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**VIEWPOINT**

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# Still waiting for change



# Danish workers still say "No" to EU

Forty-five percent of Danish voters rejected the European Union's Amsterdam Treaty in a referendum on May 28. This indicates an enormous gap between the electorate and the political establishment and a massive distrust of political leaders where the European Union is concerned. All "responsible" political parties, trade union and employers' leaders and almost all newspapers, called for a "Yes" vote.

**Åge Skovrind**

**Opposition to the European Union (EU)** and its policies is higher in Denmark than any other member state. Five referendums have been held since Denmark joined the European Community in 1972. In 1992, a majority rejected the Maastricht Treaty, sending shock waves through the Danish and European establishment.

The establishment was united behind the "Yes" campaign: the four parties recommending a "no" vote – the Socialist Peoples Party and *Enhedslisten* (Red-Green Alliance) on the left, and the nationalist Progress Party and Danish Peoples Party on the right, won only 18% of votes in the March 11 general election.

Because Danish opposition to the EU tends to express workers' and social interests, the Social Democratic party (currently in government) has been particularly hit by these contradictions. Almost half of those who normally vote Social



Democrat said "No" in the referendum (slightly less than in 1993, when the Maastricht treaty, including exceptions for Denmark on four points, was approved in a second referendum.).

Obviously, right wing and nationalist forces played a significant role in the campaign against ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty. The Danish Peoples Party, which has recently emerged as the leading far right party, filled the streets with posters saying "Vote Danish, vote No". And the biggest-circulation newspaper, *Ekstra Bladet*, made an aggressive "No" campaign on a very narrow-minded basis.

At the same time, part of the left intelligentsia has abandoned its opposition to the European Union and turned to a "progressive" policy inside the Union framework. This tendency is reflected inside the Socialist Peoples Party whose parliamentary group was split 50-50. The official party line shifted to a "No," after a "Yes" recommendation in 1993.

Social Democrats insisted that the treaty represented an improvement in



terms of peace, environment and employment. Since these are general aims, without any immediate implications, the debate shifted away from the social content of the European Union, towards issues like "national sovereignty", and "more or less Union?"

One month before the referendum, the Danish parliament approved the EU Schengen agreement on police co-operation and border controls, by a large majority and without any public debate. But, since the Amsterdam Treaty includes sections on Schengen and border controls, these questions could not be avoided in the referendum campaign.

The "yes" side insisted in the necessity of international co-operation against criminality. The left opponents of ratifica-

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tion argued against the creation of supra-national bodies without any democratic control, entitled to register "suspicious" citizens, and against the construction of a Fortress Europe directed against immigrants and refugees. Right-wing opponents of the Treaty focused on the defence of the Danish border.

### Yes or no? Right or left?

For the government and the "responsible" opposition parties, a yes vote was the only way to continue the process of enlargement of the European Union towards Eastern Europe. We must not lose this "historical chance to help these states in their liberation from the communist heritage," they proclaimed. Apart from the Red-Green Unity list (*Enhedslisten*), most "No" campaigners support the perspective of integrating these states into the EU but argues that the Amsterdam treaty is not a precondition but an obstacle to a fair and full enlargement.

Finally, much discussion focused on the possible consequences of a "No" victory. The "Yes" side argued that Denmark would lose influence, or even be excluded from Europe. "No" campaigners' arguments varied – from "nothing happens, life goes on", to demands for new negotiations, to the perspective that Denmark would – again – be at the centre of European debate, creating the possibility to start a fresh discussion between member states about what kind of co-operation they want.

In the end, the referendum result was a victory for the government. After two stormy months, including a police spying scandal and a private sector general strike, Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen can relax again.

On March 12, Rasmussen's Social Democrats did much better than expected in the general elections, and Rasmussen was re-elected as Prime Minister.

A few weeks later, a majority of workers rejected the bargaining agreement proposed by union leadership and the employers federation, and went on strike demanding a full sixth week of paid holiday.

After 10 days, the government together with the right wing opposition stopped the strike by law. Despite widespread union disagreement, no serious action was taken in response – mainly because of the absence of a left current inside the unions.

However, new political challenges will come up. The government does not have a parliamentary majority, and will have to negotiate every piece of legislation with one or other of the opposition parties. The European question will remain at the centre of the political debate.

New referendums are likely, if the government attempts to abandon Danish exceptions from the Maastricht treaty (in particular the country's non-participation in the common currency), or if future EU summits propose further reactionary integration measures. ★

## EuroMarch summer meeting

Halkidiki, Greece, August 31 to September 6.

The Greek EuroMarch Committee is sponsoring this first meeting as a unique opportunity for 100 Greek and 100 west European leftist trade union and social movement leaders to exchange and discuss their unique experiences in relation to the main problems that social movements and trade unions are facing today in western Europe. We also plan to give a special Balkan dimension to our initiative, by inviting 50 representatives of trade unions and social movements from the region.

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The summer meeting will take place at the Akti Philippelon hotel, Halkidiki 60 km from Thessaloniki airport. To register contact the Greek organisers at 62 Academias Street, 5th floor, Athens 10679, Greece. Tel.: (+30 1) 3619513 Fax: 3619610. E-mail <rozamif@internet.gr>

A deposit of 50% of accommodation costs should be sent to account number 101-002101-763243, Alpha Credit Bank, 40 Stadiou Street, 10252 Athens, Greece. Fax: 32 65 438. Do so before 1 July to ensure you have a place! Accommodation, including breakfast, costs 5,850 Drs./US\$19 per person per day in a twin-bed room, 4,750 Drs./\$17 in a triple room. Camping space costs \$4 per person per day.

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# Who speaks for unhappy voters?

The parliamentary election on May 6 showed that Dutch voters are increasingly frustrated with the social situation.

The challenge – the duty – facing the two left-of-labour parties is to translate the leftwards electoral shift into a leftwards policy shift, by building and strengthening the social movements.

**John Cozijn**

Both left-of-Labour parties doubled their parliamentary representation. The Green Left (a regroupment of ex-CPers, Christian radicals and pacifist socialists) now has 11 deputies (up from five), and the ex-Maoist Socialist Party (SP) have five (up from three).

This leftward shift is no big surprise. Opinion polls have been showing for a long time that most Dutch people want a more progressive approach to social issues. Holland's much-proclaimed economic "success" is based on the generalisation of part time work, and a punishing pace of work that causes more work-related sickness than anywhere else in the European Union.

There is an increasingly visible polarisation between rich and poor, and general dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of the health care system, and school class size.

The electoral success of the Green Left and the SP is the result of their campaigning for a more social approach. Although the Green Left has a somewhat yuppie image in the Dutch media, its support was definitely not limited to the more educated and better paid sections of society. Over 60% of Green Left voters have a low or middle-range income, and only 14% have a university education. About 36% have a high-school diploma, while the remaining 50% have only a basic education.

The growth in the parliamentary representation of the ex-Maoist Socialist Party is certainly a positive sign. The SP is the only party in the Dutch parliament to speak out clearly against neoliberalism and the free-market economy.

## More social policies?

Under pressure from the SP and Green Left, Labour made more and more social promises during the campaign. Lodewijk de Waal, president of the largest trade-union federation, the FNV, said on election day: 'We have kept track of (Labour leader and prime minister Wim) Kok's

promises, and they take up nine pages.' Few of these promises are expected to form part of the new government's programme.

In order to produce the social policies that the Dutch electorate voted for, Labour should have broken with its coalition partners, the left-liberal D66 and right-wing VVD. Instead, Kok has already decided to build a new version of the outgoing "Purple" (social-liberal) coalition, though he promises that "Purple II" will have "a more social face".

But Purple II will be born under a difficult star. Dir. Wellink of the Dutch central bank remarked told the business-oriented daily *NRC Handelsblad*, 'Sooner or later a recession is on the way.' After years of growth, it will be sooner rather than later; accelerated by the Asian crisis and the millennium problem with computer systems. The introduction of the euro will also cause uncertainty among consumers. Continuing corporate restructuring will lead to increasing unemployment, and in order to meet the European Union's Stability Pact requirements (bringing the budget deficit down to zero), cuts will have to be continued.

## Gains for the right, too

There exists a floating block of 20-30% of the Dutch electorate. A party with an appealing theme and leader can quickly make use of or abuse of it. That party could be on the left, but it could also be the VVD, the major winner of these elections on the right side of the spectrum.

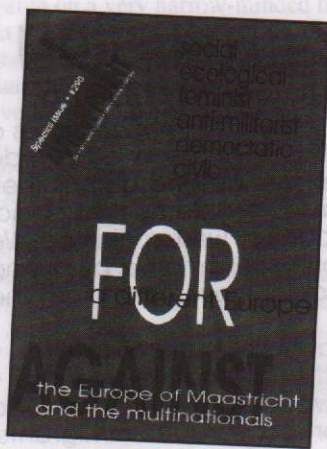
While fascist leader Hans Janmaat and his two fascist fellow-MPs were swept out of parliament by these elections, immigration will remain an important theme in Dutch politics: the VVD will make sure of that. VVD leader Frits Bolkestein has already announced that he will demand stringent measures in the coalition negotiations. According to recent polls there is still a constituency for this sort of demagoguery: 33% of the voters think immigration is an important issue, as opposed to 19% in a September 1997 poll. The VVD's racist rhetoric against immigrants and nationalist approach to the euro mean that depending on circumstances it could develop in a direction reminiscent of the British Conservatives in Thatcher's time.

## Time to work together

The Green Left and SP in particular now have a great responsibility, and not just in parliament. With a very detailed coalition programme there will be little space for a 'constructive' opposition (as Green Left leader Rösenmoller puts it) or the 'successful' opposition promised by SP leader Marijnissen. Broad social movements must be built. The social will to do it exists. The self-confidence and positive results gained from the health sector strikes just before the elections should also increase readiness for action.

The FNV trade union federation has taken a stand for higher social benefits and other measures to improve the situation of people on welfare. But if economic growth slows, the government will hardly be inclined to institute these improvements. The problems in health care and education are far from solved. The Green Left, SP and unions will have to take on their responsibilities. The Green Left will have to be less 'constructive' and more activist. And the SP will have to learn to work with others on common campaigns.

Despite the leftwards shift in these elections, there is still no major polarisation or radicalisation, let alone a debate about long-term alternatives. If the Dutch left wants to hold on to this election result and get something out of it, then broad, common campaigns as well as consistent parliamentary opposition are necessary. Without that pressure the Labour Party will once more give in too much to the VVD and D66. ★



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# Permanent instability

Turkey's military puppetmasters are trying to liquidate the Islamist Prosperity Party, marginalise former Prime Minister Tançu Çiller, force through a privatisation and liberalisation policy, and maintain the illusion of European-style parliamentary democracy. **Erdal Tan** thinks the strain is too great for the generals to succeed.

The government coalition between the Islamist *Refah* (Prosperity) Party (RP) and Tançu Çiller's right-wing nationalist DYP was organised in 1996. This unnatural union was the result of a very particular political conjuncture, following splits in traditional left and right-wing parties. Facing legal threats as a result of numerous corruption scandals, Ms. Çiller sought the support of the Islamist party as a way of eluding the parliamentary commission investigating her. But this coalition foundered a year later, under the unremitting pressure of a vast inter-class alliance made up of the bourgeoisie, the unions, the media, intellectuals, opposition parties, and the army.

In mid-June 1997, RP leader and Prime Minister Erbakan resigned, after army threats of a coup d'état. Then he attempted to reconstruct the same coalition, this time under Çiller's leadership: he hoped that the elevation of a "secular" person to the Prime Minister's post would calm things down. But the manoeuvre failed, when President Demirel asked conservative opposition leader Mesut Yılmaz (president of the centre-right wing ANAP party) to form a new government.

The new governing coalition comprised ANAP, the DSP (left national-populists) and the DTP (a party made up of 40 dissident parliamentary deputies from Çiller's DYP), supported from outside by the CHP (social-democrats). In effect, the Turkish establishment was able to bring down the Islamist Prime Minister through a parliamentary manoeuvre, rather than a coup d'état.

## The military guiding hand

Underneath the surface, the new coalition was firmly under the control of the military, which was determined to restructure Turkish politics in order to avoid another extremist adventure like the islamonationalist *Refah*-Çiller coalition. They wanted to "break" the RP and put it out of commission (at least for a time). The generals also wanted to punish Çiller severely, so as to discourage other right-

wing leaders from attempting a similar *rapprochement* with the Islamist forces.

The army's plan was simple: a "completely legal" process at the Constitutional Court would order the dissolution of the RP for "threatening the non-confessional nature of the Turkish Republic." The two conservative parties, ANAP and the DYP, would reunite, after the elimination of Çiller, who would be required by the High Court to answer for her (real) acts of misappropriation. There would also be changes in the electoral laws (to prevent any future "surprises" like the earlier election of RP mayors in Istanbul and Ankara). Whichever party was in power would implement further economic restructuring as demanded by the bourgeoisie (privatisation, monetary reform, cuts in social security, austerity programs to bring down inflation, which has reached almost 100%, and so on). And measures would be taken against "Islamist media outlets and businesses", to weaken the power of the growing Islamist bourgeoisie.

## A more stable form of government

Having prepared this scenario, the generals hoped new elections would recreate political stability, with a re-unified right in power, a re-unified left in opposition, or vice-versa. A weaker and more moderate new Islamist party might even be tolerated, to make everything look more presentable. Everything would be done within the framework of the bourgeois parliamentary system, and would uphold the proper legal forms of the Rule of Law, to the greater credit of the Turkish Republic.



This simplistic military logic was very quickly confronted with the hard realities of the political world. Any fragile minority coalition, whose popular support derives only from a "fear of fundamentalism" would have enormous difficulty in imposing the unpopular programme of political, social, and economic restructuring which the generals wanted.

And the "external support" which the social democratic CHP offered the Yılmaz government strongly resembled the support provided by the hangman's rope: social-democrat leader Baykal, who dreams of becoming the "Turkish Tony Blair", refused to become the fourth partner in the coalition, preferring to style himself as a "responsible" opposition party, ready to exploit each government weak spot so he can project himself as the better alternative come the next elections.

As a result, apart from some educational reforms (increasing compulsory schooling to 8 years, and the elimination of many Islamic secondary schools), the balance sheet of the first seven months of Mesut Yılmaz's government is a huge fiasco, since he has not been able to meet a single one of the intended goals. [This article was written in February 1998]

## The economic impasse

The new coalition's three-year plan for "anti-inflation initiatives" has not been given a green light by the IMF, which (rightly) doubts the stability of the government. The IMF wants to impose a more radical one-year plan, with much greater political and social costs. Yılmaz is refu-



sing to implement this plan, which would mean political suicide, unless the IMF will give him 15 billion dollars to relieve the social pressures. Negotiations are under way, but after the Korean pay-out, it is not at all clear that the IMF will meet the Turkish demands. The question of inflation is of the greatest importance for the Turkish economy, which has seen more than 10 years of chronic structural inflation ranging from 70% to the current rate of almost 100%.

### The cost of the "dirty war"

Unlike Southeast Asia, where it is the private sector which convulsed, in Turkey the problem is the State budget deficit. The state has had to enter into permanent debt (with usurious interest rates) in order to cover this deficit, caused in part by infrastructure projects and energy costs, but more importantly by the need to finance the "dirty war" against the Kurds and the cost of modernising the armed forces. The price of public corruption is not low, either.

In contrast, the private sector has been able to maintain a certain dynamism, which is the basis for a stable annual growth-rate of 6-7%. This dynamism is based on many things: the low cost of labour, new markets in Russia (where Turkish companies are very active, especially in construction) and in Central Asia, a domestic market clamouring for new goods and an important tourist trade (with Russian and Israeli visitors increasingly common). To this must be added the existence of a "parallel economy", with many small, export-oriented companies, particularly in textiles). This unregistered sector of the economy pays neither

taxes nor social security (with the tacit connivance of the State). The "parallel economy" also includes drug profits from the Southeast, as well as money laundering, which permits a new phase of "capital accumulation". All of this has allowed the Turkish economy to overcome the shock of tariff union with Europe (nearly 60% of Turkey's foreign trade is with the European Union) despite the fact that the EU has not kept its word about monetary compensation for the tariff union. The three billion dollars in question is being blocked by a Greek veto. Meanwhile, the trade deficit with the EU has begun to increase to dangerous levels.

### The end of the line

This system has reached its limits. The rich rail against the "traitorous competition" of the "unregistered" sector and demand monetary and structural reforms. Each modest attempt to create such monetary reforms (to assess even minimal taxes from the "unregistered" sector, rentier capital and stock market speculators) has immediately faced a mini-capital strike, enough of a signal to make the government back off.

Unless the government can obtain large foreign credits, which would allow it to retire some of the domestic debt, it has no other solution but to lighten (again) the pockets of the working class. High price inflation, but much slower wage increases, means that the State already levies a second tax on workers, who are already footing the largest part of the economic bill. If that isn't enough, the government can always eviscerate the public sector through privatisation. This would probably create 600,000 more unemployed, in a

country where there is no unemployment compensation! If that still isn't enough, the government can eliminate social security, pointing at the huge deficit in that sector (since neither the private sector nor the public - in fact, especially the public sector - pay their share).

### A rotting system

But these policies carry the risk of a social explosion: the splits in and erosion of the centre parties and the solid 20% Islamist voting bloc (along with the 10% support for parties of the nationalist extreme right and the 4% Kurdish nationalist vote) show the heavy political price already paid, since more than a third of the electorate has already turned to "radical" parties and become alienated from "parties within the system". Another problem is the creation of "mafias", since the informal sector obviously gives rise to its own "police" and "justice," since it cannot squeeze profit out of the official system the way the legal bourgeoisie can. These groups are making inroads on classical political parties.

Under this pressure the legal system begins to falter: the police, which already tend to accrue power on their own, are more and more corrupt and implicated in dirty politics; political life is regularly shaken by scandals and corruption which undermine the legitimacy of traditional parties and destabilise the State. All of this has begun to escalate out of the control of the central State, which had originally turned a blind eye on what was happening, having itself often used the services of thugs linked to the fascist movement (the "grey wolves") to organise the illegal aspects of the struggle against the far-left in the 1970s and the struggle against the Kurd nationalists in the 1980s and 1990s.

### Susurluk bad luck

It was the Susurluk Affair which revealed to the public the extent of this gang and mafia phenomenon: in November 1996, a traffic accident in Susurluk (a small town in western Anatolia) revealed a very curious car-pool: a fascist mafioso, a deputy from the Çiller party (the head of a Kurdish clan), and a chief of police. The incident unleashed a very powerful social protest movement, the "one minute of darkness for complete enlightenment" campaign, begun by the far-left ÖDP, then taken up by the powerful bourgeois media and discreetly encouraged by the army (which wanted to bring the police to heel, as well as sever their connection to the islamo-nationalist Refah-Çiller coalition which was in power at the time).

This illustrates why the establishment has brought forward the need for "structural reforms" in the economic and political arenas. These reforms are trumpeted by the most conscious sectors of the bourgeoisie, which understands perfectly the dangers posed by the current situation to its own domination and to the stability of the country. But the weakening of the traditional political parties, which has escaped

the bourgeoisie's control, has made them incapable of responding to these demands. The army, acting as the guarantor of the bourgeois State and its institutions, has subordinated itself for the political parties, to try and push forward these reforms. They have done this with the support of important sections of the population, who feel that the army is the only defence against the "fundamentalist menace".

### Political impasse

But a classic *coup d'état* would foreclose the international projects dear to the Turkish bourgeoisie's heart: integration in the EU, and imperialist recognition as a "respectable regional power". It could also offend the democratic sensibilities of secular urban layers, moving them to withdraw their support. The army has therefore had to act through a civilian intermediary, the parties of the current coalition. It guides them discreetly, through backstage whispers or coded declarations in the press.

In any case, the current institutional set-up offers them an excellent means by which to dominate politically. When they rewrote the constitution after their 1980 military coup, the generals gave the National Security Council the right to make "recommendations" to the government. Few prime ministers, particularly Turkish ones, would ignore a "recommendation" from a body which includes the President, key ministers of state and leaders of the General Staff.

The army has been able to bring its weight to bear on foreign policy, most obviously in Turkey's decision to form a strategic and military alliance with Israel against Iran (because of the latter's support for Islamic fundamentalists) and against Syria (because of its support for the armed guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK)).

Influencing domestic policy has proved more complicated. Hesitating to launch itself into unpopular radical reforms, the Yılmaz government has tried to gain time by "talking big". Yılmaz had intended to call elections earlier this year, once his major rivals (the RP and Çiller) were eliminated due to legal entanglements. He hoped to win the elections by "default".

But he managed to irritate the bourgeoisie, which wants him to increase the pace of "reforms", and the military, which feared losing control of events and which had no confidence in the ability of civilians to keep fundamentalists "in check" anyway, especially in an election period (when the danger of compromise is always present).

### Something for everyone...

The Yılmaz government was promptly called to order, and forced to reconsider its strategy. The three coalition leaders met at the beginning of January, during which they undertook a series of reforms and denied all rumours concerning elections being held in Spring (although they did

not rule out elections before the end of the year, if the RP has indeed been dissolved and Çiller has been knocked out of the race by then).

These "10 radical decisions" of the government can be placed in two categories: democratisation (abolishing the death penalty, reform of Article 8 of the law against terrorism, extension of free speech, legalising unions for public sector employees, improvements in human rights) and economic restructuring (monetary reform, reforms in social security, administrative reform, privatisation, and a more thoroughgoing reform of education).

### Authoritarian "democracy"

But it is clear that these two strands of reform are contradictory. Turkish democracy is like the Loch Ness monster. Everyone talks about it, but no one has ever seen it. And it is impossible to carry out an austerity program in a country like Turkey, which has little room to manoeuvre in terms of social policies, at the same time as strengthening democracy, especially in a context of political instability. On the contrary, only an authoritarian structure which can muzzle any eventual social reaction, can create the political conditions necessary to put such a plan into practice. And it is towards this that the Turkish government looks.

This being the case, however, the promises of democratisation (and the few more or less cosmetic measures which may actually result) were not made in vain. Because, just as the economic side of the government's plan is intended to win back the confidence of the bourgeoisie, the democratisation policies are a nod aimed not only at the West, but at the secular and social-democratic intelligentsia, in the hope of gaining their support at a moment when relations are strained with the Islamists and the Çiller clan.

In fact, during the 1960s and 1970s, it was the left which dominated the social opposition to the regime, and the State called on the Islamists and the fascists to counter the far left, seen as the "main threat" (especially during the Cold War with the USSR as a neighbour). Since the 1980 *coup d'état* decimated the left, those who oppose the regime have turned more towards the Islamists or, in the Kurdish region, the PKK.

Today, the military identifies the Islamists and the PKK as the "main threats" (with, once again, support from neighbours; in this case, Iran, Syria, and Greece, along with the chaos in northern Iraq). The far-right mafia is also categorised (for the first time) as a threat.

On the other hand, social-democrats, yesterday charged with opening the door to communism, are today a cherished ally (especially useful in relations with Europe). Even a section of the bourgeoisie is ready to support them (after all, haven't the western social-democracies proven that they are perfectly capable of managing austerity while soothing the working class?). The far left (like the ÖDP) is too

weak to be seen as a "threat", and is therefore more or less tolerated.

### Gone - on paper, but not in practice

The disbanding of the RP by the Constitutional Court after an eight-month trial (to observe all the proper forms) had as its goal the destruction of one of the two "threats" established by the generals.

This is not, however, the first time a party has been dissolved in Turkey. Leaving aside the "great radical purge" after the 1980 coup, a number of Marxist or Kurdish nationalist parties have been outlawed in the last three decades, without the Islamists (or Çiller) reacting in the slightest.

Today, of course, they bellow in outrage in "the name of democracy". Çiller and Erbakan now want to be seen as democratic victims of the military. But it was with Çiller's consent that the Kurdish nationalist HEP was dissolved four years ago. And several Kurdish deputies were imprisoned only after the RP voted to remove their parliamentary immunity. Their tardy and self-serving conversion to democracy is hardly credible now.

The RP no longer officially exists, but its apparatus is still the strongest in the country. It had 200,000 members, four million "supporters", and six million voters. Erbakan and six of his friends have lost their mandate, but there are still 144 Islamist deputies in Parliament, and many large city administrations, including Istanbul and Ankara, where the RP mayors still rule, but as "independents". Since such a strong social and political movement cannot be legally wished out of existence, it is clear that the Islamist factor will continue to be felt in the Turkish political scene.

But an Algerian outcome is not likely. Any possible actions taken by the isolated and fringe elements of the RP will be viciously repressed. Besides, Erbakan took the verdict in a dignified fashion, calling on his supporters to remain calm, and announcing that he would lodge an appeal at the European Court of Human Rights.

The Islamists will now try to find a legal and political strategy which will allow them to create a new party, just as they did after the dissolution of their two previous organisations, in 1971 and in 1981. But the task will not be an easy one: the Constitution calls for the immediate dissolution of "any party avowed as the successor to an outlawed party". They will have to be cautious, and keep their noses clean.

In addition, internal dissent is tearing the party apart. There are tensions between younger members (like Tayyip Erdoğan, the mayor of Istanbul, and Erbakan's probably successor, and the ageing old guard, Erbakan's generation, which has been active for the last thirty years).

The weeks and months to come will give rise to a series of agitations and political tensions, with a polarisation between, on one side the Islamists and the "nationalist-mafia" Çiller group, and on the other a "secular bloc" around the government, the media, and the Army. ★

# Our daily bread – today!

The Brazilian countryside is entering the first phase of low-intensity warfare. **Raúl Zibechi** outlines the development of the dynamic Landless Movement (MST) and the resistance of the landlords

Since the 1995 election of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the Landless Movement (MST) has stepped up its land occupations in numerous states in a sort of permanent offensive, with numerous mobilisations and ever larger local, state-wide and national marches. The biggest national mobilisation, the march to Brasilia in April 1997, brought out more than 50,000 people and was supported by 80% of the population. The landowners, for their part, are stepping up the formation of militia and hire gunmen with the support, active or passive, of the police and the army. The creation of private police forces is one more step in the militarisation of the conflict over land and agrarian reform.

The Landless Movement is the most powerful social movement in Latin America, both in terms of the number of people involved and lending it their support, as well as in terms of its organisational strength and its ability to place the issues of land, repression and social justice at the centre of the political stage.

At present there are about 140,000 families (almost a million people) living and producing on hundreds of land settlements across more than twenty states. These cover more than seven million hectares won from the Brazilian state or taken back from the landowners. Here the peasants produce collectively or on individual plots. They live as a community, electing their own authorities, setting up schools and health centres, forming production and distribution co-operatives. They also contribute to the broader movement, taking part in its mobilisations and contributing a percentage of the settlement's income.

However, the spearhead of the MST is made up of the 40 thousand families (a quarter of a million people) camped out on land occupations, who together with the new families setting up new settlements, wage a sort of peaceful warfare which involves a state of permanent mobilisation. They occupy lands and resist until they are evicted, they hold marches which sometimes reach as far as the state capital, and they create, in the camps they set up along the roadsides or in front of the land they intend to occupy, a solid popular organisation.

The camps are the MST's most important schools, the main entrance into a movement which is made up of both poor landless peasants and the urban unemployed who find in the camps and settlements a source of hope which helps them overcome hunger and give meaning to their lives. It's a way of escaping from social exclusion too. In short, the MST is a successful movement.

## Five centuries of land struggles

The movement's own propaganda insists that in Brazil, as in the rest of the continent, the struggle of the land "began the very day the conquistadors set foot in our country". In the time of the colony, this took the form of revolts by the black slaves, who occupied remote lands to found free territories – "quilombos" – to which the slave masters had no access and from which they therefore could not force them to return to the plantations.

From the middle of the last century the revolts in the countryside took on a messianic character. The most important of these, Canudos, in Bahia state, involved thousands of poor peasants and was only defeated after a brutal massacre. At the beginning of this century, the "social banditry" led by Lampiao swept the North East for more than twenty years. Between 1940 and 1955 there were five peasant revolts in the states of Minas Gerais, Maranhao, Goias, Parana, and Sao Paulo. These struggles were localised but very radical, and of such a strength that on various occasions the peasants seized control of large towns and set up their own local authorities.

The most recent phase of the land struggle came just before the 1964 coup. Associations of agricultural workers were set up in the central zone under the influence of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB); in about 1954, the Peasant Leagues were created on the sugar plantations of Pernambuco; and in the south of the country many land occupations were led by the Movement of Landless Farmers, obtaining from the state government – headed at that time by Leonel Brizola – the expropriation of various large ranches.

Although the MST connects with this centuries-long tradition of agrarian struggle, its immediate origins lie in the changes promoted by the military government which came to power in 1964. Severe repression broke up all organisation in the countryside. The main leaders were imprisoned, murdered or forced into exile. In organisational terms there was a sharp break.

On the other hand, the economic model imposed led to the disappearance of



hundreds of thousands of small-holdings growing coffee, cotton and subsistence crops. Both the old landowners and the new agribusinesses benefited from this massive expulsion of peasants from their land, especially in the southern and central states. For the peasants, the process of land concentration was an earthquake of similar magnitude to the conquest of the indigenous people centuries earlier. The net result is that half the land suitable for agriculture is in the hands of 1% of the landowners, 80% of the land lies unused, and 65% of the population suffers from varying levels of malnutrition. The rural exodus has swept 30 million people off the land in less than 20 years – it's the biggest migration in human history in such a short period of time. Those who have lost their land, together with those who never had any, number 12 million. This is the basis of the MST's support.

During that first period there were spontaneous and barely organised forms of resistance to the evictions from the land. The conflicts multiplied. Crops and peasant homesteads were burnt and there were hundreds of victims. As a result, the landless peasantry grew more radical.

The situation began to change around 1975, thanks to the work of the Catholic Church in support of the poor peasants with the creation of the Pastoral Commission for Land (CPT). (In Brazil, the church was one of the pillars of resistance to the dictatorship). It was during this period that many of Brazil's 80,000 church base communities were set up.

From 1978 on there were a series of mass occupations in Rio Grande do Sul, one of regions most affected by the explosive concentration of land ownership. They were isolated actions, with no contact between the different occupations. In 1981 the CPT began to co-ordinate meetings between the different leaders, both at regional and state levels. This co-ordination grew stronger, and led in January 1984 to the first National Meeting of the Landless, in Parana state.

## A movement of movements

In a way, the MST is a response by the peasants to modernisation and neo-liberalism. The situation is similar to that in other parts of Latin America, from Peru to Chiapas; the opening up of markets, the extension of export-oriented monoculture,





and the resulting destabilisation of traditional relationships (through rural exodus and massive unemployment) has generated an explosive situation just as the opening up of democracy was allowing greater possibilities of organising and mobilising.

The Landless Movement represents a coming together of different local struggles and different traditions - from the strong Christian presence to the contribution of Communist activists and members of the Workers Party (PT) - and a convergence of both rural and urban trade unionism. Some leaders insist the MST is the "articulation of new movements which were already developing locally".

As far as social composition is concerned, it's also possible to detect a number of tendencies coming together. There are peasants who rent their land as sharecroppers, dividing the harvest in previously agreed proportions with the landowner; there are small tenant farmers, who agree a fixed cash price with the owner; and there are the "squatter-farmers" who work land they have occupied - from the state or from individuals - and who have no legal title to the land (this situation is very common in the "agricultural frontier"). In addition to these situations, which combine typically capitalist forms with others belonging to pre-capitalist agrarian traditions, there are also the landless rural labourers and day-labourers, some of whom are smallholders who sell their labour on a seasonal basis, and poor peasants who own less than five hectares of land.

Another group participating in the movement includes the children of farmers, who may have as much as fifty hectares of land, but for whom this is not enough to ensure their subsistence. All these categories together make up almost five million families of landless rural workers.

Once the movement was up and running, little by little urban groups began to join in, especially Christian activists who had been working in the CPT, an organisa-

tion which exerted a decisive influence over both the formation of the movement and its methods and style of work.

In its first congresses the MST set itself three main objectives: the struggle for land as a means to survive (the economic objective), agrarian reform (social and political), and the struggle for a more just society through radical political change. Joao Pedro Stedile, the MST's main leader, sees it as "a mass social movement", which combines "three complementary characteristics: the trade union, the popular and the political", and which "doesn't fit into the traditional categories used to describe social movements". On the other hand, he insists, nor is it "a peasant political party in disguise".<sup>1</sup>

Before getting as far as occupying an idle estate, the landless peasants begin to organise themselves to negotiate with the authorities. In fact in most cases an occupation only comes after a long process of strengthening the group leading the occupation, and after a clear refusal by the authorities to expropriate the plots demanded by the peasants. The day the occupation is to happen is usually kept secret. Large numbers of peasants and the rural unemployed begin to arrive, sometimes from quite distant municipalities. The occupation itself is a mixture of festive spirit and open challenge, blended according to the particular style of the movement's activists.

Once the land has been occupied, the peasants improvise plastic shelters and if the subsequent expulsion is some days in coming, they begin to cultivate the land. The purpose of the occupation is to call the attention of society, to make visible a conflict which usually remains hidden, and at the same to demonstrate the existence of large quantities of idle land whilst there are plenty of hands ready to make it produce. Usually they do not demand the land they occupy but rather that the authorities find land elsewhere in the state on which to settle them. As far as methods of struggle are concerned, they use peaceful civil disobedience, which has led many legal experts to recognise the justice of

these occupations. Recently even the Vatican has pointed out the need for agrarian reform. The Landless do not attack the landowners; they intimidate them through force of numbers, and by a show of agricultural implements. When attacked by the ranchers, the police or the army, they defend themselves. Very occasionally they do so with firearms, but they do not initiate such confrontations.

Often the evictions are violent, but there is always collective resistance. In the last 15 years more than a thousand of the Landless have died, most of them at the hands of landowners and their hired guns. This form of "peaceful" resistance has enabled them to demonstrate before public opinion the violence of the big landholdings and the State, and has allowed them to win broad support amongst people in the major cities. Over the years the MST has been able to show that land occupations are just as legitimate as the strikes organised by urban workers.

### A different kind of organisation

The occupation, which usually lasts only a few days, is the starting point of the struggle. Once evicted the Landless set up a permanent camp beside the highway, often on land assigned to them by the government or municipality, or by some supportive landowner. These camps are like complete townships under canvas, usually housing a population of between five and eight hundred people, but sometimes sheltering more than two thousand. On average the camps last for about four years, until all those taking part have been given land. Many leave in the early months - a sort of self-selection process which leaves only the most determined in the camp.

Supported by MST leaders and activists, the camp members develop an intensive programme of organisation and education. On the strength of this depends not only the immediate survival of the group, but also the success of their land settlement in the future.

As for public activities aimed at winning land and mobilising public opinion, the camp members arrange endless meetings with the authorities, marches that last up to two weeks and cover a thousand or more kilometres, as well as hunger strikes, fasts and sit-ins in town squares. Sometimes they occupy other lands or support occupations in neighbouring states and municipalities. Of all these activities, perhaps the marches are the most important, for at one and the same time they raise the morale of the camp members, spread their message and involve other sectors in their struggle, and also put to the test the strength of their own organisation.

The camp's role as school is the most important aspect of this whole process. The peasants who come to the movement tend to be heavily influenced by individualism; they have little or no schooling, are often illiterate, and the level of their political understanding and preparedness for collective life is either very low or

## ★ Brazil

non-existent. The organisation [is based on] what are called "grass-roots cells", which include from ten to thirty families, almost always coming from the same municipality. It's worth mentioning here the considerable geographical heterogeneity of those who join the movement. Many of them have travelled thousands of kilometres to join a camp, leaving their whole life behind them.

In each grass-roots cell the camp tasks are organised: cooking, health and hygiene, sports, collecting firewood and so on. For each task one person is elected to take responsibility, and this person co-ordinates with others to form camp "service teams" who meet every day to plan their work. There is also a "general co-ordinating body" which agrees the teams' tasks and also organises the camp's external work as well as its links with other social movements and institutions.

The camp's sovereign body is the General Assembly in which all camp members take part. This meets periodically and elects the General Co-ordinating Body in which the representatives of the grass-roots cells may also take part. This is a relatively flexible body which may be more or less complicated depending on the size of the camp. The aim of the MST leaders and activists is to promote the broadest possible degree of democracy and participation in the decision-making process, as well as a collective leadership with a clear division of responsibilities. In other words they seek an organisation which is prepared both for struggle and for self-education and collective growth.

The general assembly debates and votes on a set of internal rules which are strictly enforced and, if necessary, penalties are applied which range from a reprimand to expulsion from the camp. Alcohol consumption is restricted and fights are forbidden. So is aggressive behaviour towards women and children, including within the family. The role of women in the camps, in the settlements and throughout the MST is decisive. One of the things which strikes the visitor is the number of women – especially young women – in positions of responsibility, including in the movement's leading bodies. Their growing importance is remarkable – they are the cement which binds the community together and generates the community spirit. On their shoulders rest the main tasks of daily subsistence – they play a decisive role in health and food provision, in education and animation – and the struggle itself.

### Developing a "people's market"

The settlements are different. On the one hand they are one of the movement's main conquests - they show that land reform is possible and can be successful. For the peasants, the settlements achieved – after years of struggle leading to the purchase of a large landholding by the state, or the handing-over of public lands - mean first and foremost leaving hunger behind them. Although they are usually poor



quality lands, exhausted by bad management and the over-use of chemical pesticides, all the settlements produce infinitely more than the same land produced in the hands of the ranch-owner. The settlers' efforts are enormous, for the land they get has no infrastructure and they have great difficulty obtaining supplies, credit and technical assistance. Some certainly give up, but the desertion rate is well below that regarded as acceptable by the FAO - it reaches just 15%.

The MST promotes co-operation between the settlers. Nonetheless, the majority prefer to cultivate their own individual plots along with their family. Even in these cases, many join together to buy machinery and inputs, or to acquire means of transport and storage. It's the first step in the formation of co-operatives which permit the collective planning of production and the distribution of the benefits according to the amount of work contributed. Many of the settlements try to diversify production as far as possible, to avoid dependence on a single crop and to farm without using chemicals. The production co-operatives and associations have formed a confederation of settlers' co-ops (*Concrab*), as a way of assuring technical support, jointly negotiating resources and putting their product on the market under more favourable conditions.

By 1997, after five years devoted to improving the co-operatives' work, the MST magazine *Sim Terra* (*Landless*) reported the existence of 24 agricultural production co-ops, 18 co-ops supplying services, two credit co-ops, and eight Central Agrarian Reform Co-ops, at state level, as well as more than 400 local co-operative associations with 11,000 members. The MST's agricultural co-

operative sector organises 30,000 families, and influences another 70,000.

The movement is committed to differentiating its co-operatives, in terms of their democratic structure and participative practice, from the traditional ones. One of the many leaflets on this subject distributed by the MST says that such an alternative form of co-operation "implies the appropriation of management tools by the workers and the need to begin developing a people's market linking the countryside and the town".

It's true that many settlements lapse into individualism and localism and that mobilising the settlers is much more difficult than it was during the camp phase. Nonetheless the majority of the settlements organise as communities, sharing their work, their leisure and their support for other landless peasants struggling for agrarian reform. To this end, when their economic situation allows, the settlements release some activists from their duties so that they can support peasants occupying new lands and supply food to the camps engaged in struggle.

Education is a very important area - the MST leaders call it "strategic". There is a clear awareness that education and training are a key to making the settlements viable, continuing the struggle for land reform, developing new forms of living and collaborating together, and "in order to exercise citizen rights and participate democratically in the political life of the country and in the struggle for a new man in a democratic and socialist society".<sup>2</sup> The MST talks of the need "to occupy also the under-utilised ranches of knowledge", and has published dozens of pamphlets and books to serve the educational needs of the camps and settlements.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

## Populism in Latin America

Adolfo Gilly, Helena Hirata, Carlos M. Vilas and the PRT (Argentina) [40 pages]

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The aim is to manage to train teachers from amongst the landless themselves so that the community can assume the task of education as its own. There is an effort, at one and the same time, to reduce illiteracy and achieve minimal levels of schooling, teach the adults to read and write using the methods of Paulo Freire, acquire technical training that can eliminate dependency on university-educated specialists, and provide political education that will allow the maximum number of members to play their part.

Lastly, the MST has as school to train leaders which operates in Santa Catarina state, through which hundreds of leaders pass every year. In this way the movement manages to give political and ideological coherence to its cadre, increase the autonomy and capacity for initiative of the local and regional leaderships, and limit the influence of the political parties. Somehow, and it's worth repeating this, the MST has developed an organisation which draws on different traditions, both in its structure and its approach. Amongst the rank and file it forms communities in which you can detect traces of both rural tradition and grass-roots Christianity – perhaps the strongest influence at this level – as well as syndicalism. Higher up the organisation, the influence of the organisational styles of left-wing parties is stronger, particularly the Leninist tradition, mixed with the Christian style emanating from the CPT (the Catholic Church's Pastoral Commission on Land Questions).

### A new world in the heart of the old one

After the MST's 1995 Congress, attended by more than 5,000 delegates, the MST launched a big offensive across the country, which is still going on. In 1995 there were 92 occupations; in 1996 more than twice that number. But the most important thing is that the movement, up until then heavily concentrated in the south and centre of the country, managed to extend its occupations to the north and north-east, the bastions of the right and the most reactionary landowners. More recently it began to organise big occupations near to the cities in line with the strategy adopted by the Congress and the MST's leadership.

The massacres in Para State, like that at Eldorado de Carajas, where 19 members of the Landless Movement were murdered on 19 April 1996, are a consequence of the movement's unstoppable growth in this area. One fact which demonstrates the strength of the MST is the existence of 200 camps and 300 settlements in Para State. In other words in one of the big landowners' strongest bases they have managed to recover hundreds of thousands of hectares for the poor peasants.

On the other hand, the Landless Movement has been the only sector in Brazil capable of confronting the neoliberal policies of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, as was shown by the march to

Brasilia in 1997. During the election campaign land reform was one of the most widely debated issues, and the president-to-be promised to "expropriate" land for 280,000 families. In fact so far only 15,000 have been given land to settle, although the government insists that 60,000 peasants have been settled. It is no accident that the MST stepped up its activity just when there appeared a government that tried to show a "progressive" face in order to demobilise the movement.



In fact the MST put itself at the head of the deep social discontent in the countryside and, given the vacillations (some even speak of betrayal) of the unions and the PT, it converted itself into the main opposition to Brazilian neoliberalism. This has two positive consequences for the MST: whilst popular support grew for land reform and the actions of the Landless, so too did the movement's autonomy from all political parties and institutions. As a result, the MST is beginning to link up with sections of the urban poor (shanty-town dwellers, unemployed, the homeless, etc.), which could lead to an alliance of the "less", the excluded, those who do not count, either for the trade union bureaucracy or for the electoral left.

But beyond the particular situation of the rural workers' movement in Brazil today, the MST represents something new and different amongst the continent's social movements. It shares some of its characteristics with indigenous-peasant movements, like those in Ecuador and in Chiapas. The influence of the MST goes beyond frontiers, so that for example, the peasants of Paraguay see the Brazilian movement as a solid point of reference, as do other rural organisations across the continent.

Like all social movements, the Landless Movement combines aspects which negate capitalist society with others which reproduce it. It is impossible for a movement to represent an absolute negation, a total inversion, of the society in which it is immersed. The traces are often to be found in the organisational structure (which fosters the emergence of layers of leaders with their own interests

and separated from the rank and file), in the more or less vertical styles of leadership, in the infrequent and feeble participation of the members, in internal authoritarianism, in the organisational culture promoted by an organisation or party, its relationship with other institutions, and a whole list of etceteras.

The peculiarity of the MST is that it embodies a much deeper rupture with existing society than other movements. Or to put it another way, the new has more weight than the old. Thus:

As James Petras has pointed out, the MST belongs to a new generation of social movements on the continent which are characterised by the emergence of a new leadership not divorced from the daily reality of their rank and file, relatively free from bureaucracy, whose morality is based on staying close to the lifestyles of the bulk of the movement, and which are participative, internationalist, democratic and concerned with political and technical education.<sup>3</sup>

They are focused on direct, extra-parliamentary action, are not trapped in networks of institutions, are autonomous from the parties and trade unions, but also from the intellectuals and the universities. Autonomy is one of their identifying marks.

They take up the themes of the so-called new social movements - the women's question, ecology, and [indigenous] identity.

What they lack in resources they make up in 'mystique', fostering a new subjectivity which emphasises links of fraternity and solidarity over and above the functional ones typical of more traditional associations.<sup>4</sup> The human being, the new man and woman, are the fundamental concern.

In the case of the MST, we are dealing with an integrated movement which addresses all aspects of life - political, social, cultural, economic, religious, etc. No one aspect is separated from the others. This characteristic is very clear in the camps and in many of the settlements. The central role given to education is reminiscent of the early workers' movement; it's one of the few movements which educates its members according to its own methods, different from and opposed to those of the bourgeoisie. It's for this reason, and not just because of the strategic objectives set, which makes this a movement outside the logic of reproduction of the system - it goes far beyond partial demands and is preparing, even if unintentionally, the foundations of a new society.

The MST is carrying out agrarian reform from below and creating a new society within the old one. So far all agrarian reforms have been decided by those in power, either by a revolutionary regime or by a progressive one. Both the camps and the settlements are spaces in which the dominant codes are inverted and a counter-power is set in motion. The aim is not only to appropriate the means of

production, but also to produce a new subjectivity, new links between human beings and "an individual and collective re-appropriation of the production of subjectivity".\*5\* Without this combination of practices we cannot even dream of a transition to socialism.

To do this it bases itself on two main instruments: the land, that is a physical space in which, by appropriating the means of production and reproduction, new human relations can be created; and ethics - the members and activists of the MST do not confine their activity to a few hours a day, but rather organise their lives in a different way, according to different criteria, amongst which the main element is fraternity and solidarity.

Certainly in the MST there are also traces of the old political culture, which are reflected in organisational styles similar to those which predominate in the parties of the left. This is most visible in the higher levels of leadership. I do not know how conscious of this they are, but I do know that there is a desire on the part of the leaders not to repeat the kinds of behaviour which lead to the formation of a bureaucracy. They are also alert to the danger of co-optation of the settlements by the dominant system which surrounds them and seeks to suffocate them.

There are no antidotes to such temptations. The future of the movement will depend on the level of social struggle reached both in the countryside and in the towns. But in spite of these reservations, the fact is that the most important social movement on the continent is revealing a significant new way for working people to win space for themselves, and in the process it is illuminating what might be new forms of transition to a more just society. ★

Raúl Zibechi is a journalist with the Uruguayan weekly, *Brecha*. He is also the author of *Los Arroyos Cuando Baján, los desafíos del Zapatismo* (When the Streams Flow Down, the Zapatista challenge) Editorial Nordan, Montevideo 1995, and *La Revuelta Juvenil de los 90*, Montevideo 1997.

#### Notes

1. Frei Sergio and Joao Pedro Stédile, *A Luta pela Terra no Brasil*, Pagina Aberta 1993, pp 37-39. All the previous quotations are from the same text.
2. Frei Sergio & Joao Pedro Stédile, op cit. P.91
3. James Petras, 'La izquierda devuelve el golpe', *Ajoblanco*, Barcelona 1997.
4. See Frei Betto y Leonardo Boff, *Mística y espiritualidad*, Trotta, Madrid 1996.
5. Félix Guattari, *Caosmosis*, Manantial, Buenos Aires 1996. The author believes that "the future of the third world lies firstly in its capacity to relearn its own processes of subjectivity in the context of a social fabric in the process of desertification". As an example he cites Brazil where there have been "interesting attempts at the recomposition of social practices". p. 163.

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## General Motors paralysed by selective strike "Enough is enough" for US auto workers

In a protest against "downsizing" and "outsourcing," ten thousand strikers have shut down General Motor's North American operations. Dianne Feeley reports from Flint, Michigan.

Over 3,400 GM workers at the Flint, Michigan Metal Fabricating Facility, a stamping plant, walked out June 5. The United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 659 voted to strike last January over health and safety issues, but the International union authorised the action only after management removed new dies (used to form parts for GM's 1999 pickup trucks) from the plant. They were spirited out over a traditional three-day holiday weekend and sent to GM's Mansfield, Ohio plant; at least one was damaged in transit.

Officials from the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW), when faced with a similar problem last year, occupied GM's Oshawa, Ontario plant, disassembling and hiding the dies before negotiating with the company. But in Flint union officials at the local and regional level did not take preemptive action. Two days before the strike, however, when management attempted to move racks holding metal parts, 300 workers—including workers from nearby plants—blocked the loaded trucks. Later the racks were removed by train.

As soon as the dies were brought to Mansfield, the union local got in touch with Local 659. But they didn't launch a sympathy strike because under the UAW/GM contract those are outlawed. The UAW International leadership could have authorised them to strike on the basis of ongoing health and safety violations, shutting down the Ohio plant, but that didn't happen either.

The GM publicity department has been working overtime to portray the workers in the stamping plant as unreasonable and unproductive. In many plants it has been a long-standing tradition for operators to be assigned a daily quota. They (not assembly line workers) are then free to meet it however they decide. Some choose to work at a furious pace and finish early while others finish only by the end of the shift. As long as the operator meets the quota, the job is satisfactorily completed. But in the "lean" system of today's factory, foreman are demanding continuous production. Workers on one shift are supposed to compete with workers from another shift — and all are encouraged to surpass yesterday's production. This intensification of the work day—and the attempts by workers to maintain the set quota—is one of the subtexts of the struggle at the stamping plant.

On June 11 5,800 members of UAW Local 651, who work across town at Delphi East, a major GM parts factory that produces fuel pumps, speedometers and other small parts, went out on strike.

By the end of June twenty-six out of the twenty-nine GM assembly plants in

North America and over 100 parts plants—including independent parts suppliers that produce for GM—were shut down. About 150,000 workers are out—but only 9,300 are on strike. This phenomenon of a relatively small strike having a domino effect on the entire GM North American chain is the result of "just-in-time" production, which reduces inventories to a minimum. The shutdown is now costing GM \$75m. a day in lost profits.

The two strikes in Flint, home of the 1937 sit-down that led to the formation of the UAW, are over work rules, health and safety issues and job security due to outsourcing and subcontracting. These are not only local issues, but challenge the reorganisation of work at the end of the 20th century. GM backed out of its commitment to invest \$300 million in the metal-stamping factory because it claims the union did not go along with changing work rules to increase productivity (i.e. speed up and downsizing).

Local 659 strikers on the picket line say GM is "comparing apples to oranges" in its productivity measurements. They point out that their plant makes larger parts—hoods, fenders and engine cradles for light trucks—while other stamping plants make much smaller ones. They cite the number of concessions they have made to management over the past decade, and point out that these have not resulted in job security, but only more demands by GM. As one striker put it, "After ten years of 'co-operation' the company decided that we still weren't giving enough, so they felt justified in ignoring the contract and written promises we had spent almost two years negotiating."

Michael Moore's 1989 satirical film, *Roger and Me*, documented the plant closings that devastated Flint throughout the '80s. But despite losing nearly 50,000 jobs over the last twenty years, Flint is still home to 33,000 GM workers and remains the largest concentration of GM workers in the world. While GM accounts for 65% of the local economy, announced plant closings and downsizing could decrease that to 35% within five years.

Flint strikers feel that they have to take a stand now, before the jobs have left. Strikers complain that the union had gone too far in co-operating with management, and management had not lived up to their end of the bargain.

This is not the 1970s or '80s, when the US economy was in a downturn. Indeed, GM is sitting on more money than they know what to do with. And yet, the company is demanding more downsizing and out-sourcing. The response has been a

wave of strikes. During 1996-97 GM lost \$1.5bn. from nine strikes, most of them demanding the hiring of more workers.

Last year GM surprised everyone by announcing that it would close the Buick City Assembly plant in Flint after producing the current (1999) model. It revealed to GM workers that there is no relationship between quality and productivity on the one hand and job security on the other. Buick City's LeSabre has received numerous quality awards as the best-built domestic vehicle and as one of the top quality-built vehicles in the world. And Buick City is the second-most productive of GM's assembly plants.

Simultaneous with GM's announced closing of Buick City, the corporation confirmed the closing of its Flint-based Chevy V-8 engine plant. The two plants scheduled for shutdown employ over 5,000 workers. GM promised to build a new engine plant somewhere in the greater-Flint area — but it will employ only 800. Nonetheless city and state governments have put together a tax abatement package that would subsidise GM by \$153,000 per job. (GM already enjoys \$2 billion in tax benefits from Flint-area communities.)

GM claims it must eliminate jobs, change work rules and have the flexibility to send work to outside suppliers. It has delayed investments in many U.S. plants and demanded that the union accept the combination of job classifications. This means that each worker must be able to perform a variety of jobs, wherever and whenever necessary. This more "flexible" and lean workforce is also forced to put in more overtime.

GM is also selling off some of its parts plants. The second striking Flint plant is part of the Delphi division of GM, the world's largest auto parts producer, with sales of \$27.8 billion in 1997. Delphi is currently merging with another GM division, Delco Electronics. Delphi-Delco will become a "smart systems" operation for electronic engine controls, as well as steering and braking systems. These are high-tech, computer driven and highly profitable lines. Whatever parts of Delphi don't meet that definition may be sold off or closed.

By shedding much of its parts work, GM will be able to buy in its parts from non-unionised factories. Only 10% of U.S. workers in the parts supply industry are unionised. They make less than 70% of the UAW-organized workers' \$20 an hour, with considerably fewer benefits. Additionally, most UAW workers have a local contract which specifies the maximum number of daily hours a worker is forced to work and regulates the number of Saturdays required. Non-union plants have more flexibility regarding hours. (Though even UAW-organized auto workers are forced to work more than fifty hours a week!)

In Brazil, GM has used outside suppliers to assemble various components for new cars before delivering them, along the lines of Japanese manufacturing practices. Instead of sending specifications,

gas gauges, radios and glove boxes, the suppliers send partially assembled dashboards. This decreases the amount of floor space necessary in an assembly plant and reduces the number of assembly workers—what Wall Street calls "efficiency."

Since the strike began the *New York Times* reported that GM has been quietly talking to the UAW about building a Brazilian-style factory in the United States. These factories have an "L" or "T" shape, to accommodate the large number of loading docks needed to deal with the large number of outside suppliers.

In 1997 GM made \$6.7 billion. Over the last two years it paid the top executives more than \$22 million in cash plus an additional \$35m. in stock options. Jack Smith, GM chairman, president and chief executive officer, received a 26% increase in combined salary and bonus in 1997—\$4.3m., up from \$3.4m. in 1996. But judging by Wall Street's measure, GM's profit margin is a narrow 3% and its market share stands at 32%—down from the 50% it held in the 1970s. In comparison with Ford, GM is less "efficient." And although it has trimmed 212,000 jobs over the last dozen years, according to Wall Street, GM still has "too many workers and factories."

Wall Street is encouraging GM to stand tough in its negotiations with the UAW. During the first week of the strike two internal GM memos were leaked to the press, obviously to undermine the confidence of the union. They revealed GM's plans to double the number of vehicles assembled in Mexico over the next four years, and shut down by 2003 the Lordstown, Ohio assembly plant, which employees 6,300 workers.

Yet the strikers feel confident. Although the UAW has not called for mass picketing or organised support rallies, contingents of auto workers from various locals as well as other trade unionists drop by to help with the picketing. And the number of cars and trucks honking support to the strikers makes it clear that Flint supports the workers' struggle—even if the town's mayor does not.

By the end of the first quarter of 1998 GM was sitting on \$13.6 billion in cash. With all that money it still cannot afford to delay the 1999 launch of the Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra full-size pickup trucks. Pickups account for 15% of GM's North American sales with each pickup a clear \$7,000 profit. A quick start-up is needed in order to race past Ford and regain first place in market share.

Since the beginning of the year GM and its suppliers have been working to get all the bugs out of the new-model changeovers. This means that the Oshawa, Ontario truck plant has been running at full speed—about sixty trucks per hour—by early November, with Pontiac, Michigan and Wayne, Indiana assembly plants following closely behind. Crippling GM's North American production will disrupt what *Business Week* described as "A Launch GM Can't Afford To Blow."

The UAW strikers should be in a position of maximum power. Except that the union has undermined its position all along by its "partnership" programs with GM, Ford and Chrysler. *Business Week* asks why GM and the UAW can't work out the same sort of deal that Ford has with the union. According to *Business Week*, a UAW vice president meets with Ford Chairman Alexander J. Trotman for breakfast every other month and there are "no nasty surprises." When Ford closed its Thunderbird factory in Ohio last year, laying off 2,500 workers, the UAW didn't protest. Instead the union negotiated a \$45,000 bonus for those workers transferring to a Kentucky pickup truck plant.

Much of Ford and Chrysler's downsizing took place during the 1980s and, as a result, Ford has surpassed GM's productivity—33.3 vehicles per blue-collar worker, compared to GM's 27.3. It's also true that the UAW's GM department does not have the cosy, high-level relationship with the company that the Ford department does. But it would be folly to believe that "labour peace" has been achieved just because Ford and Chrysler workers haven't gone out on strike.

It's clear that the fight over downsizing at GM is occurring in a tight labour market, where the corporation pays management outrageous salaries and nickel-and-dimes those who do the work. It's an explosive situation as industry analysts discuss GM's need to shed an estimated 30,000 workers. Yet the advice that the industry analysts trot out is that GM can only meet its objective if it negotiates a new, more co-operative pact with the union.

For GM workers the answer is quite different. It involves rejecting "partnership" deals with the corporations, fighting against the deterioration of working conditions on the shop floor and opposing forced overtime. It means developing a strategy to organise the unorganised parts sector. It means developing close ties with the CAW in Canada and the struggling independent unions in Mexico to work out a common strategy. It means replacing union officials who may sound militant but end up taking the bosses' side.

Obviously a strike settlement in Flint will not resolve all of the problems the strike has so effectively highlighted. But just as in the case of the UPS strike, people all around the country are seeing a diverse group of working people on strike—African Americans, Latinos, whites, men and women. The strikers explain their issues to reporters, obviously knowledgeable about the processes of their jobs and willing to fight back against injustice. Some are third generation autoworkers with a sense of how the union was built in Flint. They talk about corporate greed. They don't yet articulate demands for a shorter work week at no loss in pay. Instead, they stress that they want to ensure good jobs for their children. ★

Dianne Feeley is a member of Solidarity. Sources for this article include *Business Week*, *Labor Notes*, *New York Times* and *The Voice of New Directions*.

# South Africa's financial fragility

South African economist **Patrick Bond** says it's time to get off the global financial roller coaster. Or at least help to straighten the tracks.

As the Asian economic miracle fades into the distance, even economists of the international Establishment are seeking intellectual answers outside the 1980s-90s "Washington Consensus." Politicians can't be too far behind.

Writing in South Africa's *Business Day* on 5 June, Greta Steyn damns the vast waste of Reserve Bank money – and dramatic rise in SA foreign debt – involved in trying to stabilise the rand during the last days of May. Not to mention short-term interest rate increases which bring the real (after-inflation) Bank Rate to over 12%, compared to a target of 4% in the government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy. ("Reserve Bank turfs out the textbook," *Business Day*, 5 June)

This bought only a brief respite. Rentier power is so immense that last week US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin proclaimed, "I think it would be fair to say that the situation facing the world today with respect to financial stability is unprecedented."

But it is not unprecedented. Behind the still unfolding crisis are two phenomena that periodically haunt the world economy: overproduction and bouts of financial speculation.



Together these amplify what political economists term "uneven development": the incessant zig-zag race of capital across the globe in search of an investment portfolio that balances returns and risks. The most recent arc of emerging market destruction caused by hot money in-and-outflows ran from Mexico (1994) to Brazil (1995), South Africa (1996), Eastern Europe (early 1997), Southeast Asia (late 1997, 1998) and Russia (1998).

How did the markets spin so badly out of control? At root, by virtue of their tendency to overproduction (supplying goods and services beyond the scope of existing markets), highly capitalised businesses typically find themselves with profit streams that cannot earn a high enough rate of return if reinvested in yet more production. Hence they seek out, and often generate, speculative outlets.

Historically, systematic overproduction and speculative bubbling have occur-

red in "long waves" — roughly from 1825-45, 1872-92, 1929-48, and 1973-present. In each case, roughly 30% of the world's nation-states, not to mention vast commercial fortunes and yet more human capital, ended up effectively bankrupt, before global economic growth recovered.

In the grand rethink now underway about controlling such excesses, South Africa remains sadly behind the times. Commitment to fiscal and monetary austerity seems unshaken amongst both economic policy makers and leaders of the financial community, encouraged by publications like *Business Day*.

How else does one read *Business Day's* editorial analysis when the Asian crisis broke last year? "Some good could come to SA from east Asia's misfortune if it drives home the message that any deviation from sound economic policies carries a cost down the road. Finance Minister Trevor Manuel and Reserve Bank governor Chris Stals could usefully cite east Asia as they resist calls from business, unions and other interest groups to stray from fiscal and monetary discipline." ("Lessons from Asia," 5 September 1997)

Nine months later, observes Steyn, "One can only wonder what trade unionists and leftwing members of the African National Congress will make of the punishment the markets have doled out to Finance Minister Trevor Manuel and Stals for ostensibly perfect policies."

East Asian lessons are not for the left end of public opinion alone: voices of resistance to austerity and deflation are emerging across the spectrum. Steyn mentions investor George Soros's "concerns last year that the capitalist system was failing the developing world because financial markets 'overshot.'"

Soros has been joined, more recently, by World Bank Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz, Harvard Institute for International Development head Jeffrey Sachs, former US Secretary of the Treasury and State George Schultz (who now calls for the IMF to be shut down), former US Secretary of Labour Robert Reich, and Henry Kissinger. Just a few of the famous names whose censure of orthodox IMF logic gets passing mention in the South African press.

In January, Stiglitz delivered a paper which pointed out that "the policies advanced by the Washington Consensus are hardly complete and sometimes misguided... the advocates of privatization overestimated the benefits of privatization and underestimated the costs... [below 40% per year] there is no evidence that inflation is costly... The focus on freeing

up markets, in the case of financial market liberalisation, may actually have had a perverse effect, contributing to macro-instability through weakening of the financial sector."

It was perverse – though judged "sound" at the time – to let South Africa's financial reforms precede adjustment and growth, by dropping the finrand in early 1995, which sucked in hot money that year but subsequently caused a 30% currency crash. Sachs sums up the rigid commitment to fiscal and monetary strategies succinctly: "The situation is out of hand... Without wider professional debate, the IMF has decided to impose a severe macroeconomic contraction on top of the market panic already roiling these [Asian] economies."

The costs of contraction are severe both to the peoples whose unemployment rates are doubling overnight while the social wage plummets, and to the global economy, which is witnessing dramatic trade disequilibrium as more countries – including even the Japanese – begin to degenerate into competitive currency devaluations. SA's export-led growth strategy will collapse if present price trends continue.

Logically, there is also a growing political backlash. In the US, a peculiar left-right congressional alliance has so far blocked \$18 billion in IMF funding this year and stalled both the Multilateral

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Agreement on Investment and President Clinton's "fast-track" trade negotiating authority.

If the Washington Consensus is in obvious retreat intellectually, practically and politically, are we at the stage where in polite company we can finally discuss strategies concerned less with inflation, and more with full employment? Less aimed at international competitiveness at all costs, more at meeting basic needs through intelligent subsidies and cross-subsidies? Less with selling the family silver, more with strategic state interventions in areas such as infrastructure, housing and land reform where markets are failing?

A worrying sign is the limited discourse on defending the rand from hot money speculators. For Steyn, "There were three courses of action open to the Bank when the rand came under pressure... 1) leave the rand to find its own level... 2) hike interest rates to squeeze arbitrage gaps and draw in new foreign capital... 3) intervene in the currency market."

But a fourth option -- capital and exchange controls to guard against speculators while reflation begins -- is now more sensible than ever. After the 1994-95 Mexican meltdown, the IMF acknowledged the desirability of controls on inward financial flows (these have also protected Chile and Taiwan). Moreover, as recently as 1990, 35 countries (including South Africa) had a dual exchange rate (although the *apartheid*-era Reserve Bank did not seem to take enforcement seriously). At the global scale, Nobel Laureate James Tobin has proposed a 0.5% tax on buying and selling foreign exchange.

By all accounts, the biggest threat to global economic order is now the spectre of deflation. In a few months, South Africans taking leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement and a Director's chair at the IMF/World Bank (while retaining the presidency of UNCTAD) should be working feverishly against global financial fragility, in part by promoting the Tobin Tax, global reregulation of finance, and Third World debt cancellation (including *apartheid* debt).

The historic opportunity for South African global leadership at the end of the 1990s parallels the opportunities for domestic reform witnessed at the decade's outset. The question, then and now is, will we grasp the moment? ★

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## Catalan Communists regroup

The two main groups of Catalan Communists have joined with Trotskyists, anarchists, radicals and independents in a new organisation, expected to be a close, but sovereign partner of the all-state United Left, headed by Julio Anguita.

### Brian Anglo

The founding conference at the end of May defined Esquerra Unida i Alternativa (EUiA - United and Alternative Left) as a "Catalan, republican, federal, anti-capitalist, internationalist and pro-solidarity political and social movement". It is open to left political parties, organisations and individuals, although membership is always on an individual basis. The 800 delegates represented more than 4,000 members.

Catalonia, a country of six million inhabitants, forming the North-Eastern corner of the Spanish State, regained its autonomous government after the death of the dictator General Franco in 1975. But the *Generalitat* has always been headed by a bourgeois nationalist coalition. As everywhere else in the Spanish State over the last 20 years, working people in Catalonia have suffered defeat after defeat, retreat after retreat.

The backbone of EUiA is made up of two dissident groups with roots in the strong Communist tradition in Catalonia. The Catalan Communist Party (PCC) was formed in the early 80s in opposition to the "EuroCommunist" development of the PSUC, the "official" Communist Party.

The second ex-CP group, *PSUC viu* (Living PSUC) was created under a different name about a year ago, in protest at the rightward drift of the Communist-led coalition *Iniciativa per Catalunya* (IpC). Rafael Ribó and other PSUC leaders had "mothballed" the Communist

component of the coalition, preventing left opposition to their increasingly social democratic policies.

The final split came when IU formally broke its links with IpC in protest at its consistently different political line, and open opposition to IU policy.

The Fourth Internationalist group *Col.lectiu per una Esquerra Alternativa*, (Collective for an Alternative Left) has earned widespread recognition for its commitment and contribution to the project well beyond its numerical strength. From the beginning, the *Col.lectiu*, which is based in the SEAT car plant and among public sector workers, saw this project as a chance to create a broad-based organisation capable of beginning to turn the tide. FI supporters won ten of the 90 National Committee seats elected at the conference. Because of the parity list system, half of these are women.

The conference confirmed a number of trends already visible on the Catalan left. Although there is broad programmatic agreement (at least on paper), the various components of the new coalition have different conceptions of the relationship the Catalan coalition should have with IU. This debate influenced the choice of name, with members of all groups (except *PSUC viu*) divided between supporters of "United and Alternative Left," and "Left Unity," (preferred by those who wanted a greater distance from the Madrid-based United Left.) With only 27 votes dividing the two names, the autonomy of the new organisation remains a prickly question.

There is also a (justified) groundswell of dissatisfaction, cutting across almost all groups, with behind the scenes dealing and a lack of transparency in the way negotiations with IU were handled.

Aware of potential difficulties, the FI group has insisted on an internal regime based on democracy and participation, an approach to political differences that seeks consensus or compromise wherever possible, the presence of minority currents and independents on all leadership bodies. Most importantly, the *Col.lectiu* has argued that the new coalition must set itself the task of re-weaving the social fabric of resistance and re-mobilising the workers, unemployed, marginalised, excluded and downtrodden, rather than confining itself to electoral politics. ★



# The new New Order

The Chinese character for 'crisis' has two meanings: danger and opportunity. The pro-democracy movement in Indonesia today is confronted by both of these possibilities. The regime has accepted a reconfiguration of power between the different components of the dominant coalition, without altering the existing relations of inequality and injustice. But they have not yet defeated or co-opted the democracy movement, or quietened the masses.

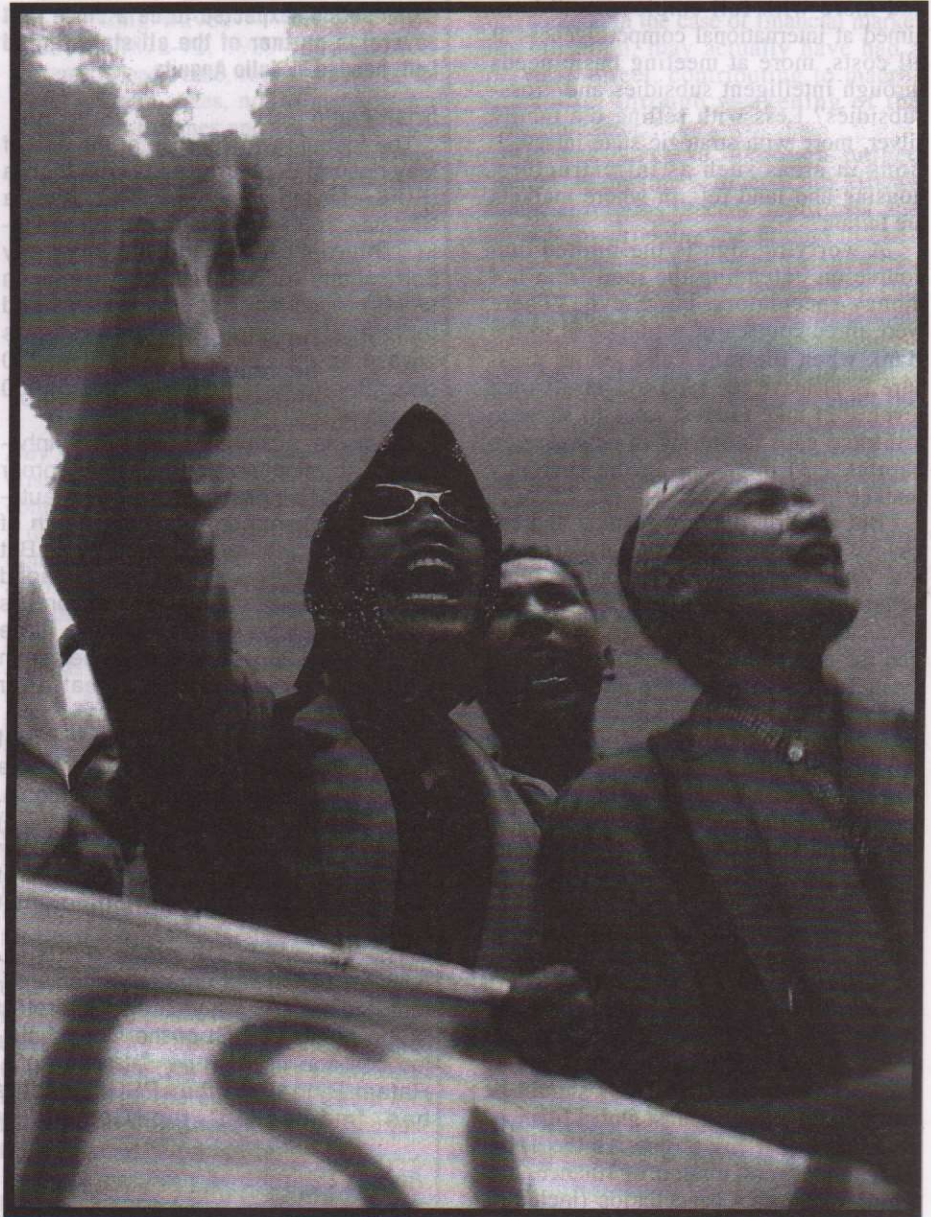
## B. Skanthakumar

The announcement of Suharto's resignation on May 21st caused an outpouring of uncontrollable tears and laughter from the students in occupation of the Parliament complex in Jakarta who had led the struggle against the despised dictator. They were rightly celebrating the end of a 32 year era which had lasted longer than their entire lives. For many of them Suharto's removal is the necessary first step to rehabilitate the economy and introduce genuine multi-party democracy.

Yet on the streets of the capital and in other major cities and towns the elation was muted, as disappointment mounted over the anointing of heir-apparent B. J. Habibie in Suharto's place, in a transparent bid by the New Order regime to sacrifice Suharto to save itself. The radical left Peoples Democratic Party (PRD) noted, "the resignation of Suharto is for minimising the damage of the people's resistance and curbing the resistance itself."

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the celebrated author of the *Buru Quartet* (still banned, along with his other books), and jailed for fourteen years, cautioned, "If the young are satisfied with the resignation of Suharto and their own brief appearance on the political stage, then they are fooling themselves. The objective of the reform movement, I hope, is not simply to reshuffle members of Suharto's 'New Order', but to replace the 'New Order' itself" (*Washington Post*, 7th June 1998).

As long as Habibie is in office he will protect his patron and the former 'First Family' from trial for their crimes against the people and embezzlement of Indonesia's wealth. That was part of the deal with Suharto and Habibie knows too well that he would be next in line for investigation and prosecution. However he had been left in no doubt as to the strength of popular feeling and pronounced in his



maiden address to the nation "have grasped the people's aspirations for a government which is clean and free of inefficiency, corruption, collusion and nepotism."

In fact, the Habibie clan has commercial interests in chemicals, construction, real estate, transport and communications and more. At the centre of their vast holdings is the Timsco Group, a conglomerate controlling more than 80 companies. The new president cannot afford any serious crackdown on corruption.

What ABRI (the Armed Forces) and others in the regime now hope is that the mass movement and its rallying cry for *reformasi* (reformation) will lose momentum and fragment, as its unifying objective of the removal of the ex-President has been achieved.

## Limited reforms

Meanwhile the reforming measures announced by the new administration have been too few and not substantial enough. Each can be reversed with little effort. Habibie has released some political prisoners such as Mughtar Pakpahan of the independent SBSI (Indonesian Prosperity Workers Union) and Sri Bintang Pamungkas of the PUDI (Indonesian United Democratic Party). The SBSI is to be legalised. So, presumably, will other independent trade unions. International Labour Organisation Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association has been ratified though it remains to be translated into domestic law nor will it automatically influence state policy. The critical news-magazines, *Editor* and *Tempo* and tabloid



*Detik* which were banned in 1994 have been unbanned and can now freely circulate again. The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), a free media union, has also been assured recognition.

Many new political parties have been formed. These include parties with roots in the pre-New Order political system which were disbanded or forced to merge into the two state tolerated opposition parties, the PPP (United Development Party) and the PDI (Indonesian Democratic Party).

Even the ruling GOLKAR party, created by the regime, has announced that its affiliates or factions will be free to form separate parties. Two such splits have already taken place.

Meanwhile new interest groups which were not directly represented in the old system have also announced their intention to form parties including an ethnic Chinese Party seeking fair treatment and an end to cultural and political discrimination. The Chinese, mainly Christian minority has at the receiving end of popular anger against the regime in recent months.

Muchtar Pakpahan has proposed a National Workers Party "based on workers, small business people, intellectuals and progressive NGOs." He has invited PDI leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia's first post-independence president Sukarno, to be its Chairperson.

The regime is unlikely to release East Timorese leader Xanana Gusmao, PRD Chairperson Budiman Sudjatmiko and his jailed comrades, West Papuan resistance leader Jacob Rumbiak, or the remaining 200 ex-PKI (Communist Party) prisoners, including 72 year old Colonel Abdul Latief, jailed 32 years ago. The release of the remaining political prisoners remains a focus for international solidarity campaigns.

There are limits to the new free political competition. The PKI will not be unbanned, it has been announced, and there is no mention of unbanning the PRD. New parties must adhere to the state ideology of *Pancasila* (consensus and moderation) and respect the 1945 Constitution.

Habibie's new Cabinet was a disappointment even to moderate opposition leaders like Amien Rais who had joined with the military and others in appealing to the pro-democratic movement to give the government a breathing space and the opportunity to fulfil its commitment to reform.

While removing the most obnoxious members of the previous Cabinet, Suharto's daughter 'Tutut' and his billionaire chum 'Bob' Hasan, Habibie has retained some of the unsavoury figures from the past.

For the first time representatives of the other two legal parties the PPP and the PDI (the Suryadi faction, not Megawati supporters) have been drawn in. As have Habibie's acolytes in the Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI). And the usual phalanx from the state sponsored GOLKAR party and the Armed Forces (ABRI).

The key figures in the new cabinet are Defence Minister and ABRI Commander-

in-Chief General Wiranto, and Coordinating Minister for Finance and the Economy, Ginanjar Kartasasmita. Apparently feelers were put out to some opposition figures notably Amien Rais to join the Cabinet but the latter recognised that this would in effect co-opt and compromise him and intelligently refused.

Habibie hasn't had it all his way. He began by stating that he would complete his predecessor's term in office. In other words that the first free elections would not be before 2003. Quite soon he realised the depth of feeling against him and was forced to backtrack. The present timetable promises general elections to the Peoples Consultative Assembly (MPR) by the middle of 1999, which will then convene between November 1999 and January 2000 and elect a new President and Vice-President.

Habibie has also promised a limit of two five year spells in Presidential office. Suharto was "re-elected" this March for his seventh consecutive Presidential term, and assured the assembled gathering that 'God Willing' he would see them again in 2003!

For many people, the promised transition period is too long. The longer Habibie and his crew are in office, the more difficult it will be to remove them!

The Presidency will remain the most powerful branch of government, and it will not be directly elected by the people. The 1945 Constitution and the office of the President were imposed by President Sukarno to strengthen himself and weaken competing centres of power. Under Suharto the dictatorial features of this

a 'caretaker' government which will be charged with overseeing general elections in 1999 and running the country until then.

Emil Salim, a recent anti-Suharto convert and formerly his Environment Minister, has supported the idea of summoning an extraordinary session of the MPR which would have the authority to nominate individuals to form this interim administration. Needless to say, the MPR is packed with Suharto's appointees and those who have benefited the most from his regime.

By-passing the MPR altogether but with even more frightening consequences is the proposal by the left-wing academic and former student activist Arief Budiman for a Presidium drawn from the military, technocracy and civilians (in that order). The presence of the military "is needed to guard political stability"; economists and technocrats "respected by international financial institutions" must be present "to restore the confidence of our businessmen" and civilians from the reform movement too who "showed their skill in leading and gaining trust from the masses" (*SiaR*, May 25th 1998).

Budiman makes no mention of any form of participation in it or of its accountability to the working class, peasantry and poor: the overwhelming majority of the Indonesian people. Thus an unelected, undemocratic, unaccountable and unrepresentative body would be charged with preparing for free elections when "everything is in order". An indeterminate moment left to the benevolence of the Presidium or its



system became clearer. Liberal bourgeois democratic reforms would aim to weaken the Presidential office, strengthen the legislature and entrench safeguards on judicial independence as well as introduce the direct election by universal suffrage of the President.

### Saving the system

In a period when the present government lacks legitimacy and is perceived as hostage to Suharto's clique and the military, many doubt its sincerity and ability to prepare the country for the transition from dictatorship to democracy. There is talk of replacing the Habibie administration with

most powerful actors.

The outlawed Peoples Democratic Party has condemned the elitist nature of this institution, calling instead for a Council "which works based on the aspiration from below" (see *International Viewpoint* #301 June 1998).

Democracy, PRD leaders reminded Budiman "depends on the system, not on the individuals, nor does it depend on the personnel who will lead the government. A democratic system can lead an authoritarian person to bow before democratic norms. While an authoritarian system can allow opportunities for a democratic leader to deviate and become an autocrat"



PRD President Budiman Sujatmiko is in the second year of his 13 year conviction for "subversion." The new regime has made no promise to release him, or the other radical left political prisoners.

(PRD statement, 27th May 1998).

The PRD have recommended instead that an Independent Peoples Council be formed which is based on Peoples Councils established all the way from village, campus, work-place level, through regional and up to national level. Such a body would be far more representative of Indonesian society and its ideologies and aspirations and better able to lead the transitional process.

### Illusions in the IMF

The pro-democracy movement is also divided in its analysis of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) 'bail-out' of the economy. The IMF has a rigid set of neo-classical textbook prescriptions it applies whenever it intervenes regardless of the specificity's of an economy and external (world market) considerations. Among these are deflationary budgets including slashing of subsidies and social spending, high interest rates, dismantling of state monopolies, removal of exchange controls and price ceilings, ease of entry (and exit)



FRELITIN representative Mari Alkatiri is still in exile, struggling for the independence of East Timor, occupied by Indonesia since 1975

for foreign investment capital and privatisation. In October 1997 the Indonesian government entered into discussions with the IMF for loans to salvage the sinking economy. The IMF's conditions would have forced the Suharto regime to dismantle the dirigiste economy and threaten the vested interests which have profited by it, including Suharto's own family and close friends.

Most people were unaware of the precise details of the confrontations between Suharto and the IMF, as the international bankers tried to impose their discipline on the economy and the old dictator squirmed his way out of it. As a result, many Indonesians concluded that, since the IMF was openly contemptuous of Suharto's economic policies, it must be an opponent of Suharto, who was an opponent of the pro-democracy movement. According to the theory that "my enemy's enemy is my friend," this made the IMF into an ally for the popular movement! Or so they thought.

With Suharto above control and censure from the people, and when the pro-democracy movement was numerically weak, politically fragmented and ranged against the repressive armoury of the state, many oppositionists thought that only an external agency like the IMF would have the power to remove Suharto or at least pave the conditions for his removal.

Few worried that these international financial institutions, these new found 'friends of the people' had spent the last thirty-two years financing and enriching Suharto, his family and cronies and collaborating in the 'New Order' regime's repression and brutality against the people.

Some oppositionists argued that the implementation of IMF conditions would loosen, if not sever, the grip of crony capitalists over the economy. Goenawan Mohamad, editor of *Tempo* and long-time thorn in the side of the regime, admitted that the effects of the structural adjustment package would be painful on the poor, but argued that "from the hardship it entails, the people will have a better argument to urgently demand more symmetry of sacrifice from the powers that be. In short, the IMF deal is a sad, if not 'evil' necessity" (*Jakarta Post*, 25th January 1998).

He gave little evidence that the regime could be compelled to "sacrifice" along with its subjects, or be compelled to clean up its act when it could so easily pass on those costs to the people, or indeed why the poor should make sacrifices to solve an economic crisis caused by the mismanagement and greed of the ruling class!

Now that Suharto has finally gone, middle class elements still advocate the embrace of the IMF plan, theorising naively that economic liberalisation and political liberalisation are as inseparable as Siamese twins: a 'free market' economy providing the best condition for a plural, competitive electoral system. Never mind that the IMF plan, supposedly designed to

relieve Indonesia's debt burden, will actually increase it by a further US\$43 billion!

Latin American and recent Asian experience shows, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that it is the working class, peasantry and the poor – and not the capitalist class – which bear the burden of debt and the cost of its servicing. The IMF will be bailing-out international banks and the Indonesian rich, not the people.

### East Timor

While many in the pro-democracy movement were pressing for Habibie's immediate resignation, some East Timorese activists disagreed. They argued that a weak leader in Jakarta, eager to gain some international support, might concede to a referendum on self-determination - even if the timetable stretched to ten years. These hopes have been shattered in recent weeks as Habibie confirmed that all he will offer is "special status" for East Timor, meaning official sanction for customary laws but no real autonomy. Habibie even made the ridiculous proposal to trade the freedom of FRETILIN leader Xanana Gusmao against international recognition of Indonesia's claim to East Timor, which it has illegally occupied since 1975.

Gusmao himself has repeatedly said that his liberty is secondary to that of the Maubere people. While there could be negotiation over the duration of the transition from colonial outpost to independent statehood, a referendum on self-determination is non-negotiable the resistance insists. The struggle for East Timorese independence and the struggle for democratisation and social transformation in Indonesia is an indivisible, dual struggle.

The victories of the pro-democracy movement across Indonesia have obviously inspired the East Timorese people too. In their capital, Dili, there have been daily protests, demonstrations and speak-outs calling for an end to Indonesian rule, for a referendum and the freedom of their political prisoners. There is a new optimism and courage as banners are openly unfurled with pro-independence slogans and as people take to the streets protesting the killing of an unarmed boy by the Indonesian military, a risk they would not have taken just a few short weeks ago.

In small towns across Indonesia there are daily protests, occupations and strikes. Issues range from specific demands like the removal and investigation of corrupt and nepotistic local officials, to protests against rising food prices and unemployment, demands for higher wages and free unions and for further reforms from the Habibie government.

In the second largest industrial city, Surabaya, there have been clashes between workers and the police, and a bitter strike by dockworkers. In Jakarta, employees of the state airlines, Garuda, have taken to the streets demanding an investigation of corruption within their company. Everywhere there is a ferment of debate and activity as people pore over the latest

revelations of the extent of the Suharto family wealth in the newspapers and magazines, and as more searching questions are asked of the meaning of these new times: their parameters, limitations and vulnerabilities.

### Unnatural alliances

Within the pro-democracy movement a differentiation is taking place as pillars of the old regime regroup with the ascendant personalities of the pro-democracy movement. None of the new currents are internally homogenous, but it is possible to say that there are broadly two tendencies within the pro-democracy camp (excluding the so-called liberals who were until recently supporters of Suharto and retain roots in and loyalties to different constituents of the New Order regime.)

There is a "moderate" opposition which believes in 'constructive engagement' with the Habibie government, which supports the revision rather than repeal of the five repressive laws of 1985, which hasn't been vocal in demanding the release of political prisoners and which is more willing to give Habibie the opportunity to implement his programme. They would be content with an accommodation with the 'New Order' regime rather than its overthrow.

Where Megawati Sukarnoputri, leader of the PDI and inheritor of her father Sukarno's populist mantle, places herself remains to be seen. She has yet to formally commit herself to anything beyond an alliance with Abdurrahman Wahid's *Nahdlatul Ulama*, Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation. Yet she commands the support and affections of the masses as witnessed in the unexpected size of the crowds at recent commemorations of Sukarno's death.

There is also a "militant" opposition, including many students, progressive NGOs, Muchtar Pakpahan's SBSI and the still-banned PRD. These currents favour an earlier timetable for elections, the trial of Suharto, his family and cronies, and release of all remaining political prisoners. Their goal can be summed up in the "total reformation" slogan popularised by the PRD.

Muchtar Pakpahan cites Lech Walesa and Solidarity in Poland as his role models in the struggle for free trade unions and believes that a Western European system of industrial relations, with tri-partite mechanisms linking employers, workers and government would be best for Indonesia. A brave and honourable man, he nevertheless swears allegiance to *Pancasila* principles and the 1945 Constitution.

It is difficult to see which way the students will develop politically. But the prevailing ideological climate, and the generational absence of left wing politics and movements, suggest that though people are radicalised against the regime, the evolution of an anti-capitalist consciousness is still ahead. Those like the PRD who are trying to build a left alternative face a massive, uphill struggle. ★



### The Undesirables

During the boom years of the 1980s and 1990s millions of migrant workers from Indonesia, Philippines, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Bangladesh and India were recruited to the growth centres of the regional economy especially Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

Now that these economies are in slump, migrant workers are being sent back to their countries of origin exacerbating the economic crisis as the billions of dollars in remittances that they have sent back no longer arrive.

Many of these workers are undocumented. A fact which is known by their employers, who evade payment of wages secure in the knowledge that the workers dare not complain for fear of attracting attention to themselves; and known to the authorities who tolerated them when it suited them but who now expel these workers, using repressive measures and with no concern for their dignity and welfare.

However even as their compatriots were being repatriated, the worsening economic crisis in Indonesia was pushing tens of thousands to journey to Malaysia in search of work as a matter of survival.

Indonesian labourers have been the mainstay of the construction industry, working on oil palm plantations as well as in the restaurant and service sector and in domestic service.

It is estimated there are between one and two million Indonesians in a country of 21 million and the majority are undocumented. Money is borrowed from labour agents who loan the money to repay family debts and to advance the travel costs.

These debts are the first charge on the earnings they will make. If they are lucky enough to get across, either by boat to West Malaysia or across the border into

East Malaysia undetected by the coastguard and police patrols. The boat-owners who ferry the workers over charge a small fortune for a risky journey which has claimed hundreds of lives in the Straits of Malacca.

The downturn in the Malaysian economy, as mega-development projects either reach completion or are suspended for lack of credit has fed into the media hysteria about rising rates of violent crime blamed on "illegal immigrants"

The Malaysian government has been rounding up migrant workers and their families who live on construction sites and in slums and squatter villages and detaining an estimated 17 000 of them in fortified camps. It is alleged that the few possessions the workers are able to accumulate are stolen from them by the Malaysian police before they board the ships transporting them to Indonesia leaving them destitute on arrival. The detention centres have reached bursting point and exploded in violence at the end of March when the authorities sought to forcibly deport Acehnese asylum seekers who face a genuine threat to their lives from the Indonesian security forces.

Detainees at several camps had a sedative mixed in with their food and drink in the evening meal of March 26th. While the motive appears to have been to drug them making it easier to deport them the following day, an overdose had the effect of inducing the vomiting of blood. In reaction riots broke out at a number of camps on that same night.

The authorities have only confirmed nine deaths including one policeman. However the Aceh/Northern Sumatra National Liberation Front claim that 25 Acehnese were killed and 14 more who had been injured or wounded died during the deportation or back in Sumatra, bringing the final toll to 39. [BS] ★

# The puppet King is dead

"Gone, at last" declared **The Economist** magazine on Suharto's resignation on May 21st, welcoming his belated departure.

Western leaders rushed to jump onto the anti-Suharto bandwagon in his final days. They quietly forgot their support and encouragement in his murderous ascent to power, his dictatorial rule, his embezzlement of the nation's wealth and his genocide of the East Timorese (with arms they supplied!).

He was an embarrassment now. A relic from Cold War years. A reminder of the gulf between their democratic rhetoric and their anti-democratic record. Suharto had out-served his purpose and out-lived his use.

## B. Skanthakumar

**What we have witnessed** is the latest stage in the unravelling of a series of alliances represented in the "New Order" regime, accelerated by the financial crisis in the region and by a vibrant mass movement.

The currency crisis in south-east Asia which began with the devaluation of the Thai baht and the collapse of its property sector in July 1997 and the domino effect on neighbouring economies drove the Indonesian government to seek financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The run on the Indonesian rupiah, which lost 80% of its original value within ten months, reflected concerns over the level of corporate or private debt estimated at US\$80 billion. Most is owed by just 50 individuals and their holding companies. Bad loans were made by the private banks owned by a number of these individuals — loans which they made to themselves. This was on top of state or sovereign debt believed to be around US\$60bn. and which will consume 24% of export earnings or US\$8 billion in debt servicing payments this year alone. More, if the IMF has its way.

The Indonesian government invited the intervention of the IMF which seized this opportunity to restore its credibility in financial circles, which had been unimpressed by its earlier packages for South Korea and Thailand. It couldn't let one of the 'success stories' of capitalism collapse

when it had so recently lauded it for its 7-8% annual growth rates.

In October 1997 a US\$43 billion deal was agreed including bilateral loans from the United States, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia in return for structural reforms to the economy. These included the dismantling of private and state monopolies in wheat and Soya beans, abolition of the price ceiling on cement, lowering of tariffs on chemicals and steel and abolition of the local content rule for cars assembled in the country by 2000. Sixteen banks owned by First Family members and Suharto cronies which had incurred heavy debts were closed down.

As the rupiah continued its free fall, middle class people started exchanging it for US dollars and currencies which had a stable value. The Government's response was an advertising campaign using giant bill-boards reading "I Love the Rupiah". Suharto's eldest daughter, the politically ambitious 'Tutut' was filmed exchanging US\$50,000 for rupiahs. Small change for the billionaire and a small drop in the ocean for the currency markets. The campaign was a flop.

Meanwhile there was backtracking on the IMF conditions as the individuals who saw their interests threatened fought back with the main weapon at their disposal: access to the President. All of the IMF measures were a direct challenge to the dominance of companies owned by Suharto family members and their cronies. Loopholes in the agreement included the Suharto's son's monopoly in the clove industry (crucial for the country's ubiquitous *kretek* clove cigarettes) and the incredibly expensive national aircraft project led by Habibie.

It also allowed the continuation of the secretive *Yayasans* (Foundations) which are managed by the Suharto family and their friends and which have been an investment and capital mobilising vehicle for them. Within weeks some of the extravagant mega-projects that had been dropped were reinitiated and Suharto's son Bambang, whose bank had been closed down, was issued another licence to open a new one.

It was humiliating for Suharto to seek a large financial intervention under these conditions. He had prided himself on his image as Bapak Pembangunan ('Father of Development').

The proposition that political order and stability enforced by authoritarian rule was the key ingredient to Indonesia's economic success, according to Suharto. The country had enjoyed average annual growth rates of 7-8%, and annual inflows of billions of dollars in aid and loans. The country's

attractiveness as a site for trans-national investment had been one of the legitimising ideological tools of this repressive regime.

## IMF contribution to the crisis

Although Suharto played for time, he was obliged to sign a second agreement with the IMF in January 1998, reaffirming the original conditions. But the ink was barely dry when Suharto proposed to set up a currency board to restore stability to the rupiah by pegging it with the US dollar. This attempt to interfere with the unfettered right of currency speculators to make their fortunes was greeted with consternation in Western capitals and by international financial institutions who promptly suspended their loan disbursements. The markets got the message, and share prices on the Jakarta Stock Exchange and the value of the rupiah tumbled even further.

By March, on the eve of his "re-election", Suharto had been forced to retreat from this idea. A new round of negotiations began with the IMF and in April the government appeared reconciled to the original package with one proviso, that food and fuel subsidies be phased out instead of eliminated immediately. This announcement in early May was to trigger a round of urban riots.

The IMF plan represented a qualitative victory for the liberalisers who favoured greater deregulation of the economy, undoing the patron-client networks which characterise the relationship between the state and certain capitalists and speeding up Indonesia's integration into the world market, on extremely unfavourable terms.

It was a defeat for economic nationalists, enamoured by the East Asian model of development with its emphasis on strategic heavy industry, nurturing of a domestic capitalist class shielded from foreign competition, and export-oriented industrialisation.

## Inventing capitalism

At the beginning of the New Order regime, Indonesia had no significant national or more specifically indigenous (*pribumi*) capitalist class. The small Chinese community were dominant in the retail and mercantile sector drawing on their access to credit networks of other overseas Chinese. Thus the State had to take the lead in investment and corporate ownership. During the 1970s massive revenues from oil exports helped finance aggressive growth in the state sector, and its diversification into a range of related industries. The mechanisms for this



strategy were state corporations and the allocation of trading licences, import and production quotas, bank credit, state contracts and forestry concessions. Acquisition of these 'rents', which were controlled by politico-bureaucrats, became the route to instant fortunes.

The primary beneficiaries were members of the Suharto family and relatives of other leading civilian and military politicians. And a number of Sino-Indonesian conglomerates who provided the technical skills and marketing know-how in joint ventures with these individuals and military owned business groups. This last category is composed of companies nationalised by Sukarno and managed by the military with serving or retired military officials as directors and which enjoyed preferential access to forestry exploitation licences and contracts for supply to the armed forces and some government departments.

One illustration of the way this system works is that of the Bogosari company which is the country's sole flour miller. It received its exclusive licence in 1969 from Bulog, the State Procurement Agency, which is also the sole importer of wheat. Bogosari is jointly owned by the Government, Sino-Indonesian Liem Soei Liong (the country's richest man) and the ex-President's step-brother Sudwikatmono. By 1995, Bogosari was estimated to control 75% of the noodles market, 33% of milk and 20% of baby food. It also received an estimated 30% of the value of all flour sales.

#### Frustrations with the "First Family"

Excluded from this cosy arrangement were two other fractions of the capitalist class.

Some big *pribumi* capitalists don't have ties of kin or friendship to the politico-bureaucrats and thus are deprived of the same access to rents and state revenues enjoyed by Sino-Indonesians such as Sudono Salim (Liem Sioe Liong), Muhammad 'Bob' Hasan (Thee Kian Seng) and Prayogo Pangestu (Phang Djun Phen) or Suharto's family members.

Another frustrated group is the petty bourgeoisie which is prominent in local and regional economies. This group comprises both *pribumi* and Sino-Indonesians

but the indigenous wing resents the conglomerates for muscling in on its sectors and is notoriously anti-Chinese.

These groups while politically estranged from the Suharto regime have also benefited from aspects of state policy. Thus state banks were instructed from the early 1970s only to supply credit to businesses where *pribumis* had at least 50% equity, excluding Chinese conglomerates and to offer concessionary credit on preferential terms to *pribumi* rural traders and small farmers.

But, although *pribumi* big business shares with Sino-Indonesian conglomerates the advantages in protection of domestic markets from foreign capital, it was unable to benefit fully from the deregulation bonanza in the 1980s because of the privileged access to these sectors of Sino-Indonesians and the former First Family.

By 1997, significant sections of the capitalist class had grown tired of the old regime and more favourable to its reform.

The current economic crisis presents a tremendous opportunity for western transnational capital especially banks and investment houses to buy up south-east Asian banks and companies at bargain prices. In the first four months of 1998 alone there were more leveraged buyouts in the region than in all of 1997.

It also represents is an ideological triumph of the neo-classical growth model favoured by international financial institutions over an alternative statist model of capital accumulation. This eradication of any alternative to neo-liberal capitalism is an even grimmer prospect for the people of the region.

#### Industrialisation

In the 1980s and faced with falling oil revenues and a rapidly rising young population, there was a shift into non-oil and petroleum products based industries. This took the form of export-oriented industrialisation in low value added sectors, such as textiles, garments, footwear and electronics assembly. This expansion was based on low waged labour, low valued currency and a labour force which (where organised) was disciplined by the 'yellow' state sponsored FSPSI (Federation of All Indonesia Workers' Unions) and the military authorities.

One of the most noticeable developments of the 1990s has been the emergence of a new industrial working class based in those sectors and concentrated in three areas, Jabotabek (Jakarta-Bogor-Tangerang-Bekasi) in West Java, Surabaya-Malang-Mojokerto-Gresik in East Java and around Medan in North Sumatra. By 1990 an estimated 8.2 million people were directly employed in manufacturing representing 11.6% of the total labour force. This includes an estimated 3.6 million women in waged factory and enterprise work.

The militancy of this new proletariat has been a positive feature of the 1990s, as evidenced by the 1994 Medan strike which led to the arrests of the independent SBSI (Indonesia Prosperity Labour Union) leadership including Muchtar Pakpahan. There has also been a steady increase in recorded strikes from 365 in 1995 to 901 in 1996 in spite of the threats by state and employers.

At the same time there has been a rapid growth in the urban population. Much of this urban labour force are daily waged or casual workers dependent on the boom economy and feeder industries and services to the manufacturing sector. They have been badly hit by the downturn and many may have returned to their home villages, placing a further strain on the food stocks there. In the construction sector alone, 2.8m. will lose jobs as 70% of industry grinds to a halt. Unemployment projections range from 18-30m. in a total labour force of 90m.

In the face of this real fear of job losses and the spiralling cost of living, many workers are enraged at the FSPSI's continued pro-government, pro-employer line. In early May there was a demonstration outside the FSPSI offices in Jakarta protesting the union leadership's support for the government's decision to freeze the minimum wage.

As every worker knows, this minimum wage is already well below the subsistence level and is barely respected by employers. The workers demanded a 20% increase in the minimum wage, the resignation of the FSPSI leadership and lower prices for commodities. One activist said, "Workers have no one to fight for them because the government has been on the side of employers... those who have no commitment to improving worker's welfare should leave this labour organisation" (*Jakarta Post*, 5th May 1998).

#### "Let them eat Rabbit"

In the first few months of 1998 food riots spread all over Indonesia, in Java and Sumatra but also on the 'outer islands' of Sulawesi, Lombok, Sumbawa and Flores. The grievance everywhere was the same: that the spiralling price of staples like rice, cooking oil, flour, sugar and Soya beans was making it unaffordable to all but the very rich. [Some months later 'Tutut' on a walk-about was confronted by complaints from cooked food hawkers at the cost of chicken and was quoted saying that people

should substitute rabbit meat for chicken. Indonesia's own Marie Antoinette...

### The Chinese as scapegoat

The target became the Chinese minority who form three percent of the population but dominate retail trade even in small towns and who collectively are estimated to control 70% of corporate wealth in Indonesia. These small traders were unfairly lumped together with the few but visible Sino-Indonesians who have made fortunes through their close association with Suharto and the 'First Family' by monopolising the sale of basic goods and exploiting the natural resources of the country.

In the 1980s many Sino-Indonesians entered into joint venture partnerships with Western and East Asian companies or became their sub-contractors. As employers too they became identified with the state when they called in the military to take action against workers for demanding payment of the minimum wage, for better working conditions and the right to form free trade unions.

Not only were their cars, shops and homes burned, but last year during the violence 55 churches were attacked or burned to the ground, often at the instigation of Muslim fundamentalist groups (Sino-Indonesians are predominantly Christian.)

Despite their economic clout and relative affluence, the Chinese minority are discriminated against politically and culturally. There is an unofficial ban on their employment in government and the military, so many enter into business or self-employment instead. The formal teaching of Chinese languages is prohibited, as is the display of Chinese characters and formation of cultural associations.

Most Sino-Indonesians have adopted Indonesian names to signify their identification with Indonesia and protect themselves from state harassment. But they have remained a useful scapegoat for the economic crisis. In the recent violence, the military has encouraged violence against the Chinese to defuse and deflect anger against the regime. On a number of occasions, soldiers have kept away from mobs or stood by and watched as they looted and burned.

### Inside the student movement

Student protests reached a crescendo in the run up to and after the March MPR session which confirmed Suharto's "re-election" to a seventh term as President.

These protests were tolerated by the Armed Forces so long as they took place on university campuses isolated from the streets and communities where the common people live and work. However even this limited space was grasped by students used to campuses which have been heavily policed in recent years with informers reporting the activities of student radicals to the authorities.

The campuses were transformed into free speech forums, addressed by promi-

nent oppositionists. The groups directing the protests were ad-hoc coalitions independent of political affiliation though including activists from student and reform organisations like PIJAR and ALDERA as well as the underground Peoples Democratic Party (PRD).

While often campus or area specific, the groups were in close communication with others throughout the country, using the Internet and mobile telephones exchanging information, monitoring developments and co-ordinating actions. City forums were formed where delegates from all the local universities and colleges would meet daily to assess the day and plan ahead. Sympathetic journalists trained students to deal with the media, prepare press releases and produce campus literature.

The identification of students with academic institution rather than with party-political affiliations was symbolised by their wearing of brightly coloured university jackets usually reserved for formal occasions.



The demands before March were for reductions in food prices and stability for the rupiah, change of cabinet and a new President. There was condemnation of anti-Chinese violence in the food riots that had swept the country and warnings that the regime was manipulating the poor by deflecting their anger away from the system and towards the Chinese and Christian minorities.

Over the last decade, students many of whom come from rural backgrounds have been involved in building alliances between students and peasants and in recent years between students and the new working class. Some urban middle class students were drawn to activism fearing that the jobs they expected after graduation would not be there. Many others became active because they felt the pains of the peasantry and the poor, and recognised their responsibility to articulate the people's grievances.

In May, several meetings were held between student and workers representatives at various campuses to formalise alliances. The movement spread and grew, throwing up new slogans and demands, using public meetings, demonstrations, street theatre and occupations of government buildings to spread their ideas. Vans of food prepared by middle class households or donated by businesses made trips to the campuses, distributing food to those

within. Between May 14th and 20th, students occupied a Television station in Padang and radio stations in Malang, Surabaya and Semarang which were used to broadcast their ideas.

### A far-from-radical opposition

The focus in Jakarta became the occupation of the Parliament building, sparking off similar occupations of regional assemblies and Governor's offices outside of Jakarta. Banners with anti-Suharto and pro-democracy slogans were displayed, and effigies and images of the dictator were burned with impunity. Something unthinkable just a few weeks earlier. In a country where insulting the President is an imprisonable offence!

The students appealed to the impotent legislators to "heed the wishes of the people." They called on legislators appointed by Suharto, in an assembly created by Suharto to... throw out Suharto!

Hardly surprising. People do not discard old institutions when new ones haven't been created or cannot even be envisioned. The masses invested the country's old institutions with all their new found hopes and energies, striving for the political system to reinvent itself, believing that what was impotent could now become all powerful.

The movement had no charismatic leader, no single spokesperson. It was led by anonymous collectives of local leaders. Yet, having provided the lead, it now itself wanted to be led. It yearned for a personality recognised by the masses and of sufficient authority to mediate with the regime.

Megawati Sukarnoputri, leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), daughter of first president Sukarno and inheritor of his secular nationalist-populist mantle could have been its icon. But she lacked the courage and the imagination to confront the military and take the attendant risk. Fearful of provoking the military and losing favour with them, she preferred to remain on the sidelines waiting for the inevitable dénouement, and then gracefully and perhaps even with the blessings of ABRI, to accept the nomination for the Presidency thrust upon her - beloved leader of the poor and forgiving friend to the rich.

With Megawati refusing to step forward, the spotlight settled on the relatively obscure figure of Amien Rais. His *Muhammadiyah* organisation has 28 million members and represents the modernist wing of Indonesian Islam. Rais has a chequered past and was closely associated with Habibie's political vehicle the Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI). A favourite of the US embassy, Rais has clear lines of communication to retired and serving high ranking officers in the military. Thus many believed him when he called off an anticipated one million strong demonstration in central Jakarta's Merdeka Square on May 20th, relaying a warning he had received from a military source that another Tiananmen

Square (referring to the massacre of Chinese students in June 1989) was in preparation.

The city centre was surrendered to the military, who watched nervously over deserted streets. Meanwhile, busloads of students proceeded to the Parliament complex gathering on its roof and steps joining those in occupation inside. Outside Jakarta there were massive demonstrations in Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Bogor, Bandung, Solo (all in Java) and Ujung Pandang (in Sulawesi). May 20th has been celebrated annually as National Awakening Day marking the birth of the anti-colonial movement against the Dutch. From 1998 onwards the day will have renewed and added significance.

### Illusions in the armed forces

Students displayed a disturbing ambivalence towards the military, reflecting the recent, immature politicisation of the movement, and their naiveté. Older activists were not numerous or influential enough to correct the students' impression that the Military could be persuaded not to support the regime through appeals to their conscience, morality and the 1945 Constitution.

In imitation of the anti-Vietnam war movement in the United States, students placed flowers in the barrels of soldiers' guns and tried to fraternise with them and win them over to the pro-democracy cause. Echoing the student protests between 1973-74 and 1978-79, the refrain to the army was "return to the people", calling on them not to repress the protests and to throw in their lot with the pro-democracy camp instead.

In fact, the Indonesian military is part of the regime, parent in its conception and mid-wife at its birth. The students' illusions reflect the tenacious hold of the doctrine of *dwifungsi* or dual function (introduced by Sukarno) which institutionalises a role for the military in civilian life.

Even those prepare to break with Suharto have yet to fully conceive of a rupture with Suhartoism. Many felt that they needed to exploit rivalries within the military high command, playing Wiranto ("the dove") against Suharto son-in-law Prabowo ("the hard-liner"). Without splits in the military high command, they reasoned, drawing on the Filipino experience removing Suharto would be extremely difficult.

However what may have pushed the regime into dumping Suharto sooner rather than later was the ferocity of the urban riots in May beginning in Medan (4-5th) and spreading to Palembang (13th), Solo (14-15th) and most spectacularly Jakarta (13-15th). The immediate trigger to the violence in Medan was the announcement that month of further fuel price increases which meant that cooking and public transport would also become more expensive. Petrol prices were to rise by 70% and electricity rates were to increase by 60%.

The May 12th killings of six students from the private Trisakti university, atten-



ded by the children of the elite enraged and numbed the whole country, sobering the "intoxication of fraternity" with ABRI. The students who had protested for weeks within their campus had marched onto the streets on that day. There were confrontations with riot police, who first kicked and beat the students and then shot into the crowds using live ammunition.

The next day, as students attended a memorial service for their fallen comrades, crowds of people came to the campus walls of Trisakti university urging the students to take to the streets with them. The students refused, sensing that a riot was likely to occur, and that this would provide the excuse for the Armed Forces to denounce the pro-democracy movement as "anarchists and looters", taking more severe action against them.

These involved in these protests were in their own confused and contradictory way more anti-systemic than many of the stock-brokers, bankers, middle-class professionals and erstwhile supporters of the regime who have since rallied to the student led movement and its demands.

The objects of the riots were the emblems of the regime and its consumerist values. The air-conditioned shopping malls with their water fountains and piped muzak, the banks and automatic teller machines, the car showrooms which stocked the Timor car, pet project of 'Tommy' Suharto, the fancy hotels where the new rich spent more in a night than most make in a month.

### Who were the rioters?

According to Gerry Van Klinken, editor of *Inside Indonesia* magazine, "the rioters are the urban poor who have not had political representation in the New Order. They have almost no political leadership other than the sometimes agitational preaching in hundreds of small mosques. Yes, they are anti-Chinese. More generally they are alienated by the entire modern economy."

Some 1,188 people died in the riots, according to the Human Rights Commission. Most were looters, trapped in the fires they had started. In Jakarta, the Chinese commercial district of Glodok was the object of a rampage. Chinese

women were targeted for rapes, sometimes by groups of men. Two women's organisations, *Kalyanamitra* and *Mitra Perempuan*, have confirmed over 100 rapes in Jakarta alone, ranging from girls of 10 to women of 55. Not a single rape has been reported to police. Partly because many women are too ashamed to be publicly identified. And partly because some victims believe that their rapists were plainclothes police officers.

The violence against women and against property has traumatised the entire Chinese community, who remember the killings of between 300,000 and 500,000 ethnic Chinese in the 1965/66 massacres which brought Suharto to power. Over 100,000 Sino-Indonesians have fled the country.

This violence was sharpest wherever there was a total absence of political organisation. In Yogyakarta, for instance, where the Muslim Muhammadiyah organisation was heavily involved in the protest movements, there was much less anti-Chinese rhetoric or violence than in other areas.

Because supermarket chains and small shops which stock food were badly hit by the riots, and owners were reluctant to reopen them, severe food distribution problems emerged in Jakarta and other cities.

The Indonesian elite worried that, if left unchecked these uprisings of the urban poor could overwhelm the military who watched on helpless or unwilling to intervene as billions of rupiah worth of property was destroyed, rocking the very foundation of the regime. The calls for Suharto to step down now came from within his own regime. No one could believe their ears when 'Ha-Ha-Ha' Harmoko - the sycophantic Speaker of the Parliament and Chairman of GOLKAR and one time Minister of Information - delivered an ultimatum to Suharto on the 19th: resign by May 22nd or face impeachment proceedings in the MPR.

On May 20th several Cabinet Ministers met ostensibly to discuss the economic situation. By the end of the meeting a number of them had decided to resign rather than continue to serve Suharto. Other senior figures from the civilian and military including Habibie and General Wiranto also called on Suharto that night. They did not give him the unconditional support that until recently had been forthcoming from them and are thought to have hinted that he should go now "in dignity" rather than face trial and public humiliation. He was also promised state protection and the safeguarding of his family's assets. The next day in a brief speech, Suharto asked for forgiveness, appointed Habibie his successor and withdrew from the stage.

To borrow from Benedict Anderson's classic essay "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture", the confluence of economic calamity and social disorder signified to the regime as much as to the people, the diminishing of Suharto's power and the loss of his *wahyu* (divine lustre), its public manifestation. The King was dead. ★

# Stop the arms race in South Asia!

## Sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

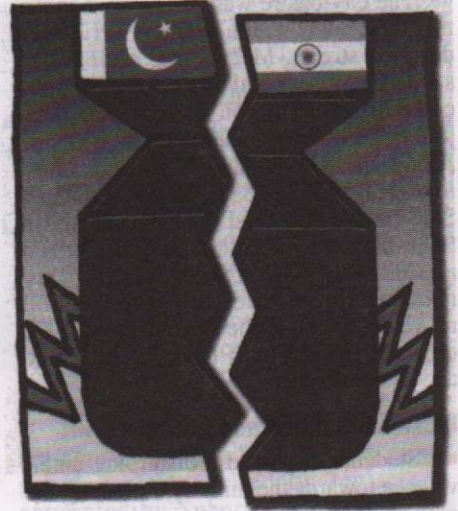
Achin Vanaik

For a long time only a handful of anti-nuclearists in India were arguing that the country should sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Their numbers may now increase substantially but the swelling can come from two different groups. The first group is not concerned, apart from lip service, with any serious striving for global disarmament. They support the tests and India going nuclear but want to limit the damage that has been done internationally which they recognise is grave. Although there is no unanimity about the imposition of sanctions on India (and Pakistan), not only the nuclear weapon States (NWSs) but the overwhelming majority of the non-nuclear weapon States (NNWSs) are insistent that both countries sign the CTBT and participate in the fissiles materials cut-off treaty (FMCT) negotiations. India cannot continue to buck this international consensus without the most serious repercussions for itself. Hence the various rationalisations of why India can now join the CTBT regime (because the context has changed) when it could not earlier.

Those in the second catchment area of potential support are differently motivated. These people want a permanent end to testing by India and are opposed to further weaponisation and deployment. But very large sections here (which includes most of the Indian Left) continue to believe, falsely, that the CTBT is discriminatory as well as being an American plot, etc. Unfortunately, they have so strongly staked their public reputations on this that it has become difficult for them to retract. But retract they must. If one is serious about getting a permanent end to testing by India (and Pakistan), then there is no substitute for the CTBT.

Do not for a moment think that this Government or any future non-Left Government will unilaterally declare a permanent end to such tests. A strong lobby is well aware that further tests are needed if India wants to build a significant-sized nuclear arsenal in the name of their understanding of what would constitute a "minimal deterrence capacity" against China.

Nor should there be any illusion that this Government will ever give a commitment of no future weaponisation. The most it will concede under pressure is no weaponisation for the moment - a no-cost policy pronouncement because it will anyway take India a year or two to technically



equip itself for final weaponisation/deployment of delivery vehicles. But the issue of the CTBT will not wait that long. It is going to be forced upon India by international pressure and the existence of an all-party consensus opposing the Treaty will play into the hands of the nuclear right-wing. There is a real chance that the Government can accede to the CTBT especially since such accession does not prevent future weaponisation. Nevertheless, a permanent end to testing worldwide is an important gain. If India and Pakistan test in the future or keep this option open, then the whole CTBT norm can unravel. The Chinese have already indicated they may have to reconsider their commitment to end testing and the American right-wing led by the not unimportant Senator, Mr. Jesse Helms, is already opposing CTBT ratification and calling for the U.S. to resume explosive testing. Such a breakdown would spell disaster.

Nor can one trust a purely national regime of monitoring to verify Indian compliance in the unlikely event of a permanent renunciation of tests ever being declared. In short, there is no practicable and reliable substitute monitoring mechanism to the CTBT regime. Those who oppose the CTBT on so-called principled grounds had better rethink, either subordinating their earlier objection to a larger good or principle or, preferably, realising that their opposition was wrong to begin with. They might just reconsider whether the support (with varying degrees of enthusiasm and qualifications) by virtually the whole of the international anti-nuclear peace movement and groups, of virtually the whole of the international Left, and of virtually all the NNWSs does not indicate that it was India which got it wrong and not the rest of the world. They should also recognise that it was precisely the outcome of the discourse over the CTBT earlier that decisively shifted the centre of gravity on this issue dramatically to the right, paving the way for what eventually



happened. Similarly, another debate (which can neither be avoided nor put off for a year or two) over signing the Treaty if it is lost to the anti-CTBTers will again significantly shift the terms of Indian discourse on the nuclear issue to the right. This will greatly weaken not only anti-nuclearists but even those pro-nuclearists who see themselves as advocating a more cautious, responsible and sober form of Indian nuclearism which sees the importance of a strong arms control orientation, regionally and internationally.

There were three main criticisms made of the CTBT in India. The CTBT had to be linked to a time-bound schedule for global disarmament otherwise it was pointless. The treaty was discriminatory. And in another related but distinct line of argument, the treaty was held to be fatally flawed because it allowed sub-critical testing and computer simulation. None of these criticisms holds water. Take the first one. A few of us repeatedly insisted to no avail that this linkage by India was simply an excuse to justify its objections to the treaty on grounds other than "national security considerations" although these were cited as well. Does anyone doubt now that this was in fact the case? India was close to testing in mid-1995 when the key issues in the draft treaty had yet to be seriously negotiated.

Time and again, this technique of argument has been used by cynical nuclear elites everywhere. One postulates one's commitment to a grand final goal which all can agree with but it is done in order to block a step in the process by which that ultimate goal can be reached. Because of the moral capital that India had built internationally in the past, many NNWSs gave some benefit of the doubt to Indian intentions. But the overwhelming majority of the NNWSs did not follow India rightly feeling that this CTBT was better than none and should not be sacrificed at the altar of a demand for a grand renunciatory commitment by the NWSs unattainable for a long time to come.

Moreover, this demand was a case of putting the cart before the horse. You first have to get institutionalised a multilateral body empowered to negotiate complete global disarmament to which the NWSs will accede. Only after this does it become sensible to talk of a time-bound schedule. This is what, for example, an *ad hoc* Committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) (which is what the NNWSs were angling for in the CTBT) or a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) amount to. Getting the NWSs to agree to either of these mechanisms is going to take years. To insist that a NWC, for example must from its very inception have a time-bound schedule for global disarmament is to greatly weaken, not strengthen, the chances of getting such a body institutionalised.

As for the CTBT being discriminatory this is just plain wrong. The NPT has different treaty obligations for the NWSs and the NNWSs' legally enshrined. The CTBT



has no such discrimination having the same obligation for all member signatories. One can claim that behind this legal non-discrimination lies a ground situation of inequality and discrimination which the treaty does not adequately address. But this is a qualitatively different kind of criticism than the morally charged and deeply misleading accusation of the CTBT itself being discriminatory. At best, one can claim that the CTBT is seriously flawed because one set of signatories, the NWSs, is not adequately restrained while the NNWSs or threshold nuclear states are. This line of criticism thus connects with the issue of sub-criticals and computer simulation. But even here the popular Indian claims were misleading. Despite the freedom to carry these out, the CTBT is a powerful restraint on all signatories.

Though the scientific evidence against exaggerating the value of sub-criticals, simulation and such facilities as the National Ignition Facility (U.S.) and Laser Megajoule (France) is overwhelming, one does not have to be a nuclear physicist to realise that the CTBT is a genuine and powerful restraint measure on all the NWSs. One only has to use one's common sense. The Republican party, numerous former top bureaucrats, the weapons laboratories, sections of the military, etc., would never have opposed the CTBT in the U.S. if this was not the case. Senate ratification is still uncertain. Nor is there any way that Russia and China would have gone along with the treaty if their scientific establishments believed the U.S. because of its technological lead, would not be significantly restrained by its provisions. Yet some Indian critics claimed both that the U.S. wanted the CTBT because it alone could monopolise the benefits of its 'loophole', and also, that the U.S. so badly wanted the treaty it was willing to forego its monopoly by eliminating its technological lead through extension to the other NWSs! ★

## Pakistan The Hard Choice

Abdul H. Nayyar

It is indeed a sad moment for peace lovers in Pakistan. Normally they would have advocated a unilateral renunciation of nuclear option by Pakistan. Now they have retreated to a position from where they are only calling for restraint. They are asking Pakistan to keep the nuclear ambiguity intact, the same ambiguity that they previously - and presumably still - regard as a destabilising factor in the region.

Many a threshold has been crossed in the past few days.

The Indian nuclear tests are an expected outcome of the general perceptions that have evolved in India over the last 50 years. Perceptions about themselves, and about others. About being traditionally in the forefront of anti-imperialist struggle, defying the hegemonic superpower domination. About being destined to an important role in the global affairs. About being at least as important as the five big powers.

Pakistan occupies only a minor place in this perception. Perhaps a little more important than other neighbours, but certainly a dangerous irritant that is used by superpowers to tie India down. That this self-perception is deeply embedded in India was clearly shown in a survey conducted among the Indian elite in 1995 by the John B Kroc Institute. It showed that the Indian nuclear programme was not perceived as Pakistan-specific.

A similar poll conducted in Pakistan in 1996 by the same institution gave a different picture. For a vast majority, threat to the country comes mainly from India. The nuclear programme is justified only to counter Indian hegemonic designs in the region. For the Pakistani elite the cost of this pursuit is unimportant.

There is thus a very peculiar situation at hand. India is treading the nuclear path with ambitions to match nuclear weapon states so as to carve out a global role for itself. Pakistan is being dragged along by its policy that is only reactive to India.

The repeated Indian nuclear tests have posed a serious dilemma for Pakistan. As viewed by its policy makers, Pakistan is damned if it conducts its own nuclear test, and damned also if it does not.

Not testing would be seen as a loss of face in the world, which has been made to believe for years that Pakistan has only stopped short of the last screw and is ready to meet the challenge in no time. The policy makers regard it as a matter of pride that Pakistan is labelled as a nuclear threshold state and is a part of the global nuclear debates.

There would also be loss of face inside the country, where a strong security hype has been created over the decades, with reassuring, and at times boastful, claims that there will be a tit-for-tat response to each and every Indian move. When the Ghauri

## ★ Pakistan/India nuclear tests



missile was unveiled, Pakistan's foreign minister lost his diplomatic veneer, boasting that the Ghauri gave Pakistan an edge over India. Pakistan has always struggled to achieve parity with India on defence matters, sometimes even deluding itself with having achieved it. What worries the policy makers is that all that was 'gained' by Ghauri in this senseless race has simply evaporated with the Indian tests.

Having tested its nuclear devices, Pakistan faces several consequences. For one, there will be sanctions which can have devastating consequences for its fragile economy. Secondly, it will have to bargain away the ambiguity that has been the cornerstone of its supposed nuclear doctrine.

Thirdly, the ensuing nuclear arms race is definitely going to prove costlier than it has been so far. The veil of ambiguity had at least allowed an opportunity to put a hold on the nuclear race; the 'enemy' was left guessing about what the country's level of capability was. With the veil gone, it will be a weapon versus a weapon. The parity that Pakistan may seek to achieve by exploding a nuclear weapon will still elude it. The technological leap that India has taken is most certainly far too big for Pakistan, now and in the foreseeable future. India has demonstrated two major advancements (if that is what these can be called) in the May 11 and 13 tests: first, constructing a thermonuclear weapon, and second showing that they can make tactical weapons also.

These two will have to be matched by Pakistan if it aims at a credible deterrence. The race will also involve having efficient

and reliable delivery systems. With India having already announced launching a missile defence system production, Pakistan is not likely to opt out of this next step. The race will go on. More fission weapons, more hydrogen bombs, more tactical weapons, larger and longer ranged missiles, missile defence systems, and so on.

Imagine the burden of this on the economies. It is futile to doubt the technical capability of achieving the objective. It is now well-recognised that nuclear weapons and missiles can be developed by any nation that has a modest technical capability and a resolve to put resources into it.

The Pakistani test will heighten tension in the region. The covert wars will increase. The test will reinforce that false sense of security which has allowed Pakistan to support insurgencies across the border [in Indian-occupied Kashmir/

An overt nuclearisation of South Asia with associated developments in delivery systems, etc., cannot be a 'better deterrent' than the non-weaponised one as the protest lobby would like us to believe.

If anything, it will be much more unstable. The Ghauri missile took about ten minutes to travel 1100 kilometres. The Prithvi and Hatf take less than five minutes to reach their targets 300 kilometres away. What time does this leave for a rational response? The history of the USA-USSR cold war is replete with incidents of false alarms, and the world was spared from Armageddon by the longer flight time the ICBM's needed to cover the long distance between the two countries, the excellent command, control and intelligence systems and the permissive action links established in the command hierarchy that prevented pushing of buttons either accidentally or in panic. India and Pakistan do not have the luxury of any of these.

Pakistan's security concern being solely tied to India, its 'nuclear doctrine' is based on the awareness of the increasing disparity in the conventional defence capabilities. The nuclear weapons are to be used in a war with India when conventional defence system fails to withstand the Indian superiority.

The message too is very clear: "If in any future conflagration we find that our forces are losing ground, we shall not hesitate to use whatever nuclear arsenal we have. It may be small, but it surely will cause a damage that cannot be acceptable to you. We also know that you have a much larger stock of nuclear weapons, and that you can indeed inflict much worse damage onto us, but our level of desperation is such that is acceptable to us in comparison to a capitulation to your hegemony".

This 'doctrine' combined with the inevitability of the nuclear race, if Pakistan continues to follow its policy of being dragged behind India, makes the situation extremely unstable. A little mistake, a panic, and havoc could be unleashed upon the peoples of the two countries. Should

this be allowed?

It is time that Pakistan for once makes a hard choice: that of a unilateral nuclear disarmament, rather than choosing to match the Indian response with a test of its own, or even keeping a non-weaponised nuclear option. For this it will have to come out of the binds of its security perceptions and to make a rational choice of putting all the resources it has got into the economic development and welfare of its people. That is the only way to make the country worth defending. ★

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For more information try the South Asians Against Nukes website:  
[www.mnet.fr/aiindex/NoNukes.html](http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/NoNukes.html)

## Women's Action Forum Nuclear madness

Women's Action Forum, Lahore, is deeply distressed by the explosion of nuclear devices in India and Pakistan. While we condemn India for starting the nuclear race in South Asia, we are saddened that Pakistan has responded in kind and lost its moral high ground in the process. In addition, the imposition of Emergency rule and the suspension of fundamental rights in Pakistan following the explosions is extremely perturbing.

WAF believes that neither violence nor the tools of violence guarantee national security. It has been amply demonstrated by the example of the Soviet Union that the acquisition of a nuclear arsenal did not ensure security and that the only long term and enduring insurance of territorial integrity is the economic well-being of a people.

WAF has always strongly opposed nuclearisation, militarisation, and war-mongering and upheld dialogue and other peaceful means of mediating conflict. It is unfortunate that people should be encouraged to rejoice in the acquisition of weapons of death and mass destruction, instead of being asked to soberly reflect on the horrifying implications of acquiring nuclear weapons. In a region where 40% of the population lives beneath the poverty line, it is tragic that such large amounts should be spent on nuclear weapons programmes.

WAF holds the Western nuclear powers responsible for the current situation in South Asia, as they have consistently followed the dual policy of keeping their own arsenals intact while urging restraint on others [...]

We appeal to the leadership of India and Pakistan to put a stop to this madness. There can be no justification, moral or otherwise, for an act that imperils the future of the human race. We demand:

### World Nuclear Tests

Country	From	To	Tests
United States	1945	1992	1030
Russia/USSR	1949	1990	715
France	1960	1996	210
Britain	1952	1991	45
China	1964	1996	45
India	1974	1998	6
Pakistan	1998	1998	5

1. An end of the Emergency and the restoration of Fundamental Human Rights in Pakistan.
2. An end to the rhetoric of violence and war by the leadership of both India & Pakistan.
3. Immediate action against those elements who are using violence to stifle debate on issues that are critical to the existence and well being of the peoples of South Asia and the world.
4. An immediate dialogue between India and Pakistan to resolve outstanding issues including Kashmir, in a peaceful and rational atmosphere.
5. India and Pakistan should immediately sign a No War Pact as well as the CTBT and NPT.
6. Finally, we demand that all nuclear powers should destroy their arsenals and put an end to the hypocrisy and double standards which are largely responsible for the threat of extinction faced by the human race today.

June 03, 1998 WAF Working Committee

## India The smile that makes generations sick

Surendra Gadekar

A nuclear test involves the release into the environment of large quantities of radioactive poisons. Poisons that shall linger on and on; long after the after glow fades; long after the applause and the mutual back-patting fades; long after all the scientists, engineers, and even the evergreen politicians fade; long after historical constructs such as Pakistan, China and India fade. This deliberate poisoning of our soil and that most precious of all things in a desert, water, shall continue to extract an inevitable toll.

Till now five other nations have conducted approximately 1,900 nuclear tests. Of these, 518 have been in the atmosphere, under water, or in space. Approximately 1,400 tests have been conducted underground in scores of places around the globe.

Obtaining complete and accurate data on health and environmental effects of nuclear weapons testing is difficult. In large part this is because countries that have tested nuclear weapons give the principal responsibility of assessing the health and environmental effects of the testing to the very agencies that make and test the weapons. These agencies have therefore found themselves with essentially contradictory missions.

On the one hand, the reality of widespread fallout requires that people be carefully informed about the nature of fallout and the dangers of radiation. It requires openness and free discussion. On the other hand there is the overwhelming desire for secrecy and the perceived need to build up nuclear arsenals come what may. In this

mind-set, it is no wonder that the health and security of one's own citizens is sacrificed at the altar of geo-political considerations. Henry Wassermann very aptly named his book describing US experience with the effects of ionising radiation as *Killing Our Own*.

Except for at very high doses, radiation damage is not immediately apparent. Considerable damage is done to health and the environment before the public becomes aware.

A 1-kiloton explosion (explosive force equal to 1,000 tons of conventional TNT explosives) will typically produce 11 billion curies of radioactive fission products one minute after detonation, falling to 10 million curies in 12 hours, as the short-lived radionuclides decay. Most bombs have four to five kilograms of plutonium of which one can safely assume that more than half is left behind. Strontium-90 and cesium-137, two other long lived radionuclides (half lives around 30 years each) are produced at the rate of 0.1 and 0.16 kilocuries per kiloton respectively.

Plutonium is one of the most toxic substances known. It has a half life of 24,000 years and will therefore remain in the environment of India's Pokhran test site essentially for ever.

Sometimes underground tests result in quick, massive releases into the atmosphere called ventings. Releases which take place slowly over a period of months or years are called seeps. The Des Moines test of 1962 vented 11m. curies while the Bainberry test of 1970 vented 6.7m. curies into the atmosphere. Mercifully, India's Shakti tests in May haven't resulted in ventings. Seeps are another matter and would require careful monitoring of the site.

The long term dangers arising from wastes in the underground environment have not yet been carefully assessed anywhere in the world. However, there is evidence quoted by the Office of Technology Assessment of the US Congress which shows that soil and ground water at the Nevada Test Site has been contaminated. This is not surprising since radioactive testing results in the drastic fracture of rock structures.

Of one thing we can be sure. If it is found that India's tests resulted in radioactive contamination which is a threat to human health, the villagers living in the vicinity are unlikely to be told anything about the fact, or asked to take precautions that might reduce their risks. In our pursuit of geo-political might, some have to pay the price of development. Modern versions of the ancient custom of human sacrifice for the sake of power and glory can be played to thunderous applause from a nation thirsty for international recognition.

## India demos

In the Indian capital New Delhi, the PBVA (Movement Against Nuclear Weapons) organised a peaceful protest on

29 May at the Patel Chowk traffic circle. They held up placards reading "India-Pakistan, stop this madness!" "Remember Hiroshima," "Our India and Pakistan will become Graveyards," "No water, no electricity, no jobs, no problem! We have the bomb!" and "Hungry people on both sides, but we have the bomb!"

In a press statement released after the action, the group said: "We unequivocally condemn the Pakistani nuclear tests as we have unequivocally condemned the Indian nuclear tests at Pokhran. We do not care whether the bomb is Indian or Pakistani or Chinese. We demand a nuclear weapons-free south Asia.

"This sudden spiralling of tensions in the region has been caused by the deliberate whipping up of jingoism and the provocative statements by the minority BJP government... In the Prime Minister's statement of having tackled 'bhay (fear), bhrashtachaar (corruption) and bhookh (hunger)' we wish to point out that fear was not an issue until May 11 [when India carried out its five nuclear tests] and that for the present regime hunger seems to be the last priority.

"The earlier stand that the tests are meant to be a deterrent has proved to be false. We now fear that when the BJP says that its nuclear policy stands vindicated they will use the excuse of the Pakistani tests to induct and deploy nuclear warheads, This will only lead to the escalation of tensions and the beginning of a nuclear arms race that no one can afford.

"We appeal to all Indians concerned with the peace and stability of the south Asian region to press the Government of India that they will not weaponise, instead India must lead the world in global disarmament by choosing to unilaterally dismantle its nuclear weapons program.

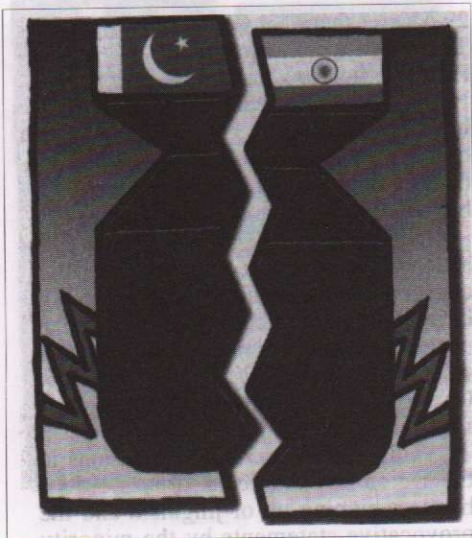
"We extend our hand of friendship and solidarity across the border to those Pakistani sisters and brothers who, like us, are challenging the anti-people policies of both governments of Pakistan and India."

## CPI(M) and CP(M) Shortsightedness

In a joint Press Statement issued on 29 May, the Communist Party Of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India said that Pakistan's nuclear tests "are not a vindication of the policy adopted by the BJP-led government as the Prime Minister has claimed, but an inevitable confirmation of how wrong has been the reversal of India's long-standing nuclear policy. It has undone the progress in establishing good neighbourly relations with our neighbours and securing peace in the region.

The short-sighted step taken by the Vajpayee government and the reaction of the Pakistani government is leading to the step by step escalation in the nuclear arms race in the subcontinent and its attendant tensions.

"Such a course is harmful to the peoples of both countries and will only



serve to divert attention and resources from the pressing and massive problems of poverty and underdevelopment in both India and Pakistan. While the BJP government has with its precarious majority undermined the sound foreign and nuclear policies being pursued, the Pakistani government, which faces more serious problems, will find it convenient to distract the people's attention. Any move to whip up tensions will only hamper and retard the prospects of economic and social progress of both countries.

"The Vajpayee government should not seek to rouse national chauvinism on a sensitive issue like nuclear weapons. It should immediately open a dialogue with the Pakistani government to defuse tensions."

According to the CPI(M) and the CPI, a national consensus can be developed only on the basis of five principles:

- India should not go for weaponisation and the Vajpayee government must not make or deploy nuclear weapons.
- The Indian government should immediately declare no first-use of nuclear weapons.
- The government should not proceed towards signing the CTBT
- India should step up efforts for universal nuclear disarmament
- the way forward in the current crisis should be discussed with all national political parties so that a common approach is formulated.

## Pakistan demos

Anti-India protesters hurled chairs and punches, breaking up a June 2<sup>nd</sup> news conference called by the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy on 2 June to protest against nuclear tests by both India and Pakistan. "Anybody who is friend of India is a traitor," chanted the protesters.

PIPFDP members denied the charge, and said they only wanted peace and opposed the nuclear arms race between the rival neighbours in South Asia. "We believe that no justification exists on earth

for either the initial tests by India or the retaliatory tests by Pakistan..." said a statement by the group, which has local groups of human rights and peace activists in both India and Pakistan.

It urged both countries to "abandon the destructive policy of producing nuclear weapons" sign a peace treaty as well as the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, settle their dispute on the Himalayan region of Kashmir, and cut military spending.

The protesters, carrying flags and banners of the right-wing Jamaat-i-Islami party and Shabab-i-Milli group, entered a hall at an Islamabad hotel where the news conference was in progress and threw chairs at the PIPFPD members, who were already facing aggressive questioning from local reporters. The news conference was abandoned because of the fracas. "Burn the Indian chambers (institutions), burn them," chanted the protesters.

The Lahore-based Women's Action Forum was one of the groups which condemned the attack, saying "we fully support the statement of the Forum and oppose this barbaric attempt to silence the voices of reason and sanity emanating from both sides of the border."

In a general climate of jingoistic support for nuclear tests, a joint statement issued by the national unions of Pakistani and Indian journalists urged the governments of the two countries to compete with each other in eradicating poverty and illiteracy rather than engage in an arms race. "We the working journalists of India and Pakistan appeal to both our governments not to build up tension in the subcontinent by participating in senseless arms race..." said the statement by Pakistan's Abdul Hameed Chhapra and India's K. Sreenivas Reddy.

In a related development, a group of law students held an anti-nuclear march in the Punjab provincial capital Lahore, where two other marches were held to welcome the Pakistani nuclear tests.

## ICS (4th International) Statement

### The mainstream left's nationalist hypocrisy

Following the Vajpayee government's testing of nuclear weapons in Pokhran, anti-nuclear groups and other activists have begun launching sporadic movements. The major left parties took three days to come out with a statement, in which they hailed Indian scientists, distancing that achievement from the BJP policy. This hypocrisy flows from their strident nationalist opposition to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), barely disguised as demands for north-south equality, etc.

In the years when the USSR existed, these parties, never opposed Soviet nuc-

lear weapons. So it is not surprising that they are not against nuclear weapons as such, but only against the timing, the stridency of the BJP's tone, and so on.

However, members of the main left parties did take part in the various demonstrations organised by other left groups and peace activists.

In Calcutta, home to a considerable anti-nuclear movement in the early and mid-1980s (in which members of the Indian Section of the Fourth international played an important role), a number of protest meetings and demonstrations were organised. These included a demonstration on the 16th May by a number of small groups, a public meeting on 21st May by the Indo-Pak Forum, a demonstration and open-air meeting by the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights on 22nd May, and a Citizen's convention on the same day.

Members of the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, Indian Section of the Fourth international, took part in all the programmes and distributed leaflets. At the Citizens' Convention, speakers included noted scientist Prof. Sujoy Basu, noted playwright Badal Sarkar, Santosh Rana (PCC CPIML leader), Santi Roy (trade unionist, associated with the Indian Chapter of Asia Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links), and Kunal Chattopadhyay of the ICS. Chattopadhyay warned that "fascist ultranationalism cannot be countered by trying to prove ourselves to be better nationalists, but through internationalism." He also stressed the importance of uniting the various efforts to build an anti-bomb, anti-nuclear movement.

ICS members active in the women's movement are working with the 34-organisation network Maitree (Friendship) in an attempt to unite the various initiatives into a major, united series of initiatives on 6th August.

The day after Pakistan's nuclear tests, members of the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements, the Peoples' Science Coordination Committee, the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, the Anti nuclear Forum, and Maitree were among those protested behind the banner, "Indian and Pakistani Rulers : Twin Warmongers".

In Gujarat, the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, the Narmada Bacha Andolan, the Lokshahi Hakka Sangathan, the women's organisation Sahiyar were already coming together to build a political alternative. As a result, they have protested together against the tests. The ICS statement has been widely publicised in the Gujarati and local English language press, as other parties are all supporting the tests, seeking only to minimise any political gains the BJP might try to extract from the tests. ★

The Inquilabi Communist Sangathan (ICS), Indian section of the Fourth International, is deeply involved in anti-nuclear work in Gujarat and West Bengal. They plan to bring out a booklet on nuclear power and the recent situation, and are producing posters and leaflets to mobilise for the 6th August protests. Donations to help their work can be sent to *International Viewpoint* via your local distributor or directly to our Paris office.

# China's surplus bureaucrats

"Institutional reform of the government bureaucracy." was Premier Zhu Rongji's first pledge to the 9th National People's Congress. Our China correspondent **Zhang Kai** explains what this really means.

**Luo Gan**, Chief Secretary of the State Council, told NPC delegates that the problem with the current government institution is the non-separation of political and economic administration. With the government's direct intervention in the production activities of the enterprises, it is difficult for market mechanisms to play their role. With redundant departments and multiple decision-making centres, efficiency is low.

Secondly, government departments basically manage economic and social affairs by administrative mechanisms, and there are many issues that should not or cannot be managed by the government. Hence, there should be division of responsibility and appropriate roles need to be clearly defined.

Thirdly, redundancy is acute, giving rise to bureaucratism, corruption and graft. This means a serious burden for state finance. Both at the central and provincial levels, a huge budget is spent on wages.

To provide statistical data to substantiate the need for reform, issue #4/98 of the State Council's magazine *Lookout* published a signed article in No.4 this year, stating that the ranks of the bureaucracy fed by the state are bulky and out of control. By the end of 1996, 36.73 million lived off the state, an increase of 82.2% compared to 1978. In this same period, China's population increased by 27.1%. If each bureaucrat received wages of 10,000 yuan a year (excluding housing, medical benefits, pension etc.), it would cost the state 360 billion yuan a year. This amounted to almost half the state's total financial budget.

There was a fairly ambitious institutional reform in 1993. But five years later, the bureaucracy has grown by over 5 million staff. The Finance Department has increased its revenues by 100 billion yuan per year since 1993, but all the increase has been exhausted by the cadre salaries on the "royal" payroll. (Hong Kong's *Ming Pao*, 8 March 1998)

This does not include the cost to the Chinese economy of the corruption, graft and extravagance of these bureaucrats.

The reform now promised by the State Council claims to be "a revolution". But its targets and methods show that it is only a lukewarm whitewashing. The number of departments will be cut from 40 to 29, and

the total number of units in the State Council will be reduced from 85 to 83. The planned elimination of half the cadres (about 30,000 within the State Council, and 4 million at different regional and local levels within three years) will be carried out by re-allocating cadre to institutions in industry, commerce, finance, market management, taxation, culture, education, or health, while protecting their grade and salary.

This in effect means that the state bureaucracy will be trimmed down while other institutions will swell. The latter will come under further leadership or intervention of Party/state cadres, and there will be even more collusion between the state and the commercial sectors. With China's traditions of favoritism and factional struggles, this streamlining will also offer good pretexts for the top leadership to get rid of rivals or dissidents.

This reform cannot contribute seriously to radical democratic reform of the political institution. The reform scheme mentions only the separation of political institution from enterprises, with no mention at all of the separation of the Party and the state functions. From the state to the enterprises, actual leadership is still held in the hands of the ruling Party and its cadres.

The power and privileges enjoyed by the Party/state bureaucracy since its inception in the early fifties have been expanding. The entire bureaucracy is unscathed by the many campaigns on streamlining throughout these decades. Deng Xiaoping's 1982 words "Streamlining is a revolution" have frequently been quoted to stress the state's determination for reform. Yet, all the reforms conducted by the bureaucracy on itself have been partial, mild, and ineffective.

For a revolution on the bureaucracy to be truly conducted, the masses need to be mobilised and the state apparatus broken down in order for the resistance of the interest-vested bureaucrats to be crushed. If the people remain powerless in decision-making on political and economic matters, there cannot be any true revolution.

Luo Gan, Chief Secretary of the State Council, blames the planned economy for the failure of previous attempts at reform of the bureaucracy.

In other words, the promised streamlining of the bureaucracy will go hand in hand with a further strengthening of the capitalist market economy. One aim of the current reform is to return more sovereignty to the enterprises, to set them free from bureaucratic intervention. Power is to be delegated of course to the leadership and not the workers.

Meanwhile, massive layoff of workers continues to be on the agenda. It is reported that the current number of workers "temporarily laid off" had increased from 8-9 million at the end of 1997 to 13 million in February 1998.

According to Lin Yongsan, deputy minister of the Labour Department, there are 130 million surplus workers in the countryside and 20m. redundant workers from state enterprises.

Every year, 7-8m. young people join the labour force, and 5.7m. urban workers become unemployed. In other words, about 170m. people are looking, unsuccessfully, for work. (*Ming Pao*, 8 March 1998)

According to Hu Angan of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the real urban unemployment rate is about 7.5%, amounting to perhaps 35m. people. (*Apple Daily*, 28 February 1998) Furthermore, in the next three years, half a million soldiers will be discharged.

One way the government intends to shift the burden is to force women to return home. According to the March 3rd *China Daily*, the All-China Federation of Women, usually a passive follower of government policy, recently protested about the replacement of 3-month paid maternity leave by a no-pay system allowing absence of one to five years. This would cost women workers a loss of seniority and even their jobs. ★



# The reality of family life

Stephanie Coontz is one of America's leading radical authors on the contemporary family. We asked her about the myth and reality of US family life

**• There seems to be a media frenzy about how families have changed in literally a single generation, sometimes harkening back to a golden era, which you say never really existed. Can you give us a portrait of then to now.**

There's been a lot of hand-wringing over the changes that have been happening with families, and on the other hand there's been a lot of denial. The debate is distorted in two seemingly opposite but related ways. In the first place people overestimate how much has changed: They look at today's problems and pose them against a background of some golden age, when elders were taken care of by their families, women and children were always protected and everything was just hunkey-dory inside families.

So on the one hand you have this exaggeration of how things have changed and how much has gone wrong. On the other hand, usually among the same people, there's a total denial of the truly novel and largely irreversible changes, such as women's entry into the work force, the growing diversity of family life, and the fact that marriage is no longer the only way through which gender roles get organised and care-taking of young and old takes place.

The result of this clash between denial and exaggeration is to divert attention from the constructive things we can do to build on the gains we've made in the expansion of personal options and minimise the losses associated with the decline in family stability, especially in the access of children to both parents.

**• So the whole hype about the '50s and '60s "good old days" is about denial?**

Only partly. I understand why many people are nostalgic for the 1950s. This is sometimes hard to understand for people who got the downside of the '50s—for African Americans, for women stuck in really toxic marriages, for victims of incest or abuse—when society was in total denial about their problems and needs, and for them there was no place to go.

But many working-class families might think, yes, the 1950s were a better time, or at least an easier time, to form and sustain families. This has less to do with the family arrangements and gender roles, which were often very repressive, than

with the fact that there were a lot more economic and political support systems for families.

Forty percent of young men coming home from World War II were able to get very generous veterans' benefits, not like the recent ones for Vietnam and Gulf War veterans. Government paid up to \$500 a year for tuition, and in those days that would pay the entire tuition even at an elite private college. In addition, college retooled to accommodate this new generation of students—creating new orientation classes, new ways of teaching, new support systems, in a real affirmative action programme.

This and other programs such as home ownership subsidies—a dollar down for veterans—took an entire generation of young men—many who had never even aspired to go to college—and bumped them into the middle class by paying for their entire college education and by helping them to purchase homes.

It was also economically an easier period if you were employed: Rates of unionisation were higher, real wages were rising. Poverty was actually higher than it is today, but it was falling rather than increasing. Real wages of the bottom 20% of the population were increasing faster than real wages for more affluent Americans, and social inequality was decreasing.

There was a greater sense of hope for the future and a greater sense of social trust, even among many African Americans who could look at the progress of the civil rights movement. So I understand why people look back to the period with some nostalgia. But the successes of the period lay in the support systems for families, not in the families themselves.

People forget the downside as well: Fewer kids graduated from high school in the '50s than today, and there was no place for disabled kids, who were often stuck in institutions that were absolutely horrible. There was daily violence, including brutal beatings and even killings, of African Americans who tried to use public space in the cities.

Still, people had some hope, and after the hardships of the Depression and the war the showrooms and grocery stores and TV ads suggested that a decent, comfortable, even leisured life was within their reach. Even people who wouldn't want to put up with the conformity and the gender roles and the political repression of the era can therefore look back and think that life seems to have been easier then.

But what gets forgotten, when the politicians and conservative pundits encourage people to take this as a model of how to live today, is that there is something hypo-

critical in telling us to live like 1950s families in a 1990s economy—when government support systems for families are about the level of that in the 1850s.

**• People were very excited when Clinton became president and got the Family Medical Leave Act passed.**

Of course it's an improvement, but look at the Act and how long it took to get through Congress, and the fact that what we ended up with—twelve weeks maximum leave, lower than the minimum provided by all of our European counterparts—and it covers only 50% of U.S. workers. It's also unpaid, which means that the people who probably most need time off to spend with their kids instead of sending them to day-care centres or home care situations that may well be inadequate, are precisely the people who can't afford it.

We need much stronger and more extensive programs to deal with the new demands of care-giving in our speeded-up, winner take all, devil-take-the-hindmost economy. Employers can no longer expect that they get one employee to work for them full-time, while that employee has someone at home to take care of the household full time. Three-quarters of American mothers are in the workforce.

But it's not just being responsible for kids. There's also more responsibility now for ageing parents. One out of every four households in America is providing substantial time to an ageing parent—triple the number of what it was just a decade ago.

We have to adjust our work policies and our social investment to deal with these kind of changes. And the fact that it took twenty years to get this totally inadequate act just shows us how much the family values rhetoric is just —rhetoric.

**• How many people can take advantage of this 12 week unpaid leave?**

Some companies are doing very innovative things for their professional and managerial employees. Unfortunately most of them do not apply to the two-thirds of American workers who make less than \$30,000 a year. (£18,750)

So the result is that women who are trying to cobble together some individual solution often end up quitting work.

Women still earn less than men, so it makes more sense for the family for the woman to leave the work force and assume the responsibility. That leads to a woman's further disadvantaging herself because if a person stays out of the workforce six months or longer, she never catches up.

And it doesn't end there. Often, the

woman quits again if there is a problem during the teenage years or when a parent needs care-taking. As a result, only 9% of women aged 40 or older who are now in the workforce can expect to get job-related retirement benefits.

### • How do single women cope? What proportion of the workforce are we talking about?

The divorce rate peaked in the '70s and has actually gone down some, but there's a cumulative effect. Fifty percent of all American children are not being raised in a home where the two biological parents are present. We are talking about a lot of people who are affected by our refusal to recognise that the nuclear family can no longer—to the extent that it ever did at all—be expected to provide caregiving on the basis of lifetime marriage and blood ties.

Conservatives often blame the transformation of family life and needs on divorce, arguing that if we'd just take marriage more seriously, people would stay together, women and kids would be supported. But this is not true.

While I think it is true that divorce has hurt some women—particularly those who played by the old rules, and then find that the men have thrown out the old rules and have established no new rules, and who then get left—the fact is that divorce is a very important option for women. That's why 60% of divorces are initiated by women.

Traditionally, if a man was dissatisfied with the marriage he could have an affair and say to the wife, "You have to take it or leave it because you are economically dependent on me." Now, women don't have to take it, and many of them are not. Nor do they have to take a situation where they are doing their fair share of the income earning and men won't do their fair share of the housework and childcare.

Why do more marriages end in divorce? Part of it is because of increasing freedom and options, and part is because of women's entry into the work force. Women are economically independent now, they don't have to get married, they don't have to stay married.

The result is that if you do want to save more marriages, you've got to reorganise and modernise marriage. You've got to make it a better deal for women.

### • Modernise marriage in what ways?

We know that one of the major causes of stress in marriage is the failure of men to do their full share at home. Women have changed their work roles very quickly, and men have not.

I want to say, in justice to men, that individuals are doing a better job than institutions in adapting to these changes. Although men don't do as much child care and housework as women do, the gap has been halved since the 1960s. 49% of couples say they do share equally as opposed to only 28% twenty years ago.

So there are more marriages that are a

truly equal proposition than ever before. That's probably why the divorce rate is down some from its peak in the late 1970s. And it could fall a little lower if people continue to negotiate more equal relationships. But conservatives and liberals are kidding themselves if they think that either repression or better communication will substantially reduce the divorce rate.

The U.S. divorce rate has been rising steadily since 1899. This is no sudden thing caused by the 1960s student rebellion or the women's movement. If you graph the rise of divorce over the first fifty years of the century it's right where you'd expect it to be.

Divorce has to be seen as an issue that has complicated trade-offs. There are clearly cases where it's used as a substitute for working at a commitment, and where one or both parents just walks away from their obligations to kids. But there are at least as many cases where it's a vital resource for people trapped in toxic relationships, and that's sometimes better for kids than the parents staying together.

Another trend that's kind of a good news/bad news gain is that the parent penalty and the stresses of combining work and family are no longer just confined to women. More and more men are wanting to spend more time with their families. The bad news, of course, is that neither of us gets to do that; the good news is that we are developing a larger constituency to demand reforms from politicians and from work.

### • What kind of institutional support do you think we should call for?

I'm talking about parental leave, flexitime, health insurance, laws that enable parents or caretakers to be able to drop down to three-quarter time work without losing benefits or seniority.

As a country we also have to think about our definitions of productivity and job sharing. We have to rediscover things like Kellogg's six-hour day, which actually improved productivity. We have to invest in decent, high-quality child care that's available to everyone. That's all at the institutional level and I think that will save more marriages.

But the other side of it is to realise that there's a bottom limit to the number of people who can be forced to get married and how many marriages can be forced to stay together. And there should be a bottom limit because sometimes it's important to the individuals—and to the children—to get out of those marriages.

There is no way we can coerce people into staying together. So at the same time as we modernise marriage—and this shocks the family values people—we have to normalise divorce.

We have to make divorce less traumatic, less acrimonious, we have to make sure that people understand that just because you've ended a relationship with another adult, your obligations to the kids don't end. It's not a deal where you can just walk away when you've lost the

sexual services of the spouse.

This is the problem with the family values approach to these issues, of course. They seek a simplistic, one-size-fits-all answer to the dilemmas facing families. The truth is, though, that there are a lot of areas where we have to work simultaneously, or on different levels, or even in seemingly contradictory ways, such as extending greater options for parents of new kids to stay home and also expanding the amount and quality of the care available to infants.

### • In the welfare reform debate, we see the state wanting to give up its role in caretaking of those left aside, by going after "deadbeat dads" and stigmatising those on welfare—especially teenage mothers.

I can understand people's anxiety about the welfare system. In fact it has developed in the most convoluted way to help people out. It forces them into behaviours that are indeed counterproductive—for instance, you're forced to lie, you're forced not to save money. If you are somehow able to "work under the table" and save some money, immediately your welfare grant is cut.

So of course people lie, of course they cheat, and of course they develop habits that are in the long run not very helpful to holding down a steady job and planning effectively for the future. They're not allowed to develop those habits by the same institutions and the same people who berate them for not having such habits.

What conservatives who like to talk about the work ethic conveniently forget is that our welfare system developed as a substitute for a commitment to providing full employment.

The UAW promoted a full employment act back in the 1940s and there was a lot of grassroots support for it, but the politicians and corporations decided it was a lot cheaper to write checks than create jobs.

I'm absolutely for the idea that it's better for people to have jobs. I don't think one can say "someone on welfare can stay home for three years with their kids" when most working-class and middle-class women can't afford to do that.

But if you're going to ask people to have jobs before they can live, then you'd better make sure there are jobs. And if you're going to ask mothers—particularly single mothers without much education, and many of whom end up on welfare because of domestic violence—to get jobs, you better make sure there are support systems and high-quality child care in place. And that's the problem with welfare "reform"—there aren't those systems in place.

### • What can be done to change from a punitive attitude to being supportive?

I have a Chinese friend who once commented to me that she felt the most important thing to do was to have preventive

policies—to prevent people from getting too close to a cliff they might fall off, but that in America it seemed nothing was done to build fences along paths on top of cliffs. Instead, she argued, Americans only throw support lines to people once they've actually fallen off and it is too late. Plus they penalise the people who walked too near the edge. I think that's a very good analogy to the welfare system.

The result is that our society is penny wise and pound foolish. We spend \$20,000 a year—or more—to keep a kid in jail, when we won't invest in after-school programmes and job creation for adolescents that might have done away with the need to put them in jail.

Part of the problem that leads to our punitive mentality is the narrow definition of morality that we have in America. Americans tend not to understand the complex relationship between situations, contexts, behaviours and values.

I just read a fascinating study of the homeless. Ethnographers traced the way people who become homeless change. Almost all of them, when they become homeless, don't want to be homeless. They think of themselves as workers, as better than the other homeless.

They go through a period of ignoring the other homeless. They try to keep their shirts ironed and show up for work. Finally, though, they began to slip out of their old habits, often simply in order to survive. They become what the researchers call "scrabblers." They try to hang on to older customs or ways of behaving but they have to cut some corners. And they have to make alliances with the people or con games they once despised in order to survive.

And sure enough, after a couple of years they begin to develop behaviours that we would consider, if you have a job, as not very constructive. But that's not what made them homeless in the first place; it's a response to the realities of having to adapt to an extremely disorganised kind of life.

Americans tend to forget something we all know about our own kids: people develop habits when they are reinforced for doing so, and they lose them when they get no reinforcement. So we'll look at a group or an individual and won't consider the experiences and conditions that underlie their values and behaviours.

Many people won't contextualise these behaviours and will say they are these because of everything—if the homeless or jobless or welfare recipients would just pull up their socks and stick out their chin and put their nose to the grindstone (quite an acrobatic thing)—they could pull them-

selves out of their situation.

### • Teenage mothers—and teenagers in general—face a lot of pressures today

One of the things I feel passionately about is not just the way we have impoverished teenagers, but the way we are beginning to demonise all teenagers in this country.

A few months ago, *People* magazine had a cover story called "Kids without a Conscience." They lumped together a young Black man who killed his teacher in New York; a Belleville middle-class thrill crime; and the middle-class girl in New Jersey who dumped her baby at the prom.

Well, you can always create an epidemic if you do that sort of thing. In fact, child killing by young mothers is lower than it's ever been in American history.

Look at the crime rates of young people. They go up in direct relationship to how many kids were living in poverty a decade before.

At the same time, there is an increasing alienation of all teenagers because as we demonise them, we've also been excluding them from public life. We talk about the gentrification of public space, there's also been an adultification of public space and social roles.

Teenagers' sexual maturity has never occurred earlier, their economic maturity has probably never been later. In between we tell parents to keep them in this holding pen where they have no constructive role to play and then we wonder why they're resentful and why there are all these problems between teens and their parents.

### • And there's another Catch 22 to it: We blame working mothers for not being at home looking after them.

Absolutely, when in fact historically this is not the issue. We have time studies that show parents spend as much time with their teens as they ever did. What teens have lost—and this is one of the few places I will get nostalgic for the past—is access to adults beyond their parents. This is a particular problem for boys, but it's hard on all kids.

At this stage parents are not the best people to teach and socialise with kids. Teenagers need to be working alongside other adults, who don't have a parental emotional tie with them. Teenagers have lost access to people like that, and they're hungry for it.

When you add all those problems and dilemmas plus the increasing sexualisation of our society, which has proceeded without wiping out the old double standard, just making the double standard

harder to negotiate for young girls; put that together with blighted communities and a poor educational system, and you've got a recipe for what we do have: the highest teenage abortion and birth rate in the industrial world.

Of course this is concentrated among young teens, impoverished teens, those with poor educational prospects and those who also face abuse at home—an astonishing proportion of these teenage girls have experienced some form of abuse.

So there's a situation where liberals and conservatives battle over whether we should pass out condoms or preach abstinence, but the best deterrent to teenage childbearing is to have access to good educational and job prospects. People don't plan well for the future when they don't think they have one.

Instead states are implementing punitive stuff, saying "you can't have any more money if you have another child out of wedlock" or you have to get married—which is really bad advice, because young teenage marriages are much more apt to have high conflict in them.

A recent study showed that the reading scores for children whose mother had a baby out of wedlock and then married the father are lower than the reading scores of children whose teenage mothers didn't marry the father. When people are pressured into marriage, they are more likely to set up a high conflict home situation.

### • What kinds of policy changes could really help?

We've talked about some of them: The need to fight for paid parental leave and, simultaneously, high quality child care, to get programmes at work that allow for flex time. We need national health insurance, that shouldn't be dependent on whether you have a job, or if you are married to someone who has a job.

I'm always stunned by the debate over gay marriages in this particular way: Why should who I sleep with determine whether I get health insurance?

We also have to fight for equal pay for equal work, because despite a lot of propaganda to the contrary, women are still paid less. It's not just a "glass ceiling" question. For most women it's a question of getting off the ground floor. Unequal pay is a problem for women at all income and education levels, especially if they are parents, but it's the biggest problem for those who are concentrated at the bottom of the pay scale. ★

Stephanie Coontz is the author of two recent books on the American family, *The Way We Never Were* (Basic Books, 1992) and *The Way We Really Are* (Basic Books, 1997). She was interviewed by Susan Weissman for the KPFFK (Los Angeles) radio programme "Beneath the Surface." This article reprinted from and © *Against the Current*

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# Booknotes

## Between Marxism and Pragmatism

**Christopher Phelps, Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist.** Cornell University Press. Ithaca, New York, 1997. 257 pp. and illustrations. \$35.

By Alan Wald

*Young Sidney Hook* is Christopher Phelps' brilliantly lucid portrait of the one-time Marxist philosopher and revolutionary activist, adversarial by temperament, who turned his extraordinary powers of analysis and polemic successively against capitalism, Stalinism and the New Left.

Although Hook (1902-1989) ended up receiving the "Medal of Freedom," the highest civilian honour in the US, from President Reagan, he started out life as the son of a poor tailor in Brooklyn, New York. The son's first name was changed from Saul to Sidney in an effort to shake off the Jewish immigrant past when he began public school.

A radical student at the City College of New York, Hook became totally devoted to philosophy while doing graduate work at Columbia University. In 1927 he was hired by the Philosophy Department at New York University, becoming its chair in 1934. This remained his home base until his 1973 retirement, after which he took up residence at the conservative Hoover Institute in Palo Alto. When Hook died at age eighty-seven, he left a confused, and variously appropriated, legacy that demands the attention of all those who seek to extend the revolutionary socialist tradition into the twenty-first century.

Any leftist who tries to understand Hook's political and philosophical trajectory will be haunted by questions such as the following: How could someone who set out to rescue the democratic, activist and self-emancipatory elements of Marxism end up in the camp of reaction? Was his anti-Stalinist critique flawed from the outset? Was Hook's goal of redeeming the experimental features of pragmatism for the Marxist project the scratch that evolved into full-blown gangrene?

Partisans of the Cold War and the "neo-conservative" Hook have explained his evolution as the triumph of American pragmatism over Marxist dogma. Those who wrote sympathetically of the early Hook from the radical generation of the 1960s, such as Paul Buhle (*Marxism in the USA*, 1987) and myself (*The New York Intellectuals*, 1987), have seen Hook's pragmatism as the vehicle by which he facilitated his political transmogrification. Phelps now argues compellingly, and with

a wealth of documentation, that the emancipatory features of Hook's 1930s Marxism were made possible by the influence of pragmatism, and that his pragmatism suffered when Hook progressively abandoned Marxism in the late 1930s.

Hook's own efforts to ensure the memory of his version of this legacy have added to the confusion. Not only did he actively suppress the republication of his most extraordinary Marxist study, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (1933), which will finally be reissued next year by Prometheus Press with an introduction by Phelps. Hook also issued a long autobiography, *Out of Step* (1987), that is misleading about his political record—although more along the garden-variety technique of omission and select emphasis than through outright falsification. The autobiography also fails to fully address the complexities of his philosophical thought and its development over the decades. Thus Phelps' study is an indispensable correction as well as fresh contribution in these areas.

In five chapters of forty or fifty pages each, Phelps demarcates key moments in Hook's career. From the Russian Revolution until 1930, Hook was clearly sympathetic to the international and US Communist movements. In these years he carried out studies under philosophers Morris Cohen and John Dewey, polemicised against the heretical Max Eastman (who held that Hegel corrupted Marxism), and conducted research on Marxist philosophy in Europe and the USSR.

For the next three years, 1930-33, Hook attempted to establish his own original Leninist viewpoint, culminating in *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*. This brought down on his head the wrath of orthodox members and leaders of the Communist Party, especially the future "cultural commissar," V. J. Jerome, and coincided with Hook's growing attraction to Trotskyism.

From 1933 to 1936, Hook fomented a revolutionary Marxism independent of the Party, and he personally sought to develop new revolutionary organisations. This is especially evidenced in his championing of a fusion between J. Muste's American Workers Party and the Communist League of America (Trotskyist), followed by his promotion of the entry of the new organisation into the Socialist Party. Simultaneously he wrote a second Marxist classic, *From Hegel to Marx* (1936), to which Phelps provides an illuminating introduction for the 1994 paperback reprint by Columbia University Press.

After that time, a new and distinct kind of political evolution was in progress, somewhat characteristic of a trend in the late 1930s, but not of intellectuals properly subsumed under the aegis of the Popular Front. While Hook devoted himself to defending Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Purge Trials and excoriating Popular Front reformism, his ties to the revolutionary socialist movement itself progressively unravelled. Phelps theorises 1938 as the year of Hook's "turnabout," in the sense that he made an unacknowledged shift to

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the defence of capitalism and imperialism as the only alternatives to the threats of Stalinism and Hitlerism.

From then until 1973, when Phelps' narrative ends, Hook's story is the depressing tale of a tenured ex-radical devoting his position and talents to developing liberal-sounding arguments to rationalise conservative causes. His most famous polemic, which eclipsed his contributions to philosophy among the broader public, was *Heresy, Yes—Conspiracy, No!* (1950). This was aimed at purging teachers who, like his younger self, were sympathetic to the Communist cause. Phelps' argument focuses convincingly on the transformation of the concept of "democracy" in Hook from a legitimate critique of bureaucratized socialist movement (as well as capitalism) into an increasingly abstract weapon of polemic that masked his growing alliances with some of the very social forces he once opposed.

Phelps' focus on the "young" Sidney Hook is a compelling choice. The problem in Hook scholarship to date is that it is driven too often by those who assess the early and most important writings according to their opinions of his later evolution. Conservatives downplay Hook's Leninist critique of the Communist movement and the revolutionary Marxist principles to which he attempted to assimilate pragmatism. Radicals fixate on his red-baiting career and some make the mistake of confusing his Marxist anti-Stalinism with Cold War liberalism.

Phelps takes us through the maze of Hook's evolution with even-handedness and attention to detail. Indeed, the illuminating explanation of Hook's political and philosophical journey takes the form of nearly a sub-chapter on each year between 1927 and 1940. This attention to nuances and subtleties pays off impressively when Phelps passes judgement on alternative claims, not only on intellectual matters but personal ones, too. For example, he seems eminently fair-minded in handling contradictory stories about Hook's alleged Party membership, and the role of Hook's first wife (a minor Party functionary from whom he separated as he departed from Stalinism). In treating Hook's later years, Phelps use of restraint rather than vitriol sets a high standard, and is probably more effective in getting the point across. His treatment of Hook's complex relation to Trotskyism is a model for explaining how intellectuals can relate to ideologies and organisations along a changing spectrum of possibilities. The same approach surely needs to be applied to many intellectuals

in relation to the Communist Party.

Equally impressive is the answer Phelps offers to the charge that pragmatism was the cause of Hook's downfall. The book aims to clarify Dewey's use of "instrumentalism" and "science" to show how, in fact, pragmatism was helpful in Hook's rescue of the emancipatory features of Marxism from Stalinist and Social Democratic trends. In a masterful conclusion, Phelps returns Hook to the tradition of Western Marxism, albeit as a unique variant distinguished by his period of activism, his internationalism (connected with his rejection of the leadership of the USSR as synonymous with the Left), the "crystalline clarity in his prose" (which can be said of Phelps as well) and his attempt to rescue rather than redefine classical Marxism. Hook's flaws are addressed as well, especially his over-emphasis on "plans of action" as the explanation for success or failure in history. This aided his rightward evolution as he turned toward a moral condemnation of Lenin and Trotsky as the ones responsible for the degeneration of the Russian Revolution into a dictatorship.

Thus, political narrative of Young Sidney Hook is also a fine addition to the literature of deradicalisation, and a welcome alternative to those relying on the simplistic theme of "selling out." ★

Alan Wald is a member of the US socialist organisation Solidarity, and of the editorial boards of *Against the Current* and *Science & Society*. This review is adapted from a longer version that will appear in *Monthly Review*.

### Thinking fuzzy

*Fuzzy Logic: Dispatches from the Information Revolution*, Matthew Friedman, Vehicule Press, Montreal (1997).

### Reviewed by Sam Scott

Matthew Friedman writes about the "Information Revolution" from a critical, yet pro-technology, standpoint. He plays up the positive potential of the new technologies while criticising the corporate agenda that drives their development. For the general reader, *Fuzzy Logic* is a good antidote to the self-serving hype of Bill Gates and the legions of utopian futurists. But, for activists who want to organise against the corporate agenda, the book is not so helpful.

Although Friedman views technology as a social product, he rejects any notion that resistance to the corporate agenda should involve resistance to its techno-

logies. He treats all opposition to technology with contempt. For him, there is no middle ground between utopian futurism and hippie technophobia, and although he is sympathetic to the plight of workers in the Information Revolution, he ultimately judges resistance to be futile. Instead, we are encouraged to accept information technology as a new battleground upon which we can engage in a kind of "information activism".

In fact, Friedman is so impressed with the use of the Internet by the likes of Zapatistas and anti-Nazi crusader Ken McVay that he tends to view social struggle in highly idealistic terms. He uses phrases like "information guerrillas" and "virtual street fighting" to describe the battle of ideas on-line. For him, the Internet has surpassed the role of communication medium, and has become a whole new arena of struggle. He gives the work of activists in the real world a back seat to their on-line communication strategies, and suggests that organising demonstrations and strikes may no longer be necessary in the information age.

Granted, information technology has provided a suite of powerful new tools for activists. New communications and publishing potentials are something that all activists should take seriously. However, whether we are organising against neo-Nazis or against a repressive government the root of a successful strategy remains our ability to engage large numbers of people in radical actions. We also need to remain open to the idea that not all technology is necessarily a good thing, especially in the workplace. In some circumstances it is appropriate to take advantage of new technology in our organising, while in others, it is more appropriate to make new technology the target of our organising efforts.

If you are tired of over-hyped futurist predictions about information technology, Friedman's approach will be a welcome relief and will help arm you with new arguments to burst the futurists' bubble. But, if you want a book that addresses the information technology concerns of socialists and activists in the real world, you will need to look somewhere else. ★

This review first appeared in *New Socialist* (Canada)

### Mexico Motors

Maria Cristina Bayon, *El sindicalismo automotriz mexicano frente a un nuevo escenario: una perspectiva desde los liderazgos*. Mexico: FLACSO and Juan Pablos Editor, 1997. 207 pages.

### Reviewed by Dan La Botz

Mexico's auto industry is central to the country's economy. In 1994 Mexico ranked 12th among 15 countries which produced 92 percent of all cars. Mexico has 20 assembly plants in 11 states, 500 autoparts plants, and 1,000 distributors. Between 1990 and 1995 the auto industry invested more than seven billion dollars in

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### Factory committees and workers' control in Petrograd in 1917

David Mandel

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Mexico. The industry represents 10% of the gross national product, and in 1994 generated 35% of manufacturing export and 18% of total exports. Auto exports are second only to petroleum in their importance to the economy. The Mexican auto industry is dominated by foreign multinational corporations such as Ford, General Motors, Volkswagen and Nissan. The only important Mexican company is Dina.

Bayon explains that Mexican auto workers have no national auto workers' union, but rather find themselves divided into company or plant unions which keep workers isolated. Bayon delivers a scathing criticism of Mexico's "corporative" labour unions such as the Confederation of Mexico Workers (CTM) which are controlled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party and the Mexican government.

Bayon shows how these authoritarian unions, working with the government and the employers, made it nearly impossible for Mexican workers to resist the restructuring of the national economy and of the auto industry during the 1980s and 90s.

During those years employers in Mexico introduced new technologies, and new forms of work organisation such as quality circles and team concept. But without genuine labour unions to negotiate these issues, Mexican workers found that they were expected to work harder, for longer hours, and at a faster pace while accepting lower wages.

The few more democratic or independent unions could not fight alone, nor did they have an adequate strategy to do so. The result has been that the auto workers remain weak, divided, unable to win higher wages and with unions that have little presence in the plant.

Bayon describes how the old, authoritarian unions allied with the PRI declined during the 1980s, and how the corporations succeeded in imposing a unilateral relationship, dictating terms to the unions. Her alternative is the creation of a new more democratic union movement, with both national and international ties; strong independent unions which take up the issue of productivity, and negotiate co-operation in improving productivity, as a way of creating a really bilateral relationship between the corporations and the workers.

While having learned much from Bayon's description, we reject her prescription. We would suggest there is another alternative: a radical, democratic labour movement which fights to suppress competition through national and international co-operation, while at the same time striving to take control over production, quality and decision making away from management.

The long term goal of the labour movement should not be a bilateral union-corporation relationship, but a different unilateral relationship, one where working people democratically manage a collectively owned and controlled economy. ★

## coming soon

### Neo-Liberalism, The IMF, And International Solidarity

Seoul, South Korea, July 3-5, 1998

Sponsored by a range of progressive organizations, including the KCTU, Action Network for International Solidarity, PICIS Newsletter, and Solidarity for Democracy and Progress.

For more information, contact PICIS Newsletter at 1578-3, Woosung Bldg. 5F, Shilim1Dong, Kwanak-Ku, Seoul, Korea. Fax: ++82 2 839 4359 Phone: ++82 2 837 2853. <hanboss@nownuri.net> <hanboss@mail.nownuri.net>

<http://kpd.sing-kr.org/~picis>

### International socialist youth camp

Jutland, Denmark. 25-31 July

See below for details.

### Trade Unions, homosexuality & work

Amsterdam, 29-31 July 1998

The 1998 International Conference on Trade Unions, Homosexuality and Work provides a forum for lesbian and gay trade unionists to exchange information, policies and strategies. For full details see *International Viewpoint* #298 or contact the organisers.

PO Box 732, NL 2700 AL, Zoetermeer, Netherlands. Tel: +31-30-273 2627. fax: 271 0512. E-mail: <modijk@knoware.nl> utopia.knoware.nl/users/modijk

### Solidarity Summer School

Chicago, USA. 3-6 August

The US socialist and feminist group will hold its annual summer school at the usual venue. The group's convention will run from 7-9 August.

### LCR Summer School

Grenoble, France, August 26-30

Cost: 959FF including accommodation and all meals. Youth/unemployed discount available. Contact: LCR, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France. Tel. +33.1.48 70 42 20. Email <redaction@lcr-rouge.org>

### EuroMarch summer meeting

Halkidiki, Greece, August 31- Sept. 6

The Greek EuroMarch Committee is sponsoring this first meeting as a unique opportunity for 100 Greek and 100 west European leftist trade union

and social movement leaders to exchange and discuss their unique experiences in relation to the main problems that social movements and trade unions are facing today in western Europe. We also plan to give a special Balkan dimension to our initiative, by inviting 50 representatives of trade unions and social movements from the region.

Subjects for discussion include: Financial austerity • unemployment • The dissolution of the social state and the alternative solutions • European and national policies for work • Privatisation and unemployment in eastern and western Europe • Fortress Europe: immigrants, racism, and unemployment • Women and neo-liberal policies • Youth and social exclusion • Rebirth of the Balkan trade union movements • unity of working people beyond national divisions in the Balkans • Participants can propose additional themes for discussion.

The Network of European Marches against Unemployment unites more than 1,200 small and large organisations and movements, including trade unions, unemployed movements, groups representing the homeless and socially excluded, anti-fascist, anti-racist ecologist and feminist organisations as well as political parties from all 15 member states of the European Union.

The summer meeting will take place at the Akti Philippeion hotel, Halkidiki 60 km from Thessaloniki airport. To register contact the Greek organisers at 62 Academias Street, 5th floor, Athens 10679, Greece. Tel.: (+30 1) 3619513 Fax: 3619610. E-mail <rozamit@internet.gr>

A deposit of 50% of accommodation costs should be sent to account number 101-002101-763243, Alpha Credit Bank, 40 Stadiou Street, 10252 Athens, Greece. Fax: 32 65 438. Do so before 1 July to ensure you have a place! Accommodation, including breakfast, costs 5,850 Drs./US\$19 per person per day in a twin-bed room, 4,750 Drs./\$17 in a triple room. Camping space costs \$4 per person per day.

### Latin American Marxist Magazines

Buenos Aires, 25-27 September

Focus on "the Communist Manifesto in Latin America Today."

Contact Alberto Teszkiewicz at <marxlat@dia.edu.ar>

## International Youth Camp '98

The 15th European camp of youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth International will take place in Jutland, Denmark, on 25-31 July. Participation costs US\$100-200, depending on your country of residence.

For more details see last month's issue of

International Viewpoint.

For more information contact your International Viewpoint distributor or write to SAP, Box 547, Nørre Allé 11 A, DK-2200, Copenhagen N. fax +45-35373217. E-mail <socinf@inet.uni2.dk>

4. INTERNATIONALE/SAP  
**INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTISK UNGDOMSLEJR '98**



### Imprints vol.2, no.3

The March 1998 issue includes an interview with Michael Rosen, author of *On Voluntary Servitude* (Polity 1997), and articles by Kai Nielsen, on 'Socialism and Nationalism' • Vittorio Bufacchi on 'Reasonable Agreement,' Alex Coram on 'Socialist Distribution' • Keith Graham reviews Pettit on Republicanism • Judith Squires reviews Lister on Citizenship and Iain Gault reviews Diamond on History.

Those interested in contributing should contact the editor at 9 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TB, Britain, or <C.Bertram@bris.ac.uk>

Subscription (for 3 Issues) in the EU costs £15 (student/unemployed £10), institutions £30. Rest of world: £30/US\$40 (individuals), £60/US\$80 (institutions). Write, with cheque, to 58 Wilmer Drive, Bradford, BD9 4AS, Britain. Or consult the website:

[info.bris.ac.uk/~plcdib/imprints.html](http://info.bris.ac.uk/~plcdib/imprints.html)

### Revolutionary History

The latest issue, *A Paradise for the Bourgeoisie?*, focuses on Belgium. It contains a number of letters by Trotsky on Belgian issues, taken from the *Oeuvres* and never previously published in English, together with history and accounts of pre-war Belgium Trotskyists, with bibliographical introductions. There is also an account of the 1961 General strike, and the positions taken by the various Trotskyist tendencies.

To order by mail send £8.15 (Britain), £8.85 (Europe), £10.85 (N.America, Sri Lanka) or £11.35 (Australia, New Zealand & Japan) to Socialist Platform Ltd, BCM 7646, London WC1N 3XX, Britain. Credit card orders are also welcome by fax. (+44 171) 263 5196 or E-mail <tcrawford@revhist.datanet.co.uk>

A bundle of all available past issues costs £80 in the UK, £85 in Europe, and £100 elsewhere. Vol.III no.2. & no.3 are no longer available

Some 25 articles from the early issues are now available on the ETOL website:

[www.compulink.co.uk/~jplant/revhist](http://www.compulink.co.uk/~jplant/revhist)

### Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference, Sydney '98

Reports, photographs, resolutions, and interviews with participants at the Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference held in Sydney, Australia on April 10-13.

Talks presented to the plenaries and workshops will be loaded on to the site as soon as they are transcribed. So will links to and information about all the parties and movements represented at the conference.

[www.peg.apc.org/~apiaustralia/apsc98.htm](http://www.peg.apc.org/~apiaustralia/apsc98.htm)

### Asia Pacific ACTION!

After three years as a monthly faxed news sheet for the Asia Pacific Workers Solidarity Links (APWSL) network, ACTION! is now also distributed as e-mail. Articles are kept very short to encourage translation and reproduction. To subscribe contact:

<rreid@actrix.gen.nz>

### NZ Neoliberal preachers

The reality of the neo-liberal "plague" in New Zealand is carefully exposed on this special section of the Joint Methodist/Presbyterian Public Questions Committee website.

[www.godzone.gen.nz/PublicQuestions/nzreform.html](http://www.godzone.gen.nz/PublicQuestions/nzreform.html)

### Science as Culture, Vol. 7 Part 1

"A unique point of view in a world where most commentators on science, technology, medicine and other forms of expertise suffer from a remarkable timidity," write the authors. Submissions are invited on any aspect of the cultural dimensions of science and of the history and philosophy of science and other forms of expertise.

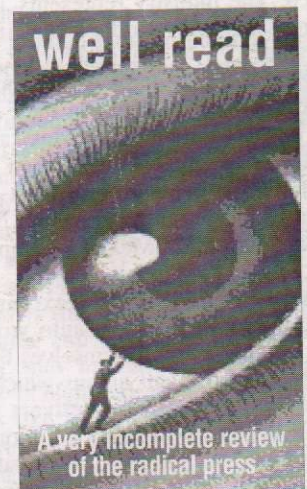
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[www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/gpp/process.html#science](http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/gpp/process.html#science)

A web site associated with the journal and forum holds articles from back issues of the journal, as well as other materials which forum members may wish to discuss:

[www.shef.ac.uk/~psysc/rmy/sac.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/~psysc/rmy/sac.html)

The web site now includes Barbara Heyl's article, 'The Harvard "Pareto Circle"', which discusses the ideological origins of the concepts of social system and social equilibrium, involving the influence of L. J. Henderson on the social science writings of Talcott Parsons, Charles Homans and Crane Brinton, in which Henderson drew on the ultra-conservative theories of Vilfredo Pareto to combat radical and Marxist ideas in American social science.



### Transformation and regroupment

But reactions to the current 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 worldwide movement of anti-capitalist struggle, taking account of the recomposition of the workers' movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

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

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

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

### Net Working

#### Schengen secrets

The confidential police manual for the EU's Schengen system for immigration police co-operation has been obtained and posted on the Internet by a Danish lawyer. Contents include the hitherto denied co-operation of secret police services, and an open invitation for police to break their national laws, in the "greater good" of the Schengen zone.

[www.datashopper.dk/~boo/sirene.html](http://www.datashopper.dk/~boo/sirene.html)

#### A new Outlook

Britain's Socialist Outlook newspaper has moved its website to

[www.labournet.org.uk/so](http://www.labournet.org.uk/so)