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VIEWPOINT

The final
word on the
Russian
revolution
Boris Kagarlitsky

Defending
the idea
of a "public sector"
Maxime Durand

NATO: bigger and more
brutal, by Jean-Louis Michel

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The neoliberal assault on the public sector

The offensive against the public sector and social services has become universal and worldwide.

This is not only an attack on the notion of public property in a 'public sector'. It is also the motor behind a wrenching change in the way societies meet human needs.

Because this change operates at such deep levels, it has been difficult for the labour movement to mount a counterattack.

Maxime Durand

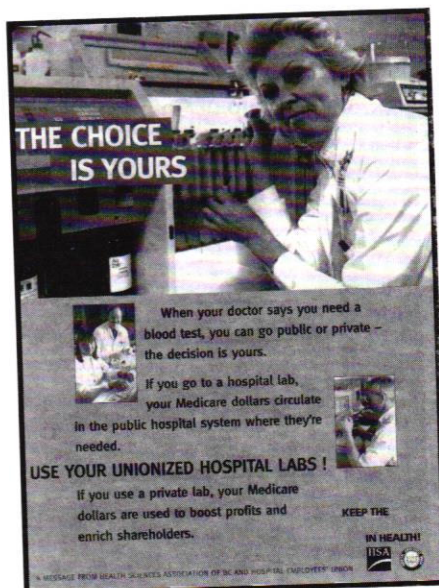
Capitalism in the post-war period developed – and increased its productivity and economic performance – in a very specific context, in which the extension of the public sector and social services was seen as key.

To understand this, a distinction must be made between social services (health, education and so on), infrastructure or networked public services (energy, transportation, the post office and telecommunications), and public sector industries (national banks, mines, etc.). Also to be taken into account are the differences between countries, for example between the United States and Europe, or between imperialist and Third World countries.

In one way, these services still represent the realisation of dreams of millions of workers, won only after long and difficult social struggles. However, at the same time, for most of the post-war period, the public sector has served as a source of stability and legitimacy for capitalism.

A model under attack

The welfare state, public services, and full employment were the global solution to the crisis that began with the Great Depression of the 1930s and led to fascism and world war. They were also a response to the revolutionary upsurge embodied in the Soviet Union and China, and a wave of potentially revolutionary social movements in Europe and Japan. These solutions later buttressed a period of astonishing dynamism for capital, despite, or perhaps because of, the numerous regulatory mechanisms with which the market was now fettered. Theoreticians of this model concluded that capitalism, organised in this manner, could overcome the contradiction between the unceasing



search for maximum profits and the need to expand markets to absorb a rapidly growing production.

The public sector, broadly defined, therefore fulfilled an economic function. Suddenly, its results allowed capital to claim a new legitimacy. The system could now claim (though not without opposition) that it could prevent any future crises, that it could guarantee jobs for all, a high-quality social safety net, and a rapid growth in purchasing power.

The neoliberal offensive represents a total reversal of this system – and a concerted effort to discredit the previous model.

In France, this backsliding to the situation existing 50 years ago has challenged every gain won at the end of the Second World War: the minimum wage, social security, collective bargaining, and nationalisation.

A widespread attack

These reversals are the result of a combination of three larger, interconnected tendencies. First of all, at the economic level, the quick-fix solutions of the post-war period are finally running out of steam, thus bringing to an end the long wave of post-war economic expansion.

For example, once social spending in a particular field becomes autonomous from a purely market-oriented logic, it can grow to the point where it no longer boosts demand, but rather is an "excessive" pressure on profitability.

Secondly, capital's offensive leads to a change in the relationship of social forces, both at the domestic and international levels. In domestic politics, the depth of the crisis discredits social democratic policy, which in any case is being applied in an increasingly timid fashion.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the bureaucratic regimes in Central and Eastern Europe contributes to the decline of even the notion of any real alternative, and increases global pressures, particularly in the Third World.

The third tendency is globalisation, which facilitates ideological pressure world-wide, and increases the ferocity of the attack on most social gains. In the public service sector, large multinational groups have been created that have been granted a certain autonomy in relation to national states, and which are able to position themselves to pursue their own interests without interference, usually in the form of privatisation, or an "opening" to private capital investment.

While differences obviously exist

among economic sectors and among nation states, the neoliberal attack has assumed universal proportions. Indeed, the similarities are striking between the arguments used to advance neoliberalism and its various strategies in the different countries. In Mexico, the telephone privatisation and the reorganisation of the (shoddy) pension system into a myriad of competing private pension funds was undertaken based on the same logic used in Europe. By a sort of "combined and uneven development", it is in the countries of the Third World that the neoliberal project finds its most radical expression. The social budget is constantly reduced to meet certain pre-established "norms", be it for the required prepayments of the public debt or for servicing the debt.

This universalism is also embodied at the organisational level. For example, IMF experts turn out structural adjustment plans from the same mould throughout the world. The OECD has been assigned the task of overseeing the construction of fiscal systems in Eastern Europe. Finally, the World Bank has produced a report on retirement and social security, codifying the transition from state programs to capitalised pension funds for the entire planet.

A market offensive

What do old age pensions and the price of a stamp have in common? Essentially, both services are made available in a relatively socialised manner. Social security pensions were a way of separating the accumulation of funds for old age from individual savings and organising a kind of social solidarity between those who could work and those who could not. It was society as a whole (and not an insurance company) that guaranteed that those who paid their social security deduction today would in the future receive a retirement pension, following certain rules which were not solely individual. The price of a stamp has been fixed in a similar socialised manner: the fundamental principle of universal pricing means that it costs the same to send a letter from New York to Alaska or to the other side of the street. The price of the service is not proportional to its individual cost.

These socialised services reduce the influence of market laws for goods and services. The neoliberal offensive, on the other hand, aims to eliminate this social characteristic and implement the full rule of a free market in every realm. It is not only the property forms in the public sector here that are in question, but more fundamentally, the way in which social needs will be met in the future. Liberalisation means individualising the supply of goods and services.

The neoliberal argument

The neoliberal offensive is partially based on supposedly objective arguments: the ongoing process of change will make traditional public services obsolete; demand for such services will be so diver-

sified that it will not be possible to base service on standardised deductions; on the supply side, technological change will make possible a different, more flexible organisation of service and supply networks, in which private initiative can play a vital role. And so on.

It is true that these changes make it possible to transfer to the private sector those elements of the public sector that can best stand on their own and which are most profitable. The corresponding tendency is to split the public sector into management of the infrastructure and the utilisation of the network in question.

However, even if such a reorganisation could be viable, this in no way means that such changes are necessary. This distinction between technological potential and actual necessity is a key point in the debate.

The neoliberals' second "objective" argument involves efficiency. In certain circumstances, where the public sector functions especially poorly (the traditional example given is the Italian postal service) it is difficult to oppose a privatisation process that is supposed to redress all the problems. However, the evidence here is misleading. A subtle shift often arises in the definition of efficiency, once the public service in question has been eliminated. A private enterprise that focuses on profitability will thus be considered more "efficient" than a public service that covers an entire territory. In other words, the "superior" private sector provider only selectively satisfies social needs.

The claims of the private sector must therefore be considered from the standpoint of results, not profits. In fact, several examples already illustrate how privatisation falls short of even very generous criteria of efficiency. What is the logic in carving up British Rail? Privatisation based on that model has been taken to its absurd conclusions with the creation of seven different railway companies in Luxembourg alone.

Global pressures

According to one popular argument, globalisation will make supplying public services at the national level practically impossible. To be competitive and to meet the new world trade norms, it will be necessary to squeeze the public sector to virtually nothing. This mostly ideological argument relies on incomplete reasoning. Its proponents end only by stating that the international opening is in itself incompatible with the existence of strong social services. But they cannot explain why European unification presupposes, in itself, the privatisation of public services and of whole branches of the social security system. In reality, the pressure on social services comes not from globalisation as such, but from the deregulation that accompanies it.

Air transportation is the only example of a public sector that has been objectively globalised, in the sense of bringing private

contents

resisting privatisation

- 2 The neoliberal assault on the public sector
 - Maxime Durand
- 6 Telecom reform in the III World
 - Vickramabahu Karunaratne

europa

- 5 German student protests
 - Manuel Kellner
- 8 Italy: *Rifondazione* and the budget
 - Franco Turigliatto
- 10 France: the feminisation of under-employment
 - Myosotis Walner
- 11 Holland: leaks in the Polder Model
- 11 Greece: George Balafas freed
- 12 Czech Republic: Labour upsurge
 - Zdenek Prasil
- 13 Croatia: Human rights • interview with Helsinki Committee President
- 14 NATO: Instrument of Pax Americana
 - Jean-Louis Michel

americas

- 18 USA: Teamster trouble
 - Dianne Feeley
- 20-23 Mexico:
 - 20 New labour federation • D. La Botz
 - 21 Cardenas takes office • F. Zamora
 - 22 Opposition splits in response to PRI budget • P. Gellert
 - 23 Zapatista communiqué

africa

- 24 Egypt: urban solidarity with peasant protests

asia

- 25 Vietnam: labour protests in the export processing sector
 - Gerard Greenfield
- 26 Polynesia: Fallout on French nuclear tests
 - Gabriel Tetiarahi
- 28 Turkey: Love, revolution and the dispossessed
 - Masis Kürkçüglü
- 28 South Korean elections: Trade Union candidate

regular features

- 30 History:
 - Russian Revolution • B. Kagarlitsky
 - A Sudeten Marxist • E. Scholl
- 34 Conferences: Moscow meeting on the heritage of Leon Trotsky
- 35 books
- 36 Radical press review
- 36 NetWorking • Internet action



and state-run companies directly into competition on the same terrain. Only global regulation could have demonstrated the logic of state control in this area, but this became impossible from the moment that many of the central participants (the United States and Britain) imposed significant deregulation policies.

But air transport is, thankfully, an exception. In Europe, at least, competition between public and private enterprise in sectors like health or education is still relatively restricted. And more importantly, the "market" does not have unrestricted access to the physical infrastructure and equipment. A British capitalist would find it difficult to establish a high-speed train company that could compete with France's nationalised rail company SNCF inside France. Capital is mobile, but infrastructure, like institutions, are much less malleable.

In other words, no tendency has yet arisen towards the creation of a single global price in the many sectors not directly exposed to competition. The weight of norms and regulations has a strong effect on the opening of borders. Even within a relatively homogenous territory like Europe, considerable differences remain in pricing, fiscal systems, and social norms.

Resistance

Tremendous resistance to these changes has emerged across Europe. In France, one wing of the public debate has targeted the creation of public services "on the French model", which would differ considerably from the European norm under construction. But the public sector strike of November-December 1995, its echoes in neighbouring countries, and other struggles around these questions have all affected the discussions taking place around the margins of the Maastricht Treaty.

One result has been the notion of a "universal service," guaranteeing the fulfilment of social needs, although the actual practice of the European institutions has been much more in an ultra-liberal direction that matches the Treaty in letter and in spirit. This is clearly a response designed to side-track opponents, while strengthening a neoliberal logic with "two tiers": a very narrowly conceived minimum service sector and a field day for private initiative everywhere else.

Counter-arguments

Thirty years ago, most economists agreed there was a theoretical justification for the existence of a public sector. The arguments used then have not lost their weight today. One primary example applies particularly well to the networks (health, transport) built up using public funds. Heavy infrastructure means large investments in upkeep, extension, and modernisation. If these networks are opened to private exploitation, investors will obviously do their best not to shoulder any of these expenses and they will see it as completely natural that such support should come from the national budget.

It would therefore be necessary to create regulations and to define a system of financial obligations, and later to ensure co-ordination between the various private enterprises involved. That is why, even in the most ultra-liberal programs, it is necessary to draft regulations to fulfil different functions. The absurd vision in which regulation is purely an administrative deviation does not hold water.

Whatever mechanisms are decided, a certain number of rules must be laid down and social choices made. Clearly there is a great risk that privatisation will go hand-in-hand with a short-term vision that not only leads to less concern for safety or quality, but entails burdening the state with the bill for operating expenses.

The second argument involves pointing out the logical contradictions in the dominant neo-liberal way of thinking. If globalisation is meant to create a real world market, wouldn't the most rational and efficient solution be flexible co-ordination instead of competitive fragmentation? If European unification has as its goal the creation of a unified territory, is the best way to achieve it really by breaking up the existing networks of transportation, of the postal system, and of energy distribution?

Even the Maastricht Treaty speaks explicitly about the "interconnection" of networks, but does not draw the logical conclusions that seem to arise in other sectors. Why not a single European energy policy, a single transportation and telecommunication policy, etc.? What economic entity has ever been created without co-ordination, inter-linking or unification of different economic networks?

Finally, of course, one can leave aside purely technical considerations and recognise that this is a social choice which cannot simply be deduced from the "primacy of productive forces". After all, the movement towards liberalisation and privatisation is intimately connected with the denial of and selective response to social needs. This is the central aspect of the debate. Either society believes some needs must be satisfied by social means, by providing some services in a way that is largely unconnected to the purchasing power of the individual, or society makes the opposite choice to meet only those needs that are profitable. It is clear that the

second option not only takes for granted social inequality, but accentuates and amplifies it.

But while this argument is justified, it is not enough to convince people. The basic difficulty arises because the public sector and the welfare state are a form of intermediate socialisation that have taken a whole series of needs out of the realm of the pure market, without, however, acknowledging that this logic goes beyond the logic of the market. This intermediate nature explains why the public sector must be defended, but also why such a defence requires outlining a project that goes beyond the market.

Any discussion on social services has to do, finally, with how social needs are met and therefore, at least indirectly, with socialism as our goal.

Between a purely market-based logic and the "free" provision of services as a socialised undertaking, there is a whole gamut of solutions that involve elements of public taxation or budget subsidies. Neoliberalism has as its goal the universal reintroduction of market mechanisms. The socialist alternative aims, on the other hand, to guarantee the satisfaction of basic human needs at a level that will provide a decent standard of living.

Our kind of efficiency

This is the sort of project around which struggles over public services should be organised. The basic idea should be that of rights, which moreover are increasingly demanded by the social movements: the right to a job, housing, health care, and education. People don't fight for social services from some abstract attachment to state property over private property, but because social services are vehicles that rationally and universally meet social needs.

Putting our idea of efficiency into practice -an efficiency not measured by short-term profits in specific sectors- can become a general demand for democratic management. Defence of the public sector cannot be a defence of waste or bureaucracy, because if it is, neoliberalism will win. Concretely, this stance implies that the labour and social movements in general take up these demands so that it is not left to the workers in each public sector to defend social services by means of defending their own jobs and working conditions.

But the greatest difficulty, at least in Europe, is to raise universal demands with specific national applicability. Neoliberal policies have enormous similarity from one country to another, even when they are aimed very different situations. But because people tend to fight best for something that already exists, the mistake of the labour movement has often been to feel it could defend a national model or to try and develop a more homogenous and international definition of social services. But the few experiences of international co-ordination, like that of the railway workers, which led to an international day

of action in 1992, show this is impossible. National traditions make it impossible to create a truly common platform of demands.

Think... global?

That brings us back to a broader debate on how to organise social struggles at the national level when international co-ordination is involved. The latter cannot be conditional on the basis of some future (and uncertain) convergence. Instead of calling for symbolic slogans like a European minimum wage, it would be better to advance the idea of an articulated system of minimum wages that takes into account the uneven development of different countries.

Co-ordination does not mean absolutely identical practice. A common front of struggle over public services is to a large extent an organisational device. It is not hard to imagine a day of international struggle in defence of social security where each country puts forward its own specific demands, while supporting those of its neighbours.

So far, mobilisations have taken the form of mass rejection of the anti-democratic attacks on public services, but the success in terms of participation in demonstrations has depended on the ability of organisers in each country to base actions on the desire of broad sectors to participate in democratic control, exercised by society as a whole, over the definition and the management of public services. In France, the November-December 1995 public sector strike showed the need for and the potential of such actions. It was a defensive struggle around public services, but also an affirmation of mass aspirations that went deeper than some simple economic adjustments.

The situation in many countries is characterised by a deep ambiguity. On the one hand, the neoliberal offensive proceeds with an inexorable logic that seems to crush everything in its path. But at the same time, its system is fundamentally fragile because it cannot succeed in legitimising itself in the long run.

For the first time in the history of capitalism -at least on this global scale- there is a consciously orchestrated policy of systematic social regression. Capital has clearly stated that full employment and social security have become luxuries it can no longer support, but it has not managed to explain why what it championed 20 or 30 years ago is no longer possible.

The obstacles are many, the retreats by the labour movement are often enormous, but common decency and good sense are on the side of popular hopes and dreams. The major concern is no longer how long we will have to suffer neoliberal policies, but how can they be defeated? Such a point of view, the first signs of which are on the horizon, suggests the next step: a new, non-bureaucratic commitment to going beyond the market. ★

Germany Students take to the streets

At the end of October, 600 students at the Justus Liebig University in Giessen presented themselves for a preparatory course. The university administration 'selected' and admitted only one in ten of them! The students' frustration sparked a movement which spread from one university to the next.

Manuel Kellner

On 27 November, 40,000 students demonstrated in Bonn. On 4 December over 100,000 participated in regional demonstrations, in the capital of each of the *Länder* (states). As well as about 100 universities, there are signs of mobilisation in some secondary schools.

The struggle is exemplary in a number of respects. First of all, it is a unitary and pluralist movement. Secondly, the participants realise that they cannot rest inside the "ivory towers." In Cologne, they distribute leaflets in the town centre, and outside the main factories, explaining their frustrations, and linking their own problems to those of working people, immigrants, and all the other victims of the government's anti-social and neo-liberal policies.

The media are trying to present this as a revolt by an apolitical and corporatist generation. In fact, the climate of the demonstrations is very political. Many of the students' banners refer to Germany's high arms spending, or denounce the government's austerity policies. Although the revolutionary left, sectarian and non-sectarian groups alike, has found it difficult to influence the movement so far, there is clearly a massive process of politicisation under way.

The causes of the students' anger suggest that, at least superficially, some anti-capitalist consciousness is imposing itself more or less automatically in this struggle.

The social basis of student anger

Unlike in the 1970s, successive reforms of the education system have undermined the social situation of the majority of students. The [universal] student allowance is fixed at a maximum of 900 DM (US\$465). And half of this sum is a loan, which must be repaid once the student enters the labour market. Not surprisingly, young people from working-class families are less and less present in the freshman classes of Germany's universities.

Those who do make it are obliged to find "MacJobs" to survive. This doesn't leave time to study. And yet, the government just introduced regulations which cut off the student allowance if a course is not completed in a certain period of time. Those who have to work while they study are caught in a vicious circle.

Successive budget cuts have caused a decline in the material and human infrastructure of the universities. There is a shortage of classrooms, libraries, and lecturers. A growing proportion of the teaching staff are employed on part time, fixed term or other kinds of precarious contracts.

Students initial protest focused on the budget priorities of the *Länder*, demanding increased spending on the universities, and on education in general. But their anger quickly focused on the federal government, which is preparing a general law on university education.

Among other things, this new legislation will permit the introduction of new types of registration fees. The total cost which students will have to pay may eventually be ten times higher than at present! This will have a dramatic effect on the number of young people who will be able to study past the high school level.

The new federal legislation will generalise a double-financing system, with the public education budget declining in relative terms, and a generalisation of private sponsorship. Although this private financing will be managed by the public authorities, the influence of industrial groups will become decisive.

A two-track education system

This will contribute to a growing division of the student world. There will be more and more spending on high technology sectors like genetic biology, chemistry, and electronics, in a race for competitiveness with top universities in other countries. Meanwhile, the human and social sciences will receive a smaller and smaller proportion of resources.

This will make the German system much more like the British and French university system, where a handful of elite institutions prepare the future business, political and scientific elite, alongside a mass of second and third class institutions preparing the mass of students for their future insertion in the labour force.

As we go to press, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservative government has been unsuccessful in its attempts to divide and divert the student movement. The promise of a few million DM for the university libraries has not calmed people's spirits. And the students reject the idea that programmes for the unemployed be cut to finance any 'bribes' to the students.

Everyone knows that the real money is elsewhere. Fingers crossed that the movement continues after the Christmas holidays! ★

Source: Rouge

Long distance control

Telecommunications reform in the third world

In most industrial and developing countries, telecommunication services have traditionally been delivered by a single, government-owned provider. Telecommunications was considered a "national" monopoly, alongside postal services, transport, electricity and water. Even the most conservative, market-oriented economists argued that it was desirable that an essential infrastructure sector like telecommunications be dominated by a single provider, preferably a government department. This was assumed to bring economies of scale and of scope (by providing a range of related services cheaper than would be possible if, say, local and long distance telephone calls ran along different lines, installed by separate providers).

Vickramabahu Karunarathne*

Similar justifications were applied to a whole range of utilities. What was special about telecommunications was the high profit margin. International telecommunications services were, until recently, provided by a carefully managed cartel of national telecommunications authorities. This cartel devised a system of high prices for international and long distance services, which they used to subsidise local services.

This was particularly true in countries like Sri Lanka, where most users of the telephone system are themselves part of the public sector. Let's not forget that over half the world's population has no access whatsoever to the telephone system. This didn't just reinforce the strategic importance of telecommunications within the state structure. It also provided a powerful argument for subsidising local communications at the expense of long distance and international services.

At the time, it was accepted, in the South and even in the North, that the state had an important economic function in ensuring telecommunications and other infrastructure service. So there was no particular effort to mobilise private or public capital for technological advance. In Sri Lanka and elsewhere, telecommunications was considered to be a ready source of income for the state coffers. Heavy taxes, excessive interest payments on state-sponsored investments,

over-employment and outright plunder of resources and equipment plagued state telecommunications operators across the developing world. Profit was not a key criteria for evaluating telecommunication services, but neither was efficiency.

The bells began to ring in the 1980s. Leaders of one third world country after another began to stress the importance of fostering private initiative, so as to increase productivity and growth. By 1992, over 80 countries had launched privatisation programmes. An estimated 6,800 state-owned enterprises were privatised around the world between 1980 and 1992 (at which point the countries of Eastern Europe and the former USSR began their own, massive privatisation programmes). The World Bank contributed to privatisation programmes in 67 countries between 1982 and 1992.

Governmental economists in Sri Lanka are almost unanimous about the benefits of privatisation in sectors where competition exists, or where they think it can be promoted, as through trade liberalisation. But there is still a real debate about the possible benefits of privatising national monopolies, particularly where strong external influences restrict competition.

It is relatively easy to identify the imperfections of state management of the telecommunications sector, and their negative impact on the capitalists, the state itself, and even on the population. But, in a key infrastructure sector like telecommunications, privatisation threatens to replace imperfections in government direct management with imperfections in government indirect regulation of a private monopoly.

Who stands to gain?

The World Bank has been less than candid in producing empirical studies of the real savings a third world country can make by privatising telecommunications. But business magazines like *The Economist* give very clear information about the increased profits such "new markets" offer to multi-national investors and their well-connected and corrupt local partners. World Bank telecom projects will bring an estimated 27% profit this year, which is much higher than the rest of the Bank's "development" portfolio.

Demand for telecommunications in the third world has changed qualitatively since the state-owned systems were developed. A growing part of production and markets are controlled by multi-national companies, which organise production and distribution at the global scale. The constraints of global capitalism on a state like Sri Lanka used to be expressed mainly through the operation of the global marketplace. Today, these constraints are increasingly expressed through the strategic decisions of a small number of

multi-national companies. Manufacturing activities are being displaced from industrial cities in the north to new industrial zones in non-industrial and semi-industrial countries. Components of the same product are often made in a range of different countries, in sites separated by thousands of kilometres.

The quantity and quality of telecommunications is now perceived as a critical factor in attracting foreign investments, and in generating exports. Some export sectors, like apparel, are characterised by seasonal demand. Others, like auto parts, require close contact with customers, particularly where the final assembly site uses a "just-in-time" ordering system.

At the same time as the state realises the strategic importance of telecommunications, its control over the system is beginning to crumble. Sea-bed fibre-optic cables and private satellites provide telecommunications customers with alternative international phone, fax and data transmission services. They are no longer tied to the public telecom utility's service (via the Intelsat). In response to the powerful pressures of the multi-national companies which dominate the international economy, most major telecommunications providers are forming alliances, and aggressively expanding their operations in what used to be protected national markets.

"The share of [world-wide] revenue from connection charges and monthly rentals has risen in the past decade from about 33% to 40%. It will increase to about 60% over the next ten years. Telecommunications utilities are not usually keen on such "re-balancing" since it usually involves reducing lucrative call charges rather than increasing fixed charges. But without it, they are vulnerable to competition, including competition from the Internet, which can offer rival services far less expensively."

The Economist, 19 October 1996

What can a country like Sri Lanka do? The private telecommunications firms which are lobbying for access here are subsidiaries of international co-operations which have access to a whole range of private information, technology, patents and know-how. No wonder they seem more efficient than state providers of telecommunications! Privatising telecommunications will allegedly help us to bridge this technology gap. The same argument, of course, is made whenever multi-nationals propose setting up down here.

The government may decide to solicit multi-national participation in telecommunications. It may even privatise the public monopoly. But the real issues are not economic ones. The capitalists are quick to point out that, unless the correct socio-political structures are in place, privatisation will be a

failure. Countries should adopt a set of institutions and a legal system that guarantee "transparency and fairness". This institutional framework must, of course, be "market friendly." There must be "a clear policy commitment" to "promote and protect the competitive environment." And, finally, there must be insulation of the new private providers from "arbitrary government intervention".

Can the state put in place a regulatory system with the capacity to restrain its own arbitrary administrative action? Can the government tie its own hands, and keep them tied? Investors might trust a bourgeois state, with a long tradition of defending private property and market mechanisms, in a country where the bourgeoisie enjoys social hegemony, with a culture and traditions based on respect for private property and market agreements. In other countries, they are, not surprisingly, worried about losing their money.

The double bind

Help is at hand for nervous investors, in the shape of international organisations like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation. Under an innovative new scheme, the World Bank provides private investors and lenders in the north with guarantees (insurance) against non-commercial risks, including the risk of administrative expropriation or nationalisation.

The catch, of course, is that the host country in the south must promise to repay the World Bank for any costs incurred if "interference" with the "free" market takes place. Otherwise, there will be no World Bank guarantees. And without the guarantees, there will be less investments.

The result is that the national and international environment is even more dominated by the multi-national companies and the international financial institutions, and the room for manoeuvre of governments in the south is even more restricted. ★

Notes

The author is a leading member of Sri Lanka's Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP, New Socialist Party)

This paper is an edited version of "Reform of telecommunications services: Aims and objectives," an undated and unpublished discussion paper.

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Rifondazione after the storm

In early October, Italy's Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) withdrew its support for the centre-left Olive Tree coalition government because of the cuts contained in the draft 1997-98 budget.

After a massive attack on the PRC by supporters of the moderate left, the party reversed its decision, in exchange for a government commitment to introduce a 35-hour week in 2001, and modification of some of the most unjust cuts in the retirement pension system.

We asked PRC national executive member Franco Turigliatto about the crisis.

Now that the decision has been taken to support Prime Minister Romano Prodi's — which, among other things, includes a drastic attack on the pensions of public sector workers — what has been the response of workers, the media and the ruling elites?

There had been a big media campaign against the party and its initial decision not to support the budget. Now the bourgeoisie and the leaders of the Olive Tree are gloating. They wanted the PRC to accept the government's proposal and maintain the process towards Maastricht and the establishment of a common European currency.

Important sectors of the bourgeoisie want this government to remain in office because there's no guarantee that new elections would give rise to a clear majority: there would be a big risk of having a very unstable parliament. Also, the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS), the main component of the government alliance, and Prodi preferred an agreement with the PRC rather than a new election.

The popular reaction has been very different. First, there are those who, after a decade of defeats, think it's no longer possible to change things and there's no alternative to Prodi's centre-left. They opposed the PRC action. However, this sentiment was theorised and pushed harder by the political milieu — PDS activists, the trade union apparatus and sections of the left media such as *Il Manifesto*.

Another sector was not clear: they didn't like the budget, but didn't want to open the way to a centre-right government and weren't immediately opposed to the initial stance of the PRC. They are open to being convinced.

The party withstood the pressure, even in the worst days of the crisis, but it was unprepared for the fight in opposition. Some local leaderships ran for cover, while others lobbied behind the scenes for the leadership to back down. Many local branches and individual comrades found they weren't very able to answer the media and attacks by PDS activists.

Yet party militants with a lot of experience were able to resist the pressure and influence workers to start to go on the offensive.

It was a "leopard skin" situation — resistance in spots. But at the national level, the party couldn't orient the people

who were very influenced by the media and PDS supporters.

You say the media pressure was very fierce. How extensive was the pressure from the PDS activists?

Very, very strong. They were particularly effective, being former leftists and trade union leaders. Also, because some PRC activists still operate in the framework of the old Italian Communist Party (PCI), it's instinctive to support "stability" and the "national interest" instead of advancing an alternative. Because our party has never fully come to terms with its past, it's always exhibited a mixed sort of political thinking that makes it vulnerable in crises like this.

What were the main arguments PDS members used against the PRC?

Their first argument was: if the PRC doesn't retreat, we'll have new elections and the first left government in years will fall and we'll have a right-wing government.

The second line of argument was: we've already made a lot of sacrifices, now we're only asking for a few more. Your leaders, who have already agreed to previous sacrifices, must be splitting the government majority for some stupid political reasons of their own. Yet, if we all make these sacrifices, we can all be "part of Europe", and that means less unemployment and better working conditions.

We were in a trap of our own making. For a year and a half, the PRC leadership majority has been arguing against the left minority to support the Prodi government because, it said, preventing a victory of the right is an absolute priority and at the same time we can demand of it a program of real reform. As a result, we defended the Prodi government for 15 months, including some of its more negative financial and social decisions.

Moreover, the party was not politically or psychologically prepared for a split. A large majority didn't think the leadership wanted to split, or they hoped or believed that the split wouldn't occur. That's because the party has been unable to prepare its militants for an alternative.

Yet there were some working-class sectors who could have been prepared to split, who saw the danger for the whole



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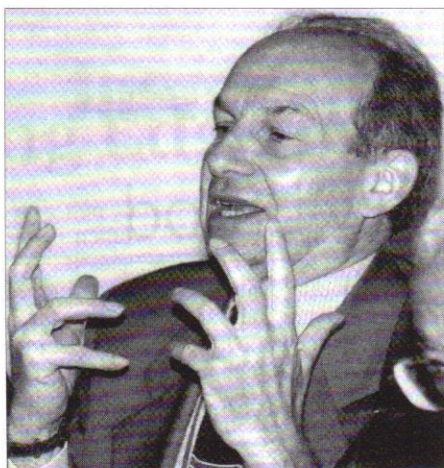
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Eric Toussaint and Peter Drucker (Eds.)

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Rifondazione leader Fausto Bertinotti

working class movement's subordination to Prodi and Company. I'm convinced that if the party had been able to prepare its members, opinion among key sectors of the working class would have supported the party and helped convinced the waverers.

As things stand, people will find out through bitter experience what the agreement means. So far there haven't been any strong reactions within the working class, even from those sectors hardest hit, like teachers and public servants, who will have to put off retirement by five years.

But these are only sectors of an increasingly divided class. And what can people do when their union leaders and "the party of the alternative" agree with the government?

What are the likely longer term effects on workers ability to resist?

I won't predict. The same dangers certainly exist, but a sector of the working class still knows about class struggle and has the ability to engage in new struggles. The general task is to link this older "vanguard" to the younger workers.

An important variable is the trade union apparatus, which is completely subordinated to the bosses, to neo-liberal ideology and politics. This applies as much to the "left" sector, which, in the hot days of the crisis, completely abandoned the PRC.

The previous trade union policy of the party facilitated this desertion. We had split the broad left class struggle current inside the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) in favour of an "area of communists" which could represent the party in internal union apparatus politics.

Come the crisis, our "allies" in the left sector of the CGIL apparatus disappeared without trace. This error has now been recognised, but it's not yet clear whether

this will result in a new orientation by the CGIL militants.

Finally, another question needs stressing. The party leadership admits that we're accepting some negative financial measures, but insists that it has been able to extract important concessions from the government. However, these are still only symbolic — the 35-hour week by the year 2001, for example.

We will push to organise a real campaign in support of the shorter working week, but with what result remains to be seen. The PRC is still alive and kicking — it organised an October 20 demonstration of 200,000 in Rome for the shorter working week and the welfare state. But this brings out our contradiction: we can organise a big protest, but we were unable to fight in the factories and against the bourgeois propaganda offensive.

How did the left in the PRC, which won 15% of the vote at the last congress, hold up during the crisis?

The opposition in the PRC works at different levels. At the leadership level, we've tried to demonstrate that we're becoming increasingly subordinate to the government and we've striven to convince comrades that it's necessary to change. We've also organised petitions against leadership decisions, for example on new unemployment regulations and against the legalisation of contract labour.

We're excluded from the executive bodies in many of the largest federations. We resist this, but unfortunately in Tuscany some important older leaders of the left, members of the old PCI, succumbed and left. We think this split was a mistake because the possibilities of building a real left organisation outside the PRC are very limited.

Today the fight for the revolutionary party is inside the PRC. The dynamic of discussion and recomposition is not finished: we're in the middle of fighting to change the PRC's orientation and having a broader left within it.

There are two possible lines of development. Either the party increasingly succumbs to the Olive Tree, or we fight their policies through mobilisations that will lead to further confrontations and crises.

To avoid subordination, it's necessary to prepare the party for new fights and splits from the government majority.

At the same time, the party's capacity to lead a social resistance and defend an alternative politics has to be developed. The experience of this short, sharp crisis shows what's most needed is a clarification of the party's political perspectives and a political discussion to arm members.

What avenues are available for that discussion?

This is a big problem. While the opposition asked for such a discussion, the door of *Liberazione* [the daily PRC newspaper] has been almost completely closed to us. The next issue of *Rifondazione* [PRC monthly magazine] will have a short article by [left minority leader] Livio Maitan about the PRC's perspectives, but it's not easy to have a public membership discussion.

This lack of discussion militates against the education and integration of young people. As a result, even though at 126,000 members the party has grown slightly, there's been a large turnover, especially of young people.

Are any forces inside the Olive Tree coalition starting to have doubts about its direction?

No. A very small number split from the Greens to form Red-Green Solidarity Alternative. But the overwhelming majority went in the "realist" direction, with the odd squabble on minor issues but always in agreement with the PDS on the key questions.

Are there any left forces outside the PRC? What about the "social centres"?

Some are semi-anarchist and ultra-leftist. Others have become "anarcho-reformist" service providers funded by the left municipalities.

The comrades in Tuscany who split from the PRC are trying to build a "new political subject" in alliance with the leaders of the rank-and-file "union" SLAI-Cobas.

Such a fusion won't be easy, because they want to bring together not only the SLAI-Cobas but also a more important "union" with some real, local public sector implantation called *Rank and File Representation (RDB)*. These unions are strongly influenced by various left political trends, ex-Maoist-Stalinist in the case of the RDB.

Then there is *Revolutionary Socialism*, a split from the Morenist wing of Trotskyism, who present themselves as innovators but create social movements in a manipulative and bureaucratic way. None of these forces have anything like the implantation and social weight of the PRC.

Today the fight for the revolutionary party is inside the PRC. The dynamic of discussion and recomposition is not finished. Those of us connected with *Bandiera Rossa* magazine are fighting to change the PRC's orientation, and develop a broader left within it. ★

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From PCI to PDS

by Livio Maitan

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Franco Turigliatto edits *Bandiera Rossa*, the magazine of Fourth International supporters within the PRC. This interview is taken from the Green Left Weekly Home Page. For further details regarding subscriptions and correspondence please contact <greenleft@peg.apc.org>.

The feminisation of underemployment

Full employment and stable contracts are the new utopia. Governments and management are welcoming back the world of a hundred years ago, declaring that unemployment and underemployment are necessary. The enforcement of the Maastricht Treaty's criteria only hastens this development. And as always, women are first in line.

Myosotis Walner

Despite their clear desire to continue working, women's right to a job is continually challenged. In any period of economic crisis, the old reactionary cry concerning women workers who "steal" jobs is heard again.

So far, all initiatives -hidden or up front- to create pay for motherhood, thus excluding women from the paid workforce outside the home, have failed to reverse our entry into the workforce. But for how long? France's new Parental Educational Aid for mothers who stay at home has already contributed to a worrisome decrease in the percentage of mothers with a second child active in the workforce, from 75 % to 45%.

In 1995, the French workforce was comprised of 11.5 million women and 14 million men. The incredible increase in the number of women -an additional 5 million since the beginning of the 1960s- is the result of the growth of the service sector. But this sector, where women have traditionally been concentrated, is today being transformed by a wave of unemployment and underemployment. Today in France, 10 million workers are unemployed, under-employed, or kept out of the job market.

Chômeuse, précaire - comme ma mère

**Unemployed, under-employed
- Like my mother before me**

Women are between 52% and 58% of the French unemployed, although official methods of calculating these figures are suspect, since they only take into account those who have no job at all and are currently looking for full-time work. Moreover, women are unemployed longer than men. In March 1994, nearly 600,000 women had already been unemployed for more than a year, compared to 500,000 men. The situation in other European Union countries is similar.

Sociologist Margaret Maruani accurately describes this situation as female "hyper-unemployment".¹ The worst-

affected categories are women blue collar and clerical workers, whose rates of unemployment are, respectively, 20.8% and 15.7%. Even with a technical high school diploma (CAP), women comprise 15% of the unemployed, while men with the same qualifications account for 10%.

Young women do not escape this trend, with a 32% unemployment rate versus 23% for young men. The unemployment rate for all youth under age 25 is 27%.

Aside from bosses' attacks and repressive government policies (including under social democratic governments) of deregulation and work flexibility, we are seeing the right gain ground ideologically on the question of part-time work. From the early 80s legislation encouraging part-time work to the 1995 Accord on the annualisation of working hours and flexibility, the spread of part-time work has escalated.² The Netherlands and Britain are the "models" for absorbing unemployment through generalisation of part-time jobs. Since these jobs are taken as a last resort rather than freely chosen, women are virtually restricted to part-time work, while only pathetic attempts are made to provide care and services for their children. Women are 85% of the part-time workforce.

Part-time work is nothing more than part-time unemployment, a fraction of a wage. Take-home pay is usually hardly more than France's minimum social security payment for those without unemployment insurance; about 2,400 F (US\$ 407) per month. Young women represent 29% of part-time workers. Young men represent only 12%.

More than half of the women who hold part-time jobs work in the service sector, sales, hotel and restaurant work, all the sectors suffering most from the current recession. This, however, does not prevent employers from pressuring them for overtime hours to meet seasonal variations, counting on women's need to earn more.

In the public sector, although "free Wednesdays" [the right to time off without pay on Wednesdays, when schools close at lunchtime] taken primarily by women, are certainly not being squeezed, as in the private sector, the practice still confirms the traditional division of gender roles. In the public sector, women's participation in part-time work is also higher than men's. One quarter of women in the lowest

category, "C"-grade jobs work part time, compared to only 10% of women in the higher civil service ranks "A" and "B."

Temporary contracts (CDD) developed enormously in the early 90s. By March 1995 they accounted for 70% of new jobs and 56.4% of other new contracts. The number of temporary contracts of less than a month's duration rose 40% between 1994 and 1995. The number of one to six-month contracts rose 21%, while the number of temporary contracts of more than half-a-year fell by 8%.

Although the number of cashier and miscellaneous service jobs (held primarily by women under the age of 30) rose by 40% between 1982 and 1990, the level of unemployment in the sector is still an above-average 17%.

The number of recorded jobs as household workers (maids, child-care providers, cooks, etc.) dropped 13% between 1982 and 1990. This leaves a declared workforce of 180,000, dominated by women over 40. The unemployment rate has reached 16%, a large proportion of which represents long-term unemployment.

Sales and secretarial work are also under heavy fire. Even though the number of job seekers under 25 in these two categories is higher than the average, young women here are more likely to get part-time work than young men.

In addition, young men in this sector often obtain work with a contractual guarantee of training or retraining, while young women are offered short-term "dole plus" contracts that make no provision for training.³

Underpaid and under-protected

Women's financial independence, already in jeopardy given wage differentials, becomes even more precarious in a period of unemployment.

About 2.2 million unemployed workers receive social insurance benefits. Half get about 3,000 F (\$500) per month. Four out of five receive less than 5,000 F. However, 44% of the unemployed receive no social insurance benefits at all. The situation is particularly bad for young workers. In December 1995, out of a total of 850,000 unemployed workers from 18 to 25 years of age, 550,000 were not eligible for a single welfare payment. Among the unemployed in the 30s-age bracket, 50% of men receive no assis-

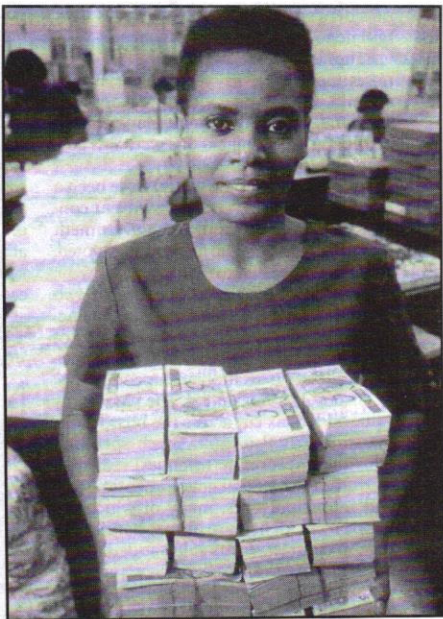
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Penny Duggan & Heather Dashner (editors)

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Greece

George Balafas acquitted, but not cleared

After being in and out of jail for 10 years, George Balafas emerged from Korydallos prison as a free man on December 1st. Three judges and four civilian jurors overturned his 10-year conviction for complicity in bloody attacks in the Eighties carried out by the left terrorist group Anti-State Struggle.

The appeals judge said doubt over Balafas' guilt had emerged due to conflicting witness accounts and forensic evidence. On the weapons charges, the civilian jurors all voted in contradiction to the judges, saying there was not enough evidence to justify conviction.

Although Balafas was acquitted, he was not cleared of the charges, and so

has no right to claim compensation for the amount of time he spent behind bars.

Balafas said police conspired to bring the charges against him, under pressure from Washington. The 1996 US State Department **Report on World Terrorism** specifically praised the Greek government for his conviction!

The police became so overzealous in pinning terrorist charges on their suspects, after their lack of success in hunting down urban guerrillas belonging to groups like November 17 and the Revolutionary Popular Struggle (ELA – which police think developed out of the Anti-State Struggle group. ★

Source: Athens News <<http://athensnews.dolnet.gr/>>

tance, compared to 60% of women.

Young women living apart from their family face the worst change in their standard of living, because they are the least likely to be eligible for unemployment insurance.

All of these factors reinforce the continuing impoverishment of women (especially with the emergence of single-parent families, mostly consisting of single women with children):

Lacking the means to pay for day care and school meals, women find themselves once again responsible for raising children, and thus less available than men for most efforts at job seeking.

Shorter hours, but what conditions?

In a situation of unemployment and underemployment, the left demand for a 32-hour work week with no loss in wages, with appropriate jobs, is particularly relevant for women. The creation of sufficient high-quality childcare centres, so that leisure time no longer reinforces the gender division of labour in the home, is an indispensable addition to this demand.

In practice, most agreements between employers and unions concerning the length of the workday have had more to do with its reorganisation than its reduction. The result has only benefited the employer: annualisation of working hours, flexibility, part-time work, lower pay, and fewer employer contributions to social insurance. The strategy towards women, sometimes carried out by unions themselves, is obviously to encourage them to take part-time work, a "choice" that is anything but that, for all of the reasons discussed. Nothing less than the social status of women is at stake. ★

Notes

1. "Women's work in the shadow of unemployment", in *Actes de la Recherche en sciences sociales* #115, December 1996.
2. *Cahiers du féminisme* #77 (1996)
3. DARES Study (*Direction de l'animation, de la recherche, des études et des statistiques*) of December 1995 on the job situation in 84 employment categories.
4. *Cahiers du féminisme* #71/72 (1995)

Netherlands

Leaks in the Polder (model)

Holland's combination of labour market flexibilisation and wage restraint with only gradual cuts in the social security system is increasingly presented as a model for the rest of Europe. But, as John Cohzijn reports, more and more people in Holland are criticising the "Polder" (dike) Model

The Dutch trade unions were very supportive about the recent EU employment summit in Luxembourg, and criticised the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) for organising a demonstration there.

Since 1982 the Dutch trade unions have supported wage restraint. The TU leadership "co-thinks" with the bosses about restructuring companies and the economy. Union leaders repeat to their members that bigger profits will lead to new investments and more jobs. As proof of their good sense, they point to the official unemployment figures of 5.3%, much lower than the EU average.

But even *De Volkskrant*, the newspaper closest to the ruling Labour Party (PvdA), admits that many groups of jobless people are not counted in this statistic. According to the OECD (the 24 most industrialised countries) real unemployment [including chronic underemployment] in Holland is around 20%. Most new jobs are part-time. Over the last 10 years part time workers have increased from 22% to 37% of the total workforce

Spain has the highest unemployment in the EU, with 20% out of work according to official figures. But Holland is the champion of temporary work. Super-flexible contracts that will enable employers to cut their workforce immediately as soon as there are signs of a new recession.

The problems with poverty and social exclusion are becoming clear for more and more people. Around one million

people from a population of 15 million are living under the poverty-line. Education and health care are becoming less and less accessible.

A number of petitions and other initiatives are seeking to mobilise people against these developments. Since Holland's fake success in reducing unemployment is presented as a model across the European Union, this is particularly important for the development of an international critical movement against the European project of the bosses. Outspoken fans of the Polder Model include British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French trade union leader Nicole Notat.

Although the line of the trade union leadership is terrible, some things are changing. The trade union council of the ABVAKABO (civil-servants union) supported the Luxembourg demonstration, though the daily leadership was against.

There is also a small but important group of TU-activists that want to build a Euro-critical platform inside the unions. The Dutch network which supports the European Marches against Unemployment is active in these initiatives, as well as the successful platform of economists opposed to European Monetary Union, a progressive Dutch initiative which has sparked similar movements among intellectuals in other EU countries.

While building a broad coalition against poverty in Holland, EuroMarch activists will try to link poverty-problems with the fight against European unification. Next time there is an all-European demonstration against unemployment, a Dutch delegation will be there, with or without the leaders of "their" trade unions! ★

This article first appeared on the EuroMarch listserver. It may also appear in *Spectre* Magazine.

New mood in Prague...

Some 100,000 people gathered on Prague's Old Town Square on 8 November, in the largest demonstration since the democratic upsurge in November 1989. Unlike the trade union leaders who spoke from the platform, most of those in the cold and wet considered themselves to be in an anti-government demonstration.

Zdenek Prasil

The mood in the crowd was much more radical than on the stage. When trade union president Richard Falbr began his traditional vague calls for dialogue and consensus, he was nearly whistled off the platform. "We are not against the liberalisation, but in favour of it," Falbr told an outraged audience. "The problem," he tried to explain, "is that this government has shown itself incapable of its successful implementation. This is what has led to the economic calamity." As the slogans from the demonstrators grew louder, Falbr realised his mistake, and began to harden the tone of his speech. Departing from his carefully prepared notes, he even called for the resignation of the conservative government and urged trade unionists to vote for the opposition parties, to the horror of the mainly right-wing media.

Falbr persuaded the demonstrators to support his vague call for a change in social policy, which did not include any threats for further protest action, or any indication of what the trade unions might do if the government followed its usual practice and ignored the protest.

The warmest applause went to the representative of Slovakia's trade union con-

federation, promising solidarity if Czech unions took more radical action. Despite the separation of Czecho-Slovakia into two republics in 1992, there are still close economic ties between the two countries.

Although the demonstration was called by the CMKOS trade union confederation, the entire route of the march was lined by members of the fascist Republikani (SPR-RS), distributing free copies of their newspaper *Republika*.

Despite this massive presence, the crowd did not seem particularly interested in the Republicans' propaganda. Prague's much smaller anarchist and Trotskyist groups also distributed unusually large amounts of literature:

The anarcho-sindicalists and sellers of the Trotskyist magazine *Budoucnost* tried, without great success, to spread slogans calling for a general strike. Meanwhile, members of *Socialistická Solidarita* sold their magazine, and distributed posters and stickers with slogans like "Tax the Rich!"

[According to one paperseller, "only a year ago, this kind of left agitation would have met with hostility from many demonstrators. The receptiveness of the crowd suggest the possibility of a shift from propaganda work towards intervention in the labour movement." Though this viewpoint is probably not shared by the leaders of the various revolutionary groupings.]

As well as underestimating the number of participants, the official and pro-government media later claimed that participants were paid 200 Kc (\$6, or about three hours wages). This correspondent travelled to Prague on the bus carrying workers from the Skoda-Volkswagen plant in Mlada Boleslav, and all we got was a packet of sandwiches. Other participants probably got the same.

The left radicals

The small revolutionary left is concentrated in the capital. No group has more than 25 members. All are based in the youth and student milieu, and are overwhelmingly male in composition.

The anarcho-sindicalist group *Federace socialistich anarchistu* (Federation of Social Anarchists) produces a magazine called *Hlas prime akce* (*Voice of Direct Action*).

There is also an anarchosyndicalist "union," *Solidarita*, about as large as the other far left groups.

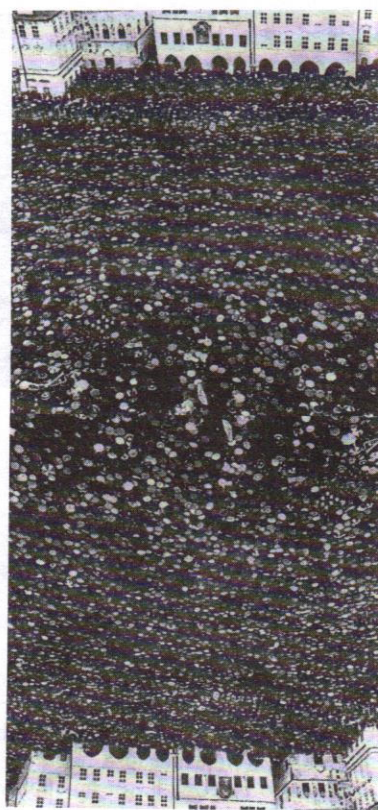
The supporters of the British SWP concentrate on selling their magazine *Socialistická Solidarita*, and intervening in

the small anti-racist movement.

At the moment they are slightly more successful than supporters of Britain's Socialist Party (formerly Militant). That group briefly had considerable influence within the youth section of the Czech Communist Party (KSM), the largest radical youth group.

At the end of that entryist period, the group had some 50 members, and a presence outside Prague.

The group has since declined to about 20 members, who sell their magazine *Budoucnost* (*The Future*), and run a Campaign for Youth Rights. [ZP] ★



These journalists think this is enough to bring people half way across the country to stand in the December rain for a few hours. I envy their deep knowledge of their fellow citizens!

Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus dismissed the demonstration as "a couple of trade unionists on the Old Town Square," unable to change anything. More forward-looking members of the ruling class took the event, the largest demonstration since the 1989 events which brought down the Stalinist regime, rather more seriously.

A further sign of this social radicalisation came in mid-November, with an unusually large turnout for anti-racist demonstrations called to protest the murder of a Sudanese student by skinheads.

These signs of a new mood in the class struggle, together with the worsening economic situation, led a large faction of the parliamentary right to remove Prime Minister Klaus from office, using the excuse of a two-year old scandal about pay-backs during the privatisation programme.

Since the currency devaluation in May, Klaus had already expelled six ministers from his cabinet as sacrificial offerings. By turning Klaus himself into the scapegoat for everything that working people might be unhappy about, the regime has managed to reduce the social tension in the country. A large number of workers clearly expect that a new government, either from the existing centre-right coalition, or after Spring elections, will somehow implement a significant improvement in our standard of living.

This has reduced, in the short term, the likelihood of larger strikes which, given



...but not in Zagreb

Interview with the President of the Croatian Helsinki Committee for human rights

For Ivan Cicak, there is nothing inevitable or spontaneous about the refugee crisis in former Yugoslavia. "Serbian and Croatian leaders made a series of secret agreements on mass resettlement. Croatian officials now admit that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has never raised the question of the return to Croatia of the 340,000 Serbs from Croatia who found shelter in Serbia after the outbreak of war in Croatia. These people are actually welcomed there, in order to preserve national homogeneity against the Albanians and other minorities."

As President of the Croatian Helsinki Committee for human rights, Cicak has plenty of well-documented evidence. "The organised departure of Serbs from Krajina started a few days before Croatian forces re-conquered that territory. In other words, some Serb generals knew about the Croatian plans before the order to attack was given to their Croatian counterparts! And one of the largest waves of Croatian emigration from Bosnia came shortly afterward — to fill up the places emptied after the Serbs fled."

For Cicak, there is no doubt. "Today, everybody knows that one of the primary aims of this war was to create a 'greater Serbia' and 'greater Croatia' — both as ethnically pure as possible."

Krajina

The continued harassment of Serbs remaining in Krajina is part of this plan. "Regardless of who makes the plans and who commits the crimes," he says, "the fact that the government tolerates all this and that it takes no actions for punishing perpetrators, proves that this is the government's politics. It is obvious that the Croatian government is leading the politics of preventing Serbs from returning. The President of Croatia has clearly declared on several occasions that there is no return of Serbs, and there will be no return."

One of the main barriers to the return of refugees is "because these people have no place to return to. The houses of the Serb refugees are still inhabited by other people."

These new residents, many of them Croatian refugees from other parts of former Yugoslavia, or people whose homes were destroyed in the fighting, are a solid base of support for the most reactionary factions of the regime. "The authorities expect some favours from these 'legally' re-settled persons. This has been a great way to create a kind of praetorian guard. Because if you give a house to someone, you can then take someone else's workshop away from them, and the guy you gave the free house to will be the first to defend you."

Plundering of abandoned property, and the property of the Serb minority, is "legalised, and seen as a legitimate way of behaving. By encouraging mass participation, a collective responsibility for plundering is created."

The regime tried to stop this destructive phenomena, but only so as to protect Croatia's bruised tourist industry. "One secret regulation of the Ministry of Defence Headquarters in Zagreb explicitly says that 'during the summer season,' re-settling and plundering is to be put to a halt!"

Individual rights

Cicak has particularly harsh words for Croatian Vice President Ljerka Mintas Hodak, who once said that the West's judgements about human rights are based "on individual cases only." "On the basis of what are they to come to the conclusion, if not on the basis of the individual cases?" asks Cicak. In his opinion Hodak, who heads the government's Co-ordination body for human rights, is "incompetent to discuss human rights... The basic principle of human rights is that they are always individual and can not be otherwise. When someone like her talks about national and ethnic rights of Croats in the Croatian national state, then s/he knows nothing about human rights. Human rights exist to protect those of the minority in the country!"

To its credit, the Croatian Helsinki Committee documented and protested against the sufferings of those Serbs who remained in Croatia during the wars that split Yugoslavia apart. The Committee is regularly criticised in Croatia for "caring more about Serbs' rights than the rights of Croats." But according to Cicak, "I think, in fact, that we have not showed enough concern towards Serbs. But with our limited resources, we cannot do more. Of course, we do not deal only with Serbs, we protect human rights to a wider extent: protection of the independent radio station **Radio 101**, protest against police harassment in the major cities, and so on. But it is normal that we protect those who are

the relatively weak social structure of Czech society, could easily change the balance of forces between the classes.

If the right-wing coalition remains in power, this calm will not last until the Spring. But if there are new elections, and the opposition Social Democrats (CSSD) come to power for the first time, this will inevitably increase people's belief in the regime's capacity to make reforms, giving the system a longer breathing space.

Those who have illusions that such a government would make radical changes in favour of all the victims of the "Klaus medicine" should not forget that CSSD leader Milos Zeman has repeatedly called for a Bohemian version of the "Austrian model" — a virtually permanent coalition between Social and Christian Democrats.

As part of Vaclav Klaus' administration, the Czech Christian Democratic Union (KDU-CSL) agreed to every asocial suggestion of the father of the Czech miracle. As Minister of Agriculture, Christian democrat leader Josef Lux achieved the virtual destruction of the country's relatively efficient agriculture, through dissolving the collective farms without consulting their members, restoring anything that had been nationalised since the middle ages, and a range of other examples of "Christian generosity." ★

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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.



most vulnerable. And in this situation the Serb minority is the one that is being killed, plundered, etc. The Croatian Republic is not doing that to Croats, at least not yet and not to that extent. So, it should be perfectly clear why we are protecting Serbs 'more'."

National Interest

He also rejects accusations in the official media that human rights activists "denounce the county abroad" through their contacts with foreign journalists and diplomats.

"During the Krajina events, we were repeatedly asked if the Helsinki Committee was taking into account the fact that our information about harassing of the Serbs could be useful for [Croatia's] enemies. The issue was not whether our report was true or not! This is where the evil lies, in this thesis. Do we say participation in the ustashi [nationalist militia] was bad because of the crimes committed, or because the West objected to it?"

In my opinion we have to fight evil because it is evil and not because the world thinks so and will object if we don't fight against it. The historical feeling of shame for crimes committed in the name of Croatia ought to be one of the ultimate criteria when establishing the Croatian national interest."

The Croatian media portray co-operation with the Hague tribunal on war crimes in former Yugoslavia as betrayal of the country's national interests. "This is stupid," complains Cicak. "Co-operation with The Hague is an obligation for the national interest." Not that it makes his life easy. "For the moment, the intelligence office is recording my conversations with officials of the Hague Tribunal, and is forwarding them to [the pro-regime newspaper] *Vjesnik*. With only a hint of irony, Cicak predicts that "when [Bosnian Serb leader Radovan] Karadjic arrives in The Hague [to face trial], all forms of co-operation with the court will be possible, wanted and necessary."

According to the Helsinki Committee, the Croatian government has so far submitted only eleven documents to the Hague tribunal. This obstructionism "is an attempt of one group in power - with president Tudjman at its head - to make the whole Croatian nation responsible for the criminal deeds of some individuals."

The fact that the Croatian government is paying the lawyers and travel expenses of the defence of Tihomir Blaskic, a Croat accused for crimes committed in a foreign country [Bosnia] means that the Croatian government must assume the responsibility for his crimes, if he is found guilty." With the Croatian regime behaving in this way, Cicak says that Croatians "should stop being surprised that we are accused collectively for what some have done in our name."

In the opinion of the Helsinki Committee president, many of Croatia's current leaders could eventually appear before the

Hague tribunal. "At least five retired generals of the Croatian Army, and ten active ones could appear before the judge." In a veiled reference to Croatia's autocratic President, Cicak says that the final list of accused could also include "former and current ministers, and those above them. Read carefully the prologue of the prosecutor in the process against [Croatian war crimes defendant] Blaskic and you will see that he was only the executor of Tudjman's political ideas."

International pressure

Cicak offers no simple solution to the continued tension in the region. "The reason for the current pressure from the international community is their awareness that the war has not come to an end and that if the SFOR [Western troops] withdraw, new conflicts are likely to emerge... The relentless position of all parties in conflict gives little hope. I do not see who will first make a reconciliatory step."

This pressure is, however, having an effect on the regime in Zagreb. "Croatia's ruling party, the most responsible for violating basic human rights, now frequently discusses the question. Not because they want to, but because they are forced into doing so by the international community. Sooner or later, this will lead them into a conflict with the extremists, those not willing to accept any change in the course of politics."

This risk is hard to evaluate. President Franjo Tudjman is a skilled politician. "He has already backed down on a number of issues, but always manoeuvred so that the public celebrates his diplomatic defeats as glorious victories." According to Cicak, though, "he succeeded in this by virtue of only one argument: the argument of war. The war in Croatia was not only a means for gaining independence but a means for preserving the power acquired."

Since war and the threat of war is the cornerstone of the Tudjman regime, Cicak refuses to believe in a rapid stabilisation of the situation. "Even if the Croatian regime makes peace with Serbia, it will find new enemies. What does the disposition of the military centres in the country tell us? Why such a concentration of military force near the Hungarian or Italian border? Why are the troops not concentrated near the borders with the declared current enemy: Serbia and Republika Srpska?" As Cicak points out, troop deployment across Croatia reflects the size of the local population, not any external threat. "The Croatian government sees the enemy within, in Croatia itself, not in Serbia. It seems that the role of the army is not just the defence of the borders, but the defence of the regime as well. ★

Source: A longer version of this interview was published in the Croatian weekly newspaper *Feral Tribune*. In response, Croatia's public prosecutor charged Ivan Zvonimir Cicak with "dissemination of false information" in contravention of Article 191. of the Croatian Criminal Code. He faces a sentence of up to six months imprisonment.

NATO Instrument

The geostrategic situation in Europe shifted during 1997. The old imperialist alliance, based on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), faces challenges to its methods of organisation. But it intends to remain the dominant element in the current redistribution of the politico-military cards in Europe and beyond.

Jean-Louis Michel

Asserting the centrality of NATO implies the acceptance of unchallenged American domination over both the aims and the application of the new strategic orientation. It is precisely here that can be found the roots of an open crisis between the United States and its main European allies. The European powers are absorbed by the construction of the European Union. This is, certainly, mainly about economic and monetary matters, under the auspices of the Maastricht Treaty, but integration also has a politico-military dimension.

The new Eldorado?

NATO now presents itself as a "framework for stability, peace and prosperity". According to the Alliance's most loyal champions, like Czech President Vaclav Havel, this symbol of the cold war will become the vehicle for co-operation between peoples.

Founded in April 1949 to combat the "Soviet threat", NATO has always combined a military function, tying its members into common action if one of its members comes under attack, and an economic, political and ideological function, by establishing various 'ground rules' for member states. In particular, accepting the permanent right of the United States to oversee European affairs. For this reason, NATO has, for a long time, represented an ideal model of regional organisation for Washington.

With the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, things have changed. NATO's new military function is oriented to the third world -- and the Arab Mediterranean states in particular.

The politico-ideological function of the Alliance is also changing. A new co-operation agreement between Russia and NATO was ratified in Paris on 27 May. There was a NATO summit in Madrid in July, and a Franco-German memorandum in Nuremberg in December 1996. Several large scale military manoeuvres have

Pax Americana

taken place. Even the Western European Union is re-asserting itself.

This changing politico-ideological function of the Alliance is what dominated the July 1997 summit of heads of state and government of the sixteen NATO member states.

The previously announced reform of the structures and methods of organisation had to be postponed once again because of the lack of consensus between Clinton and the Europeans, especially France and Germany. But the big matter at Madrid was the expansion of NATO to incorporate new members from eastern Europe.

The Alliance agreed to bring in only three countries, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. This disappointed France (which supported Rumania) and Germany (which wanted to include Slovenia too).

Clinton and the American Senate dread the probably astronomical cost of this expansion.

Formally the candidates have to satisfy several criteria: an advanced, stable "democratisation", the guarantee of civil control over the army, reasonably smooth relations with their neighbours, and above all, an ability to "contribute to collective security". It is poignant to note that there is no demand on new candidates to demonstrate majority support for their entry, say by a referendum. In the Czech Republic, at least, it is not sure that a majority would support NATO membership.

In practice the three new members have been chosen because, unlike most of Eastern Europe, they are thought capable of reinforcing austerity measures, so as to devote the required minimum of three percent of their GDP to defence. In reality, this is the most important criterion for joining NATO.

This implies a major budget reorganisation. Poland currently spends 2.5 percent of its GDP on its armed forces, the Czech Republic 1.7% and Hungary 1.4%.

NATO is creating a new arms market into which the newly restructured American military industries are ready to expand. NATO expansion marks the beginning of a new phase of remilitarisation of central and European Europe, under American leadership. The people of these countries will pay the full price of this market militarisation. They will be condemned to perpetual austerity, in the name of an elusive "better, safer tomorrow."

No-one knows far this remilitarisation can go, and what resistance it will encounter. But it probably indicates more global initiatives and further extension of military pacts and high-tech rearmament in all parts of the world.

This process is driven by American

economic circumstances. It remains to be seen if the Europeans, who face quite different economic conditions, will follow. The incoherence and incompetence with which European leaders have approached the mergers in the trans-Atlantic aeronautical industry have confirmed their inability to collectively defend their obvious interests, to say nothing of those of the people.

Europe and America

If the question of structural reforms misfired at Madrid, it was none the less revealing about the relationship of forces that still prevails in the Alliance.

Formally, the demand expressed by several European capitals for a sharing of the main positions of responsibility, tradi-

tegic sector today, the Mediterranean. The Americans cannot agree to that without running the risk of eventually losing their dominance in the alliance.

Moreover, the existence of *Euromarforce* - a grouping of air and naval forces set up last year by France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, and destined, in times of crisis, to be the armed wing of the West European Union (a largely inactive defence alliance of EU states) - demonstrates sufficiently the inclinations towards European independence. The large scale *Isles d'Or* - 1997 manoeuvres last May, under French command, clearly showed these new aspirations: particularly because they had been officially designed to test the complementary links between the NATO and WEU structures.



tionally held by the Americans, hit upon the problem of the southern command - in Naples, Italy - and, in addition, on the differences among the Europeans - Greeks and Turks on one side, Spanish, Portuguese and Italians on the other, over the geographical siting of the sub-commands for this sector. The Europeans demanded the Naples command, arguing that if an American officer kept command of the American sixth fleet, which is not attached to NATO, there was no reason why other national squadrons in the Mediterranean attached to NATO could not be commanded by a European; for example by rotation between France, Italy and Spain.

Washington was opposed, less for reasons of military coherence or technique than for a matter of principle. Appointing a European head of the Naples command would mean the 'Europeanisation' of what is now the Alliance's most decisive stra-

The European military organisation has forged a new concept of deployment of forces for cases where, following an American refusal, it is impossible to use NATO structures. This means designing, in record time, a European General Staff for that theatre of operations. The intervention in Albania under Italian command would have been the first clear demonstration of this new spirit.

The old, old story

To understand the stakes in this arm-wrestling between the United States and Europe we have to return to the history of European military construction, its state of advance and its perspectives.

The militarisation of the European Union, usually but not always under the NATO umbrella, is an old priority, though never a central concern of the European Commission and the governments of the

member states. The Euromilitarisation project has had a variable geometry. It started with the occasional bipartite collaboration, and developed into the Franco-German Permanent Defence Council and more recently the *Euromarforce*.

And the setbacks are just as old and varied. In 1954 a coalition of Gaullists and Communists overturned the planned European Defence Community, at the moment of its ratification by the French Parliament, in a chauvinist national union against German rearmament.

For many years after 1954, it seemed improbable that European countries would repeat such initiatives. Instead, each followed its own immediate interests. Germany re-armed, in a strategy of strict subordination to the United States, in the framework of NATO. Britain followed a similar path, but with a greater margin for independence, benefiting from its being victorious at the end of the war, despite its declining status as a world power. France exhibited a more marked demand for *grandeur* and independence, marked by the country's departure from the NATO military command in 1966 on the initiative of President General Charles de Gaulle.

The existence of nuclear arms presupposed a single key and, therefore, a sole authority able to take the decision to use the bomb. London and Paris were endowed, the others not. For two decades people in Institutes of Strategic Research and in the General Staffs tore themselves apart trying to find a solution to this intractable problem, how could a group of countries use the nuclear umbrella, without there being a first and a second, a consulted and a decider. As a general rule the most lucid observers considered that if this problem had a solution it was only conceivable with the coming of a European supranational body, endowed with all the attributes of sovereignty. The fall of the bureaucratic dictatorships in the east has obviously upset this certainty by consigning the nuclear arsenals, or more exactly the theories about their use, to the museums of the military academies.

European militarisation within NATO

Two parallel processes have accelerated European military construction: growing closeness between France and Germany, the key countries in the European project, and the crisis of the armaments sector.

France and Germany have created an integrated, bilingual "Eurocorps" unit of 50,000 men, and the creation of a Permanent Defence Council bringing together the members of the General Staffs and experts of the two states. The two countries have striven to develop a common approach to the problems they encounter, after the "Desert Storm" war against Iraq, in which the imperial power of America reduced the French to the role of auxiliaries, and the Germans to the role of financial backers. France's interest in joint projects with Germany is also motivated



by the frustrations of its post-colonial ambitions in its "backyard," the French-speaking countries of Africa. Paris and Bonn are thus dragging Europe towards a more integrated military policy.

The other accelerator of European military integration is one aspect of the crisis of globalisation. The armaments sector remains narrowly dependent on state intervention. From "Research and

Development" to commercialisation under export licence control, nothing in the armaments industry escapes the state. The culture of enterprises in this industrial sector has very little in common with that of civil sectors employing similar technology. This makes the process of reconversion problematic. And, as recent UN studies have demonstrated, each dollar invested in military production generates less direct and indirect profits than if invested in the most similar form of civil production.

As a result, globalisation has hit military industries, in the US as well as western Europe, particularly hard. Restructuring is everywhere accompanied by a drastic reduction in production and employment. State military credits are no longer spared from the horrors of budgetary austerity. But this only reduces the captive market for armaments even further.

And, once the sector has been 'purged' of less profitable companies, at least in North America, there is even the danger of a new round of selective arms growth, led by the Pentagon.

Europe is not really "a war behind" the USA in its technological development, as the most zealous militarists claim. A frightening range of military research programmes are currently being financed by Europe's four biggest "cannon merchants," Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Not all these projects will be maintained, of course. But they are a real factor behind the integration of arms commissioning and production, and the constitution of an authentic "European military capital", capable of commissioning research, and providing guaranteed orders for European arms producers. The US recognises this dynamic, and is looking to control the process -- since it can't hold it back. This is what motivates US support for the enlargement of NATO, and the agreements reached at the Madrid summit.

A Franco-German affair

Germany and France are the main initiators of European "visibility" on defence matters. By adopting, in autumn 1996 at Nuremberg, a common document on the problems of defence, Chancellor Kohl and President Chirac used objective factors to give themselves a direct political lever on the bilateral plane as well as that of the Union.

Why should Washington be alarmed? The novelty does not reside so much in the terms of the Nuremberg agreement, but in the precise and coherent character of the document, which sets objectives and makes it possible to measure deeds against words. In contrast, the semi-blockage at the Amsterdam Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) of EU leaders shows the advance that the diabolical duo of European construction has over its European partners.

France and Germany have been intensifying their co-operation in matters

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of defence and foreign policy for some time now. But at Nuremberg, Kohl and Chirac left nothing aside, not even those concerns which only really interest one of the two. The resulting document is an explicit commitment between Bonn and Paris for the definition of a strictly common, almost integrated defence policy.

Paris has drawn the logical conclusions from the end of a myth, that of the independence of its nuclear arsenal. Re-integration in the unified military command of NATO that France had quit in 1966 sounds the death-knell for the old Gaullist dream. The Socialists, who formally denounce the establishment's Atlanticist drift, forget that they themselves initiated the process, during the first seven years of François Mitterand's presidency. They adopted the equally illusory and ruinous perspective of independent European defence based on the nuclear arsenals of Britain and France.

Conservative President Jacques Chirac is more of a realist, and on the nuclear issue allies himself with the German position. The Nuremberg document stresses that the "supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is assured by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, in particular those of the United States". The "independent" French and British arsenals only "contribute to the global security of the Allies" as complementary forces. This form of words underlines the current limits of European ambitions, staying well within NATO. This can only please Washington.

Germany's new role

As for Germany, the engagement of troops abroad, unthinkable a few years ago, is now openly planned. The Nuremberg document notably states that "The defined common policy has as its aim preserving and reinforcing the stability of the Mediterranean basin... our two countries can be led to participate, under very varied forms, in missions of crisis management".

It is at this level that the principle danger of repeated military adventures resides. Adventures which are no longer restricted by the physical and financial limits of the French army. Unfortunately, left parties in Europe have generally remained silent on this new military potential.

Bonn is also hoping to obtain a seat on the United Nations Security Council. This is justified, in its opinion, by its new responsibilities as much as by the level of its UN contributions.

The Nuremberg document also envisages increased military-industrial co-operation, "in particular in the fields of methods of command, intelligence, logistics, long range transport and the training and development of men". All at the heart of the Atlantic Alliance of course, since both governments consider that the NATO framework is the least costly option. This

is the only method compatible with a reduction in the amount of financial resources required for defence, combined with a concentration of their efforts to compete with the United States in the few really profitable areas of research.

Partnership with Russia.

Russia and her borders remain risks of the first order in relations between the main western powers. Not because Russia's military power is worrying, or because of Moscow's opposition to the enlargement of NATO to include former Soviet Republics. But because Americans and Europeans are competing to control the situation in the former Soviet Union to their own advantage. The game, which consists of letting Moscow a role of dominant power in regional crises wherever that allows the US to reinforce its own leadership, has become a classic of American diplomacy. The Middle East provides the most developed example.

The European capitals, who have played the Russian card in the Balkans and elsewhere, want to be masters of eastern Europe just as much as the US does. It is against this backdrop that NATO, at the initiative of Chirac and Kohl, signed in Paris, in May 1997, with Russia, a partnership agreement. The same logic was behind inviting Russia to join the G7 club of the richest and most powerful nations.

The stunt of Yeltsin, announcing on this occasion the unilateral disarmament of his (obsolete) nuclear arsenal aimed at "friendly" countries was recognised as a cheap trick by a leader who no longer knows what else to do to maintain his position. This partnership agreement envisages the creation of a permanent joint NATO-Russia Council which will meet every month or at the request of one of the partners.

According to Javier Solana, Secretary General of NATO, its broad functions and terms of reference will allow it to address "the prevention and regulation of conflicts, the maintenance of peace, the prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the exchange of information on defence policies and security forces, the conversion of defence industries, environmental questions related to defence and civil preparation in crisis situations".

In other words, Russia has been integrated in a subordinate position, through NATO. Though the forms have been respected, with mention of the possibility of a joint operation under the responsibility of the Security Council of the United Nations or of the Conference on Common Security in Europe. The intervention in Bosnia has

allowed the testing of this type of partnership which, in future, has every chance of becoming permanent. America's right to oversee things is recognised in an Act of Co-operation affecting above all the European theatre and its Mediterranean extensions.

Unstable equilibrium.

The future evolution of the strategic context and the balance of forces between the different NATO partners is not sure. The tendencies at work are contradictory. So far, the United States has maintained and even reinforced its leadership since the fall of the Berlin wall. Since the Gulf War, the world has seemed to be "unipolar."

But on the other hand, never before in history has the creation of a militarily united Europe seemed so near. The implementation of the final phase of economic and monetary union in 1998-2002 can only accelerate the process of military integration, in all its dimensions... at the political level through the Franco-German initiative, and by strengthened practical co-operation, involving the quasi-integration of military forces in several new theatres of operation, especially in the Mediterranean.

The structural antagonism between Europe and North America has formed one of the weighty realities of the evolution of the international situation in the post-war period. NATO has been the preferred framework for this arm-wrestling between the two partners.

For the European left, the struggle for the dissolution of NATO, the old imperialist war machine, repainted in modern colours, will become increasingly important. A conflict will develop around the refusal of some political forces to allow the integration or reintegration of their country's armed forces into NATO's US-dominated integrated command structures. That is especially true for eastern Europe but also, in a different way, for France and Spain. The democratic demand for consulting the people before signing new military pacts is relevant everywhere.

So is the anti-austerity dimension. Though, of course, this is more difficult to combine with the anti-militarist struggle, because it supposes an alliance of classes or social layers which are unequally responsive to the two themes.


Finally, we should expect, and encourage, resistance to a probable, selective re-launching of the armaments race on the initiative of Washington. This will be an interesting campaign, since, for the moment, the arms race no longer has any widely-accepted ideological alibi. ★

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Teamster trouble

Last August, just days after the Teamsters' stunning victory over UPS, a court-appointed election officer announced that the election for top officers in the 1.4 million union must be rerun.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars in union funds had been diverted to help re-elect Ron Carey president. Because Carey had such moral authority as a genuine militant, those closest to him were stunned by the charges.

An even heavier blow fell when, on November 17, Election Appeals Master Kenneth Conboy ruled Ron Carey ineligible to run for office.

Dianne Feeley

In the late 1980s Teamsters for A Democratic Union (TDU), a rank-and-file organisation fighting for democracy in what had been a mob-controlled and corrupt union, intervened in a lawsuit filed by the Justice Department. TDU demanded—and won—the right of the membership to vote on top officers, with the federal government monitoring the election process. The union leadership agreed, thinking they could get away with a veneer of democracy without any content. Ron Carey, then president of a large UPS local in New York City, ran for president as a reformer against two members of the corrupt "Old Guard." To everyone's surprise, he won the three-way race.

Once in office Ron Carey ended the practice of multiple salaries for union officers, sold off the Lear jets that represented their lavish lifestyle, stepped up drives to organise unorganised workers (only 10% of US workers are represented by a union), put 75 locals under trustee-

ship and began the process of turning the locals back to the membership. He also led a one-day wildcat strike against UPS in order to protect working conditions. Under Carey's leadership, too, the Teamsters fought against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and began to forge ties with Mexican workers.

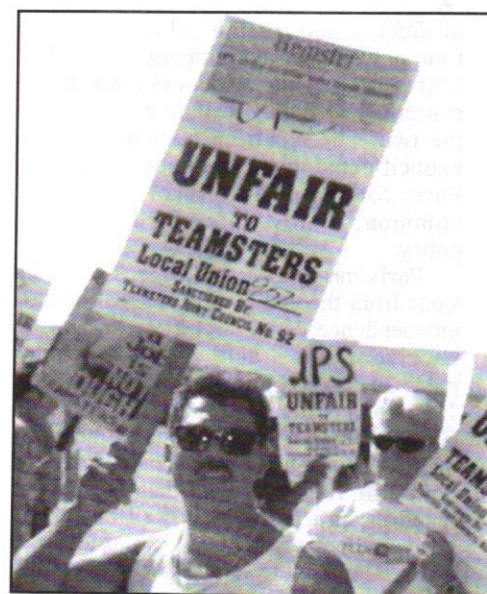
While the "new" AFL-CIO leaders talk about organising the unorganised, Carey went much further: he stood for internal democracy, for workers organising other workers, for a squeaky clean union, and he opposed "co-operation" or "team concept" schemes that disarmed workers. Although a genuine reformer, Carey remained an ally of TDU, not a member. He never was won to the idea that a rank-and-file movement is a strategy. For him, the union should function as an effective service organisation that mobilised its membership when that proved tactically necessary.

During Carey's first campaign, his UPS local and TDU were the backbone of his race. But shortly after his election, Carey brought into the union several political consultants with close ties to the Democratic Party. These would be placed in charge of his 1996 campaign—and prove to be his undoing.

The charges

To date three Carey campaign staffers—including Jere Nash, Carey's campaign manager—have pled guilty and face possible jail sentences for mail fraud, conspiracy and embezzling union funds. While Carey has disavowed any knowledge of their illegal activity, the sums of money involved are staggering—nearly three-quarters of a million dollars diverted from members' dues to the Carey campaign! Whether or not Carey "knew," he is nonetheless politically responsible for the actions of his campaign staffers.

Conboy's ruling, disqualifying Carey from the ballot said he found it impossible to believe Carey had been unaware of the illegal activity. However the election rerun process is not going forward because Carey's opponent—James Hoffa, Jr. (son of the long-time, mob-connected Teamster leader, James Hoffa)—has also been accused of engaging in illegal campaign activity. His campaign is under investigation because \$1.8 million remains unaccounted for. (Earlier in the campaign cycle the



election officer had ruled \$200,000 in the Hoffa war chest was in violation of the law, and had to be returned.)

As we go to press, everything is in flux: Who will be allowed to run? What's the process by which candidates can declare their candidacy? What is the timetable for the election? What are the election rules? Nobody knows.

Carey is appealing the judge's decision, but most observers believe he will not be successful. Meanwhile, the Independent Review Board (a governmental body set up as part of the oversight process) has charged Carey with misuse of union funds and on November 25 he took an unpaid leave of absence. Teamsters Secretary-Treasurer Tom Sever is now acting president.

On the other hand, it is a long shot that Hoffa will be disqualified. After all, his backers are professionals at money laundering. Hoffa is a mob-connected lawyer with ties to right-wing, and even mainstream, politicians. Although he has never been a working Teamster, Hoffa initially projected an attractive image of a "strong leader" who would return the union to the powerful role it played in the 1950s, when his father was president. Now that Hoffa sees Carey out of the picture, he has turned his attack on TDU.

Throughout this period the *Wall Street Journal* has continually and viciously attacked Carey. The House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, presided over by Peter Hoekstra, a anti-union Republican representative from Michigan, conducted Congressional hearings that provided a platform for Congressmen to object to financially underwriting the election and Hoffa supporters to call for

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government trusteeship. While the right wing did not orchestrate the investigation of the Teamster election, it is obviously using the incident to discredit the idea of union reform, and attempting to undercut the tremendous solidarity generated by the Teamsters' strike against UPS.

What do TDU do?

Just days following Judge Conboy's decision to run Carey ineligible, TDU held its annual convention. These yearly events serve to bring new individuals into TDU, outline a realistic strategy for the coming year, consolidate a leadership team and celebrate recent victories. A record 600 turned out, making it the largest ever TDU convention. TDUs worked through their shock over the latest charges, heard Carey speak of the possibility that there might be a reform slate without him, and began to construct a plan for the coming year.

Some reporters were surprised at the depth of positive feelings among TDUs

toward Carey. But it isn't so surprising. These are people who campaigned with Carey from the beginning. They know what his militant leadership has meant, and they gave him the benefit of the doubt. Unlike the reporters, they hadn't read the judge's 70-page decision or carefully considered the now-available evidence.

In a sense Carey freed TDU when he stated that his fate is in the hands of judges, while the future was up to them. In the course of the weekend, TDUs discussed the problems the union faces in the upcoming national Master Freight Agreement, which expires in March. It covers 120,000 Teamsters—but unlike UPS, where the employer is making super profits, the freight industry is economically precarious. Despite the differences between UPS and freight, TDUs saw the UPS organising model as the effective example to follow.

Since the Teamsters is an industrial union that organises all workers, its work sites are various: drivers, warehouse and cannery workers, flight attendants. This means that the union has fairly well-paid workers as well as those working close to the minimum wage. At each TDU convention, workers meet by sector to discuss their problems and campaigns. The 1997 conference hosted the first ever meeting of Teamster rental car agents—low-paid, primarily women workers covered by "sweetheart" contracts ("deals" worked out between union officials and the company), determined to fight for decent wages and working conditions.

The convention passed two resolutions. One expresses solidarity with Carey and supports the direction in which he led the union over the past six years. The second resolves that, in the event that Carey steps aside as candidate, the convention directs the TDU leadership to work with other reformers to support another reformer. It specifically opposes the creation of a "reconciliation" slate with the "Old Guard."

At the convention some leftists proposed organising a defence committee for Carey and picketing in front of the courthouse. They pointed to the right-wing attacks against Carey as proof of a ruling-class offensive and called for opposition to "government intervention" in the union, ignoring the reality that, without this intervention, there would have been no election of top officers in the first place.

But the reality of organising, and the weight of the charges, suggest another course. TDU has begun to outline the framework for supporting a reform slate and is considering possible candidates for the presidency. The convention heard from three:

- Tom Leedham (46) is based in Portland, Oregon. He directs the union's 400,000 member warehouse division, and is a pioneer of member-to-member organising.

- Ken Hall (40) is president of a West Virginia local. He leads the union's parcel division and was key to the UPS negotiations.

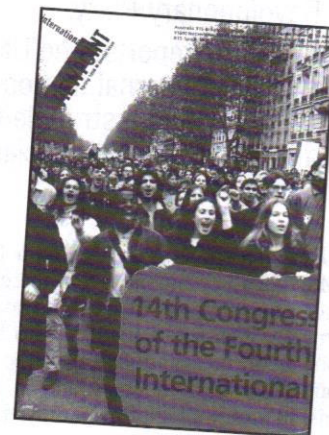
- Richard Nelson (61) leads the freight division, and is central to the upcoming negotiations.

Neither Hall or Nelson supported Carey in 1991. The fact that they have become genuine reform candidates show the change that has occurred within the Teamsters union over the last several years. Leedham is a veteran reformer who did support both of Carey's election bids.

None is nationally well known and obviously any one would face an uphill battle against Hoffa, who has instant name recognition. But TDU has always faced an uphill battle. It began its existence by physically having to defend its right to meet against paid thugs. Now that it looks

like there will be new, tighter financial rules for the election, the reformers will have at least the natural advantage of knowing how to put together an effective grassroots campaign.

Teamsters for a Democratic Union is now 22 years old. It has shown itself to be a tough little organisation that knows how to wage a good fight and it isn't afraid to loose. But one of TDU's biggest problems is that there are no similar rank-and-file movements in other major US unions. ★



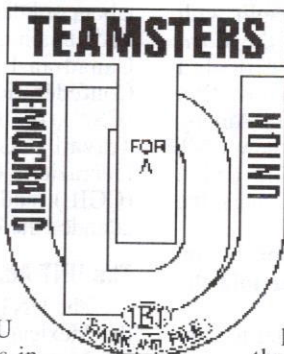
Transformation and regroupment

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. ★

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Mexico's new labour federation

The Mexican labour movement took an important step forward in November, with the founding of the National Union of Workers (UNT), a new labour federation independent of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party.

As **Dan La Botz** reports, The UNT is committed to internal democracy, and proposing a struggle for economic improvements, social security, and political reform.

New UNT vice-president Alejandra Barrales Magdaleno commented that the challenge of the UNT would be "to avoid repeating the history of leaders who base their power on the annihilation of the opposition, on a false democracy, and on their relationship with the employers or national political groups." Many observers believe that indeed avoiding the formation of a new dependence on the government will be the new federation's greatest challenge.

At the founding convention held in Mexico City on November 28, 650 voting delegates and 13,000 fraternal delegates founded the UNT, adopted a program and a plan of action, and elected a collective leadership of three presidents and seven vice-presidents. The UNT claims to represent more than 1.5 million workers in 200 workers' and peasants organisations.

The founding assembly was a symbolic event, not a working convention, and in the name of democracy much of the time of the five-hour event was taken up in the reading of the complete list of all 200 member organisations. The most important piece of business was the election of the new officers. The three presidents are:

- Francisco Hernandez Juarez, the head of the Mexican Telephone Workers Union (STRM) since 1976, the founder and former president of the Federation of Unions of Goods and Services (FESEBES), and a former president of the Congress of Labour (CT). Hernandez Juarez is a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).
- Antonio Rosado Garcia, head of the National Union of Workers of Social Security (SNTSS) since 1994, and a member of its leadership since 1987. He too is a member of the PRI.
- Agustin Rodriguez Fuentes, head of the Union of Workers of the National Autonomous University (STUNAM) since 1994. He sympathises with, but is not a member of, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

Among those elected to UNT vice presidential positions were Benedicto Martinez, one of the three presidents of the Authentic Labour Front (FAT) and Alejandra Barrales Magdaleno, the woman who heads the Federation of Unions of Goods and Services (FESEBES). Martinez of the FAT has played a particularly important role in pushing for democracy within the new UNT, while Barrales Magdaleno has been one of the leading women of the new federation.

From the Foro to the UNT

Hernandez Juarez of the telephone workers has from the beginning been the driving force for the creation of this new federation, but he has not always been a progressive reformer.

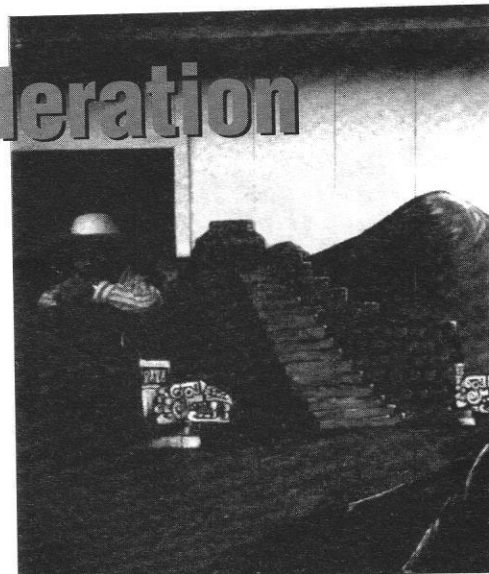
During the presidency of former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Hernandez Juarez supported the privatisation of the Mexican Telephone Company (TELMEX) and advocated a "new unionism" based on co-operation with management. Hernandez Juarez created the Federation of Unions of Goods and Services (FESEBES) as the advocate of this neo-liberal unionism. Then two years ago Hernandez Juarez became a founder of a different sort of union group, the *Foro: Unions Face the Nation* (or *Foro* group) calling for a break with the government's neo-liberal economic program, and for a new more independent and democratic labour movement. The *Foro* group played an important role in opening up an arena for discussion of the role of labour union's in Mexican society.

With his push to create the UNT, Hernandez Juarez provoked a split with more moderate reformers in the *Foro* group, and Elba Esther Gordillo led several *Foro* unions to a reconciliation with the Congress of Labour (CT). Among those that declined to enter the new UNT was the huge Mexican Teachers Union (SNTE) with over a million members, the union formerly led by Gordillo.

Speaking at the founding convention of the UNT, Hernandez Juarez told the assembly:

"Our principal objective is not to confront, not to polarise, not to divide, much less to dispute patronage and privilege, which will have to disappear as part of the process, to which we are deeply committed, of creating a genuine labour unionism.

"On the contrary, our principal objective is to change, to transform and to strengthen the labour movement, creating and building new forms and structures of organisation and of authentic representation of the workers, even if this implies being critical and obeying, above all, the will and interests of the workers themselves."



In interviews with the press, Hernandez Juarez vowed, "Here we will have no corporativism [state-party control]. The workers are going to have absolutely the most complete freedom to join or sympathise with the party that best represents their interest."

The most important and largest unions founding the UNT are: 350,000 Social Security workers (SNTSS); 100,000 university workers (including the 23,000 at the National Autonomous University of Mexico - STUNAM); and 53,000 telephone workers union (STRM).

In addition, five important peasant unions have joined the UNT: the National Union of Agricultural Workers (UNTA), the Cardenist Peasant Federation (CCC), the National Union of Autonomous Peasant Regional Organisations (UNORCA), the Coalition of Democratic Rural and Urban Organisations (CODUC) and the Workers', Peasants', and Peoples' General Union (UGOCP).

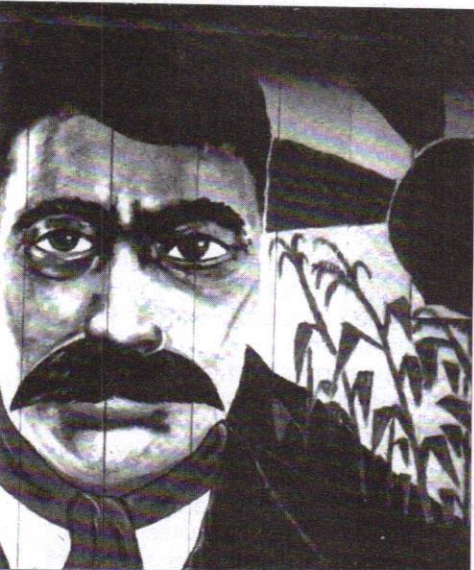
As an expression of international labour solidarity, representative of the US trade union confederation (AFL-CIO), the Canadian Labour Congress, Québec's Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN), the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) of France, Italy's Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), and several U.S. labour unions attended the UNT founding convention.

The UNT Adopts a Program

The UNT's program calls for an end to the Mexican corporative system by which the Mexican state and the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) have for decades controlled the labour movement.

The party's principal objectives are:

- A reform of the Mexican state to make it more democratic and more socially responsible.
- A new social pact to protect the interests of working people. Including guarantees for health, social welfare and pension programmes, and an increase in workers' wages.



- A reform in the relationship between the state, political parties and the unions, to guarantee the political independence of the labour movement.

- A new Federal Labour Law to end the corporative control mechanisms of the state-party, and permit new forms of labour relations appropriate to the new global economy.

In terms of its immediate economic objectives, the UNT calls for a 10 percent reduction in the Value Added Tax (IVA) and a wage increase.

Can the UNT Fulfil the Workers' Hopes?

The UNT's action plan also adopted at the convention called for a demonstration at the Legislative Palace on December 2, but the planned protest failed to materialise when only about 50 workers showed up. UNT president Agustin Rodriguez Fuentes did enter the legislature to explain the UNT proposals for wage increases, tax cuts, labour law reform and an end to top-down economic pacts to those congressmen/women who were willing to listen.

A handful of workers who had been fired from the ITAPSA-Echlin plant for trying to organise a union also showed up with banners demanding the right to freely organise. The real test for the UNT is whether it will be able to help protect thousands of other workers who face similar problems every year in Mexico.

The UNT has the potential to create a more independent, democratic and militant Mexican labour movement, and to open a political space for the growth of a rank and file workers' movement from below. To do so it will have to begin to mobilise workers for economic struggles against the employers and for political fights against the PRI, and no doubt against the PAN and PRD as well. Only the appearance of a real upsurge from below—missing for the last many years—will be able to fulfil the hopes of the convention. ★

Stakes High as Cardenas Takes Office in Mexico City

The stakes and expectations are high for the incoming three-year mayoral administration of Cuauhtémoc Cardenas and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), which took office in the Mexican capital on December 5.

Fernando Zamora

This is the highest office ever won by the opposition, and represents a major challenge for the parliamentary left: the PRD's ability to run local government, resolve pressing social problems and stimulate grassroots participation will now be put to the test.

Neither the Mexico City mayoral administration nor the city legislative assembly, where the PRD also has a majority, has many powers. The country's capital, is largely under the control of the federal government. Even in the best of circumstances, it would be difficult from city hall to modify the national neo-liberal economic policy of President Ernesto Zedillo and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

The problems of the world's largest city are daunting: poverty; growing crime, accompanied by rampant police corruption; an expanding informal economy that today represents 32% of the city's economic activity, and whose participants do not pay taxes or receive government social benefits; a 13 billion peso (US\$ 1.63 bn.) debt, 80% of which was contracted under the previous PRI mayoral administration; a housing deficit estimated at one million units; a chaotic increasing insufficient public transportation; and a continual air pollution crisis, with only 27 days in the past year in which air quality was "good".

Voter expectations are high, according to a study released by the Arturo Rosenblueth Foundation on December 2nd. Unemployment and crime were considered the new administration's top priorities, followed by corruption and poverty. About half the population, slightly above the 47 percent of the voters that elected him, expect the Cardenas administration to improve the city's problems, except in the case of air pollution, where most expect that the situation will remain the same, or worsen.

In the past few months, Cardenas' team and the PRD have sponsored a series of public forums attended by party activists, social leaders and experts at which proposals were presented to address these and other problems. While attendance at these forums was not massive, and was far from representing citizen participation, they were useful in airing many

suggestions and bringing more expertise into the new mayor's team.

The problem will be to concretise many of the general programmatic and political points raised by the PRD during its campaigns. Thus far, much of Cardenas' attention has been occupied with appointments. Marxist intellectual Adolfo Gilly was appointed head of the mayor's advisory council, and human rights leader Rosario Ibarra de Piedra has been named as his advisor on human rights issues. The new mayor has pledged that the military will no longer run public security in Mexico City and that corrupt elements will be purged from the police forces.

Heading Cardenas' call for a change in relations between government and society, as well as the effervescence that accompanied the victory in the July 6 elections, proposals have emerged in the PRD forums for creating city-wide organisational structures to stimulate citizen participation. A multitude of legal changes have been proposed to give juridical recognition to neighbourhood organisations such as civic and residents' associations. Putting them into practice is a task still pending.

Discussions are underway with non-governmental organisations such as the Civic Alliance to establish neighbourhood-based Public Affairs Offices to channel citizens' concerns, complaints and proposals to the proper authorities. The PRD is working to establish support structures for the new administration, as well as their own base committees, all on a neighbourhood level.

"We're striving for visible and forceful results in the first few months (in office), to consolidate this tremendous confidence among the citizens, this popular backing, so that they feel that there really are results and that it's necessary to maintain support" for the new administration, city hall Secretary General Rosario Robles told the daily *La Jornada*.

Within civil society, two broad and distinct perspectives are emerging on how to relate to the new PRD administration. Sectors closest to the PRD city leadership, under the banner of realism and responsibility, see the Cardenas administration as representing the "people in power" and have spoken of the need to limit mass mobilisations as a way of supporting the new mayor. Indeed, from January to October, 2,446 protest demonstrations were held in Mexico City, most against the city and federal governments.

Other forces, ranging from the far-left Independent Proletarian Movement and the Francisco Villa Popular Front to the Neighbourhood Assembly and other organisations comprising the urban popular movement, disagree. While supporting Cardenas' victory as part of the struggle for the transition to democracy, see the need to deepen and give organisational form to grass-roots participation, as vital to social change in general, and the new mayor's success in particular. These

★ Mexico

groups, organised in the Metropolitan Convention, declare they will sponsor mobilisations if and when necessary.

The Cardenas administration faces two parallel dangers. A confrontation with the PRI and its corporatist structures among city workers, street vendors, etc., could provoke problems on different levels.

Veiled threats have already been issued, but given the ruling party's relative weakness and isolation in Mexico City, any concrete moves in this direction could easily backfire. The other potential danger flows from a permanent policy of negotiations with the powers-that-be. Given city hall's limited powers, this could constrict the mayor's actions to a very reduced spectrum of activities.

After being sworn in as mayor, Cardenas addressed tens of thousands of supporters in the central square in downtown Mexico City. He promised substantial changes in his three-year administration. In each of the city's 16 delegations, centres for attending to women's issues and others focusing on children's cultural activities and the problem of street children will be put into operation.

Special programmes will be designed for the half million Indians living in the city, based on respect for their customs and traditions. The new mayor also called for the federal government to absorb part of the city's debt.

Cardenas' victory and his record in office have and will mark a change in the overall political situation. Either there will be a major step forward in the process of democratic reorganisation or social demoralisation will set in, with negative consequences for some time to come. ★

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Opposition splits in response to PRI budget

The first major legislative confrontation in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies between the new opposition majority that emerged from the July 6 mid-term elections and the government and the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) ended in a major victory for the regime.

Peter Gellert

The united (although fragile) opposition – the congressional caucuses of the left-of-centre Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the conservative National Action Party (PAN), the Green Ecologist Party (PVEM) and the Workers Party (PT) – clashed with the PRI and government in the second week of December, concerning the 1998 budget and fiscal policies proposed by President Ernest Zedillo.

The main controversy involved the unpopular sales tax, increased to 15% following the December 1994 economic crisis. The opposition bloc used its majority to reduce the tax to 12%, rejecting Zedillo's fiscal policies and thereby potentially leaving the government without funds to operate.

The government and the PRI were outraged. They are not accustomed to having to negotiate with other parties if they want their bills passed by the Chamber of Deputies.

The powers that be—PRI, government, business associations and the official labour movement as represented by the Mexican Workers Confederation (CTM)—reacted swiftly and strongly. PRI congressmen forcibly seized the Chamber of Deputies presidium following the vote. PRI national leader Mariano Palacios Alcocer charged that opposition with waging an "institutional war", seeking to paralyse government functioning by its "irresponsible and inconsistent" attitudes.

Zedillo himself declared that if the sales tax was reduced, it would be impossible for the federal government to meet its commitments to the states and Mexico City, that current economic results and potential growth would be put in jeopardy, that public finances would deteriorate, inflation would increase and consumer purchasing power drop.

Not surprisingly, the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) and its affiliated unions while offering verbal criticisms of the effects of the crisis, vociferously backed Zedillo's proposals. "Lowering taxes... is not the best way to redistribute income, because with less (govern-

ment) income, there are fewer social expenditures," a CTM statement said. In newspaper ads the pro-government labour confederation voiced its opposition to "irresponsible adventures" such as lowering the sales tax, and proposed a series of alternative measures. Though PRI deputies belonging to the CTM made so much concrete proposals when it came time to vote.

The opposition stood firm, however. The bill to reduce the sales tax was approved and sent to the Senate, where it was defeated by the PRI majority, and returned to the Chamber of Deputies, which again passed the proposal and returned it to the Senate, which finally put the initiative on ice. The sales tax remains at 15%.

On December 11 and 13, following a meeting with Zedillo, the PAN (conservative) congressional and senatorial caucus voted with the PRI to approve the president's budget and fiscal policies. This was the first time the opposition bloc divided its votes.

The approved budget allows the president to increase the foreign debt by five billion dollars and the internal debt by eight billion dollars. It does not include opposition demands to raise the minimum wage, which issued as a standard for setting salary increases in most collective bargaining agreements. Nor did it eliminate the huge presidential slush fund (it was, however, reduced, as were budget outlays for bank rescue programmes) or do away with lucrative bonuses for public officials, as the opposition had demanded.

The three parties voting against argued that the proposal gives the president absolute discretionary powers to up the country's debt. In full page advertisements in *La Jornada*, the left-of-centre PRD explained that the budget places the cost of the economic crisis on the shoulders of the workers and on small and medium-sized businesses. PRD legislator Demetrio Sodi said that "the PAN sold itself for a plate of beans and backed the government's economic policy that it so often said it criticised."

In this important vote on the budget and fiscal policies, the government and PRI not only got their way, but may have succeeded in neutralising the challenge posed by an opposition majority in the Chamber of Deputies. The future of the opposition bloc is uncertain. ★

Source: Mexican Labor News and Analysis Vol. II, No. 23

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Zapatista communiqué

To the people of Mexico; to the people and governments of the world:

Brothers and sisters:

The leadership of the EZLN informs the national and international public opinion about the current situation of thousands of Zapatista Indians persecuted, murdered and evicted from their land in the county of San Pedro de Chenalho, Chiapas.

- More than 6 thousand people displaced by war are the result of the attacks of the paramilitary bands and the state police, both directed by the state government, with the federal government's blessing.

Only in the community of Xcumul there are more than 3,500 Indigenous refugees. They are totally isolated, since they remain surrounded by the white guards and policemen from the state public security corps.

The Chenalho Zapatistas are living in the open and are suffering from, besides the lack of housing, clothes and food, illnesses which have already reached epidemic proportions.

- The state and federal governments and the Institutional Revolutionary Party, far from stopping their wave of aggressions, are trying to avoid solving the main problem of Chenalho, which is the eradication of their paramilitary groups and the return of the displaced people to their communities.

While it pretends to establish a dialogue, Chiapanecan PRI followers are undertaking the plunder and destruction of the evicted people's property. Coffee, cattle, clothes, and domestic utensils are being distributed among the paramilitary as the bounty of a war which, up until now, has only seen shooting coming from one of the sides, that of the government and its political party.

With this attitude, the PRI shows its true face: That of the enemy of the Indian peoples and one of the executors of the total extermination policy that, coming from the federal government, is being carried out against the Zapatistas.

- These past few days, the national and international press has shown to Mexico and the world the grave situation the Zapatista Indigenous population of Chenalho suffers.

What was seen through the media is only a small sample of the gigantic show of intolerance and criminal actions with which the Revolutionary Institutional Party and the state and federal governments pretend to humble the Zapatista rebelliousness.

- The undeniable fact that Zapatista Indians are being murdered and persecuted, without responding to the aggressions, has generated a public opinion unfavourable to the Mexican government.

In order to swim against this unfavourable current, the state and federal governments, and their paramilitary groups, plan to physically attack the Vatican's representative, Justo Mullor, during his visit to Chiapas.

- The paramilitary and governmental plan is to present these murder attempts as if they were being carried out by EZLN commandos, and for that purpose they are equipping their hired assassins with EZLN uniforms and badges.

The recent "appearances" of armed groups, supposedly Zapatista, in the county seat of Las Margaritas and in other parts of Chiapas are nothing but planned provocation to prepare the following stage.

Faced with this state of affairs we repeat that, from the start of the dialogue, the Zapatista troops remain in their mountain barracks and that they are not and have not undertaken any offensive movements or any movements outside of their positions.



- Besides implicating the EZLN in the projected aggression (which could escalate into an attempted murder) against the Papal Nuncio, the government is trying to make the public forget about the "Peace and Justice" attack perpetrated against Bishops Samuel Ruiz and Raul Vera, on November 4, 1997, and distract world attention from the news the case of the thousands of Indians displaced in Chenalho by the PRI bands has recently awakened.

- Instead of keeping on concocting complicated plots, as a pretext to fully use the military option, the federal government should put a stop to its paramilitary groups, allow the thousand of people displaced by war in the entire Chiapas territory to return to their communities and keep without delay its word, given in San Andres Sakam'chen.

That is the way to contribute to the dialogue, and peace could then stop being a rhetorical figure in the Zedillista discourse.

- The EZLN calls upon the national and international civil society not to be fooled by the Mexican government's war games and to demand the end of the Indigenous peoples extermination and the enforcement of the San Andres Agreements.

The EZLN makes an urgent call to the national and international civil society to come to the help of our brothers from Chenalho.

The current situation is dramatic, it is a life or death situation for thousands of rebel Indians who still believe that their struggle is not against other Indians, but against the system which condemns them to death and oblivion.

Democracy! Liberty! Justice!

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. For the Clandestine Indian Revolutionary Committee-General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

**Insurgent Subcommander Marcos
12 December 1997**

Peasant protests, urban solidarity

The regime recently arrested left activists involved in the solidarity movement with peasants protesting against legislation liberalising land rents and making it easier for landlords to expel tenant farmers. Our correspondent **Sayed Murshid** spoke to Khaled and Taha after their release.

Taha: Of the eight activists detained with me, three were Nasserians, three Islamo-nationalists from the Labour Party, and three Marxists. Later, three peasant leaders from the Guizah region were imprisoned with us. After a couple of weeks, we were all released, except Kama Khalif, who had made an outspoken attack on the authorities at a public meeting.

This was the first time Marxists had been arrested since the steelworkers strike in Helwan (south Cairo) in 1989. The regime wants to frighten people into passivity. After all, the Marxist left proved capable of adopting and defending a radical position of total opposition to the new land law.

• What is the peasant protest about?

Taha: Egypt is undergoing a series of privatisations and capitalist liberalisations. One obstacle to this process is the land management system: agricultural land is split into very small units, which creates limits to the quantity and quality of production.

The capitalists realise that the only way to insert Egyptian agriculture into the world market is to encourage a concentration of land ownership. This is the only way they can imagine a transformation of the system of agricultural production. At the centre of this project is the 1992 law which liberalises the land rent system. It affects about one third of agricultural land in the country.

The law allowed an increase in land rent, and, in a transitional period of five years, regulated the total replacement of existing land-holding agreements, many introduced in the Nasser period. This, they hoped, would enable the major landowners to increase their holdings.

The peasants (about six million people are affected by the law) could not believe that this was happening, that the government was attacking the land-management system. In our long prison discussions, peasant leader Ahmed Bor'ei explained how, after a moment of scepticism, the peasants began to turn to the Tagammu' Party, to defend their interests. But the hesitations, slowness and ambiguousness of the reformist left led the peasants in the

direction of direct action.

It was only towards the end of 1996 that the peasants fully understood the government's plans. When they came to collect grain and fertiliser from the centralised distribution system, they realised that their land-rental contracts were being modified. This led to a first wave of violent incidents, particularly near Beni Sweif in upper Egypt. And the movement was born.

There were unsuccessful initiatives, from the official side and from moderate opposition milieus, to promote discussions and negotiations leading to a "peaceful settlement."

But although the peasant movement was strong, with a wide range of activities (public meetings, road blockades, occupations, leaflets, and graffiti) it was soon clear that there was little unity among the protesters.

The movement split up almost as quickly as it had formed. The lack of a real political consciousness was very clear.

And the regime skilfully encouraged and exploited divisions within the movement to split it up. They did not apply the law everywhere in Egypt: in some regions, they will not implement it until 1999 or 2000! And where there has been protest, they have not always deployed the central security forces, which recruit mainly among the peasants.

Instead, the favourite technique has been to call peasants individually to the police stations, and there to oblige them, including physically, to sign a cancellation of their old rent contract, and then a new contract with the landowner.

The authorities have also been able to exploit tribal and family solidarities, which are particularly strong in Upper Egypt. The regime has preferred to deal directly with clan chiefs.

As a result, resistance, and explosions of social anger, have been confined to limited zones.

The regime has been relatively successful. The peasant movement is in decline as a collective force. Though the preconditions for resistance, struggle and outbursts are still present.

We may even see rural riots, at least as serious as the urban riots of 1977. Certainly, the regime is expecting a high level of resistance.

Khaled: I don't agree with you on this last point. In fact, the regime has scored a complete victory over the peasants, because of the absence of a structure, an organisation of the movement. The peasant movement is really atomised now. Defeat is only a matter of time.

Some sections of the radical left are too optimistic about these peasant struggles and the solidarity campaign. It is certainly an important solidarity activity, but what is really happening among the workers?

The absence of a real working class opposition is cruelly felt. The class struggle in this country is not just unclear, it is virtually non-existent. There is nothing more than individual, isolated struggles.

The lack of a radical perspective, and solution, is a central problem. So many times one could hear, in the peasant mobilisations, people asking "what can we win from this struggle?" The lack of structures was another real problem.

• How have the Islamic fundamentalists reacted?

Taha: When the land law was voted in 1992, neither the Muslim Brothers nor the radical Islamists expressed an opinion. Although they draw their audience elsewhere [i.e. from the poor – Ed.] their social base is above all among the landowners. And these people certainly supported the new law.

• And the radical left?

Taha: The solidarity campaign with the peasants was an important, useful experience. For the first time in a long time, the different currents of the radical Marxist left were able to overtake the Tagammu' party and the Nasserians, and make life difficult for them.

They were able to speak to a mass audience. For the first time in a long time, the radical left found itself linked to a real, active mass movement. Kamal Khalil was able to speak to audiences of three or four thousand people, in the rural areas.

Before, the left was isolated, confined to cafes and its own meetings, apart from the occasional small struggle, and the workers strikes in the 1980s. With the peasant movement, Marxism was no longer just an element in intellectual debate, but a tool of action.

As a result, Marxist activity, particularly among young people, is again perceived by the regime as a nuisance.

The accumulation of experiences like this is important for the future. The form that the solidarity movement took, and the development of a pluralist committee regrouping various tendencies, currents and personalities is also something new and positive.

Let us hope that this contributes to future radicalisations, particularly those which will emerge in opposition to the new labour code, and the planned privatisations. ★

Protest in the Zones

Workers in Vietnam's export processing sector

Despite the Party-state's strategy of enforcing militarised discipline among workers and maintaining industrial peace in the Export Processing Zones, 1997 saw an increasing number of strikes.

Gerard Greenfield

It is an irony of history that Vietnam's first Export Processing Zone (EPZ), created to integrate Vietnam into the global capitalist economy, arose from a partnership between the Vietnamese Communist Party and Taiwan's ruling Kuomintang - the party of Chiang Kai Shek.

No doubt their common Stalinist heritage enabled them to negotiate this partnership with ease, consolidating the privilege and power of the ruling bureaucratic elite through new Zones of global capitalist accumulation and the unresisted exploitation of 'cheap' labour.

The Tan Thuan EPZ was established in Ho Chi Minh City in 1991 as a joint venture between the Vietnamese government and the Central Trading and Development Corporation (CT&D), owned by the KMT. In 1966, CT&D built the Kaoshung EPZ in Taiwan - Asia's first EPZ.

Three decades later the severe exploitation of workers in the Tan Thuan EPZ was foreshadowed in its construction, when over 300 migrant workers were illegally brought into Vietnam from mainland China to build the electric power station in the Zone. It was also clear that real power lay with the CT&D. The Vietnamese Deputy Director of the Tan Thuan EPZ (representing the Vietnamese government) asserting that "all operations here are directed by the general director in Taiwan".

For Taiwan's capitalists and the island's ruling elite, the creation of the Tan Thuan EPZ in Vietnam was part of a strategy of offshore relocation and "hollowing-out" - undercutting the independent labour movement and crushed the militant workers' struggles in the Kaoshung EPZ. Nearly 30,000 workers were laid off in Kaoshung EPZ from 1987 to 1992, at the same time that Taiwanese capital was moving into Vietnam.

Since its creation the Vietnamese government has presented the Tan Thuan EPZ as a successful model for attracting foreign capital - a model which underpins the rapid increase in EPZs and Industrial Zones (IZs) throughout the country, with 350,000 workers now employed in 41 Zones. In the beginning of 1997, the Party-state intensified its drive to create even better conditions for foreign capital by allowing 100% foreign-owned EPZs,

such as the Dai Tu EPZ, which is 100% Taiwanese-owned. In a further shift away from state regulation of foreign capital, a number of projects licensed as EPZs were permitted to re-register as IZs. Some EPZs, like the Danang EPZ established by Malaysian capital, are referred to as both an EPZ and an IZ, which enables them to evade existing regulations on EPZs.

IZs provide many of the incentives of EPZs, with even less governmental regulation. That can mean 45-year leases, tax holidays of two to four years, reduced tax rates and fees, and reduced taxes for companies exporting at least 80% of production. Combined with the freedom to sell products (including scrap and waste) on the domestic market.

Most important of all, companies in IZs operate under a quasi-private Zone Authority, dominated by private foreign interests. In fact an increasing number of IZs are privately owned, like the O Cach Industrial Zone which is wholly owned by South Korean capital. This gives transnational capital unprecedented freedom from state regulation.

Even if an IZ is a joint venture with the local government, such as the Nomura-Haiphong Industrial Zone, real power lies with the foreign joint venture partner. Ultimately the Japanese financial conglomerate, Nomura, will "regulate" capital in the Zone and exercise control over its 30,000 workers.

The 1995 Labour Code is supposed to apply to all workplaces throughout the country, regardless of whether or not they are located in EPZs or IZs. In practice, only the disciplinary and repressive elements of the labour laws and regulations are used in the Zones. Meanwhile, local labour departments and trade union federations have come to play a central role in maintaining industrial peace by condemning 'wild-cat' strikes by workers and intervening to resolve disputes through closed-door negotiations with management. These negotiations exclude the workers themselves, and the 'solutions' arrived at inevitably fail to meet their strike demands.



Of course, the enforcement of industrial peace at the cost of workers' rights and interests reflects the underlying logic of the Zones: to attract foreign capital using a cheap, compliant labour force. This occurs through the context of a partnership of interests between foreign capital and the Party-state (and the trade unions under its control); a partnership institutionalised in the Tan Thuan EPZ, where the President of the Zone is also an executive committee member of the Ho Chi Minh City Federation of Labour.

As the authoritarian Communist Party regime oversees the transition to capitalism in Vietnam, an important continuity remains. The emphasis on industrial discipline - the imposition of time-work discipline and control from above - which underpinned the Party-state's Stalinist industrialisation strategy in the past is now consolidated under its programme of capitalist industrialisation. This is manifested in the EPZs and IZs where a militarised regime of production within the Zones reinforces the 'whip of capitalism' outside the Zones, the whip of mass unemployment.

The official discourse on industrial discipline is reflected in a report by an economist from the National Centre for Social Sciences, Thanh Luu, on a visit to the Tan Dinh An Industrial Zone:

"From afar, we saw a big group of women workers, in blue and yellow uniforms, marching in steady steps under the

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Polynesia

Independent report on French nuclear tests

Polynesian activists recently toured Europe to present the results of the independent inquiry into the consequences of French nuclear tests on the Tahitian people. We spoke to Gabriel Tetiarahi, member of the radical non-governmental organisation Hiti Tau

• What is the aim of this tour?

We hope to improve our dialogue with funding bodies, evaluate our partnership with them and increase it as part of alternative economic solutions to the economy of the bomb: development of co-operatives for the production of monoi, vanilla etc.).

We'll also be participating in a number of seminars. Finally, we want to publicise the inquiry, inform the public, politicians and political groups.

• What are the highlights of this inquiry?

Firstly, that there were children working in Moruroa, the atoll where France carried out its tests. It seems that 10% of workers there were less than 18 years old, including 6% under than 16, working primarily in the subcontracting sector.

Only 48.5% of former workers had a medical examination after leaving Moruroa, as opposed to 92% upon their arrival on the site. Former workers had two desires: the establishment of an independent organisation to defend their right to workplace health and safety, and independent medical research.

The establishment in Tahiti denounced this inquiry. However, it was well reported in the media of the Pacific region. The civil society of Polynesia is thankful to the former workers who broke the wall of silence. The state must now assume its responsibilities.

• It can't have been easy producing an independent inquiry...

For a number of years, non-governmental organisations like ours have suffered intimidation and political harassment. The police arrived in our office with shields and batons to demand the list of former workers at Moruroa who testified at the inquiry. No visa of any real duration is granted to foreign visitors. The authorities do not look favourably upon the alternative vanilla and monoi programs which we suggest as an alternative to the "bomb economy."

• Has the change of government in France altered the situation in the Pacific?

One of the changes is that the Pacific is now classified as a "special region." But the main representative of France in the Pacific is still Gaston Flosse, a close friend of President Chirac, and president of the French Polynesian Territory.



The same policy is being carried out as under France's Socialist President François Mitterand. [French foreign policy is controlled by the president, not the government.] A billion francs are given to Flosse annually, without control, without any development projects resulting, unless it's construction in the tourist sector, under the control of multinationals like Lyonnaise des Eaux.

The second development is between France and the United States. The Americans have allowed France to assume a leadership role in the Pacific, probably in exchange for other regions. France has become the primary source of funding for the region.

At the last Pacific Forum in Fiji, we saw a true sell-out. As during the "best" colonial period, France exchanged financial aid for the abandonment of support by these states to indigenous peoples like the Kanaks in New Caledonia and the Maohis here in Polynesia. [Both territories are still colonies ("overseas territories") of France.] In the final declaration, there is not even mention of the future of these peoples and their right to self-determination. Of course the Fijian army trains in Kanaky (New Caledonia). And, here in Polynesia, France is constructing the largest military base in the Pacific, on Hao island. ★

Interviewer: Laurent Durose/Rouge.
Translation: Stuart Russell/Green Left Weekly

command of "one, two" of a military commander. The driver explained to us: "A militia group of women workers are undergoing military training." He added: "Life here is quite merry now!" Yes, that is true... At present, it is quite lively, with a thick car traffic, a profusion of electric light, and some 2 000 workers working in Nam Cuong footwear enterprise, a cashew-nut processing factory, and the Daewoo-Vietnam Electronics company. We put some questions to a number of women workers, who were quite young and looked quite skilled: - How long have you been here? - Since the opening of the factory. - Do you like your job? Are the wages good? - I was a peasant, and so I was a bit uneasy with the discipline in the factory. But I am quite used to it now...

"We met a big number of peasant girls in Song Be. They are now factory workers, used to industrial discipline and collective life, always willing to help one another in case of illness or other misfortunes."

(*Vietnam Economic Review*, #3/4, 1997)

Two strikes involving over 400 workers in the Tan Thuan EPZ on June 24, 1997, marked the first collective protests against exploitation and labour rights violations in the Export Processing Zones. Both strikes took place at 100 per cent Taiwanese-owned factories: a shoe factory, Delphi Co., and the Toan My Co. glove factory. On the morning of June 24, over 200 workers in the tanning workshop at Delphi Co. were involved in a mass walk-out after the second shift.

The workers were protesting against the humiliating punishments inflicted by the Taiwanese supervisors, which include verbal and physical abuse, and being forced to line up and wait in the rain for long periods of time. The workers also demanded an end to forced overtime. In the preceding months the management forced the workers in the tanning workshop to work an extra four hours at the end of each shift, with no overtime pay. Anyone refusing to do overtime faces a penalty of 20 000 dong (US\$1.80) per day, which is more than a day's wage. Workers caught going to the toilet or resting are fined 50,000 dong (US\$4.50) each time, which can lead to deductions of up to half their wages at the end of the month.

The day before the strike at Toan My Co., the director, Duong Duc Hung, issued a communiqué stating that the system of wage payment would be changed before the end of June and any outstanding wages would be left unpaid. More than 200 workers declared strike action to protest these changes, demanding the full payment of wages and collective negotiation of any changes to the wage system. In response to the strike the newly-created branch of the Ho Chi Minh City Labour Federation established to manage industrial relations in the Tan Thuan EPZ intervened to resolve the dispute. As a result the director agreed to paying the wages

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Do the workers have a country?

by José Iriarte "Bikila"

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outstanding at the end of June in the following month, though a new wages system was introduced without any collective negotiation involving the workers themselves.

Less than a week later, on June 30, more than 600 workers went on strike at Giai Man Co., a Taiwanese-owned picture frame factory located in the Linh Trung EPZ, the second largest EPZ in Vietnam. The strike began at 5 o'clock in the morning, lasting eleven hours. The workers demanded shorter working hours, a decrease in shifts, specific policies to protect the rights and well-being of women workers, a system for the protection of workers' health and safety, and an end to the mistreatment of workers by managers and supervisors. Although the workers went back to work on the morning of July 1, these problems remained unresolved. Despite attempts to organise a union in April, the workers were still unable to form a union, even after the June 30 strike.

An even bigger protest took place in the same EPZ on October 16, when 930 workers at the Korean-owned shoe factory, Dae Yun Co., began a two-day strike. Workers protested against the refusal of the management to pay allowances for exceeding their quotas in September. The allowance - which increases the pace and intensity of work to meet monthly quotas - is a basic part of workers' monthly earnings and is stipulated in their contracts. Despite raising output in each shift for the whole of September, workers were paid less than half the allowance owed to them - losing up to 112 800 dong (US\$10.25) each. After the issue was raised on October 14, officials from the Ho Chi Minh City trade union federation for EPZs and IZs intervened. The failure of the trade union officials to deal with the problem led workers to declare a wild-cat strike two days later. However, on October 17, the South Korean deputy director, Kwak Dae

Hoon, threatened the workers with dismissal, forcing an end to the strike.

But just as the Dae Yun strike ended, more than 80 workers at Kasvina Co. Ltd., a Korean-owned factory in the Tan Thuan EPZ, began a two-day strike to protest against unpaid wages. The management claimed that they lacked the finances needed to pay workers, insisting that workers should get back to work and be paid later. Local authorities and trade union officials again intervened to end the strike, accusing the workers of failing to

follow the regulations on strikes. Despite its small scale, local government and trade union officials were particularly sensitive to the Kasvina strike because the factory is located in the Tan Thuan EPZ, representing a revival of workers' protest in the heart of Vietnam's foremost Zone of capitalist industrialisation. ★

Sources: *Saigon Times Weekly*, *Thoi Bao Kinh Te Sai Gon* (Saigon Economic Times), *Lao Dong* (Labour), *Nguyen Lao Dong* (The Worker), and Thanh Luu, "The bustling Binh Duong Industrial Zone", *Vietnam Economic Review* #3/4, 1997, p.43.

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The party of love, revolution... and the

After two years of activity, the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) held its first regular congress in Ankara at the end of October. **Masis Kürkçügil** reports.

In the 1970s Turkey had a very strong radical socialist movement, though racked by internal divisions and sectarianism. This left was unable to reorganise its forces after the 1980 *coup d'état*, and, throughout the 80s, radical left thinking was confined to limited circles.

The situation changed somewhat in

1994, when a number of groups fused to form the Unified Socialist Party (BSP). That project, which mobilised some 3-4,000 militants, had an electoral potential of about 1%. Meanwhile, the largest 70s group, Dev-Yol (Revolutionary Path) formed its own party, with about the same impact.

In January 1996, however, these two groups came together to form the ÖDP. The presence of 15,000 supporters at the founding meeting testified to the new party's ability to reach beyond the traditional left, to the formerly organised and unorganised militants, and beyond.

At first, the internal problems of the various currents, and the delicate relations between them seemed to be the major obstacles facing the new party. Most observers felt it would be impossible to maintain such a heterogeneous party, which included the remnants of the four pro-Moscow parties of the 1970s, the two large "centrist" currents (Dev-Yol and Kurtulus) and the "Trotskyists."

Time showed, however, that each current had undergone a process of self-criticism and re-evaluation. There was a common consciousness of the need to go beyond the sectarian cleavage of the past, to regroup socialist forces, and to make up for lost time. The re-evaluation undertaken by the pro-Moscow Stalinist parties was much deeper and more radical than that made by most of their "sister" parties in other countries. They embraced pluralism and democracy.

More than the sum of its parts

Dev-Yol brought to the new party its mass militant base: younger generations of militants that it had 'won over' in the 1980s. Kurtulus, which has the same roots as Dev-Yol, had evolved away from its traditional line, but still opted unambiguously for the ÖDP regroupment project.

Independents are a key sector of the party. Coming from a range of backgrounds, and not representing a distinct current within the party, they tend to reinforce the common identity of the ÖDP. One quarter of the party leadership comes from this sector.

Each current has brought something essential to the new party. They continue their own life, but within a common framework. So far, these currents show no tendency to decline. But the ÖDP is clearly much more than a federation of the old far left. The new party is dominated by a new, common identity.

The congress agreed to begin preparations to launch a public magazine or newspaper of the party. So far, apart from an internal bulletin, and a series of thematic documents elaborated in the various forums and debates the party organises, the ÖDP does not have its own publications. Each current, however, has its own magazine, though the only two regular, monthly publications are those of Dev-Yol, the largest current, and Yeniyol [the current identified with the Fourth International], the smallest of the founding groups.

The ÖDP takes shape

The congress was preceded by a four-day conference, held behind closed doors. This enabled the official delegates to discuss with other ÖDP supporters, including

South Korean elections

Trade Union leader Kwon Young-ghil won 1.2% of the vote in presidential elections on 18 December. Most progressive voters supported the successful candidate, Kim Dae-jung, who's election Kwon Young-ghil recognised a "very significant" step forward for South Korea's labour and human rights movement.

This is only the third time progressive forces have presented an independent candidate. In 1992, Baik Ghi Wan won 1% of the vote.

Kwon, who led the general strike at the beginning of 1997, was supported by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) of which he is president, and NADUK, a grouping of progressive, intellectual and non-governmental groups.

His campaign centred on the dismantling of the *Chaebol*, the industrial conglomerates which dominate the South Korean economy. He opposed the IMF-led calls for mass dismissals as a result of the country's financial crisis, and proposed a range of concrete alternative policies for workers' and the people's living standard.

Kwon Young-ghil won 6.1% of the vote in WoolSan province, with local high scores of up to 17.0%. But the campaign failed to spread across the country, and in all other provinces he polled 0.2-1.7%. His national score of 1.2% represents just over 306,000 votes.

Eighty-one percent of eligible voters participated in the election, with voters polarised between the establishment candidate, and veteran oppositionist Kim Dae-jung, who won by a narrow margin.

A statement from the Kwon Young-ghil campaign praised Kim Dae-jung as "not only a leader of anti-dictatorship and democratisation movement, but also a comrade of distinguished men out of

office, so his election is a significant event."

Pointing to the disastrous economic situation, widespread corruption of politicians, and the "indiscriminate management of the Chaebols... which makes the people suffer from huge unemployment, high prices and other difficulties," the Kwon Young-ghil campaign urged the new president to respect "the desire for a change in regime among those who voted for him. The change of regime should be real and complete... We have already experienced a so-called 'civil regime' which turned out to be worse than a military dictatorship!

"Therefore, we demand that the new president open his mind to the desperate voices of the people and critical arguments of [his] ex-comrades from progressive groups and civil society movement forces: those who struggled with him in the past, for democratisation.

"The election has considerable progressive aspects compared with past ones which were very based on government authority and money power. However regional antagonism, biased report of the press, unfair TV discussion and regulations which prevent new political forces from emerging are problems which must still be solved.

"We are confident that we did our best in such a difficult condition. We accept the outcome of the presidential election. We will make an endless effort to keep the promise we made with the people during the presidential election. For us, this presidential election has the meaning of a new start. We continue preparing for alternative progressive politics into the 21st century." [JD] ★

Source: Statement by People's Victory 21 for Democracy and Progress campaign, 19 December 1997 For more information: www.solinet.org/LEE/korea11.html

ispossessed

those deprived of their civic rights following a court conviction, and students and civil servants, forbidden under Turkish law from joining a political party. It also allowed a completely free debate, without the legal straight-jacket that affects public discussion in Turkey.

The resolutions approved at this conference were submitted for debate to the official congress, held in the presence of a government commissioner, the press, and some 10,000 party supporters. The resolutions, and the candidates for the new Central Committee, were formally approved.

This first regular congress confirmed the pluralist character of the ÖDP. All nine currents presented candidates, and all are represented, proportionally, in the 100-member Central Committee. Dev-Yol won 43 of the seats. Furthermore, the smaller currents are over-represented in the 24-member Political Bureau.

None of the founding currents can now turn back from the ÖDP project. The common identity has impregnated each current, and is reflected in the discourse, style and above all, the practice of the new party. The ÖDP systematically avoids left jargon, and seeks new, innovative ways to address the masses, rather than just speaking to its own narrow circle of supporters. This is particularly important in the current context, where politicisation touches only a thin layer of working people and youth.

For example, the financial report to the congress carried the slogan "We are the party of love, revolution, and the dispossessed!" In ÖDP demonstrations, protesters carry brooms, to symbolise the struggle against the Mafia. And the party's alliance policy is characterised by the slogan "the ivy of the people."

The rain fills the bucket

In the last municipal elections, the ÖDP won 1.6% of the vote in the five major municipalities where it presented a ticket. Recent opinion polls suggest that the party, which has more than 20,000 members, would win at least 3% if elections were held soon. For the first time since the 1980s coup d'état, the socialist movement is represented by a non-marginal political force: a reality that must be taken into account in the trade unions, in the mass organisations, and even in the mass media.

The social composition of the ÖDP is fairly representative. Almost all its members are wage-earners, and almost one quarter are factory workers. Many of the others are public sector employees (the layer that leads most social struggles in Turkey). The party also brings together

representatives of a range of social movements that do not necessarily consider themselves socialist: feminist groups, ecologists, conscientious objectors, human rights activists, and (very unusually for this part of the world) militants for lesbian and gay rights. The ÖDP has a certain weight in the trade unions, particularly the public sector confederation KESK. Party leaders hope to double the number of members from 20 to 40,000 in the coming period, and to increase the proportion of young people, women, and manual workers within the membership.

Now that it is present in almost all the country's Prefectures and Sub-Prefectures, the ÖDP meets the legal requirements to present candidates in parliamentary elections. With 300 local offices, the party is certainly not confined to the main urban centres, even though the effort so far has been to organise the existing milieu, the existing potential, rather than winning over new layers and new forces.

The party faces many of the same difficulties as similar mass left parties in other countries. Unlike the Turkish Workers Party (TIP), which had about 3% electoral support during the 1960s, during a period of mass struggles, the ÖDP must organise against the current, with limited forces, without a mass workers movement. The centre-left parties have confined themselves to parliamentary manoeuvres.

Actions speak louder

In this context of general demobilisation, the success of the ÖDP in transporting 5-10,000 people hundreds of kilometres, to the various protest demonstrations we have organised in far-away provincial towns is particularly impressive.

At the beginning of November, to mark the first anniversary of the "Susurluk" affair (which revealed the links between the Mafia, the far right, the police, and politicians from Tansu Ciller's party), tens of thousands participated in ÖDP demonstrations in three provincial towns. This reflected ÖDP militants having been at the head of popular reaction to that scandal since the beginning.

Other mass actions initiated by the ÖDP include the April demonstration of 25,000 in downtown Ankara, and the party's May Day contingents: more than 25,000 in Istanbul, 15,000 in Ankara, and several thousands in a series of provincial demonstrations.

The party also contributed to the collection of a million signatures for the "signature for peace" [in the Kurdish region] campaign. In June, the party gathered 35,000 protesters in Istanbul for a demonstration against the twin dangers of Islamic fundamentalism and military rule. A similar number attended the party's recent rally at Istanbul's Fenerbahçe stadium.

What has been surprising is that these spectacular mobilisations only represent

the party's ability to mobilise its own closest supporters. While the party is slowly increasing its contacts with the general public, it is far from generating or leading a large, social movement. Still, the ÖDP has been able to have an impact on the political scene, with its own personality, and its own way of doing politics.

New period: new problems

In the coming period, the party will have to develop tactics to politicise the left, and to reach wider layers, beyond the classic centre-left electorate.

Turkey may face pre-term parliamentary elections in 1998, and the party must prepare itself for this possibility. Under the current electoral law, only parties that win 10% of the national vote will be admitted to parliament. So we will be under pressure from the social democrats, who will be urging leftist voters to make a tactical vote for the centre-left, "so as to block the Islamists and the right." To be credible in the eyes of the masses, we may have to consider some kind of electoral alliance.

Particularly important in this respect is our relationship with the Kurdish nationalist left, through the People's Democratic Labour Party (HADEP). Despite its respectable score in the Kurdish region (southeast Turkey), HADEP has little echo in the western areas. Until now, the ÖDP has refrained from organising in the region under martial law. But some currents inside the party are arguing for a change of policy.

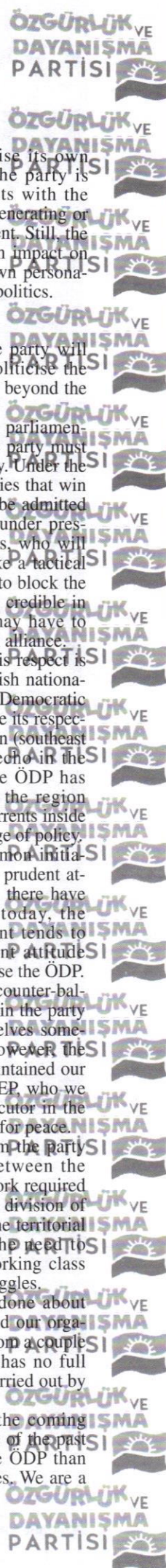
Despite a number of common initiatives with HADEP, and a very prudent attitude on the part of the ÖDP, there have been some tensions. Even today, the Kurdish nationalist movement tends to have a sectarian and arrogant attitude towards the groups that comprise the ÖDP.

As an indirect result and counter-balance of this, some sectors within the party are urging us to distance ourselves somewhat from HADEP. So far, however, the leadership of the party has maintained our privileged relations with HADEP, who we consider our legitimate interlocutor in the Kurdish region, in the struggle for peace.

Another important problem the party must solve is the tension between the organisational form of party work required by its legal status (such as the division of activities to correspond with the territorial division of the state) and the need to organise at workplaces, in working class and poorer districts, and in struggles.

Something must also be done about the party's weak apparatus, and our organisational amateurism: apart from a couple of secretariat staff, the party has no full timers, and all party work is carried out by volunteers.

What is clear is that, in the coming months and years, the heritage of the past will be less important for the ÖDP than our own struggles and activities. We are a force to be reckoned with! ★



The Revolution... unfinished

Everything worth saying about the Russian Revolution has already been said, right?

Wrong, says **Boris Kagarlitsky**

Throughout the Soviet decades, leftists repeatedly cited the pronouncements of Trotsky and of his biographer Isaac Deutscher on the bureaucratic degeneration of the regime, on the incompleteness of the revolutionary process and on the possibility of it being rolled back.

Social democrats repeated the arguments of Kautsky and Martov concerning the prematurity of the Bolshevik experiment and its antidemocratic character, while liberals insisted that an economy not constructed on the firm foundations of the market and private property could not be viable.

It seemed as though the collapse of the Soviet system in the years between 1989 and 1991 would place all the dots on the i's and conclude the discussion. At least on the emotional plane, however, the events of those years turned out to be a complete surprise for the ideologues.

To propagandists of capitalism the fate of the "Russian experiment" seemed absolutely natural, but from 1989 it appeared as though history was mocking the liberals; after confirming all their theories and forecasts, it immediately began to refute them. All the promises of a shining future, of dynamic growth and a "normal economy" turned into their opposites. Not one of the "positive" recipes has worked, while liberal values are becoming steadily less interesting to anyone but professional intellectuals.

It is striking how liberal ideologues have been forced to turn to the language of Soviet communism, mirroring its arguments. The liberals speak of the difficulties of the transition period, of the insufficiently consistent implementation of reform policies, of specific mistakes, and finally, of resistance and sabotage by hostile forces standing in the path of history or even trying to turn it back. This is not simply because all the ideologues of capitalism in Russia, as in most other East European countries, studied in Communist Party schools. Western "experts" who never graduated from Soviet party schools say the same. Behind this is their im-

tence in the face of uncomprehended mechanisms of history, along with an inability and unwillingness to give clear answers to concrete questions.

It is not surprising that against this background the debate about the outcome of the Russian Revolution should be unfolding anew. Uncertainty about the state of society means that people are forced continually to glance back. If everything is so clear, then why is everything so incomprehensible? The examination of the past conceals a fear of the future.

The discussion is going in circles. Everyone repeats their old arguments, hoping to find their old theses confirmed by the events of 1989-1991. Meanwhile, people are confronted by the paradox that in order to make sense of the past it is necessary first to try to gain a better understanding of the present.

The collapse of the Soviet system was not only a fatal blow to the communist movement, in whose ideology the Russian Revolution of 1917 played a central role and for which it created a whole system of myths. The damage suffered by social democracy was not less, and in a certain sense was even more. Now that left-centrist governments have come to power in many countries of Europe, this is even more obvious than it was a few years ago in the time of the undivided hegemony of neo-liberalism.

Leftists are coming to power not in order to implement their own programme, but to continue the policies of the neo-liberals. In many ways these neophytes of capitalism are not less but more dangerous than "normal" bourgeois politicians. Why should the defeat of communism have been accompanied by the moral collapse of social democracy, which wasted no opportunity to condemn communists?

Although the ideologues of right-wing social democracy in the West in the early years of the century set out to show that by constantly increasing the number of their electoral supporters left parties would sooner or later win the support of the majority of the people and come peacefully to office, the fact remains that not a single government of the left won power in Europe before the Russian Revolution of 1917. Perhaps this was no more than a coincidence. But the events that unfolded in Russia could not fail to have an enormous influence on both the bourgeoisie

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October 1917: Coup d'Etat or Social Revolution?

Ernest Mandel

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and the working class of the West.

After 1917 the ideology of social reformism based itself on three main premises: that a society qualitatively different from that of capitalism was in principle possible; that processes of social transformation did not have to be revolutionary; and that within the framework of the "mixed economy" it was essential to unite the democratic achievements of the West with the social achievements of the East. Meanwhile the Western workers' movement rejected the revolutionary path and opted for social compromise. But compromise requires a readiness for concessions by both sides. The events in Russia frightened not only the bourgeoisie, but also significant numbers of workers. The more workers were told of the cruelty of the Bolsheviks, and later of the Soviet regime, the stronger the reformist orientation of the majority of workers became.

In essence, what we see today is nothing other than the crisis of the historic consequences of the Russian Revolution of 1917. The social reforms of the post-war era represented a sort of reaction by Western society to this revolution. Prince Kropotkin in his time reminded Lenin that the revolutionary terror delayed the spread of the principles of the French Revolution in Europe by a full 80 years. In Kropotkin's view, the same would also happen with Russian socialism. Lenin undoubtedly saw things differently. But of course, subsequent events hinged not only on the terror, but also on the system and structures that arose out of the revolution. The Soviet model was clearly unsuited to being reproduced throughout Europe.

Like the eighteenth-century French Jacobins, the Bolsheviks were harsh, authoritarian, and at times incompetent. But at the same time they managed to achieve changes so far-reaching that their full significance will be apparent only after centuries. For all their errors and crimes, both the Jacobins and the Bolsheviks inspired millions of people, giving them back their self-esteem and their belief in their own strength. On this level the Russian revolution, for all its authoritarianism, had an immense liberating significance. The fact that people gained a sense of being in control, that they became conscious of themselves as participants in historic events rather than onlookers, predetermined both the victory of the Reds in the Civil War and the later successes of the USSR. This might be termed the "revolutionary impulse".

However paradoxical it might seem, communist ideology during the period of industrialisation served as a sort of

Russian substitute for the well-known "Protestant ethic". This is why after 1991 the Russian elites (unlike the Chinese ones) in putting an end to communism simultaneously did away with the only possible psychological and ethical preconditions for the development of capitalism. Here lies the reason why the "Russian reforms" have failed, while those in China have succeeded. And this, perhaps, represents the only historical service which the present regime in Moscow has performed.

The influence of the Russian Revolution of 1917 on Western society was also enormous, but it turned out to be quite different from what the ideologues of October had hoped. The Russian experience both impelled the ruling classes to make concessions, and at the same time acted as an obstacle to the search for a distinctive European model of radical social change. A solution was found in reformism. The success of the reformist endeavours was directly proportional to the seriousness of the "revolutionary blackmail" embodied in the world communist movement and the "Soviet menace". Socialism was able to play a huge role in improving the functioning of capitalism precisely because of its anti-capitalist essence. If socialism had not been a real alternative, if it had not had its own economic and social logic that could serve as a real basis for the creation of a new society, it would not have been able to develop the ideas and approaches needed for successful reforms.

In order to reform the system, an ideological impulse from outside was necessary. If socialist ideology had ceased to be a fundamental alternative to capitalism, if the labour movement had lost its capacity for aggressive militancy and had not been capable of determined struggle against the bourgeoisie, it would not have been able to subdue anybody or anything. Without class hostility there would not have been any social reforms or social partnership. Partnership in this setting does not arise out of mutual sympathy between the partners, but from an understanding that rejecting partnership could have catastrophic results.

This might be called "postponed revolution".

When examined from the point of view of liberal "common sense", the whole period since 1917 seems with hindsight like a chain of errors and crimes. This impression is in fact misleading; the impulse of 1917 lasted so long for the reason that along this path there were also impressive victories, including economic ones. Nevertheless, looking back from the 1990s, it is easy to take the view that while Russia received shocks, "Red

terror", collectivisation, the Stalinist Thermidor, the massive repression of the 1930s, the horrors of war, and the strain of the post-war period of reconstruction, the West got consumer society, a viable democratic system, and "civilised" capitalism.

The point that escapes the superficial observer is that the one would not have been possible without the other. The history of the "successes" of the West would have been impossible without our tragic history. By the 1930s the Soviet Union was no longer ruled by a "revolutionary regime". Trotsky correctly called the new political order the Soviet Thermidor, in which the new elite no longer served the "proletarian revolution", but looked after itself.

In the 1940s, with the rise of the Soviet super-power, the regime increasingly took on Bonapartist features. Though gravely weakened, the revolutionary impulse still made itself felt, and this was the secret both of the socio-economic successes of the USSR in the post-war period, and of the attractiveness of our country for the developing world. Nevertheless, this impulse was finally extinguished.

By the late 1980s we had a huge country with an inefficient super-centralised (and not particularly planned) economy, and a bloated, hypertrophied bureaucracy that was dreaming of acquiring property as well as power. The epoch of the "Soviet Thermidor" had come to an end. The time had come for restoration. This historical task was taken on by the Yeltsin regime, with support from the West.

The time had come for an epoch of reaction, which the press for some reason christened "liberal reforms". This reaction was not an internal Russian affair, but part of a world-wide process. Just as the Holy Alliance in Europe after the Napoleonic wars tried to root out the results of the French revolution, so today the International Monetary Fund, Maastricht Europe and the American "new world order" represent the reactionary answer of the old elites to the downfall of the revolutionary experiment. It is wrong to try to justify this social reaction on the basis of its technological successes. The period of the Holy Alliance was also one of intensive technological development, but this did not alter the epoch's reactionary essence.

It might be said that the main historical achievement of our revolution was the reforming of capitalism in the West. Now, as a result of the collapse of communism, this achievement is under threat. The defeat of the revolution is not simply weakening reformism, but in a certain sense, making it quite impossible.

It is not surprising that the collapse of the Soviet system has been a catastrophe for social democracy as well. Since 1989 the reformist course of the labour movement in the West has totally exhausted itself, and there is no new strategy or ideology. The result has been predictable. As

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Factory committees and workers' control in Petrograd in 1917

David Mandel

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the West has entered an era of acute social conflicts and unclear political alternatives, the place of reformism and revolutionism has been taken spontaneously by radicalism, expressed in uncoordinated aggressive demands and in outbursts of unorganised protest. The reason why history has not come to an end has been simply that capitalism, after emerging victorious from its struggle with communism, has remained subject to its own propensities, to its own forces of self-destruction. It is as though we had returned to the pre-October epoch.

Our historical task - ultimately, a question of survival - is becoming the search for new forms of social being, without which neither politics nor economics is possible. In Russia this social being cannot be bourgeois, because of the lack of a fully realised bourgeoisie. But creating a bourgeoisie retrospectively, on the basis of privatisation, is just as impossible as living someone else's life over again. For Russia as for many countries, the perspectives for the development of the economy cannot be capitalist because of the ineffectiveness of the model that has taken shape. Consequently, a radical, innovative alternative remains on the agenda.

The ideology of the left can become an important factor in the organisation of society precisely because of its collectivism. The task of the left in Russia is not only to express already formed interests, but also to help in their formation, and at the same time, to create itself as a political force. This will need to be done all over again.

A renewal of the social being is not identical to the triumph of democracy, but it offers the only chance for democratic development. Collectivism does not always guarantee freedom, but our freedom can no longer be defended without it. Left radicalism, ripening in a natural fashion in

a land of failed capitalism, may not become the ideology of progress, but without it progress is impossible.

Lenin's book "What is to be Done?" could only have been written by a socialist from Russia. It would never have entered the head of a European social democrat that it was necessary to create a party of workers even before the rise of a mass working class, and then to "import" proletarian consciousness into the ranks of the proletariat. But this apparent theoretical absurdity was born of the contradictory nature and uneven development of real Russian history. And was this true only of Russian history?

People have either to organise themselves to carry out joint actions or to reconcile themselves to their fates. But the passivity and submissiveness of the masses will not lead to stability, since the source of the de-stabilisation is the people at the top. In Europe in the age of the Holy Alliance it was possible to argue that the historical project of the French Revolution had ended in total defeat. But the epoch of reaction in Europe was followed by a new wave of revolutionary shocks, preconditioned precisely by the policies of the restoration. We are seeing the same thing today. The "new world order", which is systematically doing away with the elements of the "social state" in all countries, is in fact creating the conditions for a train of new revolutionary shocks.

At the very dawn of the modern era it was explained that after the restoration would come the "Glorious Revolution". Reaction is a natural historical phenomenon, but it becomes exhausted just as revolutions do. When this exhaustion sets in, a new era of change can begin. ★

Ernst Scholl was active in the labour movement from the end of World War I until his death in 1997. Born a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian empire, he entered politics in the new Czechoslovak Republic. After the trauma of World War II, he settled in West Germany, where conservatives and reactionaries dominated debate on national and social questions. In this interview published on the occasion of his 80th birthday, Winfried Wolf asked him about the controversial events that marked his life.

• **As customary these last decades, Sudeten newspapers [referring to the German-speakers expelled from Czechoslovakia at the end of World War Two] are full of reactionary demands. You are a Sudeten German — and a Marxist. What do you think of the demands made here of a return to the homeland?**

This movement has been dominated of course for a long time by reactionaries. It was able to mobilise large masses because of the brutal expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from their homeland. These people lived there from six to seven hundred years. Between the two World Wars Czechoslovak governments under Benes pursued a policy of suppressing the German minority. The justification — analogous to Hitler's policy in the East — was the need for more "space" for the Czech people. After 1918 Czechs were moved into the German areas, and given preference in employment. This exacerbated the national question.

• **Leftists usually consider that the Sudetenland was the spearhead in Hitler's plan of the conquest of the East.**

That is not so. A strong workers movement existed in the Sudetenland, especially in the industrial areas. My father was a worker and a socialist. I joined the Social-Democratic Party and the Socialist Youth in 1921. In many Sudeten cities the workers parties dominated the political scene until the end of the Twenties. Only the criminal policy of the bourgeois government of Czechoslovakia made it possible for the class struggle to be overshadowed by the national question. Made it possible that the German national question in Czechoslovakia could be utilised by Hitler.

• **One often hears that the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans was understandable revenge for the brutal suppression of the Czechs under the Nazi regime.**

This expulsion has no justification, and neither does the Nazi regime. Marxists acknowledge no such "right of revenge."

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Revolutionary strategy today

Daniel Bensaid

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A Sudeten-German Marxist

It is true: Hitler and his governor Heydrich set up a terror regime in the "Czech Protectorate." But we must not therefore accept the "theory of collective guilt": Sudeten German Communists, Socialists and Trotskyists suffered just as much under this regime as our Czech class brothers and sisters.

After the war, with the Potsdam Agreement, the Western Allies and Stalin gave the green light to the crime of the expulsion. We must always emphasise that the expulsion in 1945-47 took place under a bourgeois government — Benes again — and that it was then that the worst excesses took place. Later, after the Communists took over after 1948, they showed themselves to be more tolerant.

• **After the war, in West Germany, you tried to counter the reactionary use of the Sudeten question in the Social Democratic Party (SDP).**

The "Seliger Community" was made up of Sudeten German Social Democrats. It never sought to really analyse the causes of the expulsion. Its top functionary, Wenzel Jaksch, was a declared enemy of Marxism and of our position on the question of nationalities. In 1960 he had the cheek to declare publicly that the "Sudeten Germans are at the disposition of NATO as brave soldiers against the Soviet Union."

I wrote an article in *Sozialistische Politik*² newspaper, in which I vehemently attacked Wenzel Jaksch. On account of this article I was expelled from the "Seliger Community" without further ado or procedures. In the SPD on the question of the expelled [Sudeten Germans], it is just as in all other questions: One adopts bourgeois positions and thus drifts always more to the right, during the period of the cold war and of economic boom: rearmament, demilitarisation, emergency suspension of civil rights.

In the Sudeten German Council the "Seliger Community" also acknowledged without comment that former Nazis

represented the entire organisation as functionaries.

• **What was the most important difference in trade union work before the Second World War in the Sudetenland and after the war in West Germany?**

In the 20s and 30s it was a given that the socialist goal was also the goal of the trade unions. In post-war West Germany we were forced to remove all socialist demands from the program in the name of unity and to do "trade unionism only." In the conditions of the cold war and the boom this had the added effect that any understanding of this capitalist society was lost. The bitter fruits of this are evident today. The trade unions stand powerless on the ruins of their policy, and in the face of mass unemployment. "Social partnership" did not benefit them. In my industry, textiles, especially around Augsburg, most of the work places have been rationalised out of existence or transferred abroad — and the "secure" replacement work is anything but secure.

• **You had close connections with the Fourth International before and after the war. What did that consist of and what did it mean for you?**

In the Thirties I had contact with comrades from Dresden who were in contact with Trotsky. We formed a small group and published a newspaper. Then I had to join the German army (*Wehrmacht*) — fortunately as a medic so that I was also able to treat adversaries too.

After the war, when I was living in Augsburg, West Germany, I was able to establish contact with George Jungclas. In the Fifties and Sixties, *Sozialistische Politik* newspaper formed an important connecting link — I always sold a large number in Augsburg. These connections with the Fourth International were vitally important — for me they were and are the only possibility of dealing with socialist theory and practice and to apply them to given conditions.

Without this relationship, the same thing would have happened as occurred with dozens of Social Democrats in Augsburg who still considered themselves to be socialists at the beginning of the Fifties — they became thoroughly bourgeoisified.

I tried to anchor this relationship also inside the SPD. We created a "Marxist Work Circle" that tried to form a counterweight to the rightward motion of the SPD. The party leadership proceeded ever more sharply against us, especially when on the question of demilitarisation we won a large majority of the Augsburg SPD to our position against the course of the party leaders. The Work Circle was forbidden to advocate its views without permission; in this manner it was choked off finally in 1958-59.

I became more and more isolated politically. In addition many of those with whom I could still have a meaningful political dialogue died. And finally of course the decline of the textile industry led to the dispersal of hundreds of good trade unionists, men and women. Augsburg was not an area where socialism flourished. Precisely in this kind of situation the connection with the Fourth International rose in importance, both through the GIM [International Marxist Group] and the newspaper, to which I regularly contributed, especially for short news items. ★

Notes

1. Sudetenland was the German speaking part of Bohemia under the Austrian empire. In 1918 these German-speakers formed the second-largest ethnic group in the new Czechoslovak Republic. At the end of World War II Czechoslovakia expelled the entire German minority. German-speakers were also expelled from territory in Silesia (Schlesien), Pommern (Pommern), and Prussia (Preußen) which now forms part of Poland and Russia. Estimates for the total displaced population range from 12-15 million.

Spokesmen for the expelled [Aussiedler] movement in West Germany have been an influential lobby in favour of reactionary and revanchist policies towards West Germany's Eastern neighbours.

2. *Sozialistische Politik* (SoPo) was published until 1966 by left socialist democrats and members of the Fourth International.

Reprinted from *Was Tun* #387, 13 July 1984. Interview by Winfried Wolf. Translated by Ed Kovacs, a member of the US Socialist-Feminist organisation Solidarity.



Disney Haiti Justice Campaign

Pocahontas pyjamas cost \$12 in New York. The Haitian women who make them get 5-7 cents. No wonder workers at Disney subcontractors are trying to organize. We want Disney to stop doing business with subcontractors who refuse their workers' demands for • A wage of at least \$5 per day (double current rates) • genuine collective bargaining. • Improved working conditions, such as clean drinking water. • An end to indiscriminate layoffs, and firings for union organizing.

We have postcards, fact sheets and other materials which you can adapt for local organizing efforts.

✉ Disney/Haiti Justice Campaign, PO. Box 755, Fort Washington Station, New York, NY 10001; (212) 592-3612. E-mail <bloom@soho.ios.com>.

Conferences

Fourth annual Russian Conference on Trotsky

Several dozen Russians workers and intellectuals gathered in Moscow on October 10-12 for a conference on "Leon Trotsky and the Russian Revolution: 1917-1997". The event was sponsored by the international Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy.

Foreign guests included speakers from more than ten countries. Among the Russian speakers were Valery Bronstein, the grandson of Trotsky's brother; Yuri Kirshin, Vice President of the Academy of Military Sciences, who is writing a major work on Trotsky's role as commander of the Red Army during the Civil War 1919-1921; Vadim Rogovin, who has written four volumes of a projected seven-volume history of the Opposition to Stalin in the

1920s and 1930s; and Zorya Serebryakova, daughter of prominent Bolshevik leader Leonid Serebryakov. A supporter of the Left Opposition in 1923-1927, Serebryakov was shot after giving a forced, false confession at the second Moscow show trial in 1937.

Zorya, who knew Trotsky personally, documented Stalin's falsifications of documents about the October revolution. She cited startling examples of false historical accounts that have recently been written by scholars who are relying on these tampered documents. The round tables discussed "The Theory of Permanent Revolution: historical and contemporary aspects," "The Crisis of Capitalism as a Prerequisite for Revolution: Theory and Reality," and "When and How Was the Russian Revolution Defeated?" with panellists including Russians and foreign guests—both supporters and opponents of Trotsky's ideas and analyses as well as those in between.

The panel which drew the largest audience and generated the most controversy discussed "Was Trotskyism an Alternative?" to Stalinism. The range of views presented spanned the spectrum from Vadim Rogovin who explained with examples why "Trotskyism" was an alternative at every stage of the unfolding historic process in the USSR; to Hillel Ticktin of the University of Glasgow who argued that Trotsky's ideas were an alternative which had they been implemented would have changed the course of history of this century in favour of the working class; to Mikhail Voeikov, professor of Economics at the Russian Academy of Sciences, who argued that the topic of the discussion was ill conceived and that Trotsky knew well that his ideas could not be implemented during the political downturn in the 1920s, much less in the 1930s after the defeats and retreats caused by Stalinist policies; to Alexei Gusev, a graduate student of Soviet history, who maintained that Trotsky's policies were not really substantially different from Stalin's and, therefore, could offer no alternative.

coming soon

People's action against "free" trade

From the 23 to the 25 of February 1998, 600 representatives of peoples movements will meet in Geneva to establish a platform for worldwide action against trade liberalisation: the Peoples' Global Action against "Free" Trade and the WTO (PGA).

The first big-scale action in the calendar of the PGA will be a wave of decentralised mobilisations and protests all over the world parallel to the Second Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which shall take place on 18-20 May 1998.

The meeting in February will be the founding conference of the PGA, since it will lay down the basis of the alliance in the form of a manifesto. It is being convened by a committee formed by some of the most representative peoples' movements of all continents, including peasant movements (like the Brazilian Movimento Sem Terra, the Indian KRRS and the Peasant Movement of the Philippines), indigenous peoples (like the Mexican Zapatistas, the Nigerian Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, the Indigenous Women's Network of North America and the Pacific and FIA, a Maori organisation from Aotearoa), unions (like the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores from Nicaragua) and women's organisations (like Mama 86, an organisation of Ukrainian women affected by the Chernobyl disaster).

Other events will take place around the first PGA conference. From the 18 to the 21 of February, there will be several

information and discussion roundtables on topics such as gender, food production, culture, economics, etc., prepared by organisations participating in the conference. On February 22 there will be a one-day intensive seminar on the WTO, the MAI and trade liberalisation. On February 26 there will be a number of coordination and planning sessions in small groups, divided according to the topics treated in the roundtables. Finally, on February 27 there will be a European meeting to launch a Europe-wide movement of civil disobedience against "free" trade.

Contact: Play Fair Europe! e.V., Turmstr. 3, 52072 Aachen, Germany Tel: (+49-241) 803792 Fax: 8888394 email: playfair@asta.rwth-aachen.de <http://www.agp.or>

Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference

Sydney, Australia, April 1998

Organised by the Asia Pacific Institute for Democratisation and Development. See full page advertisement in September 1997 issue of this magazine.

The Institute also welcomes applications to present papers at the conference, and suggest specific themes for discussion under the general framework of supporting democratisation, self-determination and social justice and opposing the neo-liberal austerity offensive.

Contact: Dr Helen Jarvis, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies, (SILAS) University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052 Australia. Or Email to: apiaustralia@peg.apc.org. Or fax to: 02-96901381

The Present Crises and Future Plans

This is the fourth annual conference on Trotsky in Russia. The first was held in November 1994 at the Economics Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences where the Committee was formed. A telling indicator of the destructive consequences of the capitalist restorationist policies and the consequent social deterioration is the current state of Economics Institute itself: Such a conference could no longer be held in the Institute's auditorium today: that handsome area has been converted into a storage room for a commercial firm (the Institute, no longer receiving the necessary government funding, rents out rooms to survive); the old faculty lounge now houses an industrial vacuum dealership; Russian "Avon Ladies" peddle cosmetics on a counter just inside the Institute's main entrance. The coat check area is in shambles—the staff no longer received any pay and left.

The ideals of the Russian revolution are not dead in Russia. A recent poll suggested that 70% of Russians oppose the sale of state property and 54% feel that "the country is moving in the wrong direction." The economic, industrial, health, cultural, and educational system of the country has virtually collapsed. According to the *New York Times* on October 20th, health problems in Russia "rival those of the poorest African countries... only one child in five is born healthy...and the death rate has risen by 20 percent, without modern precedent."

Professor Voeikov, co-ordinator of

the Committee's work in Russia, emphasized the importance of the its work with his observation that "there can be no way out of the present problems without understanding what caused them. This means returning to the history of the Russian revolution and learning the causes of its degeneration. Trotsky's writings are indispensable to this task."

The next conference will be in Moscow in 1999, 120 years after Trotsky's birth. In the meantime, the Committee has launched a campaign to raise \$5,000 to publish 1,000 copies of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* which is still virtually unavailable in Russia. [MVD] ★

Contact: Marilyn Vogt-Downey, US Coordinator, PO Box 1890, New York, NY 10009; e-mail: mvogt@igc.apc.org

booknotes

Mexico's democratic left

The July 1997 victory of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas in the Mexico City mayoral elections marked the growing success of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Dan La Botz reviews recent publications on the party and its charismatic leader.

In *Taking on Goliath*, Kathleen Bruhn maps out how Cardenas and the PRD finally began to break the power of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Bruhn is an assistant professor of political science at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and this book, the first English-language study of the PRD, began as her doctoral dissertation. Relatively free from jargon, it tells the story of the rise of the Democratic Current inside the PRI, its departure, and transformation into the PRD.

That period is also covered by Luis Javier Garrido, previously known for his history of Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). *La Ruptura* is a well written, serious history based on newspaper accounts, documents, and interviews.

Kathleen Bruhn also covers the creation of the National Democratic Front (FND) and Cuauhtemoc Cardenas's 1988 campaign for president.

She then turns to the organizational and political failures of the PRD through 1994. While this is a useful overview, Bruhn fails to relate the growth of the PRD to the economic and social struggles taking place in the country, concentrating too narrowly on party building and electoral contests.

Spanish readers will also appreciate Adolfo Gilly's fascinating selection of letters sent to Cardenas during his 1988 presidential campaign. Gilly, an Argentinean-born Mexican historian, has collected and edited letters from workers, peasants, teachers, students, and middle

class supporters, providing a fascinating picture of Cardenas's backers in that campaign.

More disappointing, perhaps, is Paco Taibo II's interview/biography of Cardenas, written to support the PRD leader's 1994 presidential campaign. While Cardenas de cerca provides some basic information about the man, it fails to ask any hard questions. Taibo, famous as a historian, biographer and detective story writer brought none of his critical faculties to bear on Cardenas, disappointing those of us who have been his faithful readers.

Those in search of documents may find what they are looking for in two recent works by supporters of the Democratic Current, which became the PRD. Ifigenia Martinez, a founder of the Democratic Current, has edited a collection of over 40 essays, nearly 500 pages, by leaders of the PRD, and sympathising economists and social scientists striving to present economic alternatives to the neoliberalism of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Many of the basic documents of the Democratic Current can be found in *La Corriente democratica*, edited by Jorge Laso de la Vega.

Kathleen Bruhn. *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico*. University Park: Pennsylvania, 1997.

Adolfo Gilly. *Cartas a Cuauhtemoc Cardenas*. Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1989.

Luis Javier Garrido. *La Ruptura: La Corriente Democratica del PRI*. Mexico: Grijalbo, 1993.

Paco Ignacio Taibo II. *Cardenas de cerca: Una entrevista biografica*. Mexico: Grupo Editorial Planeta, 1994.

Ifigenia Martinez, ed. *Economica y Democracia: Una propuesta alternativa*. Mexico: Grijalbo, 1995.

Jorge Laso de la Vega, ed. *La Corriente democratica: Hablan los protagonistas*. Mexico: Editorial Posada, 1987.

Uncovering the Right on Campus: a guide to resisting conservative attacks on equality and social justice.

The Center for Campus Organizing (CCO) has released a 132 page book documenting Right-wing activity in academia. The book exposes right-wing attempts to control the debate on affirmative action, financial aid, feminism and gay rights by way of funneling millions of dollars to student groups and newspapers.

Uncovering the Right on Campus is a culmination of four years of research aimed at blowing the cover on the myth that campus Right-wing movements grow naturally from the students. The book

reveals how, despite their backing by millions of corporate dollars, conservative campus groups have yet to make an impact proportionate to their checkbook. Meanwhile, the numbers of progressive student activists are growing.

Uncovering the Right on Campus is written by the staff of the Center for Campus Organizing. CCO is a five-year-old organization dedicated to supporting social justice activism and alternative journalism on college campuses across the USA.

The budget cuts of the "Contract with America" were a recent example of Right-wing attempts to control education across the country. The Right Wing has been funding conservative campus groups at an annual rate of 10 to 20 million dollars since the 1980's in order to to buy influence on college campuses. For example, in 1994 the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation funded by Allen Bradley Corporation donated over a million dollars to conservative campus groups and the Castle Rock Foundation backed by the conservative Adolph Coors Foundation gave \$225,000 in campus grants.

ISBN 0-945210-07-08. Published by Public Search Inc. Cost: \$8 plus \$2 shipping from the Center for Campus Organizing, PO Box 748, Cambridge, MA 02142. FAX (617) 547-5067. Excerpts are available on the CCO Web Site at: www.envirolink.org/orgs/right

Exposed Realities: Palestinian Residency Rights in the "Self Rule Areas"

Manal Jamal and Buthaina Darwish of the Project for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights present a summary of the post-Oslo laws, regulations and procedures concerning core issues such as family reunification, re-patriation via the Palestinian Authority, visitors' permits, the situation of Palestinian deportees, PA population registration, etc. It evaluates the functioning of the model of "shared rule" in the PA areas, in which the Palestinian Authority serves as a messenger for the Israeli decision makers. It documents how Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip continue to suffer from the division of their families. It concludes with suggestions for action by human rights organizations and policy makers.

November 1997; English, 52 pages; price: US \$10. To order, contact: BADIL-Alternative Information Center, Bethlehem, email: badil@baraka.org or tel/fax. 00972-2-747346. (Electronic mail copies are available upon request.).

To order the books and magazines mentioned in *International Viewpoint*, try your nearest progressive bookstore, or write to La Brèche, 9 rue de Tunis, 75011 Paris, France ☎ (+33 1) 43676357 fax 43792961 (English, French and Spanish spoken). Where no price is given, we suggest you enclose US\$ 10 in any convertible currency to cover the postage costs of the publisher. To announce your publication in this free listing, send a sample copy to "Book reviews" c/o *International Viewpoint*, PECCI, BP 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France.

Convergencia Socialista

In Spanish. This new bimonthly magazine on Mexican politics accompanies the quarterly Cuadernos Feministas and Desde los cuatro puntos, a monthly magazine similar in focus and content to International Viewpoint.

Edited by Hector Diaz Polanco, an advisor to the Zapatistas during the San Andreas negotiations and Edgard Sanchez Ramirez (leader of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores PRT), Convergencia Socialista seeks "to analyse Mexican and global political questions, and to be a meeting place for socialist intellectuals and militants from various parties, and from no party."

Issue one included articles on Education and neoliberalism (Michael Lowy), Che Guevara, and "the state and ethnic identity in the era of globalisation" by Consuelo Sanchez. A special supplement includes the full text of the San Andres agreement between the EZLN and the Federal Government.

Issue two includes articles on political thinking in the Indian communities of Chiapas, Alain Krivine's interview with Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, Fidel Castro's speech at the burial of Che Guevara, and a discussion on "Che: product of revolution" between Michael Lowy and Fernando Martinez Heredia.

Contact: Convergencia Socialista, Xola 181, Colonia Alamos, C.P. 03400, Mexico DF. Tel/fax (5) 590 07 08. E-mail csapn@laneta.apc.org

Subscription outside Mexico costs \$20 for six issues. Send payment to the following account: Edgard Sanchez Ramirez, account number 8548971153433598, Banamex bank. Please notify the editorial office above at the same time.

Health and Safety in Maquiladoras

The Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network now publishes Border/Line Health & Safety: Newsletter of the Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network. Volume I, Number 1 appeared in September, 1997.

Contact: Editor, Garrett Brown at P.O. Box 124, Berkeley, CA 94701-0124. Or write to: "gdbrown@igc.apc.org".

The support network also has a quarterly all-electronic newsletter sent by e-mail. To subscribe, send a message to editor Peter Dillard, MD, at "ishmaelMD@aol.com". The support network also has an extensive Reading and Resource List posted on the American Public Health Association website:

www.apha.org/science/sections/maquil.html

This group has available a report: "The CAFOR Survey of Maquiladora Workers on Occupational Health and Safety in Tijuana and Tecate, Mexico, June-July 1996," by Michele Gonzalez Arroyo et al. Contact Garrett Brown at the addresses above.

Net

Working

Labour Left Briefing

Unlike International Viewpoint, the website edition of LLB is now updated only after the hard copy is available for sale. So if you want to see the magazine as soon as it's out you'll have to buy it.

www.labournet.org.uk/llb

New RealAudio files have been added at:

www.labournet.org.uk/llb/audio/

UPS strike

The pamphlet produced by the US group Solidarity is now available on their website.

www.labornet.org/solidarity

well read



Socialistisk Information #114

In Danish. The December issue of the monthly magazine of Socialistisk Arbejderparti (SAP), Danish section of the Fourth International includes articles on the far right "Danish People's Party" and the municipal elections, Pia Kjaersgaard's anti-social programme, the EU employment summit in Luxembourg, municipal corruption, and the struggle for a shorter working week.

For further information (and subscription rates), please write us at: socinf@inet.uni2.dk

Grenzeloos #41

In Dutch. The latest issue of the newspaper of the Dutch Socialist Workers Party) discusses poverty and the dual society (John Cozijn), The fight for the Amsterdam harbour, and an explanation of why the SAP will not take part in the 1998 parliamentary elections. At the municipal

level, however, an alliance in Amsterdam between the SAP and the Greens is increasingly probable. Robert Went looks at The barbarous face of casino capitalism, and James Balowski explains why the Indonesian regime is looking on as Kalimantan (Borneo) burns.

Murros #9

In Finnish (articles marked * are available in English on website)

The editorial* discusses the Left League's member poll on EMU and the views of Esko Sepponen, a Finnish MEP who is also the black horse of the Left League party. Is he a rainmaker or a reformist?

Katja Tuominen looks at the Finnish worker's everyday life in the 80th anniversary of independence and the "divide-and-rule" tactics of big capital.

Juha Lievonon questions the unconditional praise of the Zapatista by western left movements, throwing light on the black sides of Zapatista ideas of democracy, and their inability to produce economical results.

Janne Selin asks why Finland isn't signing the landmine ban, and Juhani Lohikoski reports on the civil movement to oppose the founding of an Islamic School in Helsinki, and news about the squat in Turku which has been taken over by activists on the route of a motorway construction project.

Murros is published by the Communist Youth of Finland, PL 288, 00171 Helsinki, Finland. Tel: 358-9-278 2244 E-mail: komnuor@dlc.fi

Internet: www.dlc.fi/~komnuor/

Bandera Roja

In Spanish. The November-December issue discusses health care reform in Puerto Rico, and developments within the US colony's Frente Socialista.

www.bandera.org

>> info@bandera.org

The Other Front

The "first front" is the front of confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians, usually through repression, dispossession and violence, though recently through the negotiation process as well.

The "other" – inside Israeli society, is less well known. These divisions and conflicts, debates and cultural developments, political parties and social movements are rarely recognised or understood, even by some of the principal actors on the "first front."

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is intrinsically - though not exclusively, or even primarily - related to internal Israeli developments, and any Palestinian strategy aimed at changing the relations of domination, should be aware and attentive to these developments.

- Had Abu Ala, the chief Palestinian negotiator, understood the nature of the settlements, it is unlikely that he would have signed the Oslo Declaration in its final form.

- Had Arafat been aware of the broad, general agreement and consensus to dismantle the Jewish settlement in Hebron after the massacre of Palestinians by Baruch Goldstein, he probably would have been more persistent and unyielding in his demand that this settlement be removed, and the entire Israeli-Palestinian negotiated process may have followed a different course.

When the AIC began publishing *The Other Front*, in 1988, the report's primary aim was to shed light on this other reality. Nine years later, the content of this publication is no less relevant than it was at the beginning of the Intifada. Following a one year interruption, and as a consequence of the tremendous interest expressed by its former readers, the AIC is renewing the publication of *The Other Front* - not as a printed bulletin, but on the Internet. The basic concept of the report will remain the same, while the scope will be slightly enlarged.

You can access *The Other Front* for free on the AIC Internet site <<http://aic.netgate.net/>>. For personal delivery, a six-months subscription costs \$150 (e-mail); \$200 (fax) and \$250 for airmail.

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