as support or sponsors if that is what they wanted, but the encounter and its organization were to be independent of the institutionalised system of the feminist movement, of the phenomenon of institutionalisation. The organizing commission, fulfilling those agreements, is formed by feminist women, autonomous in this sense...

"We conceived of the encounter as a place in which is proposed a discussion of feminist policies and where we would be able to evaluate what is being done in the name of feminism. Our intention is that this Encounter serve to evaluate what has been the construction of the movement and its politics in the last years, to project strategies of future action. For this it seemed relevant to us to come to know through a comparison of what has been the discussion of the Chilean feminist movement in the three national forums as in the national encounters held to date, generated and organized by the autonomous feminist movement in a great joint effort for reflection and philosophical political discussion.

"We are convinced of the need for the complete autonomy of the feminist movement with respect to United Nations policy, states, governments, political parties, NGO's and networks of NGO's and the politics of international cooperation. We must also recognise the existence of two political-philosophical currents in the movement. These translate into different, sometimes opposed strategies. We recognise that we have political differences. ★

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European Marches against Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Marginalisation

First we take Brussels, then we march

Mark Johnson

An all-Europe co-ordination meeting of the campaign was held in Brussels on November 30th 1996. It was decided to change the date of the European Hearings against Unemployment, Job-insecurity and Marginalisation to 22-23 February, at the request of the British and Spanish participants. It seems that a number of congresses and trade union meetings are planned for the original Hearing date, the first weekend in February. The next, essentially "technical" all-Europe co-ordination meeting will be held in Brussels on Saturday February 1st.

Participants discussed both the routes and the type of march planned. These ideas will be circulated to national organising groups in a later document. There was also discussion about the European secretariat for the marches. The general idea is to move as quickly as possible (i.e. from January-February) towards a genuinely European secretariat, with participation of all the countries which wish to do so. The presence of the Belgian and Dutch organisers seems indispensable, given that most of the proposed march routes pass through these countries, with the potential for larger events in Brussels in Amsterdam.

The **European Network of Unemployed (ENU)** has agreed to support the Marches. At their recent conference, in Ireland, contacts were also made with an Austrian group, and with organisations in Hungary and Poland, non EU countries. The Dutch ENU network (which represents the ENU secretariat) will co-operate with the march organisers in the reception of the marchers in Amsterdam. For this, they will need to know which towns the marches will pass through as soon as possible.

Kairos Europe and various national groups of the **Helsinki Citizens' Assembly**, two networks of "civic" movements concerned with political and cultural questions, have also indicated their interest in the marches. Following the Florence Appeal, the **European Christian Forum** wishes to be represented in the European secretariat.

Country-by-country presentations

In Belgium, the March organising group held its first meeting on November 4th, and decided to seek broader contacts, including the trade union federations. On December 12th, working groups stressed that the march title and slogans should be positive expressions. It was also felt important that participation in the marches be an individual initiative, rather than the simple expression of organisational decisions. There was a suggestion to prepare a "Marcher's Card".

The group also discussed the relationship between the marches and other initiatives, so

as to enable the establishment of the widest possible reception committees, and the reception of the marchers by the mayors of the towns they pass through.

At the February Hearings, the Belgian organising group suggests putting the emphasis on the testimony of the excluded, and reports on activities, rather than "big debates." To link the Hearings with the broader social movement, it is planned to organise five small Belgian marches, which will converge on Brussels. It was also suggested that the Hearings enable people to attend "as a family". This obviously creates the problem of child-space.

In the Netherlands, a conference "For a Different Europe" was held on 19 October. This is a step towards the organisation of a counter-summit, larger than the reception of the marches, with workshops on ecology, democracy, etc. Participants offered to support and prepare the marches in the April-July period, with groups coming from all over the Netherlands, and including trade unions, unemployed groups, and individuals. There was a strong demand for precision about what marchers from other countries will expect from the Dutch organisers, particularly in logistic and financial terms. Who will pay for the section from the Dutch border to Amsterdam?

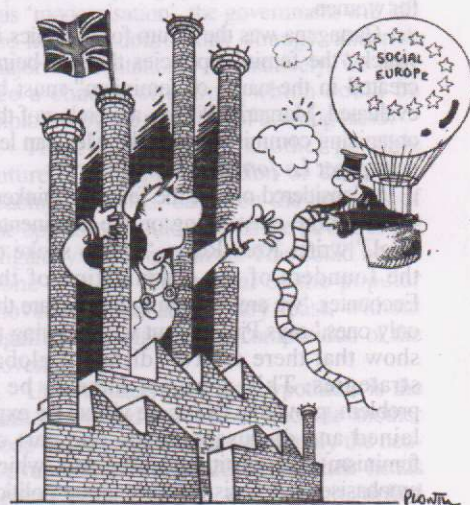
A representative of the Irish group **INOUE** reported that the idea of a "Celtic" march (Ireland, Wales, Brittany) is gathering strength. Local marches in Ireland will be received by the mayors of the towns they pass through. Irish participants in the 30 November all-Europe planning meeting expressed sharp criticism of the monetary union and its consequences, and enquired about the position of the European Trade Union Confederation. They stressed that Ireland is further away from continental Europe than people often think, and that there will be a problem with financing the transportation of the Irish marchers.

The British Committee for the European Marches held a conference in Manchester on 26 October, with about 50 participants, including trades councils and unemployed groups. There were participants from London, Birmingham, South Wales... but none from Scotland. British participants at the Brussels meeting raised mainly tactical questions. It will be necessary to pay something to unemployed participants in the British marches, since by leaving their place of residence, they will lose their unemployment benefit payments.

Since the Manchester meeting, the organisers have received the support of more trade councils, and a group of left parliamentarians from the Labour Party. The organisers are currently seeking concrete offers of sup-

port, including trade union sponsorship of 250 marchers, work with homeless groups, etc. They hope to organise a coach to the Brussels initiative.

The German organisers held a meeting with unemployed organisations, left currents and parties on 31 October. **The Socialist Democracy Party (PDS)** gave its support. A secretariat was established for regional co-ordination. There was discussion on the programme, and the orientation of the marches, the rights of immigrants, links to Eastern Europe and the South, and monetary union. The next meeting will be held on 19 January in Hannover. A conference to discuss and prepare the marches will be held in Mann-



heim on 15-16 March. A meeting of left oppositionists in the DGB trade union federation will also be held. This should make it easier to win the support of local trade union bodies.

In Switzerland, ADC Lausanne wants to organise a march segment between La Chaux-de-Fonds (Jura), Lausanne and Geneva. They are seeking wider contacts. Switzerland is not in the EU, of course, but organisers felt this did not prevent Swiss participation. "this is a march against unemployment," one said. "Not about whether we are for or against the EU."

Spain's **CGT** [anarcho-syndicalist] trade union confederation will participate in the marches. The **Madrid CGT** considers the Florence appeal to be very weak, and would like to see an explicitly anti-capitalist and anti-Maastricht text. The **Madrid CGT** is for the absolute autonomy of the marchers, and will be on the watch for any attempt to "capture" or take credit for the marches.

In Catalonia, the march will be co-ordinated by the "Civic Round-Table for Social Rights" (**Mesa civic pels drets**

on Amsterdam

socials) which organised a series of smaller marches in 1995. The **Mesa**, which brings together trade unionists, unemployed groups and intellectuals, also benefits from the indirect participation of the "critical sector" in **Iniciativa per Catalunya**, the local version of Spain's United Left.

The French organising associations² meet regularly in the interim European secretariat, which seeks to deepen the preparation of the marches, and widen support, particularly among trades unions. A common meeting is planned for December, with local committees, civic groups, and trade unions. Contacts have already been made with the **FSU**, the left in the **CFDT**, the **Group of Ten**, **SUD**,

etc). They will seek the support of parliamentarians and political organisations, while preserving the autonomy of the movement.

The Hearings of the **AC!** movement (which has about 100 local committees) resolved to participate actively in the marches, to denounce neo-liberalism and Maastricht, "without limiting themselves to a narrow EU framework in our discussion of Europe". The **General Estates of the Social Movement**, which were created during the social movement of November-December 1995, and which bring together actors from those movements, trade unionists, and intellectuals, hope to generate similar support all over Europe.

France will obviously be a host country for marchers coming from Spain and Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and, to some extent, Ireland and Great Britain, as the various marches converge towards Belgium and Amsterdam ★.

1. Groupe d'initiative Belge pour les Marches européennes, Coordination Bruxelles Wallonie Flandres Sans-Abris (Homeless Co-ordinations), Mouvement de la Paix (Peace Movement), Kairos Europa
2. AEC (HCA-F), Comité des Sans-Logis, Chômeurs et Précaires de Paris, CNT-AIT Nord-Pas de Calais, Collectif national AC!, Coordination moins de 25 ans, Droit au Logement, Droits Devant!, Etats Généraux de Mouvement Social, Mouvement National des Chômeurs et Précaires, Organisation Communiste Libértaire, Precarite exclusion Jeunes 18-25 ans, SSIPPE-CNT Nord-Pas de Calais, SUD Cheminots, Secretariat des Marches.

Brussels, 22-23 February 1997

European Hearings against Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Exclusion

The Hearings will have three functions.

- Exchange information and experience between unemployed groups, associations and trade unions at the European level. This implies organising lots of workshops, so that the militants can express themselves, and allowing for sufficient free time for the informal exchanges.
- In-depth discussions on the positions of each participant, given his/her country of origin, militant activity, and ideological convictions.
- Preparing joint activities, above all the Spring marches.

The working languages for these hearings are English, French, Castilian, German, Italian and, probably, Dutch.

Saturday

12:00 Reception, greetings, reading out messages, short videos

13:00 Presentation of the agenda and the material conditions of the hearings, presentation of the general project at the European level.

14:00 Workshops

- Unemployment in the various countries, systems of support

and benefit, the work of associations.

- rising job insecurity and flexibility. The role of trade unions in the struggle against unemployment.
- housing
- social and cultural marginalisation
- public service, defending "welfare"
- the right to asylum, and the situation of non-nationals

Saturday 17:30

Parallel workshops for each march route, including (probably)

- Ireland, Britain, France, Belgium, Holland: to discuss one or two marches: Ireland, Britain via London, northern France, Belgium, Holland; and Wales, Brittany, France via Paris, Belgium via Brussels, Amsterdam.
- Italy, Switzerland, France, Germany, Holland: starting in Italy, then joined by the Swiss of the Lake Geneva region and the French from Grenoble, continuing to Basle, and then descending the Rhine valley into Holland.
- Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Holland: a Nordic march...
- Germany, Holland: starting in

Berlin, with a possible south German march, passing via Munich. This would allow the Austrians to start a march.

- There will also be an "Amsterdam" workshop, which will discuss the problems of reception, tasks linked to the demonstration, and the debates during the counter-summit.

Saturday 20:00

dinner and social evening (but with a "Manifesto" working group, in which representatives of each working group will try to amend the text.)

Sunday

09:00 workshops on the general orientation of the marches

- European institutions and their policies (single currency, etc.) and the consequences for employment (introduced by Kairos?)
- The Europe we want to build. What opening to the East and the South? Refusing Fortress Europe (introduced by someone from the Spanish state, maybe the CGT).
- Essential emergency measures for Europe, social Europe (introduced by the reporters of the Saturday workshops).

- Abolishing unemployment, reducing the working week, full employment (introduced by AC!, Michel Husson and/or Ireland's INOU)

- Specific women's demands (introduced by Germany)

- Finance, the resources needed for such a policy

Sunday 13:00

Plenary session, lunch break, approval of the manifesto and the principle points of the march strategy.

Invitations and observers

The proposal is to have a wide range of invitations and observers, going beyond the forces which will actually participate in the organisation of the marches. We will invite associations and trade unions, intellectuals engaged in the struggle against unemployment and marginalisation, parliamentary groups in the European Parliament, and various political currents. These invitations do not imply the obligation to make a speech (although anyone who wants can express him/herself in the workshops). The president of the hearings will read out a list of invitees and excuses.

Danish socialist MP deported from Turkey

Søren Søndergaard, a member of the Danish parliament for the Red-Green Alliance was detained in Ankara on Friday 29. November, put in front of a judge, ordered to pay a fine, and expelled from Turkey.

During his 12 hour detention, Søndergaard, a member of the Fourth International's International Executive Committee, was "convicted" of violating a (secret) exclusion order banning him from entering Turkey as a supposed "Threat to the security of the state".

According to the Turkish ambassador in Denmark, the entrance ban was motivated by Søndergaard's "support of PKK terrorists," including, for example, the 14 March 1996 meeting the deputy hosted in the Danish parliament for members of the Kurdish parliament in exile.

The entrance ban was issued on August 16, the day after Søndergaard participated in the first Ankara court hearing in a case against Kemal Koç, a Danish citizen of Kurdish origin, who was arrested in early July, tortured and charged of supporting the Kurdish liberation struggle. After 42 days in prison Koç was expelled to Denmark on 16. August. But his trial is still pending.

After Søndergaard's detention, the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Niels Helveg

Pedersen, called the Turkish ambassador to a meeting in the Ministry, where he demanded that the full list of "unwanted" Danes be made public.

The Socialist Peoples Party (SF) raised the expulsion in the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Socialist Group in the European Parliament demanded that the European Union freeze an ECU 375 m. payment due to Turkey as part of that country's Customs Union with the EU.

"After the arrest and expulsion of Søren Søndergaard, plus the information that Turkey has a list of 'unwanted' European politicians, there is no doubt: Turkey should not have a penny," said Kirsten Jensen, chairman of the Danish Social Democratic group in the European Parliament.

After arriving back in Denmark, Søren Søndergaard told radio and TV that he encouraged the continuation and strengthening of the fight for human rights in Turkey.

"While it is a big surprise, my expulsion is only a little thing," he said. "The real problem is all those people who are still detained, or who live with daily human rights abuses, random jailing and torture. It is them who our solidarity should concern," said Søndergaard. ★

Asylum or death?

A former member of the Iranian F.I. group faces deportation from Holland

The European Union countries are using their new policy of "critical dialogue" with Iran to justify the deportation of refugees from the Mullahs' regime. Holland has already deported 20 Iranian asylum seekers. At least one was arrested and tortured when he arrived in Iran.

A similar fate now faces Bahman Mouri Sardarabadi, who fled Iran after being arrested and tortured because of his membership of the Iranian Fourth Internationalist group HKS (Socialist Workers Party). The Dutch authorities have now rejected his asylum appeal, and plan to deport him back to almost certain death.

Hundreds of protest signatures have already been collected. A range of political, anti-racist, and youth groups, and Members of the German, Danish and European Parliaments are urging the Dutch authorities to grant Bahman political asylum.

We ask all readers to protest against the impending expulsion of Bahman Mouri Sardarabadi and to demand political asylum for him. [RB]

Please write or fax your statement of support to: SAP, St. Jacobsstraat 10-20, 1012 NC Amsterdam. Fax: +31 20/6203774. e-mail <saprebel@dds.nl> The support committee will register these protests, and present them to the Ministry of Justice.

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Disney Haiti Justice Campaign

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➤ Disney/Haiti Justice Campaign, PO. Box 755, Fort Washington Station, New York, NY 10001; (212) 242-0986. E-mail <bloom@soho.ios.com>.

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France Communist mutation

In the good old days, all the real debate at a Congress of the French Communist Party was held out of site, before the public ceremonies began. Last month's 29th Congress was rather different.

Christian Picquet

The leadership of the French Communist Party (PCF) has for some time been trying to overcome the immobilism which has struck the party since it withdrew from an unhappy coalition government with the Socialist Party in 1984. The incentive to do it at this congress was all the greater in that opinion polls suggest that the left as a whole could win a majority of votes in the next parliamentary elections. This was also the first Congress presided over by National Secretary Robert Hue, enthroned at the 28th Congress by veteran Party leader Georges Marchais.

The buzz-word at last month's Congress was "mutation" [it sounds better in French]. This idea covers the redefinition of "Communist identity," a greater openness towards other radical movements and ideas, and a "rupture" with a particularly monolithic internal party life.

One notable change since the 28th Congress is that the PCF General Staff apparently no longer considers "Trotskyists" in general and Alain Krivine's Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) in particular as vermin or pests. Over the last year, the LCR has been invited, alongside a range of other left currents and parties, to the public forums organised by the PCF.

The existence of internal differences is no longer denied. Minority views within the National Committee are nowadays published in the party daily, *l'Humanité*. The party is even trying, in certain difficult areas, to do a little self-criticism. Following the struggle of "paperless" immigrants, the PCF has abandoned its 1989 declaration calling for a halt to migration.

The limits of change

"Mutation" has its limits. At the theoretical level, the National Committee text circulated to party members summarises Stalinism and the lessons to be drawn in a few short sentences. The problem, it seems, was *étatisme*, too strong a role of the state. A rather simplistic analysis.

In this new discourse of "going beyond capitalism," the occasional references to the importance of self-management seem rather abstract, and often contradictory. The National Committee explains that "going beyond capitalism" is not to be confused with any "brusque abolition." But nor is the party willing to "adapt" to "the system." The



text can be read any number of ways.

The confusion and uncertainty with which the more problematic points of theory are handled is probably linked to the lack of real change in the internal democracy of the party. It is true that the minority texts were included in the National Committee document, as a series of passages in italics. But the leadership refused to allow party members to vote on these texts, or indeed to discuss and choose between any clear alternative proposals to the majority position in the leadership. This puts the PCF in a curious situation. There are public fractions inside the party, which express themselves not only in the party press but in the mass media, but without the right to submit proposals to the party members for their approval or rejection.

Squaring the circle

Not that the party leadership has an easy job. Adopting a clear strategic orientation ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections will not be easy for the PCF. The party has little to substitute for its tried-and-failed strategy of Left Union, discredited during the coalition governments of 1981-84. And the PCF no longer has the international references and connections which used to boost its position in the workers movement.

New slogans

Was

Capitalist exploitation

The passage to socialism

Party of the working class

is now

The rule of money

going beyond capitalism

new Communist role

All imaginable strategic choices threaten to lead the party into deeper crisis. A new electoral union with a Socialist Party now fundamentally committed to neo-liberalism and Maastricht Europe would create the pre-conditions for the implosion of the Communist Party. But any return to the sectarian superiority of the late 1970s would only accelerate the decline in support for and identification with the party. And the various "overtures" of the Hue leadership towards the broader left suggest that the leadership is convinced that the immobilism which the Marchais leadership imposed during most of François Mitterand's 14 years as president is no longer an option either.

Unstable equilibrium

The leadership is hesitating. Robert Hue's core team would like an alliance with the Socialist Party, which would re-confirm the PCF's role as a government-shaping party, and, they hope, maintain the party's current parliamentary representation. The problem is that, in the current situation, such an alliance would make the party a very junior partner of Socialist leader Lionel Jospin. And Hue can't sell that kind of deal to the PCF rank and file.

Apart from the proposals the PCF shares with the Greens, the "alternative" left and the LCR, the party is often rather vague about what policies it would advocate once inside a hypothetical left government, beyond some "extension of the public sector." While the measures Hue talks about are certainly an indispensable minimum for any real rupture with the dominant, neo-liberal logic, they fall far short of what would be needed to put the economy at the service of social needs.

One year ago, Alain Juppe's government tried to impose its plan for the dismantling of the social security system. For some reason, the PCF did not respond by calling for an expanded, quality public health service, and the nationalisation of the pharmaceutical trusts which have pushed the price of health care up. One suspects that this reticence is motivated by Hue's desire to avoid embarrassing the Socialist Party, which now says it will not reverse the Juppe plan if it wins the next elections.

Robert Hue is "firmly in favour of the construction of Europe," with "a deep revision of France's European engagements." He supports "an instrument for monetary co-operation, a new Ecu [European Currency Unit, now called the Euro]," "a community-wide tax on capital movements" and "co-operation between the public sectors in each country." The power of non-elected European bodies should be reduced. Hue also wants to see "a referendum on whether or not we go forward to the single currency."

All this would be worth discussing, in a

positive spirit, if it wasn't for the fact that, in the same breath, Hue reassures the mass media that he will not make refusal of the Maastricht convergence process and the common currency preparations a pre-condition of any left union government.

Two oppositions

There are two opposition currents in the PCF. The "refondateur" (re-establisher) current, which publishes the weekly magazine *Futurs*, is led by Guy Hermier, MP for Marseilles, and a member of the PCF National Bureau. On 25 October Hermier told *l'Humanité* that "what was wrong with the last common programme [with the socialists] was not that the left parties told people what they would do once in power, but that the parties elaborated this programme on their own. This time, we should give the politics back to the citizens.... This requires a deep debate, not just a tête-à-tête between the traditional left parties...."

Although the *refondateurs* have a stable group of deputies, and a number of mayors in the "red belt" of Paris suburbs, the current has never really been able to organise itself inside the PCF. What they say might seem relevant. But now that party leader Robert Hue has re-positioned himself, and made his own proposals for opening the party towards the rest of the left, the *refondateurs* have much less to say. Their criticism has concentrated on the bureaucratic, sclerotic func-

tioning of the party. In practice, it seems that they agree with most of the programmatic proposals of the Hue leadership. Though, given the dominance of members of parliament within the *refondateur* group, there is a possibility that the current could make an opportunist turn to the centre if the Socialist Party decides to offer the PCF the chance of participating in government.

Regroupment means liquidation!

The second opposition current considers the *refondateurs* to be a "liquidationist" current. This neo-Stalinist wing of the PCF is led by National Bureau member Remi Auchede, MP and "boss" of the party's powerful local organisation in the Pas-de-Calais region. Beside him is Henri Alleg, a historic figure in the communist movement ever since he was tortured by French parachutists during the Algerian war of independence. This current is, in reality, a public fraction of the party, though Auchede condemns the formation of tendencies as itself a sign of the social-democratisation of all-too-many Communist Parties.

The neo-Stalinists have a radical discourse, and, in particular, are hostile to any kind of agreement with the Socialist Party. They propose "unity at the base" and "reinforcing the internationalist and revolutionary identity of the PCF". This includes "a broad national campaign, based on demonstrations, strikes and popular committees, open to all

progressive forces, for the abrogation of the Maastricht treaty."

At the same time, Auchede calls for the "re-birth of the international communist and revolutionary movement," and invokes the example of the fathers of French Stalinism, Maurice Thorez and Jacques Duclos. In another text, the neo-Stalinists protest that the party needs "communist self-criticism, but not some consensual self-flagellation, which would plunge the masses into confusion."

The outcome of these debates within the PCF will continue after the 29th Congress. Given the place of the party in the French workers' movement, and its links with significant radical sectors of the working population, the debate will be followed by radicals outside as well as inside the party. ★



The new social radicalism has been in the air since the public sector strikes of November-December 1995. When it comes to voting, however, the lack of real left alternatives has channelled much of this new radicalism to the far-right Front national. But the possibilities of a polarisation to the left of social democracy were shown in the recent Gardanne by-election, which was carried by a Communist Party candidate supported by most of the radical left.

The Gardanne (Bouches du Rhone) seat was vacant because the incumbent Radical (left) Bernard Tapie has been declared bankrupt and stripped of his civil rights. Millionaire, personality and now film star, Tapie was a symbol of the corrupt, champagne socialism of the 14 year Mitterrand administration.

The Radical Party and Socialist Party presented voters with another darling of the Paris salons, Bernard Kouchner, former minister for humanitarian action, and a leading supporter of the Maastricht integration process.

The Communist Party mayor of Gardanne, Roger Mei, benefited from a large range of supporters, including the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) of Alain Krivine. In the first round of voting Mei came first, and beat the National Front candidate in the second round (Kouchner came 4th in the first round).

The Mei campaign was particularly popular with this mining region's blue collar

100 percent left

by Christian Picquet

workers, concerned about workplace "rationalisation" and unemployment.

This was the first time in a long time that the far-right has lost votes in a by-election, particularly in their stronghold on the Mediterranean coast.

"we need a new kind of left unity to beat the right and the far right," LCR spokesperson Alain Krivine told *Le Monde* on October 18th. "Not unity to repeat the deceptions of the Mitterrand years, and not unity behind the application of slightly moderated right wing policies, but left unity to implement really left, 100% left policies."

"Let's hope that the Communist Party will allow us to repeat this Gardanne experience at a national scale. If only the Socialist Party would recognise the clear lesson of this by-election: in a climate of growing social exasperation, it is no longer electorally successful to propose more "loyal" and "responsible" management of finance-style Europe.

"But rather than hoping for the sudden enlightenment of Socialist Party leaders, we should strive to change the balance of forces on the ground, and within the broader left. In Gardanne, Communist, ecologist, critical-thinking socialists, and far-left socialists have cut a new path, together, on the basis of a few elementary principles, and respecting

the identity and other engagements of each current. Together, we have begun to articulate a response to the menace of the right, and the way the Socialist Party left has abandoned its principles. In Gardanne, we found the road down which we can and must continue."

Alain Krivine was not the only one enthusiastic about the emergence of a new "radical pole" on the left. In the face of substantial media interest in the theme, even the normally-reticent Communist party leader Robert Hue was obliged to acknowledge an "alternative dynamic, with a particular conception of 'the left', wanting to situate itself on the left, and on concrete issues."

Nevertheless, writing in *l'Humanité* on October 24th, Hue re-stated the Communist Party leadership's reluctance to enter into any broader alliance to the left of social democracy. The General Secretary was less than lukewarm about the creation of what he called "a pole of radicalism which would consist in the unification of a part of the left in order to put pressure on the Socialist Party... tying the left into the whole balance of forces equation."

Surely changing the balance of forces equation on the left is precisely the issue facing those who want to lift the labour movement out of the muddy rut in which it has become stuck as a result of the conversion of so many social democrats to the doctrines of neo-liberalism and the imperatives of the financial markets. ★

Lorry drivers block French roads

A private sector strike for dignity

Private sector strikes always frighten those with wealth, and the French truck drivers' strike of November 1996 was no exception. The possibility of simultaneous public and private sector action against neo-liberal reforms has been demonstrated once and for all. This is particularly important in France, where media editorialists have tried to dampen widespread dissatisfaction with government policies by repeating that recent industrial disputes showed very clearly that only the "privileged" public sector workers were willing to strike. Neither the unemployed, nor the private sector workers, the story went, were willing to disrupt the economy.

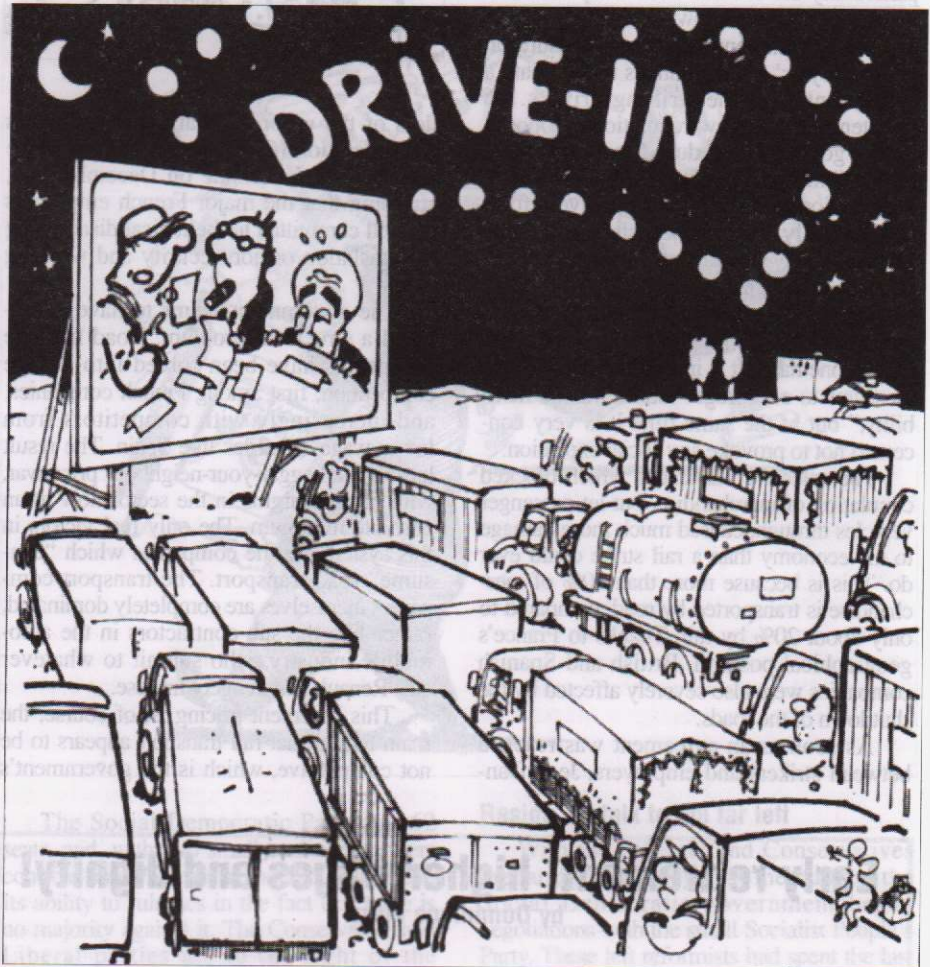
The victorious truck drivers strike has weakened the confidence of the government and the "experts." The consensus in the bourgeois discourse about "what this country needs" has been broken. Industrial, financial and political leaders contradict each other on television and in the media. Some plead for concessions to the workforce. Others continue to brandish the banner of "competitiveness" and criticise the French government for its interference in what should be employers' decisions. Some warned of the extension of the road blockade to other countries, with dire consequences for an increasingly road-transport-based European economy. Others recognised that compliance with the Maastricht criteria for European monetary union can only lead to more frequent confrontations with the labour movement. Former President Valéry Giscard D'Estang has even called for a competitive devaluation of the French Franc.

The labour movement, social movements, and left groups can exploit this blossoming division within the upper bourgeoisie, and the blockage in their project of European capitalist integration. Provided, of course, that the left parties dare say out loud that this is an illegitimate government, which must be replaced without delay. Unfortunately, Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin has responded with a call for "order" and in support of a strong exchange rate for the Franc. His top concern is to reassure the bourgeoisie that his party is a suitable alternative for managing the system.

But wage earners and the unemployed can't wait until the 1998 elections. Recent disputes on the roads, at Thomson (an engineering company) and at Electricité de France show the possibility of a unitary struggle in a range of sectors. We need to impose this view of reality on the leaders of the trade union confederations, currently bogged down in bureaucrat games at the summit, which can only discourage and demobilise the rank and file. We need to introduce the spirit of unity, the confident demands and the organising skills of the base of certain unions into the confederations as a whole.

Dominique Mezzi

[Editorial from Rouge weekly dated 5 December 1996]



Dominique Mezzi

Most of the co-ordination of the truck drivers strike a few weeks ago was done through the traditionally moderate Democratic Labour Confederation (CFDT). A good example of ABC trade union work. And, of course, the new possibilities of labour organising thanks to mobile phones and fax machines. This was the first French strike where there was a mobile phone at every barricade.

This was a well-prepared movement. The mobile phone numbers of the regional union representatives had been distributed in advance. Regular conference calls ensured that there was nation-wide support and preparation. Once the barricades went up, reports from the negotiating table were faxed to each barricade via well-equipped lorries, and via the inter-union shop steward network.

Panic?

The media in other countries was outraged by the French government's intervention in favour of a negotiated settlement. In a private sector dispute, one could have expected the state to give unconditional support to the employers, against the strikers; when Portuguese drivers took inspiration from the French, and briefly blocked a border crossing with Spain in protest at their working conditions, the police set dogs on them, and cleared the road in less than one hour.

The French government seems determined to avoid the creation of any "abscess" of social discontent which could develop into a social movement like the public sector strike which rocked France in November-December 1995. Even before the truck drivers strike broke out, the government delayed, for the second time, its proposed

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Do the workers have a country?

by José Iriarte "Bikila"

◆ £2.50/\$4. Cheque payable to P. Rousset, IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 Amsterdam, Netherlands.

reform of the National Railways (SNCF).

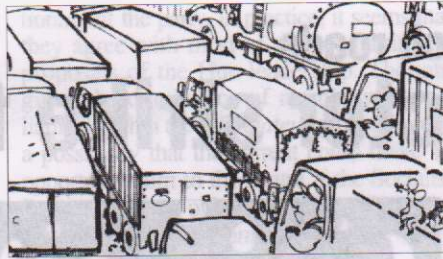
Prime Minister Alain Juppé's government backed down rather than use police force. They knew that scenes of police violence would increase the chance of the movement spreading to other sectors, particularly the bus and tram companies in a number of provincial towns.

The government put strong pressure on the employers' representatives to negotiate a settlement with the striking drivers. To sweeten this pill, new regulations proposed by the government reduced the employers' responsibility for the increased social security contributions which any progressive reform would imply. The French state has made similar concessions in other sectors in the past (the Robien law).

The Juppé government faces the beginnings of a real contradiction in its policies. On the one hand, it is introducing outrageous measures to encourage "labour market flexibility," but at the same time it is very concerned not to provoke any social explosion.

The selective barricades which blocked circulation of merchandise, but let passenger vehicles through, caused much more damage to the economy than a rail strike could ever do. This is because more than 70% of merchandise is transported by road, compared to only about 20% by rail. Thanks to France's geographical position, British and Spanish companies were also severely affected by the shutdown of the roads.

As soon as an agreement was reached between strikers and employers, Jean Dan-



dois of the umbrella National Employers Confederation (CNPF) gave a provocative interview to *Le Monde* on December 3rd, stressing that the major French employers are still committed to the radical dismantling of legislation on job-security and working hours.

The government seems to have recognised a structural problem. Road haulage companies have been forced into savage competition, first among French companies, and increasingly with competitors from lower wage countries like Spain. The result has been a beggar-your-neighbour price war, with profit margins in the sector now at an absolute minimum. The only real victors in this system are the companies which "consume" road transport. The transport companies themselves are completely dominated, rather like the sub-contractors in the automobile industry, who submit to whatever cuts Renault and Peugeot impose.

This basement pricing is, of course, the main reason that rail transport appears to be not competitive, which is the government's

justification for the cuts in the State Railway system.

New disputes?

Both the CFDT trade union confederation, and the Communist-dominated CGT come out of the strike strengthened. Particularly the CFDT, which was the organising force behind about 80% of the barricades. To the frustration of the CGT, the CFDT was already the strongest union among the drivers, whereas the more radical CGT was strongest among the depot and dispatching workers of the road transport sector.

There is also a difference in tactics. The CGT, and the third federation, FO, has traditionally organised industrial action in the workplace only. The CFDT has for some time now combined workplace action with barricades on the highways. They recognised that this was a sector dominated by a mass of very small companies, in which it is very difficult to organise a strike, given the ferocity of the repression which invariably follows.

The mobilisation of the militants of the *Transport-équipement* sector of the CFDT was quite extraordinary. The federal organisation of their union seems to have contributed to this. Railway workers were the main sector offering indirect support and solidarity. This homogeneity and solidarity reinforces the weight of *Transport-équipement* within the CFDT, where it is one of the sections most strongly opposed to the collaborationist strategy of Confederation President Nicole Notat.

Conscious of its bad image after Notat's shameful support of the government against striking public sector workers in late 1995, most sections of the CFDT did offer some support to the striking truck drivers.

The result was a strong, popular strike with legitimate demands. And in the private, rather than the public sector. Public support was clear, though the petrol shortage was, inevitably, beginning to have a negative effect on public opinion. At the end of November, the drivers decided to approve an agreement before creating another weekend of blocked roads and empty petrol stations.

In these last days of struggle, there was much discussion about the possibilities of winning direct support for the struggle from other sectors of the workforce. But there was no real possibility of spreading the strike to other sectors. Not even to the railway workers, who had been in closest contact with the lorry drivers, and had the most similar demands. There was, inevitably, a current of thought among railway workers that "since they didn't support us when we struck in December 1995, why should we support them now?"

Nevertheless, this strike has re-integrated the lorry drivers into the organised labour movement. The public no longer sees them as an atomised, individualist group, but as a group of workers who have regained their dignity, and are no longer willing to do whatever the boss says. ★

Source: *Rouge*, 5 December 1996

Early retirement, higher wages and dignity!

by Dominique Mezzi

France's striking lorry drivers have won the right to retire at the age of 55, rather than 60. This will encourage miners, train drivers, and other sectors fighting to retain their right to early retirement. It is already encouraging other sectors of workers, including public transport drivers, to demand the right to early retirement because of their difficult working conditions.

The gain in basic salary was less impressive than in the other demands. The only concrete figure is a one-off bonus of 3,000 FF. (£350, US\$600). But real salaries will certainly rise. Loading and waiting hours will now be paid in full, rather than at a fraction of salary. This can only mean a higher salary at the end of the month. New government regulations have incorporated the strikers' demands for a fairer remuneration of short-distance deliveries, "on call" hours and long

distance trips. As a result, many drivers will be able to demand payment for 10 hours a week more: hours that were until this strike counted at half-time, or simply not counted.

Improvements were also made in sickness pay and remuneration of travel to and from jobs. If no agreement on the remaining points of negotiation is reached by the end of December, the government will impose regulations governing remuneration in the areas concerned.

In total, the strike has brought an impressive increase in working conditions and salary, as well as recognition of the stressful and unpleasant aspects of road haulage work, in the form of early retirement on full pension. The new conditions, enshrined in government regulations, are a step towards a new status for the profession. ★

Rouge, 5 December 1996

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The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: an overview

by Catherine Samary

◆ £5/\$6.50. Cheque payable to P. Rousset, IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Red Green Alliance asks itself Is there ever a "good" budget?

Last month the Danish government turned to the left opposition for support in passing the 1997 state budget. But this unexpected move does not reflect a general turn to the left. Nor is it the result of pressure by trade unions or other social movements.

The problem for the government is simply that the right opposition in parliament considered the budget way too moderate.

Age Skovrind

Earlier in 1996, Social Democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen invited all the parties to participate in negotiations about the draft budget. Since the Danish economy had been doing quite well in capitalist terms, and has already met the criteria for European Monetary Union, the draft budget did not include harsh austerity measures, "only" some cuts in health, social and cultural programmes.

The invitation was above all intended for the two big right-wing parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals. The 1996 budget was the result of Conservative-Social Democratic co-operation, and one of the worst budget agreements the working class has suffered under in recent years. It included a drastic attack on the right to unemployment benefit, the exclusion of young workers from unemployment benefit, and the complete abolition of taxes on personal fortunes. Unfortunately, this unpleasant package was not resisted by extra-parliamentary mobilisations.

This time round, the government almost repeated its agreement with the Conservative Party. In late September 1996 the Social Democrats agreed to a new series of austerity measures, including a major tax reform and cuts in several social budgets.

Break with tradition

Suddenly, the Conservatives backed out of the negotiations, and sharpened their demands. They warned that they would vote against the budget, unless the government proposed measures acceptable to a majority of members in the parliament. This is something new in Denmark, where normal practice is for the "responsible" opposition to speak against the budget in debate, but then vote for it, rather than call into question the legitimacy of a minority government, like the current Social Democratic administration. According to tradition, if the government cannot get approval for its budget, it must resign immediately.



The Social Democratic Party has 62 seats, and, with two small coalition partners controls only 75 seats in the 175 parliament. Its ability to rule lies in the fact that there is no majority against it. The Conservative and Liberal parties are to the right of the Governing coalition, while the Socialist Peoples Party and the Red Green Alliance are to its left.

By walking out of the negotiations, the Conservatives probably hoped to provoke new elections. Recent opinion polls suggest that the Conservatives and Liberals could command a majority in a new parliament. Although they could only do so if they won the co-operation of two small far-right parties.

The Conservatives clearly feel pressure from the right. Support for the Liberals grew rapidly during the 1980s, under their camera-friendly leader Ellemann Jensen (Foreign Minister in the 1982-92 Conservative government). Jensen has attracted younger voters, and captured part of the Conservative electorate in the towns. And when the Conservatives made a pact with the Social Democrats to pass the 1996 budget, they effectively split the right.

The right also got a smell of power when the Social Democrats humiliated themselves by first cancelling the November ceremony at which British writer Salman Rushdie was to receive the European Union's Aristeon Prize for Literature, then backing down under protest from all sides.

Resign, or talk to the far left

With the Liberals and Conservatives preparing to vote against the budget, the Social Democratic government began negotiations with the small Socialist People's Party. These left reformists had spent the last few years out in the cold. Prime Minister Rasmussen was now offering them an influence on Danish politics again.

The other left opposition party, the Red Green Alliance had not voted for the 1996 budget. But in August 1996 it declared that it would back the government, including in the final vote, if five budget demands were met. These included a guarantee of a real job for all unemployed workers before they lose unemployment benefit. (Under the 1996 budget, benefit is cut off after five years).

Within the Alliance, there was growing opposition to this announcement, as a matter of principle (since no-one seriously believed that the government would meet these five demands). "Can we ever vote for a state budget in a capitalist state, and, if so, in what circumstances?" members asked.

In October, the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party (SAP), the Danish section of the Fourth International, which is part of the Alliance, asked "how serious is opposition to the military, if one can vote for their expenses? And what about those young workers whose conditions were attacked by last year's budget...? The state budget is a totality of bourgeois Social Democratic policies and, for that reason, recent

announcements by the Alliance may undermine the impression that a credible alternative to the ruling misery exists."

Time for real politics

This was the situation when the Red Green Alliance convened its annual conference in late November. If Alliance deputies abstained in the budget vote, the government would survive. The question of how to vote on the budget was no longer just a matter of principle. It had become a question of real politics. Delegates arrived at the conference carrying national newspapers with titles like "Government's future to be decided this weekend" and "Everyone is waiting for the Alliance."

The alternatives discussed were to vote against the budget, or to abstain. Delegates expressed a range of views on what to do, but well-defined currents did not emerge during the conference. The precise content of the final budget proposal was still unclear, and subject to negotiation.

The conference left the final decision to the new National Committee, but unanimously adopted a statement saying "there is no doubt that the Alliance will oppose and vote no to the budget now taking shape. Although the Alliance will vote for partial agreements, we will maintain our opposition to an overall state budget which is substantially a continuation of previous [Social Democrat] budgets passed in agreement with the Conservatives and the Liberals.

"But, if the final vote is a question of survival for the government, the National Committee will convene and decide which way the Alliance will vote. But the Alliance will only consider abstaining... if the budget contains improvements compared to last year."

The Alliance

Enhedslisten — de rød-grønne (Unity List — the Red-Greens) was formed in 1989 at the initiative of the Left Socialists (VS), the Communist Party (DKP) and the Socialist Workers Party (SAP — the Danish section of the Fourth International).

In 1991 they were joined by the ex-Maoist Communist Workers Party (KAP).

Since then, the Alliance has developed into an independent organisation, with no special privileges for any affiliated party. Despite its name, no "Green" organisation has ever joined the organisation.

In December 1990 the Alliance stood in national parliamentary elections for the first time, and won 1.7% of the vote, failing to enter parliament (which requires 2% of the national vote).

In September 1994, the Alliance won 3.1%, and has six seats in the present parliament.

Total membership, in November 1996, was 1,273.



The conference also adopted a revised political programme, which defines the goals of the Alliance in more radical terms (revolution, workers' power, planned economy...) In the section on parliamentary work, the programme states that "the Alliance will... vote against any cut in social programmes. Thus, the Alliance can only vote for an overall state budget which marks a decisive break with bourgeois policies, and does not include any deterioration in conditions."

Make-your-mind-up time

In the days and weeks following the Red Green Alliance conference, things moved very quickly. The Conservatives maintained their "No" position, and the government concluded a major agreement with the Socialist Peoples Party. This included a series of small improvements, and dropping all the planned social cuts.

At this point the Alliance parliamentary group suggested to the National Committee that they should abstain in the final vote,

allowing the budget to pass. If the Alliance deputies voted against the budget, alongside the bourgeois opposition, then the budget would fail, and these "important" concessions would not be realised, they argued.

These include an increase in the number and quality of student places, "green" job programmes, non-hydrocarbon energy programmes, and increased funding for programmes for children in poor conditions. On the other hand, these measures represent spending of about 500 million Danish Krøner, which is only about 0.2% of the total budget.

After debate, the National Committee voted 17:3 in favour of abstention. The three Fourth Internationalists on the National Committee voted with the majority.

What now?

The political programme adopted at the November conference committed the Alliance to a decisive break from bourgeois politics. But what exactly does this mean? Can abstaining on the state budget can hardly be seen in this light?

The government had to rely on the votes of the left, and it paid a price, by dropping the most anti-worker elements in the budget. As a result, there is a general impression that severe cutbacks have been avoided, and that some social and ecological gains have been made.

Hopefully, this impression can stimulate more activity by workers, unions and social movements, and encourage them to take action for more demands.

The debate in the Alliance will continue. There will be a general debate on the political line on the state budget in Spring. No-one wants to repeat the situation the Alliance faced with the 1997 budget. ★



EL FISEN

Hebron

The disastrous settlement

Why can't Israel and the Palestinian Authority agree on a redeployment of the Israeli troops occupying Hebron? After all, Arafat accepts that Israel will intervene whenever it wants.

Tikva Honig-Parnass

The main disputed point between Netanyahu and Arafat concerns the right of Israeli troops to enter the area of Hebron under Palestinian rule - both to chase and arrest those suspected of committing military operations, and carrying-out preventative arrests.

Israel insisted on an explicit, written acknowledgement of this right of so-called 'hot pursuit' and 'cold pursuit' from Arafat, and he agreed. However, in order to maintain the facade of steadfastness he needs to present his people, he asked that the written document state that the entry of Israeli troops into Arab Hebron be permitted only in 'exceptional' circumstances!

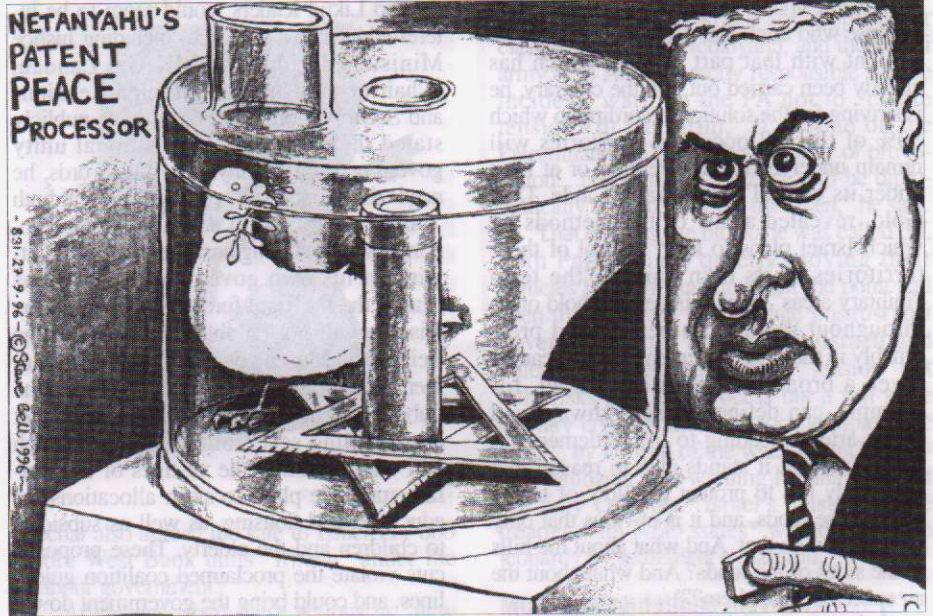
In practice, this would not prevent the entry of Israeli troops in even a single instance, because it is understood that Israel will be the sole judge of what is to be considered 'exceptional'. In addition, the Palestinians demanded that Netanyahu state in writing the target dates for the three additional redeployments in the West Bank mandated under the Taba Interim Agreement (the first of which should have been carried out this September) and the freeing of about 20 women political prisoners (but not the 5,000 male political prisoners that are still being held in Israeli prisons!!).

Likud support for Hebron agreement

The return to the original Hebron agreement is also a return to the 'good old Oslo Accords', which are so ideal for Israel. The claim by the Palestinians and of the Labor Party that Israel's right to enter Arab Hebron and indeed all the cities under Palestinian rule is fully inherent in the Oslo Accords was finally confirmed by Netanyahu. Thus, when he suddenly 'discovered' it in the last week of November, he agreed that instead of mentioning this right explicitly in the new agreement, there would be a reference to the provisions of the Interim Agreement which place the over-all responsibility for the security of Israelis living in the occupied territories in the hands of Israel, and explicitly gives it all the authority needed to fulfill this responsibility, including the right to enter the autonomy areas and to arrest people suspected of committing or planning military operations.²

Of course, the Palestinians are inclined to accept the Israeli proposal. The Prime Minister's office announced that at the 26 November negotiating session, the Pales-

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tinians stated that they would consent to give the Israeli army freedom of action in Hebron on condition that this not be explicitly mentioned in the agreement in order "not to make problems [for us] with our public."³

The long months in which Netanyahu dragged out the Hebron negotiations allowed him to present himself to the far right-wing of the governing coalition, and the extremists among the settlers, as a man determined not only to provide for the settlers' security, but also to save the State of Israel and the entire Jewish people. He needed these months of delay in order to paint the redeployment in the colors of national security, as if he had achieved more in this regard than Peres.

In this way he hoped to soften the opposition to the redeployment from Hebron, and to guarantee the necessary majority within his own government to implement the Hebron agreement. For this purpose, Netanyahu repeatedly promised to thicken settlements, repeatedly attacked the Oslo Accords for their 'neglect' of Israel's security needs, and even paralyzed the whole country for two whole days in the first week of November, because of intelligence service warnings about an Islamic Jihad plan to explode a car-bomb in one of Israel's cities. Because of the many roadblocks, central Israel's highways became the site of one tremendous traffic jam, work-days were squandered and the economy suffered huge losses.

And indeed, Netanyahu managed to accomplish what he set out to do. The moderate camp of the National Religious Party is growing stronger and stronger. On 24 November, that party's political bureau, including a number of leaders known for their hawkishness and close affiliation to the most extreme settlers accepted the 'moderates'

proposal decision: to support the Hebron agreement, while seemingly conditioning their acceptance on "preserving the security of the Jewish community in Hebron, allowing the conditions to develop it and keeping responsibility for security in all of Hebron in the hands of the IDF"⁴

Even Rabbi Moshe Levinger, the first Jewish settler in Hebron, self-confessed murderer of a Palestinian merchant and inciter to pogroms against Palestinians, expressed his support for a Hebron agreement, on the grounds of "preserving the unity of the [Jewish] people, and prohibition of fighting against the majority of the people". And it is indeed true that 80% of Israelis support this agreement - almost all of the 50% who voted for Peres, plus about 60% of the 50% who voted for Netanyahu.

Many of the supporters of the Hebron Agreement are mislead to believe that it will lead to a solution of co-existence between the 400 violent settlers - who have been left in the heart of the town - and the 120,000 Hebronites. Only few military commanders have dared to say the truth, namely that it is a 'time-bomb' solution.

Beilin-Abu Mazen Plan

Broad support for the Hebron agreement reflects broad support for the Oslo Accords, and signals that in the future a considerable portion of Likud voters will support Netanyahu in whatever agreements he signs with the Palestinians, including an agreement allowing for the establishment of some kind of Palestinian entity with symbolic tokens of sovereignty.

This magazine has repeatedly explained the nature of the final settlement which is becoming more and more acceptable to the

majority of the leadership of the Likud; the cynicism in the Israeli position, which is shared by both Labor and the Likud, and the readiness of most 'peace-seekers' in Israel and the international community to accept the planned final settlement. Amir Oren, writing in *Ha'aretz* (22 Nov. 1996) reported Netanyahu saying that he rejects the opinion of those who think that it would be best to be content with that part of Oslo which has already been carried out. On the contrary, he is striving for the solution according to which 80% of the '67 occupied territories will remain under Israeli sovereignty or at least under its control'. Netanyahu's aide, Dori Gold, revealed a few of the methods by which Israel plans to keep control of these territories in its own hands: "the term 'military areas' [which Israel will hold on to throughout the interim period, and presumably in the final settlement as well] can be given a broad interpretation. Israel, for example, can define all the highways and traffic arteries leading to the settlements as military areas; it stands also to reason that somebody has to protect the flow of traffic along these roads, and it is obvious that only the IDF can do that. And what about the hills to the sides of the roads? And what about the air space between them?"

It is not surprising, then, that the "80% plan" is acceptable to the harder Right forces in the government, like Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi, as well. This Hanegbi is the same man who not so long ago shut off the microphones when Rabin spoke before a mass rally organized by the Labor Party; this is the man who that same year said: "I would have put Jericho under curfew - no one could get in and no one could get out. Not a pregnant woman and not a child who needs chemotherapy". This person, who is quite close to Netanyahu, declared at the beginning of this month: "I am certainly ready to learn from the experience of 1994-96, and not bury my head in the sand like an ostrich in the presence of the new developments... I am prepared to restrain my emotional reaction to the PLO and to give an arrangement a chance to emerge". He even addressed the Palestinians in front of the Knesset and assured them: "there is much to talk about" - including "symbols of sovereignty such as passports, stamps and coins".

The force which paved the way for this 'moderation' were the Labor Party 'doves' who spawned the Beilin-Abu Mazen Agreement, which permitted around 80% of the territories of the occupied territories and the majority of the settlers to remain under Israeli sovereignty, and which provides that the village of Abu-Dis will be the capital of the Palestinian state-to-be. This plan, which, ac-

ording to press reports, 'all the top leaders of the Likud' are now studying', can indeed serve as a basis for the establishment of a national unity government with the Labor Party. Likud leaders are now talking with Beilin and other Labor leaders about an alliance, with Netanyahu's blessing. Most of the top Likud leaders would seem to be interested in such a prospect - including Justice Minister Meridor and MK Uzi Landau, (Chair of the Knesset's Foreign Relations and Security Committee), and have publicly stated their support for a national unity government. In Netanyahu's own words, he needs the support of the Labor Party, in both 'foreign policy and in dealing with the economic situation' - against the extreme right-wing of his own government, as well as against the far Right forces outside it. Otherwise he will not be able to implement the Beilin-Abu Mazen version of the final settlement. Similarly, he needs the support of the Labor Party in order to push through budget cuts totalling seven billion dollars, which will utterly destroy the vestiges of the welfare state. He plans to slash allocations for education and housing, as well as subsidies to children and the elderly. These proposed cuts violate the proclaimed coalition guidelines, and could bring the government down. Two parties who profess to represent distressed sectors, the Russian immigrants' party, *Yisrael b'Aliya*, and David Levy's Geshet, with pretensions to speak for the under-privileged Mizrahi neighborhoods, could leave the coalition over economic issues.

The 'unholy alliance'

Netanyahu might distance himself from the extreme Right, 'legitimize' himself and win the cooperation of the Labor Party in jointly implementing the Oslo plan. One should not forget that Peres would not have been able to carry out the plan without right-wing support. Thus, it is possible that the wide consensus around the Hebron agreement reflects a broad new Israeli consensus that has recently crystallized in favor of the Palestinian surrender agreement concerning the final settlement, ending with an apartheid state in all of historic Palestine. The journalist Haim Baram is correct in pronouncing this growing national unity "an alliance between the bourgeoisie, clericalism, and militarism, somewhat reminiscent of the coalition which brought Franco to power in Spain"⁶

A decision handed down by the High Court in the last week of November, is like writing on the wall, reflecting this alliance so necessary to the establishment of the full apartheid state, including in Israel proper

itself. On 25 November, the Court approved the law, passed by a majority of the Knesset, prohibiting the import of non-kosher meat. With crocodile tears, the court proclaimed that it was forced to give priority to the principle of majority rule over the right of free enterprise. According to the well-known progressive jurist Moshe Negbi: "the constitutional revolution in Israel [the reference is to two basic laws passed by the Knesset in recent years, the Law for the Protection of Human Dignity and Freedom and the Law for the Protection of Free Enterprise - both intended to serve as a quasi-constitutional 'bill of rights'] was defeated today; this judgment put the nail in its coffin and dealt a blow to democracy here". Moreover, Supreme Court President Barak himself once wrote: "a regime in which the majority can deprive the minority of its basic rights is not a democracy". But this decision, Negbi believes, "gives a green light to the Knesset to pass laws humiliating Arabs - if at least 61 Knesset Members vote for it"⁷

The continuation of the discussion revealed the real internal contradictions which beset even a democratic jurist as Negbi. In answer to the question of another panelist: "Isn't this a Jewish state according to our Declaration of Independence?" Negbi the Zionist did not challenge the Jewishness of the state, only the religious concept of what is Jewish, and added: [True, this is a Jewish state], "but the question is, in what sense: national or religious?"

Given their ideological blinders, even for Zionists who genuinely believe in a Jewish secular and democratic society, it is difficult to offer any real opposition to this unholy alliance between clericalism, militarism and the bourgeoisie - which is leading to not only further repression of Palestinians, but of Jews as well. ★

Notes

- 1 'Within the territory under the security responsibility of the [Palestinian] Council, in places where Israeli authorities exercise their security functions in accordance with this Annex and in their immediate vicinities, the Israeli authorities may carry out engagement steps in cases where an act or incidence requires such action. In such cases, the Israeli authorities will take any measures necessary to bring to an end such an act or incident with a view to transferring, at the earliest opportunity, the continued handling of the incident falling within the Palestinian responsibility to the Palestinian Police. The Palestinian Police will immediately be notified, through the relevant DCO, of such engagement steps.' (September 1995 Interim Agreement, Annex I, Article 11(3)(b) The Agreement defines 'engagement' as 'an immediate response to an act or an incident constituting a danger to life or property that is aimed at preventing or terminating such an act or incident, or apprehending its perpetrators.' (Annex I, Article 11(3)(a)).
2. Akiva Eldar, *Yediot Aharanot* 21 November 1996.
3. *Ha'aretz*, 28 November 1996.
4. *Yediot Aharanot*, 22 November 1996.
5. Akiva Eldar, *Yediot Aharanot*, 31 October 1996.
6. *Kol Ha'ir*, 22 November 1996.
7. from a radio panel discussion.

"Israel agreed to give up the demand for hot and cold pursuit after Yoel Zinger, the previous government's legal adviser to the negotiations, explained that... 'the stronger partner in the negotiations [Israel] precisely should prefer vague statements, and then in cases of contradictory interpretation, the stronger partner will implement his interpretations on the ground' " -- D. Rubenstein, *Ha'aretz*, 2 December 1996

Land day

Palestinian discontent increases

On 15 November Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza observed Independence Day. It was eight years since the Algiers Palestine National Council finally voted for a two state solution to the Palestinian/ Israeli conflict.

Graham Usher

In a televised address, Yasser Arafat vowed that the eventual content of Palestinian independence would be "a state with Jerusalem as its capital". Elsewhere in the self-rule areas a public holiday was declared, with the main emphasis on parades by the Palestinian police (units of the PLO's old Palestine Liberation Army) and speeches from one or other of the Palestinian Authority's new district governors in the West Bank and Gaza (ex-commanders of the PLO's old Western Sector military command). But the dominant mood remains one of despondency, soured by Israeli actions on the ground.

Independence Day festivities highlighted the central paradox the Oslo process has imposed on the Palestinian struggle. People in the occupied territories have never been freer to express their nationalism on occasions like Independence Day. But they have never felt so restrained in their resistance to the ongoing reality of Israeli occupation, and the *de facto* denial of their national rights.

For most people in the West Bank and Gaza, this is a paradox that cannot endure. Following the armed and popular confrontations that rocked the territories in late September, Arafat's dilemma is that he knows sooner or later he will have to move, either to quell the growing discontent of his people or (as he did, partially, in September) to throw his and the PA's authority behind it.

Struggling against settlements

The Oslo paradox is especially apparent in the Palestinians' so far hamstrung struggle against what is perhaps the gravest threat to any future Palestinian independence - Israel's settlement policies in the West Bank.

On 10 November, one Palestinian was killed and 12 wounded after the Israeli army opened fire on a peaceful Palestinian demonstration in the West Bank village of Deir Qiddis, near Ramallah. The 100 or so villagers (led by their local Land Defence Committee and backed by several Palestinian Legislative Council members) had been protesting Israeli seizures of their land to expand the Jewish orthodox settlement of Kiryat Sefer.

Nine days later, Israel's Defence Minister, Yitzak Mordechai, approved the construction of 1,200 housing units for the settlement of Emmanuel, over 25 km east of the Green Line. The units will be built on 100 acres of land confiscated from the Palestinian village of Deir Isitya, near Nablus. Mor-



dechai also agreed the sale to Israelis of 600 more West Bank units "frozen" under the Labour government.

Arafat described these actions as "new and dangerous". There are also signs that he has given a cautious go ahead to Palestinians to oppose them, on the ground as well as rhetorically. On 21 November - in what was a clearly prepared statement of policy - PA Information Minister, Yasser Abed Rabbo, warned that Israel's ongoing expansion of settlements would provoke "total confrontation" between Israel and the Palestinians. "The only alternative that this (Israeli) government leaves for us is to confront this policy... with all the means that are possible and at all levels," he said.

The next day a joint meeting of the PLO executive and PA Cabinet called on Palestinians to reclaim confiscated land in the West Bank and Gaza, declared it would support any Palestinian resistance politically and financially, and urged "popular confrontation" every time "Israeli bulldozers appear on Palestinian land".

Two days later, on 24 November, several dozen Palestinian cars and trucks blocked a junction leading to Netzarim, a Zionist mini-settlement in the centre of Gaza. The Palestinians were protesting the Israeli army's two year closure of a road that runs alongside the settlement and which, according to Oslo, should be open to Palestinian traffic. There have been sporadic Palestinian protests outside Netzarim ever since Oslo was signed. But this was the first time Palestinian drivers were assisted in their demonstrations by PA police officers, who not only allowed the traffic jam but redirected vehicles into the closed road.

Israel's response was to bring Armoured Personnel Carriers to the Netzarim junction and tanks to Gaza's Nahal Oz exit to Israel. Several hundred Israeli soldiers permanently stationed in or near the settlement dug in behind its sandbagged fortifications, mas-

sively reinforced since the September clashes. Binyamin Netanyahu, and the Israeli army held Arafat directly responsible for the incident, warning the PA not to "create tension" in Netzarim. "If anyone on the Palestinian side thinks that a policy of provocation... bordering on violence will be diplomatically fruitful, they are mistaken," he said.

That evening, the blockade was called off, with Palestinians quietly moving their vehicles from the junction. But the point had been made. Given the absolute mistrust that governs relations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, the slightest "tension" not only risks the Oslo process but a full scale military confrontation. As for the diplomatic "fruit", by the end of the week Egypt's President Mubarak was warning Netanyahu that not only Oslo but "Israel's existing peace treaties with Arab states" would be put in jeopardy by settlement expansion.

More confrontations inevitable?

Arafat is adept at raising the political heat in the West Bank and Gaza only to then channel it into diplomacy. His problem since the September confrontations is that, while he has strengthened the Palestinians' international standing vis à vis Israel, he has not effected any change in Likud government policy. After two months, there is still no deal on Hebron anywhere on the horizon.

Nor have the diplomatic gains made any real dent on Netanyahu's expansionist ambitions for the West Bank. In a calculated show of defiance, on 26 November, the Israeli leader made his first visit as PM to a West Bank Jewish settlement. Standing on the perimeter of Ariel (with 13,000 settlers, the second largest settlement in the West Bank), Netanyahu vowed to increase the growth of West Bank settlements because "this land has been empty for thousands of years". Ariel is a few kilometres west of Nablus.

Many Palestinians are concluding that another round of confrontations may be the only way to push their struggle forward. Including the influential political scientist, Khalil Shakaki. Two months after the September clashes, he argues that there is now "only one way" to respond to Likud's settlement drive: "Confrontation. In every town and village where Israel attempts to expand settlements, there should be an immediate and physical confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians. The Palestinians must force the region and the world to understand that we will fight further settlement. The protests should be mass based and non-violent, though any confrontation risks violence given Israel's rule in the occupied territories. We should not stop negotiating, but the PA should bolster the negotiators' hand by authorising mass popular protests". ★

Source: *News from Within*

Morocco: Absolute manipulation

Abdel Baki Yussi and Mdebi Aziz of the Casablanca-based radical left weekly *Annahj Demokrati* (*Democratic Way*) discuss King Hassan's latest "democratisation" moves.

Abdel Baki Yussi: this latest constitutional reform comes at a moment when the balance of power is particularly favourable to the regime. The new Cooperation Agreement with the European Union has consolidated Hassan's internal power, and external support. Hassan's visit to France last year confirmed his "special relationship" with the former colonial power! At the beginning of 1996, the regime even launched a "clean-up" campaign, supposedly targeting smugglers, the Mafia, the drugs trade and corruption.

Meanwhile, the opposition parties have been weakened by internal conflicts, and the quality and level of their public activity has declined.² The new left is very weak, and the trade unions recently made an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior which might lead to three years of 'social peace' and reduced rights for the working population.

In other words, the context is one of a strengthened regime, and weakness of the democratic and progressive camp.

This reform only incorporates two, quite minor points from the memorandum of the Democratic Bloc from March 1996, reducing the period of each parliament from six to five years, and placing the High Council for Accounts within the constitutional ambit.

The regime organised a referendum on this new constitution as a result of external pressures, and also because of the economic, social and political blockage in Morocco. The only way out seems to be the "democratisation" of the regime.

Of course, the new constitution doesn't stipulate a real separation of powers. And parliament remains a formal institution. The parties of the democratic bloc had demanded that parliament be elected directly, and that the King no longer have the right to appoint one third of deputies. Under this reform, parliament will have a directly elected Chamber of Representatives, and an indirectly elected Chamber of Counsellors. Both chambers will have the same prerogatives. So even if we had democratic elections, even if the democratic opposition wins a majority, and even if we are allowed to form a government, the Chamber of Counsellors will be able to dissolve the government!

Mnebi Aziz: The regime is trying to rearrange the nature of the monarchical rule, with one eye on the day when Hassan II will

no longer be king. The monarch is determined to reinforce the institutions of monarchy, to protect the system against challenges when he departs.

The new constitution has no juridical value, and represents nothing new. It is yet another measure which concentrates legislative, executive and administrative power in the hands of the monarchy. The king remains the centre of political power in Morocco. Neither the parliament, nor even the Chamber of Counsellors will have any real power to take decisions. Both chambers in the new parliament will just be sounding boards for the choices and policies which Hassan II chooses to put forward.

The opposition response

Abdel Baki Yussi: This was the first time since 1962 that the parties of the democratic bloc voted in favour of one of the monarchy's constitutional re-shuffles. This made the referendum a kind of plebiscite in favour of the regime. This will provoke a crisis for the radical left, which was convinced that the democratic bloc could hardly approve a constitution which did not respond at all to the memorandum on constitutional reform which the democratic parties had proposed in March 1997, to the obvious dis-interest of the regime.

The radical left³ boycotted the referendum. This is a step forward, towards the construction of an alliance, or some kind of framework where the various radical forces can struggle together for a constituent as-

sembly, for a new dynamism in the trade unions, and in the human rights movement, women's associations, and unemployed groups.

We organised a common declaration calling for the boycott, supported by common meetings and common leaflets. The regime claims an 83% participation rate, with 99.56% of voters approving the new constitution. But we know that the abstention rate was significant in the larger towns, like Tangiers, Fes and Casablanca.

Mnebi Aziz: The real participation rate cannot have been higher than the 60% of registered voters who participated in the 1993 elections.⁴

The dilemma for the regime is that it needs the support of the democratic bloc in order to legitimise its reforms. But the parliamentary opposition is so weak that it cannot even defend the interests of the regime in the face of popular frustration. This makes the opposition unsuitable as a guardian of social peace for Hassan II.

At the same time, the opposition can hardly stop supporting the regime, and "go over" to the people. This would mean calling into question their policies and practice since the mid 1960s!

Some leaders of the democratic forces have material interests which prevent them from breaking from the regime bloc. Nevertheless, a part of the base of these parties is clearly opposed to their leaders' policies.

The role of revolutionary and radical democratic forces is to win over this base, by offering perspectives for action which are not just "political", but have something to say about the social, trade union, feminist and cultural aspects of struggle. The challenge is to build a unified democratic movement which will be able to create links between the various fields of action.

Abdel Baki Yussi: Before the referendum campaign started, our current, Democratic Way, was present in the various associations, the trade unions, the Amazigh (Berber cultural) movement, the women's and unemployed movements. The boycott campaign was not an isolated incident, but the crowning element in a longer process. The important thing about the referendum campaign is that it created two currents, across and within the political parties: for or against participation in the referendum. For example, the youth section of the USFP called on the party to vote against the new constitution. The divergence between these two currents even led to a split in the OAS, with a majority of comrades opposed to participation.

The fact that the larger parties were



polarised over this question made it possible to organise, in Tangiers and Casablanca, meetings between the USFP, PAGS, the Moroccan Human Rights Association (AMDH), the Amazigh (Berber) Association, the unemployed movement, and ourselves, Democratic Way. These meetings produced a common declaration calling for a boycott, which was distributed in the streets in large numbers.

The campaign for a boycott was short — from August 20th until the vote on 13th September. But we will have more time to prepare the boycott of the next municipal and parliamentary elections.

Not that we should limit ourselves to electoral politics. The goal is the construction of a wide front, which can integrate all the radical forces, and be able to struggle against the regime, taking up the struggles of the exploited classes, the workers, the poor and the unemployed, with the perspective of creating a modern, democratic state.

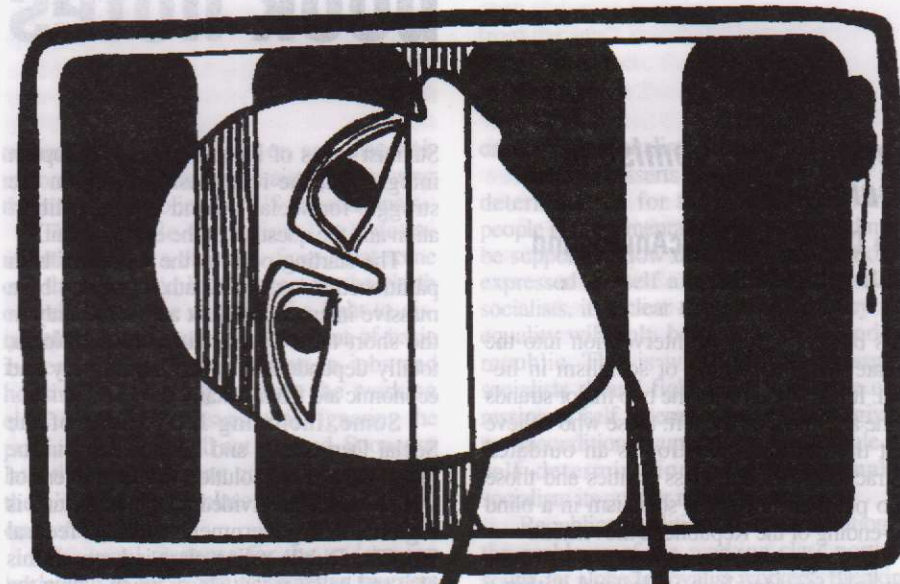
Mnebi Aziz: We also need to consolidate the work of the radical democratic militants in the trade unions. How to unify the working class? One way is to reinforce the trade union struggles of the two major confederations, the Democratic Labour Confederation (CDT) and the General Union of Workers of Morocco (UGTM), and even in the confederation linked to the nationalist, democratic party, Istiqlal.

We need to take up the most basic demands of the Moroccan people. More than 11 million people live below the poverty threshold. This is unacceptable. We need to mobilise alongside these people to bring them out of poverty, to put an end to their humiliation by a regime which has appropriated the best land, oppresses the people who have the right to that land, and deprives them of all forms of dignity and sovereignty.

Today, the regime is weak, which allows the democratic movement to put forward more radical slogans than in the past. The manoeuvre round the referendum is proof of this weakness. The role of the radical democratic current is to take up the various struggle which exist. The radical democratic current is the central element in the democratic struggle today. We need to consolidate and reinforce trade union work, and try to make this work converge with the other social movements, like the feminist, Berber and unemployed movements. This is the only way towards the building of a revolutionary party.

Fundamentalists

Mnebi Aziz: The fundamentalists are a real danger nowadays. Particularly because the radical democratic movement is unable to



occupy the centre-stage of social unrest, in a context where suffering and drama is the daily lot of the population. Having said this, the history and the positions of the Moroccan Islamic fundamentalist movement shows that this current is only a puppet in the hands of the regime, Arab reactionaries abroad, and imperialism, particularly the USA.

These currents aren't struggling against the regime. Their main contradiction is not with the regime, but with the democratic movement. Just look at their position on essential questions like democracy and women. One day, these fundamentalist movements could play a role of breaking up the democratic movement. That is how they tried to develop at the beginning of the 1990s, until the strength of the counter-mobilisation pushed them back.

The only way to fight this current is through a philosophical, cultural and political struggle, particularly aimed at the poorer quarters where the fundamentalist current is strongest. At the same time, we have to support their right to express themselves, including the liberation of their political prisoners, even those who we suspect of having organised violent attacks against democratic militants.

Abdel Baki Yussi: It is the poverty here in Morocco which has helped the fundamentalist movement to grow. Poverty caused an increase in prostitution, and in the number of homeless people. This is a fertile context for the propagation of fundamentalist ideas, particularly when these currents have financial support from Saudi Arabia and dodgy business ventures here in Morocco.

The radical left has always denounced the obscurantist ideas of the fundamentalists as a matter of principle. But the larger political parties, the USFP, Istiqlal and OAS, have tended to make conciliatory statements. Although the USFP took a different line when the fundamentalists physically

prevented them from holding public meetings at Casablanca University.

What is worse, these parties keep on making solemn declarations about the need for the regime to lift the restrictions on Sheik Abdelsallem Yassin [a fundamentalist leader under house arrest]. This is a man who campaigns actively against democracy. In his book *An interview with eminent democrats*, Yassin explicitly rejects democracy as an option for Morocco. When his house-arrest was last lifted (for two days), he used his liberty to make a public statement that all the democratic parties are only opportunist groups, in the pay of the regime, and, therefore, they should be fought against.

We have a range of fundamentalist currents in Morocco, but they share the most reactionary ideas, and seem to want to take the country back in time 14 centuries, beyond the renaissance.

The fundamentalists didn't take a position on the constitutional referendum. Their policy is to avoid taking positions concerning the regime. Instead, they concentrate on building up their organisations. They are present in the universities, and some of the trade unions. They also do charity work in the poorer districts. This obviously brings them popularity, and a certain credibility. ★

Notes

Interviewed by Sonia Leith

For more information about the radical left current which animates *Democratic Way* newspaper, see *International Viewpoint* #270 and #271

1. France's Moroccan possessions became independent in 1956. A Spanish-occupied zone in the north of the country was attached later. Ceuta and Melilla, two towns on Morocco's Mediterranean coast, are still under Spanish occupation.

2. This is true for the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), the Progress and Socialism Party (PPS, ex-Communist) and the Organisation of Democratic and Popular Action (OADP)

3. Including Democratic Way, Socialist Avant-Guard Party (PAGS), and the opposition current in the OADP (formed when part of the ex-Maoist 23 March group became legal).

4. From an electoral register of 12.3 million voters.

Ireland: The Promise of Socialism

Joe Craig, John McNulty and Paul Flanagan

This book is a timely intervention into the debate about the future of socialism in Ireland. It takes issue with the two major strands in the argument on the left: those who believe that the national question is an outdated distraction from real class politics and those who put their hopes for socialism in a blind tail-ending of the Republican movement.

Its scope is wide ranging. It situates the struggle for socialism in Ireland within a broad framework covering the fall of the

Stalinist states of Eastern Europe, European integration, the relationship between the struggle for socialism and women's liberation and the question of the environment.

The starting point is the failure of both partitioned states; the South, paralysed by a massive international debt and saved only in the short term by EU aid, and the North, totally dependent on political, military and economic aid from Britain.

Some, including John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party in the North believe the solution to the problem of what he calls the divided people of Ireland is regional self government within a federal EU. The Dublin ruling class is keen on this idea and believes that closer union within the EU is the way to overcome the country's his-

toric dependence on Britain. Thus Irish independence is to be achieved by greater European unity. Unfortunately for them a large section of the Conservative and Unionist Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland does not share this Euro ideal.

Neo-colonialism

This exchange of dependence on Britain for dependence on the EU is precisely what occurred after 1960 in the South. The attempt at native economic development between 1932 and 1958 ran into the sand by the late fifties. What followed was an abrupt about-turn by the Fianna Fail government - opening the economy to foreign capital and a dash for membership of the European Union. The effect of the influx of foreign capital was a rapid growth in the number of jobs controlled by multinational capital and the decimation of domestic industry.

The book takes issue with the argument, put forward by the Socialist Workers Movement and others, that the South is not a neo-colony. This would have us believe that the South is not to be bracketed with the underdeveloped world, that it is no more subject to the ebbs and flows of international capital than other economy and finally, that Dublin is capable of acting on its own behalf outside the control of its colonial masters.

The fact is that the Irish economy was shaped in Britain's interests, that what determines capital accumulation in Ireland is the capital flows of the imperialist countries and, finally, that despite those sectors, such as drugs, computers and electronics which have sprouted since the influx of multinational capital in the 1960s and which make such a big difference to the balance of trade, there remains a high dependence by native capital on the British market. This dependence was clear in the big devaluation of the Irish pound after the British currency crashed out of the ERM in 1992.

One of the most important consequences of this dependence on multinational capital is the fact that about 12% of GDP is repatriated by the same multinationals. The lack of investment which accompanies such massive capital outflows means that manufacturing productivity in both parts of Ireland is about 75% of that in Britain and Britain is by no means a world leader in this area.

The National Question

As well as being a neo-colony (the South) and a colony (the North), Ireland has an unresolved national question. British rule has never been accepted by the majority of the people of Ireland and Britain can only maintain that rule through repression and sectarianism. For the authors, there is only one legitimate response to this oppression;

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immediate withdrawal and disbanding of the repressive forces which it has brought into being.

This demand is a democratic one but should not, as some socialists do, be counterpoised to socialism. As the book points out: "Avoiding or fudging political issues while promoting purely economic ones... surrenders these questions to the capitalist class.... At the same time, the struggle for self determination, while it may improve the conditions for the struggle for socialism, is not the same thing. A unified 32 state is not the solution to the problems of Irish workers."

Workers in Britain have a responsibility to demand British withdrawal, if only because of the classic Marxist dictum that a nation which oppresses another can never itself be free - a phase which has been borne out repeatedly in the history of relations between Britain and Ireland.

Workers Unity

The book argues that Protestants are not a separate nation and it is because they cannot clearly identify themselves as British, Irish, Northern Irish or an Ulster nationality that they define themselves by religion. The call for Protestant self-determination is an attempt to give their reactionary and pro-imperialist role a democratic cover. The Northern state was and is based on a sectarian head-count.

Sectarianism cannot be reduced to the ideas in peoples heads - it is woven in to the very fabric of the northern statelet which was to its founders to be a Protestant State with a Protestant Parliament. Seeing sectarianism in this way feeds easily into the view promoted by the British that the war is an irrational feud which needs the presence of themselves to keep the fanatics apart. The authors argue that socialists need to challenge the sectarian ideas held by many Protestant workers: not capitulate to them.

Many socialists so strongly desire workers unity that they ignore or play down inconvenient facts. Employment discrimination is a manifestation of the sectarian nature of the Six County State and, as the book points out, the differential in Catholic and Protestant unemployment has changed little under the benign reigns of various British direct rulers. Neither do the authors counterpoise the fight against employment discrimination, as some "equality-of-misery" socialists would have it, to a general fight against unemployment as it affects all workers.

Demanding unity between Catholic and Protestant workers while ignoring the fact that the majority of the workforce refuses even to accept that discrimination exists, is a false and fragile unity. On the same tack, the

authors place no reliance on anti-discrimination legislation from Britain or pressuring the investment policies of US transnationals.

The struggle for national self-determination is not a diversion from what some call the bread and butter issues in the North of Ireland. On the contrary, the fight to dismantle the sectarian state grew out of basic issues such as discrimination in jobs and housing. Attempting to unify the working class around these issues while ignoring the political divisions will not succeed. Sooner or later they will fall apart under the pressure of the Unionist ruling class which bases itself on sectarianism.

The usual response for the trade union leadership in the North to sectarian murders has been to call on the British State - in the guise of the Army or the police (RUC) - for protection, this in spite of the well documented collaboration between both of those and loyalist murder gangs. The only true defence is workers self defence.

The first step is to denounce all attacks on workers because of their religion and to demand that all organisations which claim to defend workers campaign against sectarian attacks. Such a defence campaign would necessarily be anti-Loyalist since loyalist is based on Protestant sectarianism. For Republicans, targeting mainly Protestant towns, accepting Protestant civilian casualties which wouldn't be accepted if they were Catholics, and refusal to confront the bigotry of the Catholic Church, are rightly denounced.

Rejection of Protestant self-determination does not mean rejection of the need for minority rights in a united state. Worries about the sectarianism of the South should not however lead socialists to support Protestant sectarianism in the guise of Protestant self determination or unity by consent.

Reformists put forward the demand for workers unity in the north as the alternative to sectarianism but limit it to unity between Catholic and Protestant workers in the North. Only a programme of unity of all workers North and South, offers an alternative to both Loyalist and bourgeois nationalism.

The Republicans and armed struggle

The book defends republicans who fight against imperialism, including their right to use armed force. While it doesn't demand of republicans as a precondition of support that they adopt a socialist programme, this implies in no way support for the republicans nor for their methods. Military struggles by their nature are elitist and many republicans elevate armed struggle into a principle. The republicans have furthermore combined militarism with reformist politics and more recently developed a strategy of alliance with the bourgeoisie North and South in the so-

called pan-nationalist alliance.

The book asserts that the struggle for self determination for the whole of the Irish people is fundamentally democratic and must be supported. How that self-determination is expressed is itself a matter of struggle. For socialists, it is clear that real democracy and equality will only be possible in a workers republic. This is why, the authors argue, socialists should fight for the concrete expression of self determination (without giving up unconditional support for the struggle for self determination, whether it makes socialism its goal or not.)

Republican politics offers no solution to the problems of the working class north or south, let alone to loyalist workers. Breaking out of the impasse of republican politics requires mass action and a programme which is not only democratic but addresses the needs of workers especially in the South. The Southern working class is the key to the destruction of the sectarian northern statelet but these workers will not be mobilised around the demand for self determination though the vast majority favour self determination and Irish unity.

A large part of the failure of the Republicans to win significant support in the South has been its failure to confront the backward, bigoted and reactionary ruling class on the question of women's rights. Never having challenged the notion of family, republicans have been sidelined as more and more cases of violence against women, abuse of children and the hypocrisy of many priests who preached celibacy but acted otherwise, have emerged from behind the facade of the Irish catholic family.

The book criticises the so-called social partnership promoted by the leadership of all the main unions in the South and which is nothing less than class collaboration. This has left the mass of workers open to the attacks represented by unemployment, emigration, cuts in welfare, new management techniques and privatisation.

A key political requirement in the South is to break the working class from its support for Fianna Fail, and encouraging workers to identify with the need for a party which represents their interests. The authors do not support the Irish Labour Party, which they argue cannot be reformed, but they argue that building a genuine workers party means first of all winning workers to support class politics. The success of such initiatives have no small impact on the struggle for socialism in England, Scotland and Wales. ★

reviewed by David Coen

Self-published, Belfast, August 1996.
Cheques (£5.00 +50p p+p) to Socialist
Democracy, PO Box 40, Belfast, N. Ireland

The New South Africa and the Socialist Vision

Thomas K. Ranuga

Many books analyzing South African politics during and after apartheid have appeared on the Left over the past three decades. What sets Professor Ranuga's book apart and makes it invaluable is that it is written by an African with a revolutionary Marxist perspective. Professor Ranuga is a supporter of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA), led by Dr. Neville Alexander. This book provides a concise and clear analysis of the political origins and evolution of the major African nationalist and Marxist political parties and organizations in South Africa for the past seventy years.

Understanding the ideological evolution and interaction between Marxists and nationalists in South Africa in the context of world political upheavals is essential for comprehending why the South African revolution was deferred by an "historic compromise" between the main liberation forces led by the African National Congress (ANC) and the apartheid government of De Klerk.

An active participant in the South African liberation movement, Ranuga authoritatively analyzes the historical roots of the revolutions derailment. He explains how a failure to fuse Marxism with African nationalism allowed the forces of compromise to win hegemony in the liberation movement.

Much of the book is a fascinating and informative exposition of Marxian and African nationalist responses to the rise and consolidation of racial-capitalism, from the birth of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress (ANC) to today.

The National Question and the ANC

While recognizing that the concept of a "nation" can be defined by objective factors such as territory, language, culture, etc. as well as subjective ones, Professor Ranuga eschews narrow formalist criteria, stating that nationalism of the oppressed is "the political desire by a self-willing people to rid itself of internal and/or external domination so as to achieve the objective of self-determination leading ultimately to the creation of a nation state. In the case of South Africa, the dispossessed and historically dominated people are the African majority and hence the rise of African nationalism in that part of the world." (p.9)

Tracing the present political reality of South Africa to the ideological roots of the African National Congress which was founded in 1912, Ranuga points out that the "ANC was, strictly speaking, not a nationalist movement for national liberation and independence" but essentially a civil rights organization. Their ideology is deeply rooted in the European Christian/liberal tradition of the English speaking Cape Province. The nation, for the ANC, has never been "an African nation evolved and based

on the democratic principle of One person, One vote or majority rule, but a multiracial nation based on the notion of a pluralistic sharing of power or representative government. The ANC was therefore not aiming at the establishment of a nation-state based on the government of, by, and for Africans, with all those who owe their allegiance to the African nation-state being considered Africans... theirs is a liberal type of nationalism as opposed to the orthodox type of African nationalism." (p.10)

Ranuga extensively explores the rise of orthodox African nationalism (which in South Africa was founded by Antone Muziwahke Lembede), and its evolution in subsequent organizations such as the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM, led by Steven Biko). Ranuga cuts through the slander that these orthodox nationalists are racists. He explains that they do not exclude whites from a future African state; rather their concern is that the dispossessed African majority must recover possession of the land. White people are welcome to stay: provided they accept the rule of the African majority. This is quite different than the "power sharing" strategy of the ANC, which is: Blacks can participate in the government, provided that they accept the actual rule of the white minority.

White Working Class and Racism

Much of the responsibility for the failure of Marxism to fuse with orthodox African nationalism can be laid at the doorstep of the South African Communist Party. During the 1922 white miners strike in the Rand, which aimed at stopping the government from hiring more Black workers in the mines, the all-white mine workers union raised the slogan "Workers of the World, Fight and Unite for a White South Africa". The Communist Party supported this racist strike. Incredibly, they issued an appeal to Africans "for interracial solidarity against the background of a situation where the overwhelming attitudes of the strikers and their leaders were patently hostile to Black workers... The divisive effect on labor solidarity was beyond measure."

Closely examining the evolution of the African National Congress, the Pan-African Congress and the Black Consciousness Movement over the next seventy years, Ranuga concludes that "In the final analysis, aversion to communism had more to do with the fear of domination or cooptation by Whites than with the ideology of marxism per se."

The ideology of the Communist Party was far from Marxist however. What the book makes clear is that the evolution of the official positions of the SACP, after a brief support for the idea of a Black Republic, quickly evolved toward a position that Black liberation could be achieved without the Black working class taking power in its own name and for its own interests: in other words, that democracy could be implemented without a Black-led socialist revolution.

A Non-Sectarian Approach

Thus the alliance of the SACP to the ANC in the 1950s was not based upon winning the ANC to a Marxist program. On the contrary Ranuga shows how the current program of the ANC, the 1955 Freedom Charter, is a liberal document.

For example, the charter does not address "the central question relating to the historical injustice of land usurpation and forceful removal of the African people to make room for White settlers". It was the SACP's support for this liberal program rather than for a revolutionary African nationalist program that allowed it to ally with and simultaneously reinforce the reformism of the liberal ANC. While revealing the real history and nature of the ANC/SACP alliance, Professor Ranuga calmly addresses the issues in language that would not offend a Black member of the ANC or SACP. He is respectful of the stature of Nelson Mandela in the liberation movement and gives due credit to the revolutionary role of specific SACP leaders, such as Chris Hani.

"When Chris Hani, the SACP chief and ANC National Executive Committee member, was assassinated in April 1994, the Left lost one of its most militant and committed advocates. This was one revolutionary individual who was ardently trying to promote a socialist agenda, and in fact just two weeks before he fell to an assassin's bullet, he was in the process of canvassing for a national conference of all forces and individuals on the Left to discuss and re-define the socialist program in South Africa. His revolutionary dream never materialized, but the militant reaction of the workers and young comrades to his untimely death made it abundantly clear that the socialist cause he had so courageously espoused had deep political resonances and a potential for proliferation." (p.141)

Ranuga sees the 1949 Programme of Action of the Congress Youth League, which provided the ideological fuel for the 1952 Defiance Campaign, as a nationalist program that briefly broke with the old ANC liberal tradition. However, this nationalist direction was reversed with the adoption of the 1955 Freedom Charter which reasserted the liberal political perspective of the ANC.

At the same time, Ranuga explains why the very terms of the current "Historic Compromise" will not allow the Mandela government to end the oppression and exploitation of the African majority, let alone resolve such basic questions as the restoration of expropriated African land to its rightful owners. "The ANC, whatever its declared aims to implement reform, will be hampered in its efforts by entrenched constitutional principles agreed to before the national elections."

These "constitutional principles" commit the ANC to the preservation of private property, which in South Africa is owned by the white minority. If the ANC does not step over these "constitutional principles" and "continues along the path of trickle-down economics that is reminiscent of the Reagan

administration in the United States, the ANC government may resort to more conservative and possibly authoritarian measures that could lead to a widening gulf between the owning and working class."

Hence the thesis that the basic tasks of the South African democratic revolution remain on the agenda. According to Ranuga, the responsibility for completing that revolution falls on the Black South African working class, the class that is the object of exploitation of the system of racial-capitalism. Although "at the present historical conjuncture, a socialist victory is not imminent in South Africa", Ranuga foresees that if the, "ANC government of National unity fails to deliver on its promises, then the spirit of peace and goodwill could be seriously threatened as Black leaders, now waiting in the wings, come forward with more radical solutions such as nationalization of the commanding heights of the economy, equitable distribution of wealth through taxation, and the restoration of land forcefully taken from its rightful owners."

Although this is not likely to occur during Mandelas presidency, the very nature of the "historic compromise" between the liberation forces and racial capitalism means that the tasks of the South African democratic revolution will only be solved by the African working class, who will eventually create their own working class government and thus re-open the road to socialism for South Africa and the world.

An Invaluable Theoretical Tool

At the beginning of the book, and running through it as a theme, is a profound quote from Frederick Douglass; "Power concedes nothing without a demand." It is an urgent reminder that it has taken the sacrifices and commitments of countless numbers of Africans just to arrive at the present tenuous compromise in South Africa. But for committed revolutionary Marxists the goal remains the seizure of political power by the masses of Africans. In order for that to happen, theory first has to seize the masses.

The formidable weapon of revolutionary Marxism in the hands of a thoroughly organized and highly politicized labor movement can pose a serious challenge to racial capitalism and therefore pave the way for an alternative and qualitatively superior way of life. In other words the combination of mar-

xism as a weapon of theory and organized black labor as a political force can ultimately bring the capitalist system in South Africa to its knees and achieve the just and ideal society envisaged by true marxism.(p.131)

For Professor Ranuga that qualitatively superior way of life can best be summed up in the African proverb "umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu", that is: a person is a person through other people, a concept of compassion, co-operation and sharing which is the very anti-thesis of the sheer greed inherent in free-enterprise capitalism. ★

Reviewed by Jim Miles & Vera

Wigglesworth

Published in 1996 (154 pages) by Humanities Press, 165 First Avenue, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716-1289 (902)-872-1441

Sozaboy, a novel in rotten English

Ken Saro-Wiwa

Since the Sani Abacha military regime seized power in 1990, the Ogoni tribe, an ethnic minority living on the Niger delta in south-eastern Nigeria, has suffered extremely brutal repression. Amnesty International points to government-instigated attacks resulting in at least 100 extrajudicial executions, 600 Ogoni detained, and the destruction of dozens of villages.

Last November 2nd a kangaroo court convicted nine key Ogoni leaders of inciting to murder. Defying international human rights concerns, the regime carried out the executions on November 10th.

Ken Saro-Wiwa was the most prominent of those executed. He was the author and producer of probably Africa's most popular TV series, "Basi & Co." Running in the mid-eighties for more than 150 episodes, the soap opera had upwards of 30 million viewers.

Saro-Wiwa was also the author of at least seven books, including novels, plays, poems, an autobiography (*On a Darkling Plain*) and children's books. His 1992 manifesto, *Genocide in Nigeria: the Ogoni Tragedy*, outlined the exploitation and pauperization of the Ogoni people by both the Nigerian government and Shell Petroleum Development Company.

Instrumental in setting up the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (Mosop), he helped it to carry out effective and nonviolent mass protests and became its chief spokesperson.

Ten years ago this extraordinary man wrote a brilliant antiwar novel, which is now available in Longman's African Writers series.

During the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) — when one million people died, mostly from starvation and disease — Saro-Wiwa worked as a civilian administrator in Bonny, a crucial oil port on the Niger River delta. At

the war's outbreak he fled from the new Biafran state.

Saro-Wiwa did not identify with the aspirations of General Ojukwu, who was from the area's dominant tribe—the Ibo. For Saro-Wiwa, then, the rhetoric of self-determination was hollow. As he has pointed out in several of his essays, colonialism isn't simply European, but has been long practiced in Africa by dominant tribes against smaller tribes.

In *Sozaboy* the Biafran government's representatives are absent. Instead, their orders are carried out through the tribe's chief, who organizes the special war tax and makes sure to get his cut. In other places, lower-level army officers do the job. Throughout Saro-Wiwa is merciless in his portraits of those who operate on behalf of the state: they are corrupt and brutal.

From the novel's first sentence—"Although, everybody in Dukana was happy at first"—the direction is downhill, in the trouble's direction. Given the unrealistic expectation of overcoming the corruption of the previous regime, hope quickly recedes. In its places comes even greater corruption, followed by fear and the prediction that the world will end.

Mene, the novel's everyman, worries about whether he will ever be able to have a life—meaning marriage, a job, a family. And so he naively chooses to become a soldier, consequently losing everything with the first roll of the dice.

Mene is totally naive, and remains so until the final page of the novel. The reader sees from the prism of Mene's vantage point, but always knows more than he does. Yet despite his limited knowledge, Mene always manages to land on his feet while the others—who started out with him—quickly die.

Mene is the anti-hero, who sets off on a long journey, manages to survive against incredible odds, yet returns only to find his village destroyed, his mother and wife dead. He is perceived by his fellow villagers to be a ghost whom they must kill in order to survive. He has survived, but to what purpose? There is no place for him.

In contrast to the novel's main character is the tall man who appears throughout the novel as Mene's chief tormentor. We meet him first in the African Upwine Bar. If Mene is everyman, the tall man is fate. As he explains, there is "trouble." And trouble means fighting and dying.

His companion asks him to judge the situation, but the tall man refuses:

"Well, I don't think it is good thing or bad thing. Even sef I don't want to think. What they talk, we must do. Myself, if they say fight, I fight. If they say no fight, I cannot fight. Finish." (p. 17)

Mene encounters the tall man several times in the course of his life as a soldier. The tall man is the enemy soldier, the nurse, the traitor and prison guard all rolled into one. The tall man saves him, only to become his savage prison guard at another stage. Finally the tall man is ordered to kill all the

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deserters—only to discover he has run out of bullets.

As with so many other troubles Mene has, pondering the reality of the tall man proves to be a difficult task:

“And now this Manmuswak is again with our own sozas and no longer with enemy sozas. Or abi na which side the man dey now? At first I could not believe my eyes because I cannot understand how this Manmuswak can be fighting on two side of the same war. Is it possible? Or is it his brother? Or are my eyes deceiving me because I am sick since a long time? Or is it ghost I am seeing?” (166)

First Mene believes the tall man is an apparition, but when he doesn't fire, Mene opens his eyes, sizes up the situation—and escapes his fate.

It is only in the last page of the novel that Mene grapples with what he has learned. It is the knowledge of his own survival that forces him to extract a lesson. Cast out of his own village, he meditates on the death of his wife and his mother:

“And as I was going, I was just thinking how the war have spoiled my town Dukana, uselessed many people, killed many others, killed my mama and my wife, Agnes, my beautiful young wife with J.J.C. [Johnny Just Come—i.e. pointed breasts] and now it have made me like porson wey get leprosy because I have no town again.

“And I was thinking how I was prouiding before to go to soza and call myself Sozaboy. But now if anybody say anything about war or even fight, I will just run and run and run and run and run. Believe me yours sincerely.” (181)

The deep cynicism that pervades the novel becomes explicit. There are no ideas worth fighting for, all is simply the superficial and silly view that being a soldier is somehow noble.

This view stands in sharp contrast to the writing of Ken Saro-wiwa's fellow countryman Chinua Achebe, who finds the ideology of the Biafran secessionist vision still a noble cause that has been compromised by corruption. Achebe, an Ibo, was a spokesperson for the Biafran side. (See his story, *Girls at War*.) Saro-Wiwa gave a subtitle to his novel, “a novel in rotten English.” His antiwar novel, then, is experimental in its sustained use of pidgin English. Other authors, notably Achebe, have used such English in their dialogue, but Sara-Wiwa has constructed its language in order to reflect the reality.

In fact, the novel ends as if it were a letter Mene had written home to his family, thus the novel is a kind of monologue Mene—the author!—has composed.

In his preface to the novel, Ken Saro-Wiwa explains:

“*Sozaboy's* language is what I call ‘rotten English,’ a mixture of Nigerian pidgin English, broken English and occasional flashes of good, even idiomatic English. This language is disordered and disorderly. Born of a mediocre education and severely limited opportunities, it borrows words, patterns and images freely from the mother-tongue and

finds expression in a very limited English vocabulary. To its speakers, it has the advantage of having no rules and no syntax. It thrives on lawlessness, and is part of the dislocated and discordant society in which Sozaboy must live, move and have not his being.”

Above all, Saro-Wiwa reflects the chaos and lawlessness of the war by introducing the chaos and lawlessness of the language. Of course it only appears to be chaotic. But it creates an idiomatic rhythm that both functions to provide comic relief and the power of a distinctive voice.

Yet it is only at the novel's end that one realizes the whole story is like a letter read aloud. The glossary in the back lets the reader not only look up the unfamiliar expressions, but gives evidence to the writer's control over the chaos. ★

Reviewed by Dianne Feeley
Source: *ATC*

Longman Publishing Company, 10 Bank Street, White Plains, NY 10601-1951. (\$10.95 paperback.)

Notebooks for the Grandchildren: Recollections of a Trotskyist Who Survived the Stalin Terror,

Mikhail Baitalsky, translated and edited by Marilyn Vogt-Downey.

Many valuable memoirs of life during the time of Stalinist terror have been published. *Notebooks for the Grandchildren* is unique in that it was written by someone who had been active in the Trotskyist opposition to Stalin and who sought to reflect on how the revolutionary society created by the October Revolution came to be succeeded by Stalinism.

In so doing, he confirmed in terms of his own personal experience a number of sig-

nificant points of the analysis that Leon Trotsky made in his book, *The Revolution Betrayed*. Though, of course, Baitalsky had no access to the work of the exiled Trotsky or to that of his co-thinkers. Baitalsky began writing his notebooks in 1958 after his release from his second stay in the notorious Vorkuta camp, where he spent most of his 11 years of imprisonment. He continued work on them for 12 years.

Fearful of being imprisoned once more, Baitalsky wanted this book to be published only after his death. He died in 1978, but 17 years more elapsed before it was possible to secure American publication. Vogt-Downey has translated and edited the manuscript, and added useful annotations that clarify Baitalsky's references. ★

Reviewed by Paul Siegel

Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 1995. 447+xviii pp. \$75.

Psychology and Society: Radical Theory and Practice

Ian Parker, Russel Spears (Eds.)

International Viewpoint's founder, Ernest Mandel, was supposed to write a postscript to this work, which originally bore the title *Psychology and Marxism: Coexistence and Contradiction*. Ernest withdrew from the project after a serious heart attack, and, on 20 July 1995, he died. By coincidence, that same day the publishers requested that the two editors “tone down” the title. Booksellers, it seems, now have little confidence in their abilities to sell a book with Marxism in the title. So, *Radical Theory and Practice* it became.

Parker and Spears bring together contributors from different countries, covering a wide range of social science and social welfare traditions within psychology: from behaviourism to psychoanalysis.

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The book is dedicated to Ernest Mandel, “an inspiration to many comrades dedicated to practical and theoretical work against oppression.” ★

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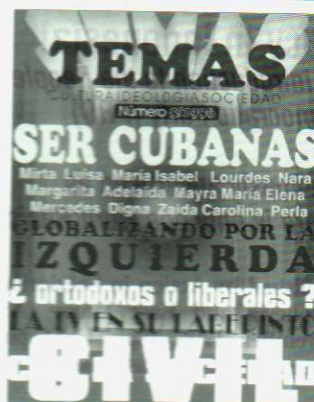
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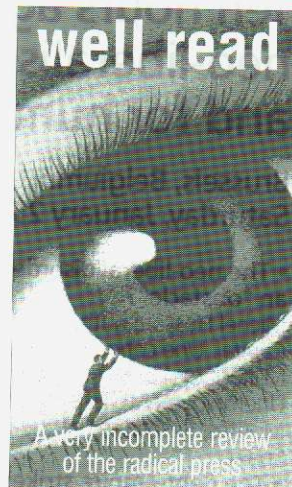
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Towards a different Europe!

Alternative conference, with lots of demonstrations and other activities

- Preparations for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) are leading to the dismantling of public services and social security and rising unemployment in almost every EU member state.

- the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) has begun: the fifteen member states are negotiating to revise the Maastricht Treaty, the treaty that has propelled the European Union into its current credibility crisis. According to plan, these negotiations are supposed to end with the signing of a new treaty by the heads of government during their June 1997 Amsterdam summit.

- Together the EMU and IGC will largely determine the character of the European Union and thus the daily lives of Europe's citizens. But discussion of these developments is going on mainly among politicians.

- For the moment there is no broad debate about the threats posed by European integration, plans for an EU defense bloc, and "Europeanisation" of the French and British nuclear arsenals. Our Europe must be a Europe that carries out a strong social and environmental policy, creates jobs, eliminates the democratic deficit, offers equal opportunities to women and men, safeguards the rule of law, is hospitable to refugees, is open to the East and in solidarity with the South, disarms in order to contribute to peace, and promotes sustainable development both inside and outside Europe.

Parallel to the June 1997 Amsterdam Summit, there will be an alternative conference, demonstrations and other activities. We invite all progressive parties, groups, NGO's and others to take part in this Summit for a Different Europe.

Get in touch!

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