

international

July 1999 • No. 313

# VIEWPOINT



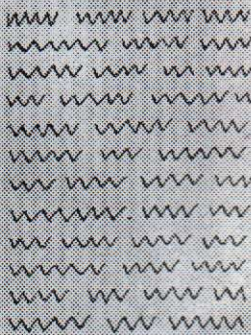
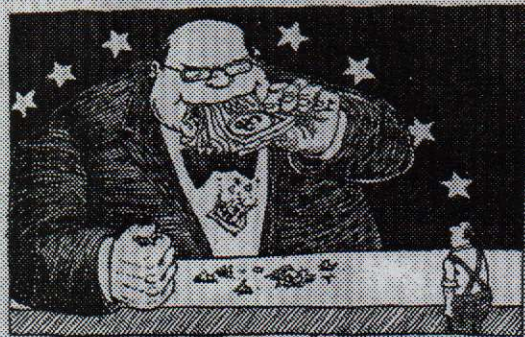
## The Philippines Liberating the left

- Kosovo • South African elections
- German Greens • Kashmir conflict

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# THE Emu

## CENTRAL BANKER ATE MY WAGES



## Revolutionaries elected to European Parliament

Despite an overall swing to the right, revolutionary socialists, Greens and other radicals increased their support in June elections to the (almost powerless) European parliament

**In France**, the LO-LCR list won 5.2% (almost one million votes). That means three seats for the Trotskyist LO, and two for the Fourth Internationalist LCR.

Although the LCR is the larger of the two, LO has a longer tradition of electoral participation. So LO spokeswoman Arlette Laguiller was top of the joint list, followed by Alain Krivine of the LCR.

The LCR has a significant role in the trade union left, and in France's many dynamic social movements, such as AC! (unemployment) DAL (homelessness), Ras l'Front (anti-fascist) and the movement in support of the *sans-papiers* (undocumented immigrants). According to Alain Krivine, "the challenge, ever since the big public sector strike in 1995, has been to find a political expression for the radicalisation in the social movement left." [See *Rouge* editorial on page 5]

In general, French voters moved to the left.

The extreme right lost five of its ten European seats—partly the result of a split between Jean-Marie Le Pen and his former deputy Bruno Mégret. Le Pen's National Front scored 5.7% and will

send five fascist deputies to the European parliament. Bruno Mégret's National Movement scored 3.3% (in France only parties which win at least 5% are represented in parliament). In the 1994 Euro-Elections, the (still-united) National Front scored 10.5%.

France's conservative parties have also suffered splits and lost votes.

Leonel Jospin's centre-left government increased its share of the vote. Jospin's Socialist/Radical grouping increased its score to 22%, winning six new seats, (for a total of 22). The Greens increased their vote from 2.9% to 9.7%, which gives them nine seats (they had none in the outgoing European parliament).

The French Communist Party did not share in this surge of votes for the government coalition. The party's vote declined slightly, from 6.9% in 1994 to 6.8% in 1999. The party maintained its six seats.

Preliminary reports suggest that while some voters moved from the centre-left towards the Communists, an equal number of Communist voters switched to LO-LCR in frustration at CP participation in the Jospin government.

### Italy

The Party of Communist Refoundation won only four European Parliament seats, and 4.3% of the vote. In 1994 they scored 6.1%, taking five seats. In the last national election the party scored 8.6%. Among the unsuccessful *Rifondazione* candidates was Gigi Malabarba, a supporter of *Bandiera Rossa*, the Fourth International caucus.

Armando Cossutta's right split from the PRC won two seats.

### Germany

The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) got its best result ever, 5.8%. (The party scored 4.7% in the 1994 Euro-Election, and 5.1% in the last national election. For the first time it has Euro MPs—six of them.

The Greens lost five of their 12 seats. Their vote declined from 10.1% in 1994 to 6.4%.

### Netherlands

The Green Left party had a major breakthrough, winning four European Parliament seats (up from one) and 11.9% of the vote. In the 1994 Euro Election they won 3.7%.

The ex-Maoist Socialist Party ("Tomato Party") won 5%, electing its first Euro MP, a comrade well respected by left groups outside the SP. In 1994 the party attracted only 1.3%, and in the last national election 3.5%.

The Socialist Party was the only Dutch parliamentary party to oppose NATO bombing of Yugoslavia.

The fourth internationalist SAP group supported the SP election campaign.

## Britain

The Greens, Welsh nationalists and Scottish nationalists each won two seats.

The Greens increased their score from 3.2% in 1994 to 6.3%. Welsh and Scottish nationalists scored 4.5% (same as in 1994). Only 2.5% of voters supported these parties during the last national election (held under Britain's first-past-the-post system).

The Scottish Socialist Party did not win enough votes for a seat in the European parliament.

## Ireland

The Greens increased their share of the vote to 6.7%, winning two seats. In 1994 they won 3.7% of the vote, not enough for a Member of the European Parliament.

Although the Labour vote fell from 11.0% in 1994 to 8.8%, this time the party will have a deputy.

Sinn Fein failed to win European seats in either part of the island. But in the southern Irish local and municipal elections, Sinn Fein won 62 seats (up from 28).

## Sweden

The radical Left Party won 15.8% of the vote (12.9% in 1994), taking three seats in the European parliament (none in 1994).

The Green vote fell from 17.2% in 1994 to 9.4%. The party lost two of its four seats in the EuroParliament.

The Socialist Party (4<sup>th</sup> International) did not present candidates.

## Denmark

Anti-EU parties won 23.4% of the vote, maintaining their four seats. The Socialist People's Party dropped from 8.6% in 1994 to 7.1%, but maintained its one seat.

## Finland

The ex-Communists lost one of their two seats (9.1%, down from 10.5% in the last Euro-Election).

The Greens increased their vote to 13.4% (from 7.6% at the last Euro-Election). This gives them two seats (one more than in the outgoing European Parliament).

## Austria

The Greens increased their vote from 6.7% to 9.3%, winning a second seat in the European Parliament.

## Belgium

The Green vote increased from 11.5% to 15.8%. They now have five European MPs, up from two).

## Greece

The governing socialists (PASOK) slipped from 34.3% to 31.1%. The Communists increased their vote from 6.3% to 8.7%, which gives them three seats (up from two). Other left parties

increased their vote from 6.3% to 8.7%, winning four seats (up from two).

## Portugal

The Communist coalition lost one of its two seats in the European Parliament, after a slight decline in their vote (from 11.2% to 10.3%).

## Spain

The worst news for the left came from the Spanish state, where the (bitterly divided) United Left fell from 13.6% to 5.8%. They retain one of their five seats in the European parliament. One of the party's unsuccessful candidates was our regular collaborator Jaime Pastor.

Nationalist parties from Spain's oppressed nations increased their combined vote from 11.1% to 15.3%, and their representation in the European parliament from one to six seats.

Even in opposition, Spanish social democrats lost votes to the conservative People's Party.

## Greens and government

Ecological parties did well in Belgium, France, Britain and Holland, but badly in Germany. Only the British Greens opposed the NATO war against Yugoslavia.

In France, Germany and Italy, Green ministers participate in less-than-impressive governments, while the Dutch and Belgium greens are desperate to participate in government. In Holland, the Green Left suggests a coalition with the Christian Democrats as well as the Labour Party.

The good result for the French Greens came after a particularly right-wing campaign led by one-time May '68 hero Danny Cohn-Bendit, who even supports the neoliberal European Monetary Union.

## Social Democrats

The elections were bad news for social democrats, who govern all the EU states except Ireland and Spain. Voters sanctioned the social democratic governments. Christian Democrats have replaced the Social Democrat bloc as the biggest European parliamentary group.

## Extreme right

Despite its recent split, France's National Front kept five of its ten Euro MPs.

In Belgium the fascist Flemish Bloc won 16-17% in the Dutch-speaking northern half of the country. It is now the biggest party in the main Flemish cities.

Austria's Freedom Party declined from 27.6% to 23.5%, losing one of its six seats.

The Danish far-right scored 5.8%, winning one seat. [PD/BS/JD] ★

An updated version of this article, and interviews with successful left candidates, is available on our website. <come.to/international-viewpoint>

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## European Appeal For a just and durable peace in the Balkans

"Stop NATO, and support Kosovo self-determination" was too difficult a message for most of the west European left. The following pan European statement was the high point in a frustrating race against the bombers and the Serb paramilitaries.

Paris, May 15, 1999

"The participants in the international meeting, held in Paris on May 15, 1999, gave voice to numerous and converging appeals, in Europe and in the United States, that have expressed their opposition both to the ethnic purification in Kosovo and to the NATO bombings against Yugoslavia.

The states that have launched or supported this undeclared war, waged outside the bounds of international legality, have claimed that it is moral and legitimate, justifying it exclusively in terms of the defense of the rights—and the lives—of a people.

They admit that "errors" or "collateral damage" have been committed, but these are said to be mere missteps in an effort that is "moving in the right direction". All criticism of NATO, we are told, aids and abets the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, or at best refuses to combat his reactionary policies.

All this is untrue. What evaluation can be made of these past several weeks of NATO bombings? It has been a tragedy! With each passing day, the war

worsens the situation of the civilian population and makes it more and more difficult to resolve the national conflicts in Kosovo and throughout the Balkan region.

We cannot consider as moral or legitimate a war which

- provides a pretext for a terrible aggravation of the fate of the Kosovar people—a people it claims to be helping and whose exodus it is in fact provoking
- unifies the Yugoslav population around the repressive regime of Slobodan Milosevic—a population that is thus blinded to Belgrade's responsibilities regarding the ethnic purification of the Kosovars;
- reinforces the Milosevic regime and makes the democratic opposition in Serbia and Montenegro even more fragile, and which destabilizes Macedonia
- is based on a bombing campaign which kills civilian populations, and destroys infrastructure, factories and schools.

This war contradicts its own proclaimed goals in every respect. It has provoked a catastrophic chain of events from which we must escape as fast as possible: the intensification of the bombings, pursued in order that NATO may protect its "credibility", and the brutal and massive expulsion of populations, accompanied by a series of violent acts incomparably more serious than the repression carried out prior to the bombings.

It is not true that all other solutions

had been tried nor that the bombings are an effective reply to Serb repression and an appropriate way to defend the lives and rights of the Kosovars. Nothing was done to maintain or expand the presence of OSCE observers nor to involve neighboring states and the populations concerned in the search for solutions.

Western governments have accelerated the disintegration of Yugoslavia and have never treated in any systematic way the interlocking national questions within the Yugoslav federation. They have given their blessing to the ethnic carve-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina, organized jointly by Belgrade and Zagreb. They have allowed the situation of the Albanians of Kosovo to fester because they preferred to ignore the expulsion of the Serbs from the Croatian region of Krajina.

During the negotiations in Rambouillet, they chose to have recourse to the armies of NATO rather than proposing an international peacekeeping force, operating on a mandate from the United Nations, although such a proposal could have legitimately been imposed in the event of a refusal by Milosevic. Such a force would have been much more effective than NATO bombs in protecting the civilian populations.

Today we demand:

- the return of Albanian populations under international protection, and under the responsibility of the UN General Assembly.
- the withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo; and, as a condition for attaining these objectives, an immediate halt to the bombings.

To re-open a process of negotiation on this basis, within the UN framework, would not only imply no confidence in Slobodan Milosevic but would indeed be more destabilizing to his regime than the bombs, which have only affected the Yugoslav population and the opposition to Milosevic.

Such an approach must rely on a well-defined principle and be accompanied by certain indispensable means. The principle is the respect of the right of peoples, and first of all the Kosovar people, to decide their own fate, in the framework of the rights of minorities. The indispensable means are:

- economic aid to the Balkan states—an aid strictly conditioned on the respect of individual and collective rights
- \* an independent inquest into the atrocities committed in Kosovo
- respect of the right to asylum, according to the Geneva Convention, for all refugees who seek it and for Yugoslav deserters, and their free circulation in all European countries.

Finally, we demand a public debate in our countries concerning the action of NATO and the role it has attributed to itself, and about the prospects of security in Europe.

In our view, security cannot repose on a logic of war nor on an increase in arms spending in the aim of conducting a great-power policy, but first of all on a policy of development, the eradication of social misery and the realization of the universal rights of peoples and human beings, men and women.

We shall continue to pursue

- our action of solidarity with the political, trade-union, associational, and feminist democratic oppositions that are resisting the reactionary powers.
- our action of solidarity with the expelled populations, in defense of

their right to asylum and their right of return and self-determination.

**Germany:** Joachim Bishoff, Franzisca Brautner, Richard Detj, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Frigga Haug, Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Alex Neumann, Jakob Schaffer, Dr. Peter Strutynski, Frieder Otto Wolf **Austria:** Welfried Graf **Belgium:** Mateo Alaluf, Francois Vercammen **Denmark:** Soren Sondergaard **Spain:** Francisco Fernandez Buey, Jaime Pastor, Carlos Taibo, Manuel Vazquez Montalban, Aseu Uriarte **United Kingdom:** Sebastian Bogden, Daniel Singer **Italy:** Salvatore Cannavo, Giuseppe Chiarante, Rossana Rossanda **Sweden:** Anders Fogelstrom **USA:** James Cohen **France:** Nils Andersson, Olivier Azam, Nicholas Bell, Daniel Bensaid, Martine Billard, Alexandre Bilous, Pierre Bourdieu, Philippe Boursier, Suzanne de Brunhoff, Philippe Chailan, Jean-Christophe Chaumeron, Patrice Cohen-Seat, Marianne Debouzy, Francoise Dielmann, Zorka Domic, Bernard Doray, Yves Durrieu, Danielle Espagnola, Concepcion de la Garza, Elisabeth Gauthier, Serge Guichard, Michel Husson, Isabelle Kalinowski,

Pierre Lantz, Frederic Lebaron, Francette Lazar, Catherine Levy, Isabelle Lorand, Henri Maler, Roger Martelli, Anne Mazauric, Jean-Paul Monferran, Aline Pailler, Claude F. Poliak, Jean Sagne, Catherine Samary, Anick Sicart, Jeanne Singer, Marie-Noelle Thibaut, Rolande Trempe, Catherine Tricot, Patrick Vassalo, Raphael Weil, Francis Wurtz.

\* The meeting received messages of support from: Joachim Bishopp and Richard Detje (Germany), Arthur Mitzman, Marcel van der Linden and Michael Kratetke (Netherlands), Tony Benn and Ken Loach (Britain), Ignacio Ramonet (France), Noam Chomsky and Edward Said (USA).

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# France Far left "affirms itself"

According to the LCR weekly newspaper Rouge, "despite massive abstention by working people, this score confirms the growing support for the far left since 1995. The media are mostly talking about the high score for the far right and the greens. But it is also clear that the far left has affirmed itself as a significant, stable political force."

According to Rouge, those who voted for the LO-LCR list voted against the bosses, the right and the far right, and punished the left coalition government for its policies." Socialist Party Prime Minister Leonel Jospin and his Communist and Green partners received "a clear warning. People will no longer tolerate the policies of a government which is privatising, questioning retirement pension rights, encourages the explosion of part-time work and job insecurity, and

do nothing about unemployment."

The time has come to chose "between adapting to the capitalist logic of Maastricht Europe, or real left policies. Like an emergency plan to combat unemployment and misery. To break with the logic of profit, and satisfy people's social needs"

The new LO-LCR deputies will try to unite the left-including those who voted for the governing parties-around demands for an immediate change in government policies. "Outlaw redundancy measures and "downsizing" in companies like Elf and Alstom which are making huge profits, while cutting jobs. Impose a reduction of the working week, in a way that creates new jobs, without worsening working conditions. Defend the retirement pension against government attacks. Give papers to all the

undocumented immigrants."

"We continue our struggle for another Europe. A Europe which is above all for the workers and the peoples, not for the multinationals and the banks. This continent has the resources to overcome the current crisis. We should harmonise the social gains, like the minimum wage, at the highest level that exists inside Europe. We should enforce a coordinated reduction of the working week to 35 and then to 30 hours per week. We should eat into the profits of the capitalists, and tax speculative capital. We should reduce the total control which the employers and the multinationals have over the economy.

"Other left parties have a radical discourse at election time, and quite another discourse once they are elected. Not us. Our two parties, and our five deputies in the European parliament, will remain faithful to the interests of those who gave us their confidence". ★

For more information (in French only) see [www.lcr-rouge.org/index.html](http://www.lcr-rouge.org/index.html)

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# The politics of the human rights groups

Western human rights groups say Serbian democratic activists should have done more to speak out for the Kosovo Albanians. Most Serbian human rights activists saw this as a naive request, given the NATO bombing against their country. Exerpts from a difficult correspondence:

## Letter to Serbian non-governmental organizations from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights

Dear friends and colleagues,

The protection of human rights defenders and civic activists in Serbia are one of our main messages to decision makers and media in Europe, and that we have initiated support campaigns and letters for Serbian independents and intellectuals.

However, we are deeply disturbed that the Belgrade NGO Appeal of 6 April [Published in June issue of *International Viewpoint*] —and subsequent open letters and appeals from intellectuals in Belgrade—reflects a view of the Kosovo

crisis to which we cannot subscribe, and we feel a need to clarify our position on these issues.

The Kosovo Albanians who have arrived in Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro have been extensively interviewed by members of various Helsinki committees, as well as by news media. Their stories confirm beyond any reasonable doubt that they were driven from their homes by Serbian police and paramilitary forces; that seemingly thousands have been systematically killed, maimed, raped and robbed. This is ethnic cleansing on a horrific scale.

Neither the NATO bombing campaign nor military actions by the Kosovo Liberation Army are responsible for the "unprecedented exodus" which you describe. Based on the extensive information we have collected about the catastrophe in Kosovo, we consider it intellectually and morally unsound to equate these campaigns.

We respect your lonely and courageous struggle for democratization in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a struggle we have supported for years. But unfortunately—and we would very much like to be mistaken in this—it seems to us that hardly any of your fellow citizens have supported a just settlement to the Kosovo issue, and that the crisis has been caught in a downward spiral of radicalization for many years.

Thus when you say that "NATO military intervention has undermined all

results we have achieved," one must ask if these results were of such a scope and significance to bring hope that the plight of Kosovo could be relieved by peaceful means.

As the Rambouillet negotiations came to a close, it seemed clear to us that there was no such hope of a political settlement. The regime scorned international—and domestic—pressure aimed at a peaceful solution, and went ahead with the preparations for the campaign which is currently unfolding in Kosovo.

Faced with preparations for grave crimes, how should one respond? That was the dilemma faced by the international community in March, and in our view you also should recognize—even though you do not support it—that, in principle, the NATO intervention was not an arbitrary act of aggression.

We are in sympathy with your extremely difficult situation, but we cannot agree with the conclusions you have drawn as to who bears primary responsibility for improving it. It is our view that your appeal should properly be addressed to the FRY and Serbian authorities which bear the responsibility for systematic and grave crimes of war and crimes against humanity in Kosovo, and for the dangers you, as members of the civil sector in Serbia, are currently facing.

We express our solidarity with you. Also, we acknowledge the sacrifices you must make, and the dilemmas and paradoxes you are faced with as victims of a government whose policies you cannot support, and bearing the costs attached to efforts to make that government act in accordance with civilized standards.

It is our hope and aim that the enormous responsibility the NATO states

have taken... intervene... whole-h... in the S... ever, is c... Europe.

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Oslo a...

[Signed... Genera... Commi... Executi... Executi... Ludmill... Stein-l... Holly C... Krassin...



Res NG

Dear F

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have taken on by initiating the military intervention, will entail a far more whole-hearted support of the civil sector in the Serbian society, which more than ever, is crucial to Serbia's restoration into Europe.

Unless the western states recognize the need for this kind of policy, it will be difficult to describe the current NATO actions as a humanitarian intervention.

We will soon face new challenges. This letter is meant to open a dialogue on what we can do together to preserve the independent forces in the Serbian society in order that they may resurface after the war. We would very much welcome your recommendations as to how we, from the outside, should address the new situation and how we can continue to support you in your current plight.

**Oslo and Vienna 18 May 1999**

[Signed] Bjorn Engesland Secretary General The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, and Aaron Rhodes Executive Director on behalf of the Executive Committee of the IHF: Ludmilla Alexeyeva Ulrich Fischer Stein-Ivar Aarsaether Sonja Biserko Holly Cartner Bjorn Engesland Krassimir Kanev Andrzej Rzeplinski.

tion" and NATO aggression, that is, in the midst of a collapse of the legitimate spheres of public and political life, at a time of extraordinary decrees, military rule and summary trials in Yugoslavia, asks of us to raise our voices and sharpen political criticism and moral condemnation of the regime in Belgrade.

Moreover, in this assault of severe western Alliance action, which has transformed our society into a military barracks and enthroned Milosevic a charismatic leader and Supreme Commander, we are expected, if possible, to approve, even greet with understanding the militarist interventionism of NATO in the Federal Republic (FR) of Yugoslavia.

Let us say immediately: from the beginning of the destruction of former Yugoslavia our "civic position" has been clear and unambiguous. We have been equally opposed both to the ethnic cleansing in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and today in Kosovo and to NATO's intervention in the FR of Yugoslavia. In other words, we fought with equal decisiveness against the lethal political self-will of the Belgrade regime and the pernicious militarist self-will of the western alliance.

In this context, we cannot be expected to unilaterally denounce local totalitarianism and, at the same time, express solidarity with the pretensions of global

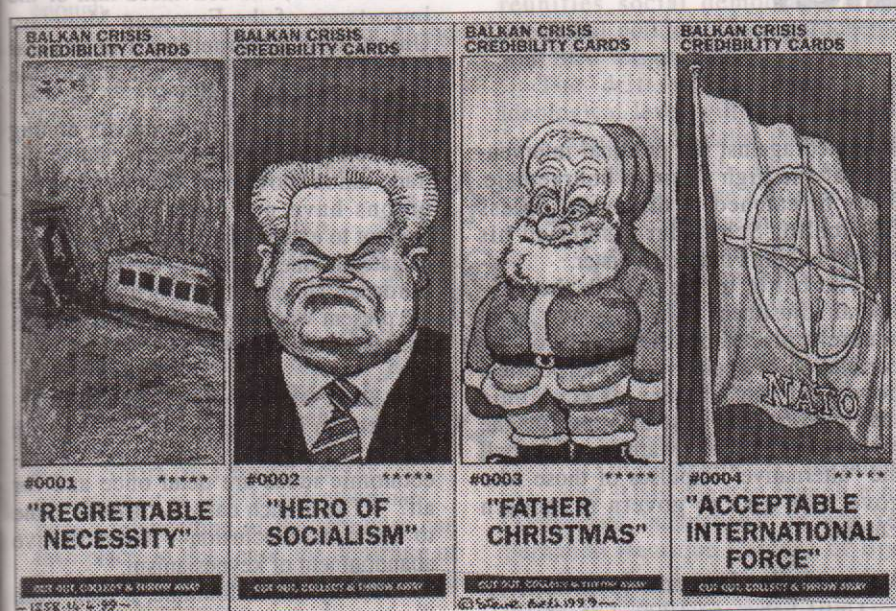
archaic "figure of war", which we hoped long banished from our culture.

Finally, let us remind you: the brutal disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, and the related nationalist conflicts which culminated in the ethnic catastrophe in Kosovo, took place "in collusion" with European policies and international diplomacy. It has been precisely these unexpected shocks that have dangerously threatened the ideals and norms of international democracy, which is still the successor to the liberal and social heritage of defence of autonomy of the individual, groups and peoples.

In spite of all circumstances, we shall continue to fight persistently and enduringly for freedom of the individual, for those individual, civic, collective and human rights which this war has again brought into peril.

**Belgrade, May 21, 1999**

Signed: Alternative Academic Educational Network, Association of Citizens for Democracy, Social Justice and Support for Trade Unions, Belgrade Circle, Belgrade Women Studies Centre, Center for Policy Studies, Nezavisnost trade unions, Center for Transition to Democracy, Civic Initiatives District 0230, Kikinda, EKO Center, European Movement in Serbia, Forum for Ethnic Relations and Foundation for Peace and Crisis Management, Foundation for Peace and Crisis Management, Group 484, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Society for Peace and Tolerance (Backa Palanka), Sombor Peace Group, Student Union of Yugoslavia, Trade Union Confederation, Union for Truth About Anti-Fascist Resistance, Urban Inn (Novi Pazar), VIN, Weekly Video News, Women in Black, YU Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights.



## Response of Serbian NGOs,

Dear Friends, Esteemed Colleagues,

You are our associates and friends of long standing, with whom we cooperated for a number of years on the long-term and far-reaching programme of building a civic society in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Your request, which we received in the midst of war, "humanitarian interven-

tion" and NATO aggression, that is, in the midst of a collapse of the legitimate spheres of public and political life, at a time of extraordinary decrees, military rule and summary trials in Yugoslavia, asks of us to raise our voices and sharpen political criticism and moral condemnation of the regime in Belgrade.

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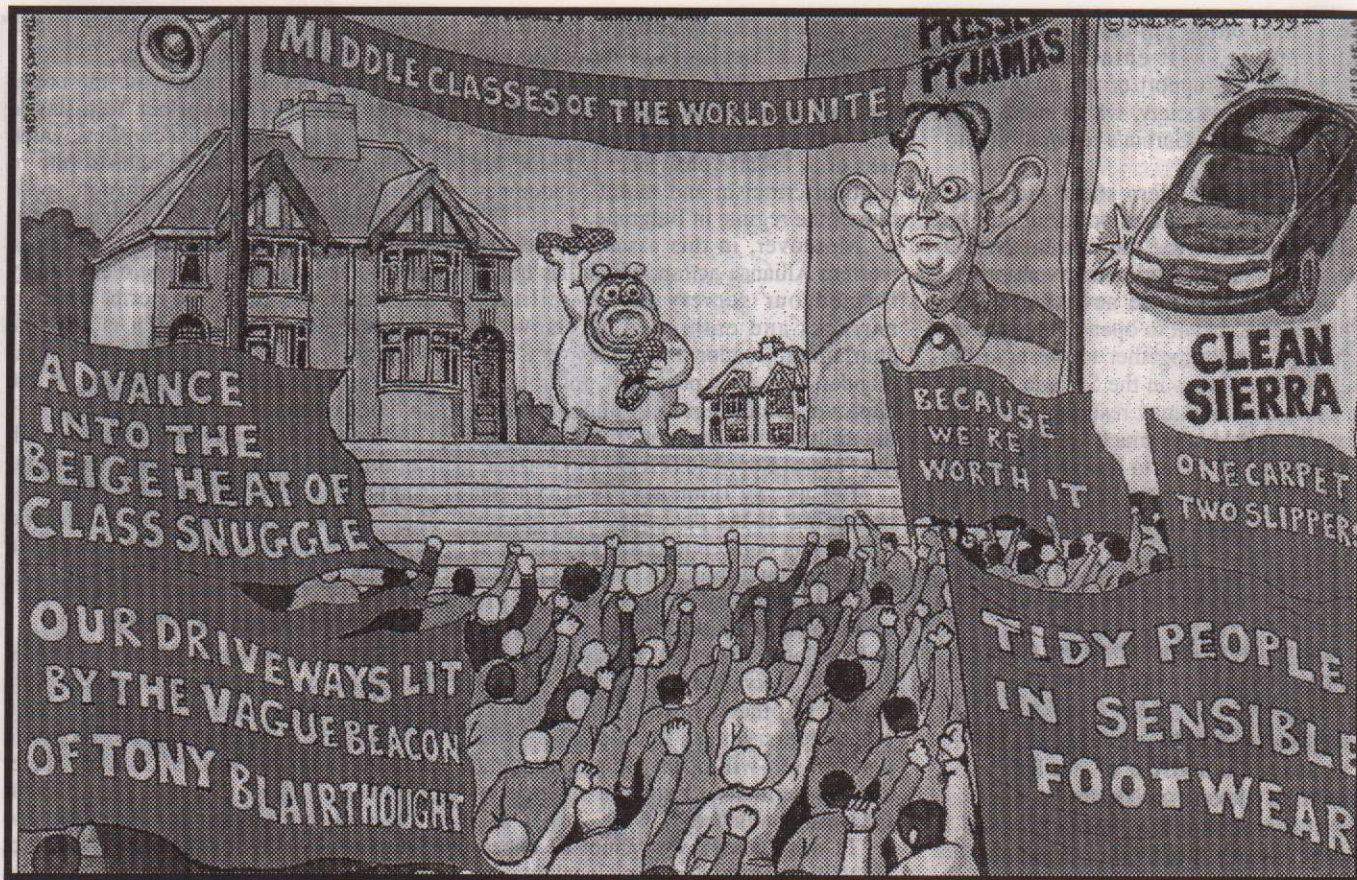
**Net Working**

**Inprekorr**

Our German sister publication has moved. The website now includes the full index (to December 1998)  
<http://webserver.comlink.org/inprekorr/>

**Last but not least...**

Check out our own website, archive and links, at  
[www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.htm](http://www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.htm)



## Europe's social democrats

The expulsion of Oskar Lafontaine from the German government was a key moment for the European Union, and for its Social Democratic parties.

**François Vercammen**

The crisis says a lot about the evolution of the European Union (EU), and the international economic environment. In the principal country of the EU, big capital has used powerful extra-parliamentary pressure to alter the political composition of a government which "continues to enjoy the support of the great majority of the German electorate."<sup>1</sup>

The festive coalition which expressed itself in the aftermath of Lafontaine's departure—bankers, industrialists, powerful journalists, courtesans of the Stock Exchange—has a true "class odour." Their brutal reaction to Lafontaine is a precise indication of the limited tolerance of the German bourgeoisie, and the nature of their counteroffensive.

Long before Lafontaine had the opportunity to collide with the rules of the European Monetary Union or the "spontaneous" reaction of the markets—assuming that he wanted to do so—he

stumbled against the political intervention of the high German bourgeoisie. They threatened to disinvest, unless Chancellor Schroeder dismissed his radical-talking Finance Minister.

The battle to break with the neoliberal adjustment policies is now more squarely placed on the terrain of the correlation of social forces, of political power, of the mastery of economic instruments. The cost of opposing the high-and-mighty is a warning against all the "alternative" impulses of those who govern or wish to govern in modern Europe.

### No socialist internationalism...

Until February 1999, Lafontaine's policies were the official policy of the German government. But none of Europe's other social democratic parties have called for a continuation of Lafontaine's policies. This is surprising, since Lafontaine shared the general social democratic policy of support for the capitalist project of European integration, coupled with half-hearted demands for a "social Europe" (harmonisation of standards and co-ordination of economic policies).

No-one is surprised that Britain's Tony Blair was not attracted to Lafontaine. But even the French Socialist

Party boasted of having "brought sense" to Lafontaine, and convinced him of the importance of the European Monetary Union, now governed by a neoliberal "stability pact" and an unaccountable European Central Bank.

The lack of internationalism among the social democrats is reflected in the trade union movement. The major trade unions have not made the slightest attempt to extend any exemplary struggle initiated in one country to the level of the European Union. The silence concerning the present wage struggles in Germany is only the latest sad example.

### The end of neo-Keynesianism?

German industrialists boast that, with Lafontaine gone, "orthodox macro-economic ideas are dead once and for all!"<sup>2</sup> The French daily *Le Monde* came to the same conclusion—"the definitive abandonment of Keynesianism."<sup>3</sup>

So why did Lafontaine, a man from the mainstream, launch a policy which broke with the neoliberal alignment. He claimed his radical policies were necessary because "supply-side policies had failed, and had to be replaced."<sup>4</sup>

The correlation of forces became more favourable after the September 1998 legislative elections. There were significant workers' mobilisations in January and February 1999. Lafontaine argued that, facing the risk of deflation and a possible recession, "not to do anything threatens to be even costlier." than neo-keynesianism.<sup>5</sup>

Lafontaine is gone. But sooner or later another economic, political or social



shock may revive the left reformist perspective. The question is whether Europe's social democrats will argue for, and win support for, such neo-Keynesian policies.

The chance of another battle like Lafontaine's depends on the vitality and resources preserved inside the Socialist parties. We don't see any other "Lafontaines" in the leaderships of the Europe's socialist parties. This reflects the mutation of social democracy in terms of militant force, ideological conviction and social composition.

### So why does all this matter?

Lafontaine's policies were certainly insufficient from a radical left point of view. They left intact the entire package of flexibility and privatisations, and did not advance any anti-capitalist "structural reforms." But the high bourgeoisie certainly saw him as a threat. Why?

First of all, because the labour movement is in a calamitous state, all round the world. There is no mass political force which can serve as support or as a relay for social needs and the demands of the struggle. The more this dynamic persists, the more the "social fabric" is weakened. From a truly radical point of view, anything that can in practice put a brake or a stop to this crushing roller will help. Nothing should be ruled out just because, like Lafontaine, it doesn't go far enough...

Secondly, an important sector of the social movements continues to follow the social democrats, for lack of a better alternative. The only way for radicals to relaunch social mobilisations is to engage with the ideas of these people..

Finally, struggles like Lafontaine's can stimulate consciousness. The multiplication of frictions, the spectacular although mediated contradictions, of limited but public conflicts can have an impact which stimulates trust and consciousness. Short of a broad social explosion, it is hard to see otherwise how a relaunching of the struggles can take place. In this sense, the departure of Lafontaine is a victory for the right wing of social democracy.

### The impact in Germany

The character of the Schroeder government has changed. The prime minister, who trade unionists now call "the comrade of the bosses," holds the reins of power, without having to share them.

This will not result in a spectacular turn to the right. German society does not permit it. But Schroeder will govern more squarely in favour of the bosses, even if he does not tread the same path as Blair.

The left of the social democratic



Margaret Thatcher is the role model for Social Democrats like Greek Prime Minister Kostas Simitis

party (SPD) has been beheaded. Will it be able to reorganise the left wing potential which Lafontaine abandoned?

In Europe, the departure of Lafontaine reinforces the established leaderships of the social democratic parties, and their neoliberal policies. In a symbolic recent move, German and British party leaders made a joint declaration on "The New Centre—*die neuer Mitte*"

The spectacular victory of Schroeder reunifies social democracy around neoliberal politics. The rapprochement with Blair was immediate.

The drift to the right at the ideological level will overtake all the

European Socialist Parties, except the French. The naming of Prodi, the Christian Democratic technocrat, as president of the European Commission, by the social democratic ministers who dominate all but two of the EU member states has symbolic value in more than one sense.

In September, Clinton and Blair tried to launch a new "Democratic International" in New York. Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil was there, but Leonel Jospin was not invited. Italian leader Massimo D'Alema did not bother to go. Six months later, the constellation has changed. The social democrats are reunited—but it is Blair who sets the tone.

### Blair to lead Europe?

Blair wants to bring Britain into Europe, by taking the lead within the EU. This is a struggle which has not been won in advance. It is still playing out in Great Britain.

Blair has put three aces on the table. He has accelerated the speed of British integration to the Euro. He has proposed a truly autonomous European army

within NATO. These policies imply a historical repositioning of Great Britain: taken to their logical conclusion, they mean the end of the "Airstrip One" link to the United States.

Blair also has a reform plan for the European institutions. Aimed above all towards the Euro-sceptics of his island, it supports Blair's activist intervention in the crisis of the European Commission. It has propelled the Italian Christian Democrat Romano Prodi to the leadership of the European Commission, as the joint candidate of Social Democracy and Christian Democracy. Blair now presents himself as the unifier of Europe, as the training force of the "third way," in which he is the centre of gravity.

### Blair's Eurovision contested

If Blair wins his battle at home, the consequences will be felt on the continent. A new stage will be reached in the sense of stronger centralisation between national states, between the institutions of the EU and a more coherent and hardened politics of austerity and "modernisation."

This will not be achieved without trouble.

The first difficulty will be the probable collision with the trade union movements, in each country and at the European level. Can the social democratic parties, in government almost everywhere, afford the electoral cost of such a social blood letting, while a hardened right, wearing its extreme-right hat, is crystallising, and on its left, an awakening social movement and a radicalised electorate are reaching out to the radical left?

In taking the lead of the governments of their countries, the social democratic have in their hands the machineries of the state. This underlies their essential choices, the profound sense of their politics.

All of a sudden, they find themselves administering inter-imperialist contradictions, of which the principal one, which is becoming more acute, is that between the EU and the United States. But also, within the EU, the social democrats are obliged to administer contradictions between states which are major players on the world stage.

The German government rallied to Blair over economic policy. Blair has rallied to the EU. These two elements reinforce a weighty trend. We are in a transition to a new stage in the EU. Should this transition succeed, it will affect all the social and political relations on the continent.... ★

#### Notes

1. According to observers as expert as those of the bank Goldmann Sachs, cited in the *Corriere della Sera*, March 6, 1999.
2. According to H. O. Heckel, president of the DIV, the Association of German Industrialists, cited on March 12, 1999.
3. *Le Monde*, March 13, 1999.
4. *Le Monde*, September 15, 1998.
5. *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, November 25, 1998.

# Greens join establishment

The Green Party has abandoned its radical youth, to become a party of the enlightened middle class

David Müller

The recent special convention in Bielefeld clearly showed that the Greens have concluded their development from a movement party critical of the system into an updated party of the enlightened middle caste of the Germany system.

A large minority are frustrated with the discipline imposed by the Green's participation in the Social Democratic government. Participation in a government which is part of the NATO war against Yugoslavia does not allow for compromises. A split between the "Left" and the [pro-government] "Realos" seems inevitable.

The ecological Greens were founded in 1980 as a clearly left project. The most important social influences on the new formation were the peace movement, sixties radicals, former opponents of nuclear power, and activists of "the new social movements." They created a party that wanted to bring the demands of social resistance into the Parliament. But the "movement" and "parliamentary" wings of the movement were never really integrated. After an uneasy coexistence, the two orientations came into conflict.

With the election of Helmut Kohl as Federal chancellor in October of 1982 and the downturn of the peace and anti-nuclear movements after 1983, the left's emphasis on the "social movements" became ever more difficult.

Radical ecologists Jutta Ditfurth and Manfred Zierans and the ecosocialists Thomas Ebermann and Rainer Tramperts continued to lead the Greens because they had the solid support of a middle layer of active party members. These members were involved not only in the party but also in the diminishing structures of the social movements and other rank-and-file initiatives. This wing had numerous connections with the left alternative or left radical milieu.

The Greens' national congress in May 1987 approved overwhelmingly the boycott of the census of the population then taking place. The party also approved the left trade union demands for socialisation of the steel industry.

But the steady decline of social movements and left currents outside the Greens strengthened the *Realpolitik* ("realistic") line within the party. Coalition with the SPD seemed to offer a

faster route to social changes than the Green left's laborious rank-and-file endeavours—which in any case increasingly lacked a mass base.

The growing political isolation of other left milieus strengthened the adaptive tendencies within the Green left. As well as a predilection for provocation rather than patient politics.

The beginning of the end for the left in the Greens came in October 1987. National spokesperson, Jutta Ditfurth began a campaign for the release of the imprisoned members of the Red Army Fraction (RAF) [an ultra-left armed struggle group of the 1970s]. This was a justified demand, but the campaign did little to furnish the party with a perspective.

The ensuing struggle led to the erosion of the traditional Green lefts. A large part of their adherents became ever more inactive or oriented towards more moderate currents in the party. Without the pressure of social movements, left participation in the SPD-led coalition led to ever greater accommodation.

## Radical opposition

The party badly misjudged the 1990 election, which was dominated by the question of reunification with the German Democratic Republic (DDR—"East Germany"). The Greens chose to focus on the environment, with the slogan "Everybody is talking about Germany, we are talking about the weather". Voters deserted the party, which received only 4.8% of the vote in West Germany (a party needs 5% to enter parliament).

Later that year, the ecosocialists around Thomas Ebermann left the party because they wanted to form a radical opposition to German reunification. Nothing permanent developed from this current. The next year the radical ecologists also left the party and formed the "Ecological Left," a peculiar mix of Jutta Ditfurth's personal entourage and an ecoautonomist current.

During the Gulf war, a whole series of *realpolitik* personalities opposed the party's refusal to support the war. Many participated in anti-war protests—but without acting as a party, or disseminating a specifically Green content.

By the end of 1991, the traditional left had been pushed out of the Greens. Those who remained concluded a truce with the party leadership. But the new left around Jürgen Trittin mutated gradually became a job agency concerned with promoting their own clientele into the increasing number of

Green positions in government and the civil service. It did very little to oppose the continuing development of neoliberal positions in the *Realo* camp. The "Left" in the party accepted the strategic goal of coalition with the SPD and subordinated its own programme on every decisive question.

Of course, clientelism was not the only explanation for the changes in the Greens. The old left milieu from which the Greens emerged in the early 1980s continued to shrink. The formerly rebellious young intellectuals largely became part of the establishment.

Many of the old left party members dropped out of the Greens. For example, over 70% of the membership in Hanover have joined since 1995. The new recruits have hardly any experience with social politics. They are heavily influenced by the years of Germany's "right turn" under the Christian-Democratic-Liberal government. Some Green youth functionaries openly admit that they joined the party because it was the quickest road to a successful career.

The process of adaptation was accelerated massively by the formation of a Social Democrat-Green national coalition government. Long before the election, the Green leadership around Joschka Fischer had realised that the SPD would invite the Greens to join a coalition government only if the party was ready to dispatch the German army into combat situations [for the first time since the Second World War].

The enormous majority of Greens members were clearly obsessed with participation in the government. German participation in a war in the remnants of Yugoslavia was not even discussed by the party left. Attempts to discuss these problems with the Greens before the election were unsuccessful because the question was held to be totally absurd.

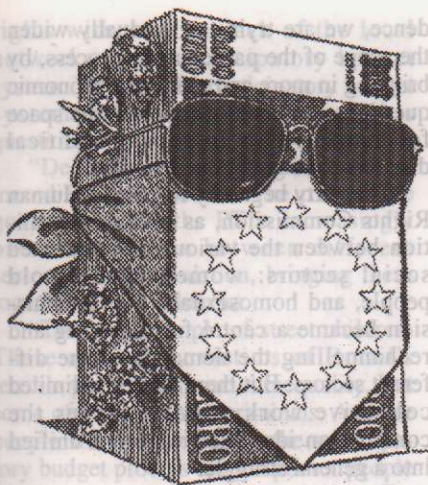
The first months of the coalition government provoked disenchantment among many left-wing Greens, and even some critical *Realos*.

Finance Minister Lafontaine's resignation plunged a majority of the party into frustrated gloom. The left in the Greens began to distance itself from the coalition government, and to form their own structures, like the initiative for the "Green Rank and File" in preparation for the National Delegates Conference.

Among the *Realos* there was restrained jubilation because Lafontaine's departure meant a better chance for adoption of their own neoliberal economic orientation. The *realpolitik* line of complete adaptation to the ruling powers triumphed with the war in Kosovo.

## Debates

An astonishing variety of green positions appeared at the National Delegates Conference in Bielefeld earlier this year. A motion from Baden-Württemberg, the stronghold of the



neoliberal party wing, supported the policies of the federal government while a motion of the national executive tied supporting the Green German foreign minister to the demand for a temporary pause in NATO bombing. Both proposals lacked any deeper critique of NATO.

A position paper by Christian Ströbele and others opposed the *Realo* positions and called for a unilateral cessation of NATO attacks. It contained no appraisal of the motives of the states of the West—probably for tactical reasons. A decidedly left motion by remaining fundamentalists from Hamburg and Lower Saxony made many correct points but had no chance from the start.

In the *realpolitik* camp the maintenance of the coalition stood at the centre of the issues. The otherwise somnolent Ludger Volmer became enraged when he accused the environment minister of North Rhine Westphalia state of undermining “Joschka.” Problematical questions such as the duplicity of NATO towards Kosovo and Kurdistan were not alluded to at all in the speeches of Joschka Fischer or Angelika Beer.

The argumentation of the left was much better on several questions but suffered from the limits of coalition discipline. An analysis of NATO or even of German war aims was widely absent. The creation of Western zones of influence in view of the ever more dramatic developments in Russia was not discussed. Nor were the concerns of the Kosovo Albanians.

The left reticence was the result of an insufficient analysis of the conflict as well as the hope of still winning a majority for their side by such restraint.

The left's leading personality, federal environmental minister Jürgen Trittin was so disciplined that he did not even speak. His silence added to the difficulties for the left. In the end the motion by the federal executive was accepted by 444 delegates, compared to 318 for the left proposal by Christian Ströbele and others.

The accepted proposal was a classic example of tactical cunning. The demand

for a temporary halt to NATO bombing convinced enough critical *Realos* to secure a majority in the meeting. At the same time it was obvious to most participants that this would not influence the policies of the government or even the Green parliamentary fraction.

This is a new path for the Greens. Until this conference, the Greens were the parliamentary party with the closest concordance between resolutions and actual politics.

The Green fraction in the federal Parliament had already made it known that it would not make or support any demand for a halt to the bombing of Serbia, in order “not to endanger” pursuing “solution by “negotiations.”

NATO attacks increased in the weeks after the party conference, and more and more civilian targets were bombed. Although all the resolutions at the conference rejected the use of NATO ground troops, the party majority's support for “German foreign policy” (as presented by Joska Fischer) opened the way for use of ground troops.

### Left network

The defeated left-wing Greens are still deciding how to proceed. Probably a network of left Greens and alternative lefts will be formed outside the party. Various possibilities are being discussed, from the founding of their own party to the creation of a network of left opponents of the war. A Green Left network was created on 6 June, but in less-than-inspiring conditions. Participants who had already left the Green Party imposed a resolution which explicitly rejected voting for the Greens in the European elections. This needlessly polarised the meeting, and alienated those still inside the Greens.

Unless a large antiwar movement develops, the only haven for these disappointed left Greens seems to be the ex-Communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS—the former ruling party in East Germany) Most left Greens do not have the energy or patience for a new ‘long march’ of rank-and-file work in the social movements. For the moment, however, the PDS is a taboo question for many left Greens.

The most important question facing the left and dissident Greens is the war in Kosovo. There are many possibilities for joint work. Though some leftists had the bad idea of organising a puppet theatre with the theme “Smash NATO, Start with the Greens”

There is mounting disquiet about the war. The left at least has a chance to transform this disquiet into protest. This will not be easy. But the way to go is clear: the creation of broadly conceived coalition structures and mobilisations against the NATO attacks and for the rights of the Kosovars. ★

Reprinted from our German sister-magazine *Inprekorr*.  
Translated by Ed Kovacs, Los Angeles Solidarity



## Britain Left results

To complete the article on page 2, we present the results of Britain's June election to the European Parliament.

### Northern Ireland

Social Democratic and Labour Party (28.1%), Sinn Fein (17.3%)

### Scotland

Scottish National Party (27.2%), Green (5.8%), Scottish Socialist Party (4.0%), Socialist Labour Party, (1.0%)

### Wales

Plaid Cymru (“Party of Wales”) (29.6%), Green (2.6%), Socialist Labour (0.7%)

### England

The scores for left lists were:  
**London:** Green (7.7%), Socialist Labour (list headed by Arthur Scargill) (1.7%), Weekly Worker (0.1%). **East Midlands:** Green (5.4%), Alternative Labour List (Ken Coates) (2.4%), Socialist Labour (0.8%). **Eastern:** Green (6.2%), Socialist Labour (0.6%). **North East:** Green (4.7%), Socialist Labour (1.2%), Socialist Party of Great Britain (0.4%). **North West:** Green (5.6%), Socialist Labour (1.1%) Weekly Worker (0.1%). **South East:** Green (7.4%), Socialist Labour (0.5%). **South West:** Green (8.3%), Socialist Labour (0.6%). **Yorkshire and the Humber:** Green (5.7%), Alternative Labour (1.3%), Socialist Labour (1.0%). **West Midlands:** Green (5.8%), Christine Oddy (deselected Left Labour MEP) (4.3%), Socialist Alliance (0.9%), Socialist Labour Party (0.6%). [Compiled by BS] ★



## ORÇAMENTO PARTICIPATIVO

VOCÊ É QUEM FAZ UMA CIDADE DE VERDADE

# City of human rights

The radical left government in the city of Porto Alegre is incorporating human rights questions into their pioneering system of direct democracy.

**Mark Johnson**

Over the last 10 years the city has pioneered a participatory budget process in which citizens debate and control municipal policies through open meetings in each neighbourhood. At the beginning,

human rights questions were not integrated into the discussion. But gradually the Workers Party (PT) government recognised the demands coming from marginalised groups and organisations outside the participatory budget process.

"Of course, it was never our intention to limit this process to discussion about roads and schools, says city councillor Helena Bonhumá. "But everything we are doing here is innovatory. And we didn't know how to introduce questions like human rights. But, as we gain confi-

dence, we are trying to gradually widen the scope of the participatory process, by bringing in more and more non-economic questions. Concretely, to widen the space for human rights in popular political discourse and government action."

The party began by forming a Human Rights Commission, as a kind of coalition between the various discriminated social sectors: women, blacks, old people, and homosexuals. The commission became a centre for receiving and rechanneling the demands of the different sectors. But there was only limited collective work, and the issues the commission identified were not unified into a general struggle."

But the commission was a springboard towards a city-wide conference on human rights. "A very rich experience for the participants and for the party," remembers Bonhumá. The conference for human rights discussed each sector, separately and in plenary sessions. Participants identified the main demands of each sector, and the priorities in each area of municipal intervention.

"Participants pressed us to transform the council into an organ with power to control those sectors of government which impact on human rights in the widest sense. The city council cannot just point the finger at the state and federal authorities which have the constitutional responsibility to protect human and civic rights. All government has an obligation to protect human rights."

The Council was reorganised on a territorial basis, ensuring representation in each of the city's 16 participatory budget constituencies. "The idea became to combine work in each sector of human

## Women Breaking the cycle

Councillor Helena Bonhumá outlines the impact of feminist ideas in the management of the city of Porto Alegre

At the beginning of the PT's second mandate in 1993, the party organised a city-wide Constituent assembly, to establish the priorities for the popular administration.

One of the elements of this Assembly was the launching of the "Porto Alegre for Women" programme. This identified 16 areas of concern to women: including work; creches; violence; and education.

The wide participation of popular organisations and specialists enabled the development of a diagnostic model. A smaller seminar assessed this raw information, and identified

policies and key demands. These were presented to the Assembly.

We explained that discrimination and subordination are reproduced in all areas of life, including urbanisation, and participation in public affairs. The city expresses all the social relations existing in the urban space. For example, 13% of men in Porto Alegre are unemployed, but 18% of women. And 26% of women are heads of households.

Unless we introduce decisive counter-measures, discrimination will be reproduced. We need to break this cycle. To create new habits and new spaces.

We need to include compensatory measures into all areas of our work. So far, we have given a special role to co-operatives of women,

which have been awarded contracts for cleaning and other areas of service work in the municipality. We have also created clothes-making workshops, bakeries and other employment and training projects for women. We have begun to investigate non-traditional careers for women, including computer studies and agriculture.

We would like to have more income generation projects for women. But this is a disputed area. The participatory budget meetings invariably relegate these programmes to the bottom of the list, and funds are severely restricted. We also lack a legal framework for positive compensatory projects.

As we go forward, we are trying to identify weaknesses like these, and introduce city-wide legislation to correct them.

Curiously, there are no feminist non-governmental organisations in Porto Alegre. The PT's only 'competitors' are some very conservative church groups. ★

rights with work in each of the local networks of the participatory budget system. We want the participatory budget system to incorporate human rights questions.

"Deepening direct democracy is an incredibly rich process. The role of the government and the PT is increasingly one of mediation between different sectors of the population, bringing them together to find solutions.

"Take the example of street children. These are clearly victims of Brazil's terrible poverty and social inequality. But some of them are also criminals. And the people who participate in the participatory budget process are the poorer people of the town, those who are the main victims of violence. Not just police violence, but violence within the poorer communities, where most crime happens.

"Our role as the PT, and as the government, is to build links within the population. It is a long process. But there are some positive examples. I remember at one participatory budget meeting, residents of a 'red light' zone protested about the noise and traffic caused by the presence of prostitutes. The prostitutes explained that they had to work in order to survive. We helped them find an agreement that reduces disruption for local people, without repressing the prostitutes."

The right wing parties in the municipal assembly have tried to use human rights to divide the PT's massive popular support. One conservative councillor recently proposed transferring funds from programmes for street children towards programmes for the physically disabled. Bonhumá attacked "this discourse which makes a false distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor; this obsession with security; and this deamonsation of the most marginalised groups in society."

By trying to reassert the city council's authority to amend the budget, the right-wing parties were also attacking the very basis of the participatory budget process. As Bonhumá explains, "in this town, city counsellors should just implement the decisions of the participatory budget process. It is for the society to decide about the relative importance of any two areas of government intervention.

"Any conflict, including the inevitable competition for resources, should be resolved through dialogue, not through a 'divide and rule' strategy. The essence of our project is getting each sector to express its desires and needs, to understand the other groups in the population, and to

vote for programmes that increase solidarity and social justice.

"I'm happy to say that our policy of putting full trust in the people has been vindicated. When we present the population with full information, and when they can see and feel that they genuinely

control the city and its government, then, time and time again, they vote for solidarity and tolerance." ★

\* Helena Bonhumá has coordinated the city government's human rights work since 1994. She is also the coordinator of the women's work of the PT councillor's caucus.

## The people's government What about the police?

**When they took power in Rio Grande do Sul state, the Workers Party accepted responsibility for managing the state's paramilitary police force. Mark Johnson reports**

The Workers Party (PT) has always had a tense relationship with the police. Party leaders gained their spurs in the struggle against the dictatorship that established state police forces like Rio Grande's Brigada Militar.

According to Luis Felipe Nelsis of the vice-governor's office, "we come from a military state, where the police role was clear — repress the population. The Brigada Militar was a repressive body. It was concentrated in rich areas, to protect property, and absent from poorer areas, where criminals could act with impunity.

"But the gradual reforms of society, towards the rule of law, and constitutional protection of human rights, leave the police in a very contradictory position. Of course, the constitution is not respected, and there are high levels of police violence, but there is also a concern among policemen about their role.

"There has been a real evolution in the thinking of many police officers. The development of a critical analysis of their own role. Some officers told us that their constitutional role of defending the state prevents them from guaranteeing the real security of the citizens."

In 1997 police across Brazil demonstrated in protest against non-payment of wages. President Cardoso promised wide reaching reforms. But it now seems that what he really wants is to transfer powers away from the existing police bodies, so as to reduce the threat of militant activity. Some powers will be transferred to new police bodies. But many areas of civic security will simply be privatised. The police will concentrate on protecting the state, while private security companies will increasingly

police the richer residential and shopping areas.

According to Nelsis, the Workers Party government in Rio Grande do Sul is determined to reform the paramilitary Brigada Militar, and put police matters firmly within the framework of the participatory budget system.

"We want a thorough retraining of the police, and redeployment evenly across the state, to ensure that all areas have an equal level of policing. We will also be completely determined to root out and punish cases of police brutality and corruption.

"Previous administration didn't hesitate to use the police to repress strikers and demonstrations. There will be no return to those practices, even if sections of the population or the public sector workforce enter into conflict with the popular government."

Nelsis is not worried that the Brigada Militar will try to paralyse or destabilise the PT government. "The base of the police is PTista. The officers can't influence this. The police can't be politically active, but there have been demonstrations of policemen's spouses, and even of masked policemen, demanding improved working conditions, wage rises, and the right to trade union organisation. There have been discussions with the PT and the CUT trade union federation.

"Many policemen don't see why they should be obliged to repress the workers. By introducing democratic rights within the police, we will be able to increase this consciousness among police of their civic role.

"This division within the Brigada Militar makes us convinced that we can implement a thorough reform of the police, and that the officer corps will not be able to block or sabotage us." But he warns that "This is probably not the case in other parts of Brazil, even where the PT is strong." ★

# Socialist Democracy

**Jean Dupont** interviews three leading members of Socialist Democracy, the revolutionary current within the Rio Grande do Sul Workers Party

Lucio Costa is the Communication Secretary of the Workers Party in Rio Grande do Sul. "A bad Leninist and a bad Catholic," he makes no apologies for Socialist Democracy's willingness to take positions in state institutions, or any of their other unorthodox policies.

"There is no manual for social revolution, insists Costa. "Many 'Leninists' forget that Lenin based his political thinking on a thorough analysis of his country's political economy and history. His *What is to Be Done?* was written for one country, at one moment. If we understand Leninism as absolute confidence in the working class, and an absolute conviction that communists must organise in a democratic and coordinated fashion, then we in Socialist Democracy (DS) are perfect Leninists. Or maybe I am just a bad Leninist, as well as a bad Catholic."

"There is an immense difference between our tendency in Brazil, and much of the European Trotskyist movement, for example. For us, the value of Trotskyism is its critique of Stalinism, its insistence on democracy in the movement, and Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Russian revolution. But, as for the model of party building adopted by most European Trotskyist organisations, I find it, frankly, unconvincing.

"For these reasons, I would say that here in Rio Grande do Sul, DS is not a Trotskyist organisation. Maybe one in four of our cadre are 'pure' Trotskyists. Many of the rest have their roots and their identity closer to the progressive catholic movements. In fact, when church people join DS, we tell them not to leave the church. But that is hardly surprising here in Brazil, Latin America.

"The Latin American left has tried everything—armed struggle, populism, electoral politics. So what we now say—and what Che Guevara and Fidel Castro said—the most important thing is to do things, not tell other people what they

should be doing.

City councillor Helena Bonhumá shares much of Costa's outlook, but worries that DS has moved too far from its roots in the rank and file movement. "We are all in the institutions now," she sighs.

Like much of the Brazilian left, Socialist Democracy (DS) began in the student vanguard. In 1979, the current decided to focus its activities on the labour movement. But, unlike "turns to industry" by revolutionary groups in many imperialist countries, the strategy was not based on cadre taking jobs in the industrial working class—largely because of the marked income differentials at that time.

Bonhumá has fond memories of that period. "We built massive popular movements, and gained a lot of experience. I myself began organising women agricultural workers. Women united to identify and defend their rights, and we forced the trade unions to vote to accept women as members.

"In those days, the DS had a big impact in the social movements. We need to rebuild that area of our work. To have more people in the social movements. To reinforce the autonomy of the social movements, irrespective of the type of government. Despite their many positive qualities, the people now leading the social movements don't come from our tradition.

## Socialist Democracy Winning the majority

The Socialist Democracy tendency is not confined to Rio Grande do Sul. Mark Johnson spoke to Joaquim Soriano, a tendency leader, and member of the PT's national secretariat.

"I can understand why, at times, some revolutionaries are frustrated with the moderate PT leadership," says Soriano. "But it would be an irresponsible error to march out of the party on the basis of some ultra-radical critique. The vanguard of the popular movements and trade unions is still firmly inside the PT, and the left is strong."

"The left should stay inside the PT, and try to win majority support," says Soriano. He points out that moderate and radical currents in the party recently united on key questions. "The party's parliamentary fraction—most of which supports the moderate leadership tendency in the PT, has agreed to call for the impeachment of Presi-

dent Fernando Henrique Cardoso."

For Soriano and other members of Socialist Democracy, this shows the importance of their work within the party.

The DS current is trying to reinforcing its national profile, regularise its publication *Em Tempo*, and increase training activities. "I'd like us to have more national visibility," says Soriano. "But we can't negate the reality of our disparate level and focus of intervention." In Rio Grande do Sul the current represents about 25% of party membership, and almost half the government. In Rio de Janeiro state, the current is one of the smaller left currents in a party dominated by the centre-left. But Socialist Democracy members play an influential role in the state's trade unions. "Branding everything we do with a big 'Socialist Democracy' sticker isn't the answer," says Soriano.

According to Soriano, foreigners often misinterpret the nature of the



tendencies within the PT. "The party has a very strong identity. Not just because the leadership doesn't like the challenge that tendencies represent, but because the base of the party expects loyalty and unity.

"So the Trotskyist origins of the DS current do not mean that we are an 'entryist' group, trying to build a party within a party. We have taken what we think is useful from Trotsky and Lenin. But we don't have much in common with many of the self-styled revolutionary groups that use the 'classics' to condemn us for our participation in the PT project, and, in places like Rio Grande do Sul, our role in local government." ★

\*Socialist Democracy is the largest Latin American group associated with the Fourth International. The PT website (in Portuguese) is at <[www.pt.org.br](http://www.pt.org.br)>

"But, if anything, the DS tendency is towards a greater involvement in the institutions. This is a complicated process. It is not just a question of having more and more positions in the state, at the expense of the social movements. We are also going deeper into the state. The PT victory in the state government means that we have much more power than at the municipal level. True, we are further from the citizen. But at the same time we can create new fields of struggle. We have a broader strategic focus, which gives us the possibility to create bigger conflicts with the establishment.

"The PT and DS are increasingly hegemonic in the left in Rio Grande do Sul state. Many young people want to join the DS because they like Miguel Rosseto, the state's vice governor, and most prominent member of DS. But many of these new comrades have a low level of political education and consciousness. We have to educate these new members about our tradition, our ideas, and our way of working. People don't know who the DS is and what we want. Our identity as a counter-current is less visible than in the past.

"At the same time, our leading role is

creating exiting new challenges. We are one of the few expressive, radical, national tendencies in the PT. And our role in Rio Grande has captured the interest of the left across Brazil. This gives us a growing power of attraction.

"To try and reinforce the DS, we have created a three-member leadership. Those comrades have elected positions in the PT, but not in government. That gives them the time to develop the DS as well as the PT. Part of their responsibility is to improve our connections with the national leadership of the DS, in Sao Paulo.

## Building the Workers Party in Rio Grande do Sul

Mark Johnson looks at the party at the centre of the radical left government in Rio Grande do Sul state

The Workers Party (PT) has 48 mayors in Rio Grande do Sul state, including the three major towns, and over 350 municipal councillors. In November 1998, the party extended its organised presence from 320 to over 400 of the state's 427 municipalities.

The PT is the leading force in the Popular Front, which also includes the left-nationalist PDT, the Socialist Party, and the (ex-pro-Albanian) Communist Party of Brazil (PCdB). The PT has 12 of the Popular Front's 20 seats in the 55-member State Assembly.

The party's membership is mainly working class and rural poor. The PT is also the preferred party of teachers, civil servants, the liberal professions and all the lower-middle class sectors which have been pauperised under the neo-liberal administrations.

Women make up half the PT membership, though they are under-represented in the party hierarchy.

The party cadre are largely from the 35+ generation that entered politics in their late teens in the student and labour struggles against the dictatorship. The average age of the PT membership and leadership increased sharply during the 1990s, partly because the student movement is fragmented, and no longer plays the same vanguard role as in the 70s and early 80s.

Although young people faced no future under Rio Grande's previous neo-liberal government, few saw

the PT as offering an alternative programme relevant for them. This changed with the 1998 election campaign, in which the PT again spoke more clearly to young people.

The party as a whole has no statistics on youth membership, but the radical left Socialist Democracy current recruited some 150 young members during and after the November 1998 election campaign. This reflects not only the growing attraction of the PT among young people, but the migration of young people to the left of the party.

Rapid growth poses a major challenge to the party. According to the PT state Organisation Secretary Inacio Fritzen, "After 10 years of rapid growth, the party is struggling to integrate its newer members who do not share the experience of the founder generation. But our challenge is not only to integrate and consolidate. We also need to make the party more organic, and more integrated. All members must have a forum where they can genuinely participate. At the moment, those who do not have a specific function in the party can only participate in congresses and election campaign—though in Brazil we do have major elections every two years! So we face a major, new challenge in translating social resistance into organic forms of expression, in which each militant will intervene."

### Isolation

The Rio Grande PT has always been dominated by the left, which is a minority in the national party. This tradition of radicalism has played a major role in the party's success in Rio Grande. This was the first state where the party



introduced proportional representation of tendencies in the election of party bodies. But the national PT has tried to build a coalition with centre-left and centre-right bourgeois parties, the Rio Grande party has only co-operated with anti-bourgeois parties.

According to Lúcio Costa, Secretary of Communication at the Rio Grande do Sul PT, the strength and confidence of the Rio Grande party makes it almost impossible for the national leadership of the PT to intervene against them. In any case, the local supporters of the PT's moderate national leaders are discredited because of their non-participation in local party campaigns.

The rapid consolidation of a PT base in Rio Grande do Sul state means that the local party could play a growing role within the national party. This influence is already present in the current protests against the government's economic policies, and is expected to increase in the run-up to the PT's national congress in November.

The success of the PT in Rio Grande contrasts sharply with the party's decline in those states where the party leadership has imposed moderate policies and failed to mobilise the party base and social movements. ★

Lúcio Costa is Secretary of Communication for the PT in Rio Grande do Sul. Inacio Fritzen is Secretary for Organisation. For more information read the state PT newspaper Linha Direta, [www.portoweb.com.br/ptrs](http://www.portoweb.com.br/ptrs). Tel/fax 051 224 2230. <ptrs@portoweb.com.br> Av. Farrapos 88, CEP 90220-000, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

"For a number of years, the PT majority was hostile to the existence of tendencies within the party, and we lost both members and our identity became more blurred. We are now trying to reverse those trends. Shortly after the 1995 Fourth International world congress we reestablished a more systematic national training programme, with activities in all the states where we are active."

Although the participative budget process is 10 years old, and the PT in Rio Grande do Sul is strongly influenced by internationalist and Marxist currents, there are comparatively few contacts with the left in other countries. And those contacts are not always fruitful. In place of the "sometimes stratospheric" discussions of the far left, Mayor Raul Pont of Porto Alegre would like to see "more international discussion of the questions that preoccupy DS and PT members in the government—how to confront the state from local institutions, how to govern without accepting the neoliberal logic, how to develop 'can't pay, won't pay' and debt cancellation campaigns, direct democracy, and the relationship between social movements and political power." ★



## Transformation and regroupment

Regroupments of anti-capitalist and anti-Stalinist forces are developing in a number of countries.

The organisations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the re-groupment process. We consider this an important step towards the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left on a world scale.

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# Kashmir conflict

The 'nuclear deterrent' has not prevented the escalation of Indo-Pakistan conflict over the disputed territory of Kashmir.

**Praful Bidwai**

Three months after their "historic" summit for peace and reconciliation at Lahore, India and Pakistan resumed shelling and insulting each other across the Kashmir border. For the first time in 27 years, India has deployed its air force in border hostilities. Over 60 Indian soldiers have died in ground operations.

Although India says the conflict is confined to its side of the line of control (LoC), as the disputed boundary is called, Pakistan claims that some bombs have fallen on its territory and it regards the matter as "very, very serious".

Both states accuse each other of breaking the letter and spirit of both the Lahore Declaration of February 21 and the Simla Agreement signed after the Bangladesh war of 1971.

Both countries claim sovereignty over the divided Jammu and Kashmir regions. Both are insecure about each other's military capacities and intentions, and foreign policy-making.

This confrontation began when the Indian army detected the presence of armed "infiltrators" on the Indian side of the LoC. Pakistan says the men are Kashmiri *mujahedin* (guerrillas), fighting for independence of India's only Muslim-majority state.

Such cross-border forays have been routine for years, especially after the winter snows melt. More than 350 exchanges of heavy artillery fire were reported in the six months both countries exploded nuclear tests in May 1998.

What is new about the present case is the relatively large number of guerrillas crossing the border (unofficially estimated in India at 1,000 to 1,500) and their success in penetrating 7km into Indian-controlled Kashmir. The guerrillas have established relatively well-equipped camps over an area reportedly as large as 15km<sup>2</sup>. Apparently, the Indian army's routine operations failed to dislodge the militants.

Army sources say this is the first time in 50 years that Kashmiri guerrillas have established permanent control over Indian-controlled territory near the border.

Indian home minister L.K. Advani claims that the infiltrators included Pakistani "army regulars and mercenaries."

India says it had no option but to use air power to soften up the intruders and cut off their supply lines. Any delay would have encouraged Pakistan to extend its operations; non-eviction of the "infiltrators" would have changed the alignment of the LoC to India's disadvantage; the security of the vital Srinagar-Leh road would have been threatened; and continued occupation of the heights would have led to further infiltration.

In the absence of full and verifiable information, it seems that after the Indian army failed to dislodge the militants, perhaps after sustaining high casualties (according to the local Kashmiri press), the government decided to launch air strikes.

These strikes are being carried out by helicopter gunships and a range of combat aircraft including MiG-21s and MiG-27s, with MiG-29s providing cover. These strikes add a new element of speed to the military confrontation and involve the risk of aircraft straying across the border, and bombs and rockets missing targets and hitting militarily significant assets in Pakistan.

The border is undemarcated on the ground. This increases the chances of retaliation and strategic misperception.

Strategic miscalculation has been a constant factor in India-Pakistan rivalry. In 1965, Pakistani General Ayub Khan thought that merely parachuting troops into Kashmir would trigger a popular rebellion against India. This started a bitter war which Pakistan did not win.

In 1986-87 and again in 1990, Indian military exercises convinced Pakistani generals that attack was imminent. In 1990 the Pakistan government lined up trucks at the Kahuta uranium enrichment plant, demonstrating its willingness to escalate the confrontation to the nuclear level.

The present stand-off raises three serious questions: Was the Pakistan army or its Inter Services Intelligence agency really involved in the "infiltration"? If so, did it act independently or with the civilian administration's concurrence? Why did all the mutual-consultation and confidence-building measures agreed by the two states fail to avoid conflict? And what determined the timing of the Indian air strikes?

If the Pakistani army was involved, that would cast doubts both over the viability of limited "good faith" agreements such as those reached at Lahore and the ability of the Nawaz Sharif government to prevail over the army which is considered all-powerful and the



final arbiter of political decisions in Pakistan.

If, on the other hand, the Indian claim is false, then that would put a question-mark over the transparency that "democratic India" professes. Such transparency has always been low in Kashmir where the public has limited access to information and cannot verify official claims.

The Lahore accords are not really about serious arms restraint and control. They are a declaration of good intentions to improve relations and introduce a limited form of transparency.

India and Pakistan did not agree to bilateral measures to reduce the danger of nuclear war, but only to (unspecified) "national measures" to reduce "accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons under their respective control." They agreed "to continue to abide by their respective unilateral moratorium on conducting further nuclear test explosions—unless either side... decides that extraordinary events have jeopardised its supreme interests."

## Pakistan "Bread not bombs!"

**Only the radical left has dared oppose the India-Pakistan war in Kashmir, and the arms race between the two countries.**  
Mohammed Farooq

Skirmishes with India along the cease-fire line in Kashmir are a blessing for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The Pakistan Muslim League [PML] government is trying desperately to rekindle the nationalist fervour that followed tit-for-tat nuclear tests by India and Pakistan twelve months ago. War is a welcome distraction from the multiple economic and political crises that surround the government.

The state-run electronic media and a large section of the press blinded by years of anti-India indoctrination lend the government a helping hand in glorifying the nuclear adventure.

Government supporters covered the Prime Minister's home town of Lahore with propaganda trying to show massive pro-nuclear sentiment. But over 3000 peace activists gathered outside the Punjab Assembly Building on May 28, to demonstrate their opposition to the nuclear madness. They chanted "Bread not Bombs, Education not Bombs!"

The timing of the Indian decision to deploy air power reflects the temptation of the Vajpayee "caretaker" government (which has lost Parliament's confidence) to outmanoeuvre its domestic political opponents.

The ruling coalition is in deep trouble and its principal opponent, the Congress, is on the upswing with the return of Sonia Gandhi as president. (She had earlier resigned as party leader after opponents said her "foreign origins" disqualified her from leading the country.

Congress and other opposition parties have criticised the government handling of the conflict, and refused nationalistic demands for unconditional "national unity".

In Pakistan, the Sharif government has brutally cracked down on critical journalists and public-spirited NGOs and women's groups as it desperately seeks a fig leaf of legitimacy through Islam to cover up corruption and misgovernance.

But most of all, the current conflict exposes the false claim that nuclearisation could introduce stability or maturity

in India-Pakistan relations, or reduce the danger of a conventional conflict. In reality, nuclearisation has created more insecurity. ★

© Inter Press Service. The author is a well-known left wing journalist on the *Times of India* and *Frontline* magazine and has co-authored with Achin Vanaik a series of studies and tracts against nuclearisation.



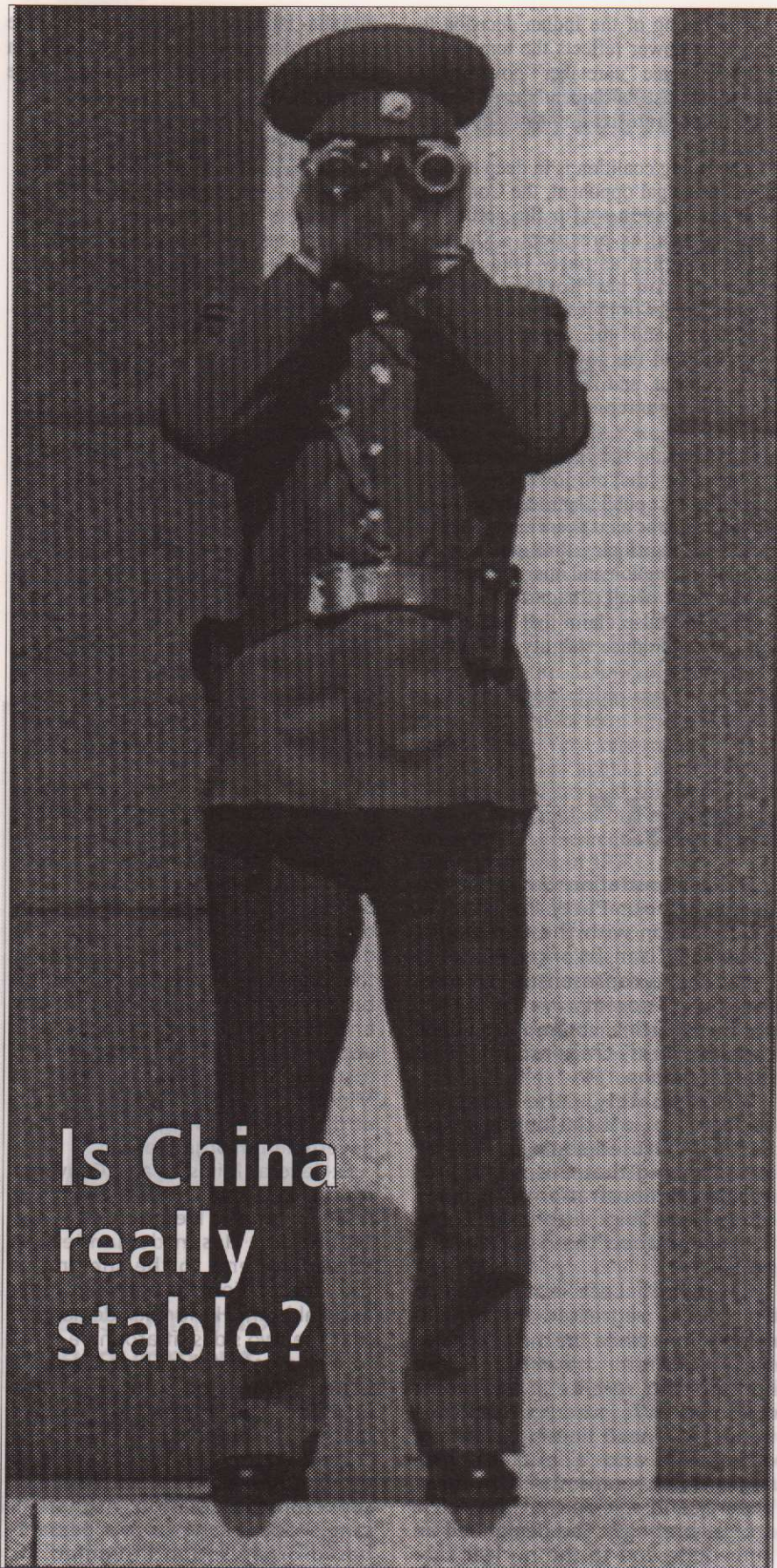
Indian author Arundhati Roy joined anti-nuclear protests after the May 1998 tests.

to Tariq "May 28 is being observed in Baluchistan [the province where the nuclear testing and dumping of nuclear waste took place] as a black day. Sind Province has also boycotted the so-called celebration organised by the government. This demonstration in Lahore proves that the working class, community-based organisations, trade unions and students of Punjab do not approve of the celebration. Tariq also criticised Punjab Welfare Minister Pir Benyamin for harassing and blackmailing the non-governmental organisations.

Ex-Federal Minister and Convener of the Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy, Dr. Mubhashar Hasan demanded an immediate end to the shelling at the Line of Control between India and Pakistan. He further demanded that the two sides sit around a table to seek a peaceful solution to all the issues. "War is no solution. It just adds to the misery of toiling masses", he observed.

Syed Azim, Temur Hasan, and other noted political activists also spoke on the occasion. Asghar Ali sang a peace song from a peasant-based organisation in Punjab. Its theme was "Until the system changes, wars will continue".

The author is a leading member of the Labour Party Pakistan. A shorter version of this article previously appeared in *Green Left Weekly*. Additional content by BS.



# Is China really stable?

The 10th Anniversary of the 1989 democracy movement finds China in political and economic crisis, according to **October Review** magazine.

**Over the last ten years**, dissidents fighting for democracy have been continuously subject to arrest, detention and harassment. But new fighters have come out to continue in the struggle. In the eighties, students and intellectuals took the lead. In the nineties, with the aggra-

vation of social conflicts under the rule of the CCP bureaucracy, with all its corruption and abuse of power, workers and peasants have come out in struggle.

According to official reports, organised workers' struggles in 1998 increased by over 30% over the preceding year. Peasant discontent has also found expression in riots and demonstrations.

Despite the government's prohibition, in recent years, numerous sit-ins and protests have occurred outside Zhongnanhai, the Party-Government centre in the capital.

On April 25, over 10,000 people of the Falun Gong cult launched a 13-hour action to surround the Zhongnanhai, protesting official criticism of their martial arts cult and demanding formal recognition of their right to practice. The cult has tens of millions of supporters, many of whom are high-ranking party and military cadres.

The tide of mass protest that erupted on May 8 in reaction to the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was the biggest mobilisation in the past decade. Over 250,000 people took to the street in Beijing, over 100,000 in Guangzhou, and tens of thousands in other major cities.

Some protests were orchestrated and carefully controlled by the authorities. But this massive outburst should be seen in the light of the tensions in Chinese society, in the people's discontent about domestic social contradictions, and about the government's impotence in foreign policy, in particular in relation to China's application to join the World Trade Organization.

During the protests, a teacher from Beijing said, "Our leaders are too feeble, they dare not be like in the times of the Korean war [of the early 1950s]." Some students chanted the slogan "Down with Japan!", and some chanted "Zhu Rongji [the Premier] should step down!" In Shenzhen, some people shouted "Down with traitors!" After orchestrating the protests for two days, the authorities quickly turned to their containment policy. Party leaders appealed to the people to abide by law and order, and to be vigilant of elements who might seize the opportunity to cause havoc.

Though the wave of protest has subsided, the repercussions are still spreading. The opportunity has been taken to expand public space for open political discussions. In the Peking University, the democracy wall has been reactivated, and big and small character posters have appeared. One of them said, "the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia should bring us science and democracy." Another one said, "is it not high time to put forth a plan for political reform and against corruption?"

Faced with increasing discontent from workers, peasants, students and citizens, Zhu Rongji proposed, in his Government Work Report of March this

year, that "prompt resolution" of the internal contradictions among the people should be conducted. "The problems should be resolved when they start burgeoning, one should not simplistically and brutally aggravate the contradictions, and should not deal with the people and the masses by autocratic means."

If he truly meant such words, the first move should be to release all political dissidents. In fact arrests and surveillance of political dissidents across China increased in the months before the 10th anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre.

When Zhu recently visited the United States, he said that in 1989, students were fighting for democracy, but they breached the rule of law. This is not a 'rehabilitation' of the 1989 movement. But it goes beyond the usual official labelling of the 1989 movement as a "counter-revolutionary riot".

We call on people in and outside China to work together to compel the Chinese government to:

- Rehabilitate the 1989 movement for democracy, and bring to justice those responsible for the bloody repression on June Fourth;
- Release all detained dissidents and political prisoners, bring to a halt the surveillance and detention of dissidents, and restore their reputation and status;
- Abide by the United Nations Human Rights Covenants and the provisions of the Chinese Constitution, to safeguard the democratic freedoms and rights of the people, in particular the freedoms of speech, publication, rally, association (and formation of political parties), and demonstration;
- Mobilise the entire population to discuss and decide on plans for democratic political reform, and to end one-party dictatorship.

Popular pressure can force an official rehabilitation of the 1989 movement for democracy. Rehabilitation was finally won after the 5 April 1976 Tiananmen Incident, the 28 February 1947 Incident in Taiwan, and the Kwungju Riot in South Korea. Victory can be won when the movement for democracy is linked to the struggle of the workers and peasants for better livelihood and against the bureaucracy. ★

Source: This article formed the editorial in the latest issue of the Hong Kong magazine *October Review*. For more information write to G.P.O. Box 10144, Hong Kong, or <or@earthling.net>

## Hong Kong Four thousand voices

**Hong Kong spearheaded the worldwide commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre.**

More than 4,000 demonstrators participated in the march organized by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movement in China on May 30, 1999.

The signals of Hong Kong TV stations were blocked in Southern mainland cities such as Guangzhou in order to censor news of this commemoration.

According to Szeto Wah, chairman of the Hong Kong Alliance, "Hong Kong is the only place in China where people can commemorate the Tiananmen Massacre. It is important we fight on. We are a spark in China democratic movement," he said.

For the last 10 years, the Hong Kong Alliance has been holding a march on the Sunday before the anniversary and a candle-lit vigil on the anniversary of the massacre. About 3,000 citizens participated in the 1998 march, the first after Hong Kong returned to China.

Over one million Hong Kong people took to the street in June 1989 to protest against the massacre in Beijing. The number of the participants in the march has dwindled to a few thousand as time goes by, but "although it has been 10 years since it happened, I don't think people's feelings about it have changed that much," said Albert Ho Chun-yan, committee member of the Hong Kong Alliance.

The march ended peacefully after Szeto Wah handed a statement to a

representative of the Chief Executive office.

Another protest group April 5th Action Group then continued the demonstration as they carried a coffin with the words "Butcher Regime Stinks Forever" to the Chinese Foreign Ministry Office. They were stalled by the police outside the Foreign Ministry office. Leung Kwok-hung who led the protest was warned by the police that they had not "made application" for the demonstration.

After arguments with the police, the group forced their way and put the coffin on the barricade outside the office. The police removed the coffin after the protesters dispersed.

In a picture exhibition on the June 4th Incident, Chinese labour activist Han Dong-fang criticized the SAR government for barring exiled dissidents such as Wang Dan from entering Hong Kong. Wang Dan and other exiled dissidents have been invited by the Hong Kong Alliance to join an academic forum as guest speakers, but the SAR government refused to grant them entry visas. The government has given no detailed explanation for the decision.

Szeto Wah and other committee members of the Hong Kong Alliance are forbidden to visit the mainland by the Beijing government. [FL] ★

Source: Hong Kong Voice Of Democracy. Contact editor Francis T.L. Lau at <tlau@hknet.com>, Mobile: (852) 9424 1068, Fax: (852) 2493 3953. For more information go to [www.democracy.org.hk/](http://www.democracy.org.hk/)

## Pakistan: National Workers Party

**Three left-wing parties merged at the beginning of May.**

The four hundred delegates representing the Awami Jamhoori Party, the Pakistan National Party and the Pakistan Socialist Party came from all parts of the country. The conference was also attended by several groups of progressive intellectuals and labour leaders including Mr Javed Akhter.

If the merger is consolidated in practice, the new organisation could become a party of the socialist left, based on and led by trade union leaders and activists and with supporters in progressive community-based organisations. However, similar initiatives in the past have been top-down, rather than grass-roots operations.

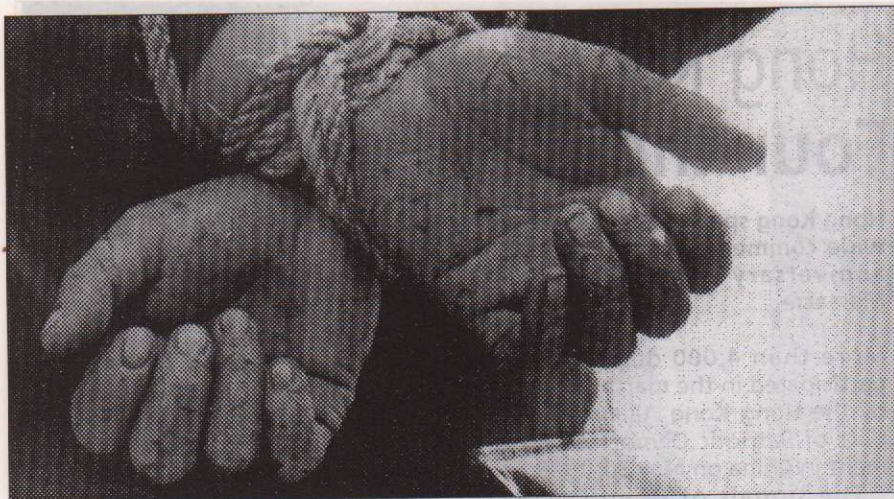
Mr Abid Hasan Minto was elected president of the new party. The executive committee includes Begum Tahira Mazhar Ali, mother of British radical Tariq Ali. ★

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## Philippines Liberating the left

Mark Johnson

Since 1992, large sections of the Philippine left have thrown off the Maoist straitjacket, and embraced a more dynamic—and democratic—revolutionary strategy, based on the self-organisation of the oppressed. Guerrilla war has given way to mass political activity. Women's liberation is no longer a secondary question. And the diversity of left thinking is recognised as an asset, rather than a weakness.

In May 1998, most of the anti-Maoist revolutionaries came together to establish the Revolutionary Workers Party (RPM-P)

The new party has Permanent Observer status in the Fourth International [which sponsors this magazine.] According to party spokesman Harry Quezon, "the International helped us replace Maoism with a more critical, dynamic Marxism. We also absorbed many ideas about party democracy, pluralism, and the need for the party to build genuine, autonomous social movements, rather than simply focus on its own recruitment."

The successive splits in the Communist Party of the Philippines have obviously weakened the left in the short term. But Quezon is convinced that the move away from "protracted people's war" strategy has made it much easier to organise the rural and urban poor around their immediate concerns.

The armed struggle is not being abandoned, but guerrilla units now concentrate on defending the gains of the mass movement, and protecting activists, rather than winning territory.

Many party militants concentrate on organising the poorest sectors of society—poor peasant, rural workers and urban "squatter" communities.

This is long term work, requiring a high level of commitment and patience. "If the aim was recruitment, we'd do things differently," says Quezon. "but we realise that it is not us the party which will make the revolution, but the working people. So they must have strong, independent organisations."

This new model of mass work also ensures that the party is constantly testing elements of its programme in the real world.

The party itself is still clandestine. But militants participate in a wide range of "above-ground" activities.

The RPM-P is a disciplined party, but far from monolithic. And the social structure—and class struggle—varies from one island to another.

This dossier presents the challenges facing progressive groups in mass organising work. Where possible, we indicate the link between mass organising and broader strategic questions.

Such a dossier is inevitably partial. In future issues we will report on urban labour organising and the indigenous peoples' struggle.

We will also present some of the radical left currents which have focused on electoral and legal work.

This may be the first time that an ex-Maoist current has embraced so much of the thinking which this magazine tries to articulate.

This is a two-way process. In adapting those ideas to their work in the mass movements, they have created a synthesis which deserves closer study. ★

## Peace caravan

The militarisation of Mindanao cannot crush the national liberation struggles of the Moro and the indigenous peoples. A broad peace movement is reaching out to all sectors of the population, articulating the national and social demands of all the oppressed sectors.

In December 1998 President Joseph "Erap" Estrada authorised an escalation of the conflict in the southern island of Mindanao. Armed Forces of the Philippines surrounded and attacked Moro Islamic Liberation Movement (MILF) camps and territories. Many civilians were displaced, their properties were destroyed.

The regime reactivated the CAFGUs (Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Units), vigilantes, and fanatic groups trained for anti-insurgency campaigns. Vigilantes and fanatics were tasked to sow intrigues between the majority Christian "Filipino" settlers, the Muslim Moro people, and the indigenous tribes (Lumads).

Death squads returned to the streets of urban centres like Iligan, Cagayan, Marawi, and Cotabato. These groups are organised by high-ranking officers of the Philippine National Police (PNP), the AFP, the military intelligence, and politicians. They claim to pursue common criminals, drug traffickers, kidnappers, and car-jackers. But they also target insurgents and progressive movements.

These events are part of the grand plan of the military hierarchy specifically the Commander in Chief President Estrada. He desperately wants parliament to ratify an expensive modernisation programme for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). To justify this spending, he needs to "create" chaotic situations. In the AFP modernisation programme, military forces will be streamlined and their skills will be upgraded particularly in combat tactics. Armaments will also be modernised.

The Philippine Government needs the help of the United States for this modernisation. In exchange, Washington will be able to base US troops in the Philippines (all US bases were closed after the fall of the Marcos dictatorship).

There was massive public opposition to the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). People remember all too well the political and social consequences of the old US bases in the Philippines.



The VFA will not offer stability to the country. In fact, it will hinder peace and development efforts. Opposition is particularly strong in Mindanao, where the US will intervene to support the 80% of Philippine troops already deployed to fight the Muslim and communist revolutionary groups, and protect multinational fruit plantations.

The Mindanao-wide campaign for genuine peace and sustainable development culminated with a Tri-People Peace Caravan (Christian Filipinos, Muslim Moros and anamist indigenous peoples).

### Overview

To achieve genuine and lasting peace, all sectors and groups of people in Mindanao have to work together and develop concrete proposals that will address the basic issues confronting the peoples in the island without prejudice to their cultural differences.

The Tri-People Peace Caravan was an attempt to reach out to all ethnic-religious and social sectors of the population, and elaborate a common agenda for peace and development in Mindanao. It was a shared effort of Muslim, Christian, and Lumad (indigenous) groups.

The caravan was sponsored by a coalition of NGOs, community organisations, local government officials, and leaders and activists from the Catholic, Protestant and Muslim communities.

The coalition mandated the socialist campaign centre ALAB-Katipunan as the secretariat for the caravan. ALAB-Katipunan is the leading radical force which promotes a tri-people and social solution to Mindanao's problems.

### "The Spark"

The spark that ignited the "journey for peace" was generated in the Muslim City of Marawi. A Prayer Rally was organised by the Mindanao Muslim NGO's Coalition Against RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement and supported by the Peace Advocates of Ranaw (PAR). The 8,000 participants came from all over the

Lanao del Sur region.

A Manifesto for peace entitled the First Mindanao Declaration was read and distributed during the rally. This Manifesto expresses the Muslim people's reasons for rejecting the VFA.

The Prayer Rally was highlighted by a symbolic "killing" of the Visiting Forces Agreement. A 95-year old Muslim clad in a traditional warrior costume danced and used his "kris" (a traditional, highly symbolic sword) to destroy the effigy of an American GI soldier, representing the United States Government. With all his strength he cut its arms and legs and then its head. This elicited loud applause from the crowd.

The Caravan travelled across the island, talking to local people about the VFA, the militarisation of Mindanao, and the need to respect the national rights of the Moro and Lumad peoples. Lumad groups like the Higaonons asked the Caravan participants to help them recuperate their ancestral land which was taken from them through deceit and legal manipulation.

### Workers unite against globalisation

The caravan gave an extra impetus to May day celebrations across Mindanao. In Iligan City, union leaders discussed globalisation, privatisation, and the role of workers in the over-all struggle for social change. In Cotabato City, the main themes were Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), agricultural workers, and the indigenous people. The May Day rally also saluted the 13 vehicles prepared for the second caravan, which left the following day from Cotabato City to Kidapawan City.

Meanwhile, in Davao City, the peace caravan joined over 7,000 workers in a March/Rally celebrating the International Day of Labour. Speakers emphasised the ill-effects of globalisation to job security. Other speakers stressed the need for workers' unity in this period of massive contractualisation and retrenchment.

Caravan participants carried "peso for

peace" collection boxes to raise funds for the next stage of their mission.

### In unity there is strength

On May 2, the two groups of Caravan riders converged in front of the Kidapawan City Hall. Weariness seemed to vanish now that they were many—57 vehicles and more than 2,000 Caravan riders.

After speeches from the Diocese of Kidapawan and a city government official, Lumads Caravan riders presented a courtship dance, and youth activists presented an interpretative dance that tackles the issue of the environment. A very successful concert was held with the participation of the Manila-based group Agaw Agimat.

After the concert, students and out-of-school youth from all over the area held the first Mindanao-wide youth/student consultation. They talked about the Peace Proposals and formed a Mindanao Youth and Student Coordinated Body to spearhead the Campaign against Commercialisation of Education.

The following day, the caravan set out on its final journey, swelled by another 48 vehicles. The closing rally in General Santos City attracted about 15,000 people. An inter-faith prayer was followed by speeches coming from different organisations, but mostly from the religious groups. Bishops and priests from the Diocese of Butuan, Kidapawan, Marbel and the Archdiocese of Cotabato spoke against the Visiting Forces Agreement. Representatives from the Muslim and Lumad group also shared their views of the VFA and their respective agenda for peace.

After music from Agaw Agimat, a group of young students from General Santos City performed a dance depicting the history of resistance of the Mindanao people against foreign dominations. The rally closed with the rereading of the Manifesto which basically called for the "death of VFA".

This culmination marked the highest expression of unity among the three groups of people in Mindanao; united in their quest for lasting peace and sustainable development in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, in Manila, the Philippine Senate went through the motion of deliberating the merits of the Visiting Forces Agreement. Ratification was a mere formality.

### What now?

ALAB-Katipunan organisers were overjoyed when the organising coalition—particularly the bishops—decided to transform themselves into a permanent co-ordination of the tri-people peace movement. Sectoral discussions are underway, and the KASAMA KA coalition will be formally launched in the coming weeks. [JD] ★



insists that they can win freehold over their land, and warns that individual mortgages are likely to result in bank ownership of much of the barrio. Church groups that are not rooted in the popular movement have also received an unfriendly response, as have government programmes that claim to help the poor.

The RWP-P has pinned its future existence to success in organising districts like this one. "We have been able to refound our party, and produce basic programmatic documents," says local organiser Nerissa Dalisay. "But nothing in those texts guarantees us a significant role in our communities! Everything depends on how well we build our bases in the urban and rural poor.

"The big problem in the urban areas is the informalisation of the economy. Urban poor (squatter) areas are threatened with demolition because of the growing demand for shops and offices. We organise on the day-to-day questions of the urban poor. Though we obviously try to educate people on national issues, such as oil price increases."

This is a new paradigm, a new methodology for Philippine communists. It differs from the Maoist past, and the purely propagandistic approach of many European revolutionary groups.

"We want to have our own government one day. And we became socialists because we want to help people. So we must begin, today, to develop our own solutions to the problems of the people. It isn't enough just to go into the streets and shout! People are tired of slogans. They still need to be convinced that the radical left is ready, worthy to hold power.

"Are we for empowerment, and active decision making by the popular organisations? In the old days the CP mobilised people on a range of ideological issues. But did the people really understand? And did what we asked them to do make any difference to their lives?"

RWP-P organisers are keen to study the experience of the Brazilian left in Rio Grande state, where the progressive government has ensured that relocated squatters have school places and work possibilities, partly financed by those who wish to exploit the land which the squatters currently occupy.

The Maoist CPP calls the RWP-P "collaborators" because of their insistence on using every legal loophole, and every government programme, to improve the lot of the urban poor.

The new party recognises that they will recruit very few rural poor in the short term. But they are determined to root their organisation among the poorest sections of the population. "This is where the action is, and where the new upsurge will come from," explains Dalisay. "In the global economy, these are the human resources which we must unite. ★

## "Kill the pushers!"

Mark Johnson accompanied RWP-P activists to a 'red' slum in one provincial capital

People here used to pay rent. But now the landlord wants to expel them, so that he can sell the land. He thinks he can get P1500/m<sup>2</sup> (US\$40). None of the residents have that kind of money. The men occasionally work as day labourers or drivers. Some of the women sell snacks by the side of the road. But without seed capital from outside, even this kind of business is impossible for most families.

The Communist Party of the Philippines organised this district for over 30 years. Many young people were recruited into the communist guerrillas in the rural area.

But—because of this recruitment potential—the CPP's Maoist leadership neglected community organisation. Local campaigns would attract state attention, something undesirable for a "red base," they argued.

Leaders of the breakaway RWP-P, now the province's largest communist group, are trying to overcome this legacy, but progress is painfully slow. The intensity of urban organising is much lower than in the party's rural base areas. Only 29 of the 300 households are organised.

The residents' organisation has prevented the development of prostitution in the district, but is unable to confront the drug gangs which have mushroomed in recent years.

Even the guerrilla movement was surprised by the expansion of the drugs business. According to local commander Jose Lahug, "it will take a long, deter-

mined struggle by community groups to rid their districts of drug gangs. The rebel army will intervene where it can, against known drug pushers. And we will tolerate police activities aimed at suppressing the drug trade."

But with 2/3 of local people now dependent on alcohol or illegal drugs, the rebels are careful to distinguish between users and dealers. Or, as Lahug puts it, "educate the users, kill the dealers!"

The district youth group is trying to educate young people about drugs, and provide alternative social activities. But "it is hard to find a common language with the many young people who are out of school," one organiser complains. Another quietly remarks that even their own members take drugs sometimes.

The residents association is part of the provincial federation of urban poor groups. But residents jealously guard their barrio against outside most outside groups. They recently expelled the government-backed Citizens' Mortgage Program, which tried to persuade families to take massive loans so as to buy their own homes. The community



# The fair trade challenge

The alternative trade network in Visayas has reinforced peasant organisations and the radical left.

**Mark Johnson**

The Philippine alternative trade network developed after the 1983 collapse in sugar prices. Peasant organisers, many linked to the Communist Party, saw alternative trade as a partial solution, and a valuable tool for organising the rural poor around a progressive agenda.

With the slogan "trade not aid," Japanese aid organisations financed the development of alternative trade as a self-sufficiency programme.

The People's Fair Trade Assistance Center (PFTAC) enabled farmers on Bohol island to diversify into organic, red rice, which they marketed mainly in the Netherlands. They also expanded production of green balangung bananas not normally consumed in the Philippines, but very popular in Japan.

Bohol's poor farmers had little interest in commercial banana production, because there was no existing market. But thanks to PFTAC they have split their fields between rice and bananas, which makes them much less vulnerable to the vagaries of the international market, or crop failure due to drought or pests.

## Alternative development

Groups like PFTAC try to persuade peasants to form co-operatives. But they recognise that most rural poor dream of a family-owned plot of land. According to PFTAC director Vincente Loquellano, "we also have to recognise that many of the cooperatives set up in the past have since collapsed because of mismanagement."

Progressive development workers are now concentrating their efforts on helping farmers pool their equipment, and collaborate in quality control, technical development, marketing and strategic planning. "We would prefer co-operatives. But if the peasants don't want, then we encourage them at least to collectivise these key services."

A fair price for peasant farmers is the cornerstone of the fair trade system. According to Loquellano, "in the capitalist sector, the price is usually determined by a middleman, who keeps most of the profits. At the last harvest the middlemen were paying 10-15 centavos per banana, and selling for 50-55. PFTAC paid the farmers 25 centavos,

and sold at the market rate. We take 20 centavos to cover our own costs, which leaves five centavos per banana as surplus, in addition to the higher price we pay the farmers in the first place."

This surplus is reinvested into the popular movement. PFTAC encourages poor farmers groups to federate, and form alliances with peoples' organisations and labour groups. The group also educates farmers about how to use the extra cash they receive thanks to the alternative trade system.

Not surprisingly, more and more farmers are asking to join the PFTAC system. Over the last 15 years, the number of families involved has grown from 300 to over 10,000.



## State repression

Each expansion of the alternative trade network has provoked attacks from the Philippine government and plantation owners. As farmers became organised, they began to demand their civic and human rights, and land reform.

Landlords responded by sending thugs to intimidate peasants and rural organisers. But this repressive role was gradually assumed by the state, which has militarised the countryside, and branded PFTAC and similar groups as "communists". In many areas, police chiefs moonlight as plantation managers, giving them a personal interest in repressing the rural poor.

## Local market networks

PFTAC has been surprisingly successful in developing a local market for fair trade products. A number of consumer coops and teachers' associations are willing to pay a little extra for

PFTAC's yellow banana, rice and handicrafts. A part of production is also sold on the open market.

Vendors are recruited from popular organisations of the urban poor ("squatters"). Packaging and transport work is also outsourced to allied popular organisations, who sometimes reciprocate by purchasing PFTAC's rice and bananas. Urban poor groups, and organisers from this sector, are represented in PFTAC's board of directors.

But most Filipinos are too poor to support the alternative trade movement. The local banana market is flooded with the products of Del Monte's Mindanao plantations. They might be full of chemicals, but they are cheaper. And like in other countries, Filipinos prefer the standardised, blemish-free appearance of plantation bananas.

But Japan's huge network of consumer cooperatives is the biggest market for Philippine "fair traders". The co-operatives have educated consumers about the benefits of organic produce, and the importance of a direct relationship between producer and consumer. This makes it possible to charge a price above the market level.

Since they lack ISO quality certificates, Bohol's small farmers would in any case be unable to sell into most international markets.

## Globalisation as challenge...

The Nicaraguan and Salvadorian revolutions provoked multinational banana producers like Del Monte to develop huge plantations in the Philippines, as an alternative supply. Over 70% of Japan's bananas now come from the southern island of Mindanao.

Globalisation means increased competition on price and quality, even within the alternative trade network. Peasant organisations in Thailand have overtaken their Philippine counterparts on both counts.

Although most multinational banana production depends on chemical inputs, the multinationals are trying to develop "organic" varieties. They have the land, the technology, the capital and the economies of scale. According to Loquellano, "organic banana and rice production is no longer a protected niche for us. The multinationals already have lower production costs."

This illustrates the importance of diversification: one of the key ideas behind the growth of alternative trade networks in the 1980s.

## ...and as opportunity

According to Loquellano, "we should also see globalisation as an opportunity to strengthen solidarity between different countries. After all, there is growing awareness of our mutual vulnerability in the face of global capitalism.

"In the old days, our explanations of 'imperialism' and 'global exploitation'

seemed abstract. But today it is easy for people to recognise that globalisation is essentially a process of consolidation among the biggest capitalists, at the expense of working people everywhere.

"Before, imperialism used military means to control the 'third world.' Today they use economic intervention like the World Trade Organisation and the Multilateral Agreement on Investments.

"So we need to improve the co-operation between smaller producers, and the link between producer and consumer. Alternative trade helps develop the consciousness of popular organisations in the south, and consumers in the north.

"We can't confront the capitalists directly. But strong people's movements can establish meaningful links that make a difference."

The problem is maintaining export levels in an increasingly competitive market, and persuading farmers that they must increase the quality of their products, even if this is more time-consuming.

"There is a limit to what we can do," explains Loquellano. "We only facilitate.

The farmers are the ones who must decide what do to about globalisation. We try to help them identify the relation-



ship between the big picture and the local situation."

PFTAC's training programme includes strategic planning sessions, so that the farmers' associations can themselves identify new projects (rather than passively accepting the recommendations of their technical and political advisors).

### Corruption and co-option

PFTAC also educates the rural poor about the dangers of exploitation of poverty and popular movements by unscrupulous Non-Governmental and charitable organisations, which can have their own bureaucratic interests, or which abandon a particular project as soon as foreign funding is no longer available.

"There is a constant turnover of 'development' groups which pretend to sympathise with the rural poor, but are primarily motivated by their own religious, zoological, political or economic agenda, says Loquellano.

"Groups like our own are in for the long haul. But we have always told the peasants that, if the day comes when they no longer want our help, we will go." ★

## Street children Urban poor intervention

**Street children are a very visible consequence of the crisis in Philippine society.**

Ignored by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and brutalised by the police, street children in Mandaue City have gradually come to trust the "aunties" who opened a drop-in centre in their district.

"Options" offers an integrated programme: educational counselling and support for those who want to rejoin the school system and those who do not. It also offers welfare services and livelihood skills.

Many of the children survive by scavenging and recycling refuse, or washing the city's Jeepney buses. Most of what they earn is given to their mothers, to buy food for younger brothers and sisters.

"The Principal of the local school didn't even realise that these children were on the street!" says Options director Ligaya Abadesco. "Teachers only saw that these children were often absent, often tired, and often distracted. We cover the costs of those children who want to attend school, though our resources are limited. We may try to persuade the city government to pay these expenses. But street

kids don't vote, and neither do many of their parents."

Beyond the immediate project, Options staff are trying to dialogue with and organise the squatter communities from which the street children come. Options' community development officer covers five urban poor communities.

"The urban poor face a daily diet of injustice. They are very hard to organise, and we can only win their respect and confidence if we can help solve some of their immediate needs."

Projects like Options are a question of principle, not 'mere' humanitarianism. "We need to provide an alternative to the dependent, clientelist relationship which the government, politicians, and most NGOs encourage among the rural poor," explains Abadesco. "We need to build a long term relationship, that will continue even if our funding runs out. Of course we concentrate on basic issues like access to water and education. But this is the only way to begin to organise and educate the community."

In collaboration with other popular organisations, Options is trying to develop income-generating projects. "We need to make

the parents less dependent on their children's paid labour."

The long term goal is the formation of a resident's association in the squatter zones. As a matter of principle, this organisation would be invited to join Options' board of directors.

In one squatters camp, Options is helping mothers regain collective control over the single water outlet. The original installation was financed by an NGO, but, over the years, the unorganised residents failed to pay the water company, and the tap is now under the control of one individual. "Since she has the money, she can always lend the mothers a bit of money to buy food," said one organiser. "Which makes it very hard for the other mothers to challenge her."

Subject to funding, Options plans to train a series of paralegal advisors on labour law, to assist individual workers (and to provide paid work for some blacklisted activists!)

Options also collaborated with medical students at San Carlos (the country's oldest university) in training the urban poor in the production of herbal medicines.

In the housing boom, the urban poor are the first to be ejected or forcibly relocated. Without the support of organisers like Options, the urban poor will be unable to use the legal mechanisms that offer them a degree of protection. ★





## Fair trade, foul play

The "privatisation" of an alternative trade company has forced workers to unionise.

**Mark Johnson**

The economy of Negros island took a nose dive in the 1980s, when sugar prices collapsed. The Alter Trade Corporation encouraged farmers to diversify into banana and handicraft production, as well as opening a niche market for organic, unrefined moscovado sugar.

By the early 1990s, ATC was the marketing arm for the export of 120 tonnes of bananas to Japan every month, as well as 2.5 tonnes of organic moscovado sugar to Japan, Germany and Switzerland.

The ATC was established by a range of people's initiatives, linked to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Guerrilla support and protection of the project was essential to its success.

Although ATC functioned as a cooperative, its legal structure required that six members be registered as the legal owners. When the CPP began to fragment in 1992, those shareholders decided to transform their formal ownership into a reality.

Under a smokescreen of "professionalisation," the six manager-shareholders began to transform the ATC. In 1994 the company stopped hiring and training members of the rural poor organisations. Management preferred to recruit college-educated outsiders, with no link to the social movements, and a personal loyalty to the new "owners." Existing workers were forced to sit "professionalisation" exams, and threatened with redundancy

if they failed. Their skills in community liaison were not thought relevant.

According to local union leaders, "we aren't against modernisation. But this particular model of professionalisation is very problematic. Before, when a worker visited one of the administration offices, he was greeted and made welcome. Now, it's arrogant, its 'what do you want?'" Admin. workers protest that "now we look really smart in our 'professional' office clothes. But visitors don't realise that we've gone into debt to buy these clothes, and that we don't have enough food for our children."

In an attempt to reduce staff and dismiss more radical workers, management became obsessed with identifying and punishing even the smallest errors.

These exacting standards did not apply to the managers themselves. According to one former clerical worker, the company has two sets of accounts, and an unknown number of bank accounts. Tax officials have been bribed not to investigate the company.

The managers' *nouveau riche* lifestyle contrasts with that of their former co-workers, who earn 5,000 pesos per month (US\$130), except for the four months a year when there is no work, and no salary.

Frustrated with these developments, workers formed a trade union, and demanded a collective bargaining agreement.

ATC president Danilo Guinabo refused, claiming that the workers demands would force the plant to close, threatening the livelihood of 20,000 sugar cane workers.

As managers became increasingly

aggressive, Marxist guerrillas of the RPA-ABB intervened. They burned two cargo trucks and a motorcycle, warning ATC not to use force against its employers. RPA-ABB regional spokesman Jose Montero said the managers of the ATC now acted "as if they owned the corporation."

ATC used this attack as a pretext to suspend negotiations, and shut down production at the mill.

On 23 March, 97 of the company's 250 workers picketed the plant. They said the closure represented "unfair dismissal," and condemned the management for refusing to dialogue with them. Although managers had threatened a six month closure, they reopened after four weeks.

But the "professionalisation" of ATC continues. Farmers organisations are now invited to deliver their bananas, and ATC drivers are told that there is no work available. Some have accepted individual redundancy agreements worth about P6,000. Others have asked the courts to overrule this "undeclared policy of retrenchment".

The "no work, no pay" system for Negros' sugar workers means that drivers and haulers are unemployed for four months every year, when there is no sugar to transport. Unions say a company like ATC should pioneer new working relations, by finding alternative work for its staff during this dry period. The company should also provide education and housing loans, to enable employees to better their situation. "But ATC's managers won't even consider an advance on next week's wages—so some workers can't come to work because they simply don't have the bus fare."

The company has also abandoned its "alternative" relationship with producers. ATC used to purchase sugar cane at the market price (P900/tonne) but provide farmers with a range of development services. The company now offers P600/tonne. Farmers have little choice but to accept. They now depend on ATC for their fertiliser and other inputs, and for pre-harvest credit. Because they control so much of the production and marketing process, it is easy for ATC to extract a disguised profit by manipulating the prices of the various inputs and services it provides.

Rather than eliminating the middleman and giving producers full market information, ATC's activities make it impossible for growers to compare the price and risk of different options. Rural organisers have been bluntly told "keep sending the sugar at P600/tonne, or we'll close down the mill."

To make matters worse, ATC is the major local buyer for organic sugar. Organic production means lower input costs, but also lower yields per hectare. Most small organic farmers quite simply have no alternative to ATC.

The new trade unions at ATC say the

only solution is for a workers' representative to participate in all board meetings. "Let them open the books! If it is true that we are really losing money, then let the workers discuss how to improve production. After all, we play the major role."

Management has branded workers' representatives as allies of the "terrorist" guerrillas, and says all criticism is an attempt to "take over" the ATC.

But former admin. worker Lucille Perartilla is not surprised that most workers refused to condemn the rebel attacks. "For one thing, the workers were not involved. Second, the rebel attack reflected a real problem—who should ATC serve, the managers, or the community."

"And thirdly, by demanding that workers choose between management and the rebels, the managers were trying to legitimate their own theft of the company. And putting the workers in the middle."

"Whatever their dispute with the guerrillas, the management had no right to close the alter-trade network. The livelihoods of hundreds of people are at stake."

### Rebel connection

According to the *Visayas Daily Star* newspaper, ATC formerly paid the communist-led NPA guerrillas a monthly "tax" of P500,000 (US\$13,000). Former



leaders of the NPA explained that this represented "about 30% of the profits of the organisation, as a legitimate taxation and payment for support and defence services by both the guerrilla and party units. The rest was plowed back directly into the popular organisations and local communities."

Rebel leaders say ATC's assets and bank deposits are worth at least P100m. (US\$2.7m).

Not surprisingly, they are outraged that a handful of former comrades used the crisis in the party to appropriate the movement's major "treasure chest" Guevarra, "self-serving interest and business interest that ride on people's empty stomachs should not be tolerated. Those who truly desire genuine people's empowerment should be vigilant against those who discover possibilities for personal enrichment within the peoples' movements."

But rebel leaders recognise their partial responsibility for the unhappy degeneration of the ATC. A regional leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party in neighbouring Panay (which supplied bananas to ATC) says the project was always surrounded with

## Labour Unity Forum Building the movement

The second largest Philippine city, Cebu has avoided the worst excesses of sectarianism within the progressive and labour movement. The town's Labour Unity Front has regrouped many of the splinters of the Communist movement, as well as trade union leaders from the region's main sectors.

Mark Johnson

The success of the Labor Unity Front (LUF) is partly due to a lack of competition from more sectarian labour projects. The Communist Party-linked KMU union federation is "marching towards oblivion" in Cebu. Its unreconstructed Maoism was unable to attract more than a few hundred workers to its May Day contingent.

Groups which have copied the CP's sectarian and manipulative style have failed to take root in Cebu. The Cebu Labor Education Advocacy and Research Centre (CLEAR) recently disaffiliated from the Alliance for Progressive Labor, which "wanted to fill the role of the KMU, and especially to control all overseas funding contacts," according to CLEAR director Pepe Gasapo. "They wanted us to convene a forum of

independent unions, but their main ambition was to recruit the union leaders to Bisig [a non-aligned socialist group] and establish hegemony over the labour movement."

For CLEAR, leadership in the labour movement can only come through "years of union-building and leading disputes. Leadership is won every day. It isn't a matter of "capturing" the leadership and manipulating the members."

According to Vic Abadesco of the Institute for Progressive Studies (IPS), the LUF is the country's strongest broad left alliance on labour questions. "We'd like to extend this kind of alliance in other areas. But for the moment, we're struggling to keep LUF together. Old habits die hard, and the left groups are very suspicious of each other. But because it is independent of the various post-CPP currents, CLEAR is accepted and trusted as the central custodian of the ideals of labour unity."

A LUF seminar in May attracted widespread interest from union leaders in the private sector, including organisers in the local free trade zones. But the problem is the public sector. "These workers see

themselves as more of an elite group," complains Pepe Gasapo. "They don't see why they should sit down with workers from the informal sector." Only the nurses union is convinced of the need to unite with the private and informal sectors.

On a brighter note, LUF has managed to integrate groups of workers from the informal economy. These groups face massive difficulties in organising, and lack even the smallest budget for their work. Although they can offer little practical solidarity to other workers at this point, their strategic importance is enormous.

LUF also participated in mobilisations against the Visiting Forces Agreement, which invites the USA to reopen its military bases in the Philippines. Participating groups recently resolved to accelerate their programme of seminars and coordinated interventions on key political questions, in the hope of reinforcing the organisation.

The underground Revolutionary Workers Party, the country's largest regroupment of anti-Maoist revolutionaries, believes that groups like LUF are the key to building a truly autonomous labour movement, in which communists can strive to lead by example and argument, rather than organisational manipulation. ★

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ambiguity. "We never really thought out what kind of role this enterprise was supposed to play. Nor how to subject it to proper control. Nor where it fitted into our combination of military, mass movement and party work." As long as the money kept rolling in, "the party didn't ask too many questions." Even when ATC used an inflated exchange rate to retain almost half the dollars earned by its Panay farmers.

The new party leadership is trying to transform its former activities in line with a new strategy, respecting the autonomy of the mass movements, and relegating the guerrilla units to a strictly support and defensive role. "But even if we wouldn't necessarily set up a company like ATC nowadays, we can't avoid responsibility for solving the problem that exists," say rebel leaders.

### Reappropriation

Party, worker and peasant leaders are unsure how to proceed. Some party militants think it could be possible to organise a broad coalition of civic groups to support worker and farmer demands for a return to the original charter of ATC. Others think any confrontation will

inevitably involve violence.

For the moment, workers at the mill are concerned with winning their basic union rights. Some seem to have accepted the "privatisation" of ATC as inevitable. "So what if we have broad support in the local communities?" says one union leader. "Everyone else is as poor as we are. They can give only oral support.

Party leaders think the guerrilla attacks was legitimate, but wonder whether such interventions are tactically useful in the current situation. This reflects a broader debate on whether the partisan units in the hills should be replaced by self-defence and insurrectional units closer to the popular organisations in rural and urban areas.

### External support

To protect their progressive image, ATC managers have built a strong alliance of NGOs and popular organisations which hope to benefit from their "generosity". The Negros Council for Peace and Development is a major tool in their campaign to justify their appropriation of the company.

Much depends on the reaction of

ATC's main customers: the Japanese co-operative movement, and European fair trade importers like GEPA (Germany) and OS3 (Switzerland). But recent visitors to the company did not even meet with the trade unions, and are presumably unaware of the discontent among ATC's sugar cane suppliers. Guests are accommodated in an attractive company-owned hostel. But drivers are required to sleep in their trucks.

ATC trade unions hope that the rest of the alternative trade network will investigate the company, and oblige it to respect labour law and the founding principles of the alternative trade system. But they lack the contacts and resources to contact ATC's customers abroad.

Workers are understandably nervous that publicity may dissuade customers abroad from dealing with ATC. But they hope that their efforts will increase pressure on management, without destroying their common livelihood. ★

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## Labour struggle Stop the union busters

Strikers at a leading chemical plant have called for international solidarity with their struggle against union-busting.

The independent union at Shemberg Marketing Corporation is one of the most radical labour groups on the central Philippine island of Cebu.

Their employer is Asia's largest producer of carrageenan, a seaweed extract widely used as a thickening, gelling and stabilising agent in the food and pharmaceutical industries.

The union-busting started in September 1998, when the company encouraged some workers to oppose the union, and then to resign. In exchange, these workers were allocated to new jobs inside the (anti-union) Mactan Export Processing Zone.

The union invoked its legal right to force termination of the contracts of these disloyal workers, and began a slowdown strike in protest at this unionbusting strategy. Management refused, and fired all fifteen union officers.

According to union leaders, "Effective legal strike is almost impossible. Philippine labour law

obliges the strikers to allow free entry to the plant, even to scab labour." Like most other strikers, the Shemberg workers have been forced into extra-legal activities.

They occupied one of the plant's two water pumps until 30 May, costing the company about P500,000 (US\$13,500) per week. The firm stopped all production for the domestic market, to save water for the dollar-earning divisions, notably the carrageenan refinery.

The company has reduced its credit terms from 60-90 days to one week, in a desperate struggle against the effects of the strike. Marketing comptroller Cris Mercado Jr, makes the (unconvincing) claim that the fundamental problem is a collapse in demand for carrageenan in Asia and Latin America.

In reality, an obstinate management has brought the company to its knees, rather than accept the existence of a real trade union. It took management five years to recognise the independent union, which was established in 1990 by workers frustrated with the "yellow" ALU union.

The dispute is about union rights, rather than salary. Workers earn the

industrial average of 190 pesos/day (after tax about 130 pesos/\$3.50)

The strikers initially camped outside the compound gates, but were driven away by armed security guards, a court injunction, and the foul smell of the waste from the plant.

The French multinational Rhône Poulenc is considering buying the company outright, for about US\$20m. But Shemberg's owners, the Benson Dakay family, are desperately trying to find a speculative investor who would allow them to keep a 20% stake. Interested parties are thought to include Newbridge Capital (USA), Lombard APIC (Hong Kong) and China Development and Industrial Bank (Hong Kong).

Shemberg is virtually bankrupt, owing US\$25m. to a consortium of 15 banks.

• Protest letters should be sent to <shemberg@philexport.com>, fax (63-32) 3461892, or to SMC, Pakna-an, Mandaue City, Cebu Province, Philippines

• The strike started on 30 March. With all 250 members on strike, the union's strike fund is almost exhausted. The union is linked to the radical left Labor Unity Forum and the non-partisan CLEAR organising centre, neither of which can offer financial support.

For more information contact the union c/o CLEAR, 3rd Floor, F.Lao Lim Building, Highway Maguikay, Mandaue City, Cebu Province, Philippines, fax 032-3441933, email <rgenita@yahoo.com>. Financial donations can be sent to Shemberg Employees Independent Union (SEIU), Bank account #0157-21509-1, Far East Bank and Trust, Hi-Way Branch, Mandaue City, Cebu Province, Philippines, or to Shemberg Employees Independent Trust Fund, account #3-23692296-5, Metro Bank, North Road Basak, Mandaue City, Cebu Province, Philippines.

# On the plantation

The mid-80s collapse in sugar prices drove thousands of plantation workers on Negros island into the arms of the Communist left.

But Maoist policies hindered the development of the popular movements.

Most of the local left split from the Communist Party in 1994. **Mark Johnson** reports on their struggle to rebuild rural poor movements

**The Communist-led National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW-KMU)** never managed to unionise more than about 10% of workers on the island's 25,000 *haciendas* (sugar plantations).

According to local organiser Joe Gatia, "in the old days we had such a radical and militant programme, but we couldn't even organise 20% of the workers! The union was too focused on political work, and didn't do enough real organising on day-to-day issues. Growing frustration of local union leaders was a major factor in the regroupment of most local communists into the breakaway Revolutionary Workers Party. "Some union leaders were convinced that we could organise many more workers, but the KMU rejected our ideas, says Gatia. "We said the unions should focus on workers everyday experience of capitalist exploitation, and fight for better working conditions, higher wages, proper payment, and access to government benefits. The political orientation should follow on from this economic focus. We should educate workers on their basic rights. For those who are interested, we should offer seminars on the political and economic situation, and the challenges facing the labour and progressive movement."

Almost all the sugar union organisers left the NFSW-KMU in 1994. Their new Democratic Association of Labour Organisations (DALO) is slowly rebuilding a provincial federation of sugar workers. Political division is compounded by legal barriers, and the hostility of local govern-

ment in a province absolutely dominated by big *hacienda* landlords.

For the moment, the emphasis is at the local level. "We left the KMU because the centre constantly interfered in the local chapters," says Gatia. "our new concept involves more stress on the local dynamic. Though obviously we propagate a general orientation on the Philippine situation, and the political nature of our movement.

Once the membership is more consolidated, DALO will put more effort into broad alliances, like the Caucus of Labor in Negros. But the sectarianism of much of the left is a major barrier to closer cooperation. "The KMU's slogan is 'Workers Unite!' but they are obsessed with establishing their own absolute leadership. They are incredibly hostile to us, calling us reformists and deviants."

At a national level, DALO cooperates with the National Federation of Labor Unions (in Manila), and independent organising centres like CLEAR, in the neighbouring province of Cebu. "But it is very hard to work with groups aligned with the KMU or BISIG," says Gatia.

Old habits die hard. "Some of the left splits from the Communist Party prefer their little 'empire building' to honest participation in a genuine labour movement. The BMP [led by former CP Manila leader Popoy Lagman] use their labour organisations to boost their own interests. There are all kinds of financial and political deals that we don't understand, and don't want to be part of."

## Land reform

According to the National Rural Development Institute (an NGO), land reform has "barely scratched the surface" of the land problem in Negros. Less than half of the 200,000ha earmarked for redistribution has been processed since the reform began eleven years ago. Most of what has been redistributed was unused government land, or land seized to cover landlord's tax arrears or bank debts. The remaining land is mostly privately owned. The land reform administration has the power to purchase and redistribute it, but lacks the necessary funds. To make matters worse, the bonds used to finance the first years of land redistribution are starting to mature.

Progressives working inside the Ministry of Agricultural Reform worry that the current focus on negotiated settlements with landlords could even make matters worse. In some negotiated land transfers, the landlord effectively sells the land to the peasants, who become little more than bonded

labourers, struggling to repay their new debts. Other landlords have surrendered their marginal land, but dominate the market in agricultural inputs and sugar cane. They still dominate the economy, but through a commercial rather than landlord mechanism.

"Land reform is a government strategy to neutralise the peasants' struggle for land!" insists Ed Tagbilaran, a leader of the BPNP (a rural poor organisation).

"The government makes a lot of noise about its "programme of sustainable rural development", based on the "Convergence" of the Departments of Agriculture, Agricultural Reform, and Environment and Natural Resources. But this programme has failed, because it accepts all the basic structures of the underdeveloped capitalist economy here in the Philippines."

Over 90% of Negros is in the hands of the landlord class. Most *hacienda* workers are unaware of the mere possibility of land reform. The Department of Agricultural Reform has no public information campaign, and *hacienda* workers are notoriously ignorant about their rights. Conservative, even feudal ideas still have an influence.

"We should try to exploit every possibility to win land," says Tagbilaran. "But let's not lose sight of the big picture!" The BPNP, which co-ordinates a federation of over 50 rural poor organisations, still calls for "democratisation of the land," but its immediate concerns are promoting and supporting peasant cooperatives and associations. It also agitates around wages questions. Many peasants do some non-agricultural work, at wages of P70-90 in the service sector, and P100-150 in the construction sector. Many earn less than the minimum wage.

## Rebel support

The years after the sugar price collapsed saw many spontaneous occupations of land. There have become less frequent, because of the stabilisation of the economy. The decline in guerrilla activity has also made peasants more hesitant about taking such a dramatic step against the landlord class.

Rebel leaders warn that winning land is not enough. "In the 1980s we forcibly redistributed many hectares of land in the areas we controlled," says a former commander of the New People's Army. "But we were unable to go further than that. Without credit, without technology and without marketing, the peasants are unable to exercise true ownership of the land they farm. " Now active in the RWP-P, this cadre is convinced "we need to massively expand the legal side of the peasant struggle. Strong, independent peasant organisations can negotiate with the state, banks, and other institutions."

"Of course, if the class struggle escalates, there will be new land



occupations. But on their own, they are insufficient."

Building genuine peasant organisations obliges radical socialists to put many of their long-term projects on hold. "In the NSFW we advocated collectivisation, but this was very difficult to

implement," says Gatia. "Peasant culture still places a higher value on individual, family land. We still promote collective ownership, and urge peasants to make collective applications for land reform. When they receive land, we urge them not to subdivide it. But many prefer to try

their luck as family farmers. We work with both groups. Over time, we hope to prove that collectivisation brings greater benefits." ★

Contact: Democratic Association of Labor Organizations, 214-A Chapel Village, Tangub Highway, Bacolod City, 6100 Negros Occidental, Philippines

# Rural organising Community building

**The 1992 crisis in the Communist Party disrupted left organising of the rural poor in Negros. Rebuilding popular organisations is a slow process.**

The Association of Small Fisherfolk in Talok Baybay (AIMATABA) was established in 1988, after the neighbouring DBI distillery began dumping untreated waste into the sea, poisoning most of the oysters harvested by local people. Local authorities gave one-off assistance, but refused to monitor the situation, or oblige the distillery to respect environmental legislation.

In late 1998, the organisation forced DBI to sign an agreement acknowledging responsibility for environmental cleanup, and establishing a tripartite monitoring committee. Any further fish kill would trigger compensation payments from a bonded fund established by DBI.

The agreement was never respected. DBI knows that the local people can't understand the nuances of the English-language agreement. The company also knows that Filipino authorities are unlikely to intervene. "In fact, they take sides with the company" says Flor Aranguez of KAOSA, a provincial organisation of community organisations.

Each time there is a new spillage, DBI has promised a range of investments in the village (costing considerably less than their obligations under the joint agreement), but little of this money ever materialises.

Organisers uncovered serious irregularities in DBI's application for an Environmental Compliance Certificate. "But the only way to make the Department of the Environment act on this evidence is for the community to organise lobbying and publicity," says Aranguez. "The government won't intervene unless they are under pressure from a strong people's organisation."

AIMATABA is now hoping to receive a loan from the business-backed DBSP. According to Aranguez, "the money has already been approved, but local government doesn't want to release it to the community"

The Barangay captain (village mayor) is of an opposing party, and directs all the resources towards more favoured areas. Most of the village has electricity since 1998, but the nearest drinking water is 1km away.

Local people plan to use the money for new boats, to enable more families to fish the 10km coastal zone reserved for local shrimp and crab fisher folk. Some are also planning to raise hogs. This diversification will lessen their dependence on the sea, and the labour required can be combined with the fishing routine.

Now that the oysters have almost disappeared, fishing alone doesn't provide enough money to send the children to school. To make matters worse, the middleman takes 30-40% of the retail price of their shrimp and crab, which is mainly sold 15km away in Iloilo City.

Organisers say this situation calls for a collective solution. "If the wife takes her husband's catch to market, she has to leave at 8am, and comes back at 3pm, which means someone else has to take care of her children and do the other chores. But farmers in other areas run a collective stall in the nearest market, and eliminate the middleman."

For the moment, local people are unenthusiastic. "The middleman pays cash!" says one. "How long would it take the new collective to pay us?" Others say there is no way they could raise even the P5,000 (US\$160) needed to open a market stand.

Organisers are trying to strengthen the community group before an even bigger crisis hits. As soon as the dirt track is replaced by a concrete road, the owner of the

land intends to expel all the fisher folk, and build an upmarket beach resort. Some local residents still can't believe that they will lose their homes after 50 years residence. Philippine law supposedly gives land rights to anyone who has lived on abandoned land for 10 years. But the people have no lawyer, and the owner has friends in high places.

## Power in the union

The benefits of organisation can be seen in Punto Salok, forty kilometres up the coast. With the support of Builders, a development NGO, the Punto Salok Women's Association (PUSWA) obtained a P30,000 (US\$810) loan from the Cooperative Development Authority. This provided 30 microcredits with which women bought hogs, started small-scale trading projects, or financed their children's education.

Repayment is ahead of schedule, which has allowed 10 additional members to benefit from similar loans. Builder provides the training and support to enable community development.

The group previously received government funding for a pre-school feeding programme, but decided to use the money for income generation instead. As a women's organisation, it has concentrated on non-fishing sources of income, so as to increase the family's self-sufficiency, and expand women's role and contribution.

Over half the members attended a two day residential seminar on strategic planning. The sacrifice involved shows both their determination, and their conviction that organisation has improved their lives. Not surprisingly, they now want their husbands and sons to organise a fisherman's association.

None of the women thinks there has been much change during the first year of populist president Joseph "Erap" Estrada. They place their hope in the self-organisation of the urban and rural poor, in collaboration with the rest of the progressive movement. ★

Contact: KAOSA, 214-A Chapel Village, Tangub Highway, Bacolod City, 6100 Negros Occidental, Philippines • Builder, PO Box 490, Bacolod City, 6100 Negros Occidental, Philippines.



# The new revolutionaries

It is one year since most of the country's anti-Maoist revolutionaries came together to found the RWP-P. Pedro Sikatuna, one of the new party's five-member Political Committee shared his personal evaluation of the last 12 months with International Viewpoint's Mark Johnson

• **International Viewpoint: Why do you place so much emphasis on combining legal and extra-legal aspects of struggle?**

**Sikatuna:** When we were still in the CPP we expropriated thousands of hectares of land. But because the peasants were not organised, they were unable to control the agricultural process, and it was the banks and the retailers who made the real decisions.

• **But that didn't stop you establishing a dominant guerrilla presence in quite large rural areas**

Most of the areas we really controlled were mountainous, hilly areas, far from the population centres.

• **Is there now a real democratic space in the Philippines?**

The army and police no longer act with total impunity. These improvements did not fall from the sky, of course. They were achieved by the people's struggle.

But we are convinced that the situation could change again very quickly. If the crisis deepens, there are those in the

regime who would not hesitate to escalate the level of repression. That's why our party remains clandestine.

• **Why do you put so much emphasis on building community organisations in rural poor and urban squatter neighbourhoods?**

The party's relationship to the popular organisations is one of the most complex new questions. We don't want to control and manipulate them, like the CPP. But how exactly do we seek to lead and influence them?

What we do know is that to take state power we must build embryo organisations that could play the role of soviets. Before taking power, we need to create some forms of organisation that can take us to where we want to be.

This is all part of the new thinking, of moving away from the Maoist period. We aren't there yet. But we know which way we want to go.

• **What kind of new thinking?**

Coming from the Maoist tradition, we are still groping our way forward on many theoretical questions. We are re-studying Marx, and trying to learn from the experience of revolutionaries in other countries.

We are very interested in the experience of those Brazilian revolutionaries who helped build the Workers Party (PT), particularly their experience in local and state government in Rio Grande do Sul state.

Old habits die hard. There is still a feeling that new ideas must be discussed by the leadership first, so that they can help orient the membership! Particularly since we are trying so hard to establish

the new party out of the various anti-Maoist currents. The overriding need is for unity around the new project. We know that internal democracy and debate is the best way to ensure this unity. But it is hard to put it into practice.

• **How hard?**

It is a painful process, but I think it is getting easier. The most difficult thing is reinterpreting the Philippine situation, based on these new ideas. We say that the country has a very uneven level of development, reflecting a particular kind of backward capitalism. But some comrades haven't seized the programmatic implications of this move away from the Maoist model of "semi-feudal" relations.

In a similar way, not everyone yet realises the implications of our new programme, which goes beyond the obvious anti-imperialist and pro-democracy slogans, and tries to pose transitional demands.

But I think the RWP-P has moved much further than some other groups which left the CPP at the same time. Popoy Lagman's BMP [the main Manilal-Rizal split from the CPP] sees the "workers' movement" as not much more than the trade unions. You get the impression that they don't see poor peasants as 'real' workers. Our own conception of the working class includes the industrial workers, service workers, the semi-proletarian and urban poor layers, poor peasants, and the various semi-proletarian groups in the countryside.

• **Debates among former CPP comrades often seem rather dogmatic...**

Unfortunately, some comrades are a bit too obsessed with theory, theory and more theory, with putting everything into neat categories. So we've had a frustrating argument about whether the peasant category is disintegrating into fragments with differing class positions, and hence whether we should maintain a single peasant organisation.

My own view is that the land question still unites the peasant class, whether the particular manifestation is land reform, irrigation disputes, or non-payment of wages on the plantations. The Moro national question is also a peasant question. The Lumad [tribal minorities] struggle for their ancestral lands is also a peasant question...

Comrades should realise that quoting Lenin isn't the only way to orient ourselves! We can learn a great deal by careful study of our 30 years of revolutionary experience.

Only history will tell which of the various strategic, tactical and organisational options will be the most appropriate. So we should be a bit less dogmatic, and concentrate on practice, rather than endless debate.

## Building the party

### • It is one year since the founding conference of the RWP-P. Are you happy with the progress so far

The founding congress was a great achievement. In May 1998 we did not simply establish a new party. That congress was also the largest and most thorough democratic debate between Philippine revolutionaries for a long time—the CPP hasn't held a congress since 1968!

We are still consolidating the new party. There is a lot of organisational work to be done. But building a party is essentially an ideological and political problem, not an organisational one.

### • You have had to build a new party apparatus almost from scratch

The party is supposed to be a tool for building socialism. But people can see that the party is so poor that it lacks the resources for the most basic of tasks.

### • The CPP was very undemocratic. How about the new party?

Our new constitution includes the right to form factions *à la* Ernest Mandel. Personally, I was opposed to this, because forming a faction should be a last resort, and the current formulation would allow factions to form whenever there is a minor disagreement.

Some European revolutionary parties distinguish between tendencies and factions. Perhaps we should have allowed tendencies rather than factions. Of course, until a concrete situation arises, it's very hard to say. We don't yet have the critical mass of new experiences that will confirm our break from the past. But, in my personal opinion, moving away from Maoism didn't automatically have to include enshrining the right to form factions.

The central leadership task is to consolidate the organisation. To do that, we have to really lead. And I think we are doing so. But the leadership bodies have inherited all kinds of structural and financial problems.

## Unity in diversity

### • The RWP-P was formed as a fusion of several different splits from the CPP. Each presumably has its own specific characteristics

The specific situation in each region, and the specific development of what is now the RWP-P in each region, means that each regional leadership has a slightly different appreciation of the local and national situation. We aren't always convinced by the analysis and practice of the comrades in other regions. But we agree on all the central points. We don't want to say 'let each region do whatever they want', but we are convinced that it is still too early to adopt the model of any one region, and try to apply it

nationwide.

We recognise that the precise dynamics of the class struggle vary from region to region. Panay island is characterised by the landlord-peasant relation-

ship. In Negros island the plantation workers have a wage labour relationship to the capitalist plantation owners. Mindanao has the Moro liberation struggle, and so on.

# Women Pro-choice, Philippine style

## Maria Busuanga explains the work of the Panay island women's desk at the BPNP peasant federation

During the 1980s, Panay had a specific organisation for peasant women. But we had no separate orientation or programme. The separate women's organisation just served to organise as many people as possible, under the absolute leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The new BPNP peasant organisation doesn't have a separate women's organisation, because of lack of resources. But the organisation takes gender issues very seriously. The women's desk has direct input into the overall work of the organisation. And we do gender sensitivity education for the male members, as well as the women.

Peasant women in Panay insist that they form an equal partnership with their husbands. Both do similar work, for similar pay. In fact, there are many more opportunities for women to work outside the agricultural sector, and it is not uncommon for the husband to take responsibility for child care while the wife leaves the village to work as a live-in servant for richer families (14 year old maids in Manila can earn P1,000/month).

This non-agricultural work is particularly widespread in non-irrigated areas, where the long dry season restricts the amount of agricultural work available.

The sharing of child care responsibilities is a concrete result of the long tradition of progressive organising.

But at our gender sensitivity workshops, we ask people to describe the average day of a husband and wife team. And then they can see—as if for the first time—that the wife gets up earlier, and goes to bed later.

We also have an advocacy service for women members. Domestic violence is not perceived as a widespread phenomena. But if parents discover that their daughter

is having sexual relations, they put her under enormous pressure to get married. In some villages there are still some arranged marriages. So part of our work is a "pro-choice" campaign, saying that women should make their own choice about when, and who, to marry.

Although birth control is widely available in the Philippines, legal abortion is very expensive. Most rural women have a conservative, Catholic attitude about abortion, and even progressive church groups try to block discussion on this issue. There is widespread recourse to non-medical methods of abortion, leading to much private pain, shame and sickness.

Day care centres are a popular project that would encourage a collective approach to community problems, and bring an immediate improvement to women's lives. But even the P50 (US\$1.50) monthly fee dissuades most women from using the existing rural daycare centres.

Peasant women are still victims of the patriarchal system. They need to develop initiatives, and become more independent of their husbands. Most want to make a bigger contribution to the family income, and learn about their rights as peasants and as women.

Many rural women became politicised during the 30 years of military confrontation in the countryside. When the men were arrested, a crowd of women would rush to the police station—by making the arrest public knowledge, they prevented many "salvagings" (summary executions). But when the women were arrested, their husbands were often away from home, and so they suffered in isolation. Either way, resisting the militarisation of the countryside helped many women become more courageous and self-confident.

In the urban areas, men and women do mostly different types of work, and the sense of partnership is weaker. There is more alcoholism and drug abuse, and more violence between family members. [MJ] ★



• Has the new party stabilised its financial affairs?

The old party had a strong central apparatus, but the funding mechanism depended far too much on external agencies and links to politicians.

To put it crudely, the Kosovo crisis will make it much harder to raise money through the NGO sector. And in any case, we should rely on our own forces for our funds. But it's very difficult. In this transitional period it's hard to find money for leadership meetings.

The lack of resources is a major problem. Over 30 years the CPP built up a huge network of supporters, and accessed all kinds of outside funding through "revolutionary taxation" of the capitalist sector, and control of NGOs. Because the centre controlled and distributed the resources for local organisers, the centre was all-powerful.

Not only does the RWP-P reject this hyper-centralised model, but in any case it lacks the resources of the old party. Most organisers now are lucky if they can get their travel expenses refunded. Many full timers go long periods without being paid. Again, the situation varies from province to province.

• In the Maoist period, the armed wing was a major source of income, as well as the main area of spending.

The RPA has ruled out any kidnapping and ransom operations. "We'd like to stop 'taxation' too, but we don't have any alternative sources of income. But now we try to convince people to give us money, rather than just threatening them.

The guerrilla units have also made time to put their skills at the disposition of the local population. This makes it easier to ask the peasants to feed the guerrillas. It also improves the peasant's income-generation, which can't be a bad thing. "It will take several years to thoroughly reform the guerrilla units, and overcome the negative features of our

Maoist period. But most of the guerrillas are from peasant families, and they are quite enthusiastic about the new opportunities to put their building and medical skills into practice for local people. In the RPA today, the biggest criticism that can be made of a comrade is to say that he or she doesn't actively help the local people."

• How many members do you have?

There is no easy way to count. Members of the guerrilla support networks don't show up in any statistics, because they don't want to draw attention to themselves, even by joining a community group. And poverty prevents many people from paying any kind of membership fee.

But low membership also reflects people's reluctance to attract trouble from the authorities. The military only stopped bombing rebel areas in 1992, and assassinations of peasant leaders still occur from time to time. "The only way to recruit people is to convince them that the party has a new orientation, towards mass legal work. But then we have to deal with people's suspicion about all "legal" forms of struggle—suspicion we ourselves encouraged when we were still Maoists!"

As a general rule, RWP-influenced organisations can mobilise about three times their formal membership. Each cadre would be responsible for 4-5 members, each of whom would try to educate and develop 6 or 7 activists in the mass organisation.

The armed struggle

• Your new party has also absorbed some sections of the CPP's guerrilla army

We have rejected the old strategy of "protracted people's war" in favour of a mainly political struggle, with the armed wing in reserve as a kind of shield for the mass movements. But we still see a role

for the armed struggle as we move closer to the overthrow of the capitalist system. So we will be reforming our guerrilla units, not disbanding them!

• The rebel units were also affected by the splits in the CPP

In my own region the CPP's armed wing has maintained only four of the 100+ areas with a tradition of guerrilla activity. Almost half of the remaining areas have a consolidated presence of our own armed wing, the RPA-ABB.

In the others, the support network was severely disrupted by the split. The RPA could go back to those areas. The local people know that the rebel presence can defend them against landlords, drug gangs and the police—in some areas, the peasants have asked the RPA to reestablish itself—but we ourselves are still unsure what kind of military presence we should rebuild.

We rejected our former, Maoist strategy of Protracted People's War. We place our trust in the mass movement. In rural areas where the class structure rests on the landlord-tenant opposition, we organise the peasants in a struggle for land rights, combining legal and extra-legal means. If the landlord starts to use violence, making a legal resolution of the conflict impossible, then the RPA will intervene.

We are trying to reorient many members of the guerrillas' urban support network towards open, legal work in the mass movements.

We were eventually able to agree on a new military strategy. We decided to cool down the conflict in the most militarised areas, and try to rebuild the open political organisations there. Torture, hamleting and 'salvaging' had taken a terrible toll. Far from contributing to the 'protracted people's war,' the high level of confrontation had probably weakened the progressive movement as a whole.

It was difficult to restructure the military units. Finally, we split them into small teams, which we dispersed to provide support for the legal organisations, and do education about the new party's strategy.

Some comrades left the NPA with us, but have since asked to be demobilised. Many others wanted to be transferred to legal work.

• What is the new relationship between military and political struggle?

In both urban and rural areas, the struggles are led by the party, with the RPA playing a secondary, defensive, support role. This is quite different from the Maoist model. Until the early '90s, most of our political work focused on building better conditions for the "protracted people's war" in the countryside.

The party structures at the lower level have been demilitarised. A regional leadership still determines the priorities for the RPA-ABB, but is much more



separated from operational command than was the case in the CPP.

In rural areas where the RPA is strong, we are searching for a new model of dual power. Rather than rejecting all legal work and seeing all local officials as "the enemy," (like the Maoists do), we try to combine our legal and armed work so as to maximise the population's direct control over their own affairs.

This means developing electoral work, particularly at the Barangay (village) level. And cooperating with progressives and allies in the local government structures. The central government is still our enemy. But we can find allies at the local level.

**• That will presumably mean much more attention to electoral politics**

The leadership of the RWP-P is convinced of this. But it is hard to reorient our supporters, after 30 years of quite different tactics. Also, we have no leading comrades who are public political personalities, able to lead such electoral work.

If the party asked me to stand for election as provincial governor, I'd refuse. The chance of being killed during the campaign is very high! And my skills as a leader are rooted in the underground struggle. In small group discussions. In strategy. In "tax collection".

In some areas we tried to participate in the May 1998 elections. We lost decisively. It was a great surprise for us that people would listen to us enthusiastically, but then vote for whichever bourgeois candidate offered the biggest incentives. We thought guns equalled votes. But it isn't so simple. In the old days we could organise boycotts, even confiscate the ballot box. But what electoral tactics should we now adopt?

But I should say, in our own defence, that the 1998 election campaign came at exactly the same time as our own founding congress. Next time round, we'll be much better prepared!

**• What about the rest of the left?**

The Maoists continue their strategy of protracted peoples war, where all efforts are directed towards expanding guerrilla operations, moving from the mountains towards the towns. We participated in that struggle for 30 years, until the early 90s. So we know the limitations. They can't build strong rural organisations, because they neglect mass, open work. They provoke the regime into repression of rural organisers. And they use their urban base mainly as an underground support network for the guerrillas, rather than building campaigns that can mobilise the urban poor.

For the moment, the other left groups are better at media relations and propaganda. The CPP has kept many of the media contacts, and some of the other left splits from the party focus most of their energy on propaganda. We don't

want to change our focus on building a base within stronger mass organisations, but we do need to improve our propaganda work.

**• Isn't the continued existence of the rebel army a handicap for open political work?**

Not at all. The existence of the 'illegals' ensures that we have some democratic space to work in. It makes it much more difficult for the regime to repress our legal organisers. Once we build a strong mass base, things might be different. But for the moment, without the armed wing, we would be nothing. Why would anyone negotiate with us?

The NPA here was never parasitical, in the sense that it lived off the peasants without really defending them. But the obsession with a large guerrilla army meant that our recruitment efforts completely neglected other areas of struggle. You simply don't need full time guerrillas for most of the activities we carry out. We pulled priests and teachers out of their urban context, and sent them into the mountains as political officers. It would have been better to encourage them in their original community-building and educational work.

Neither the RPA nor the Maoists have any problem attracting new recruits, but the RPA would prefer to remain small, and direct militant activities towards



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mass struggles. Many of those the RPA does recruit are actually allocated to intelligence work, and the development of unarmed self-defence structures within the popular organisations. In the long run, we think this will be a lot more insurrectionary than the Maoists ever were.

**• Do you mean a shift from a guerilla army to 'arming the people'?**

Not yet. Police functions are still reserved for the partisan and guerrilla units. Not all military commanders are convinced of the need for popular militias and self-defence units alongside or instead of the party-led guerrilla army.

The party is still developing a national policy on the armed struggle. Some provincial leaderships are in no hurry to build RPA structures. One other region was always proud of its large, regular guerrilla units. But this was based on their unusually large income from commercial activities. These have now collapsed, which presents a huge financial crisis for the RPA there. ★



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# The ANC after Mandela

South Africa's new president Thabo Mbeki has all the credentials to sell the eclectic blend of left rhetoric and right politics that has come to characterise the ANC in government.

**Carl T Brecker**

In the wake of the country's second multi-racial elections, the ANC holds sway over the national and provincial assemblies and looks set to consolidate its hold on local government.

The ANC's electoral victory marks the end of an unstable interregnum that began with South Africa's first post-apartheid elections in 1994 and ends now with the consolidation of a new democratic state under a new ruling bloc.

There is no doubt that Mandela himself was central to the success of this transition. But incoming president Thabo Mbeki is the new man of the moment.

The new circumstances call for an astute balancing of class forces. Thabo Mbeki is a bourgeois politician with struggle credentials. As such, he is eminently suited to the task of 'building a nation' and promoting his much-vaunted 'African renaissance'.

Mbeki is much more intellectual than Mandela. More importantly, he has unchallenged control over the structures of the ANC.

Having run the country for the last two years of Mandela's presidency, Mbeki is widely credited with the formulation of GEAR, the ANC's neo-liberal macro-economic policy. If the bourgeoisie need to be wooed, Mbeki has a reliable track record to rely on.

At the same time, Mbeki's impeccable 'struggle' credentials, his intimate knowledge of radical politics gives him the credibility to coax into line any would-be malcontents in the ranks of the organised working class and among the representatives of the rural poor. (Mbeki is a graduate of Moscow's Marxist-Leninist Institute and an former leader of the South African Communist Party).

Mbeki's task is made easier by the fact that this election witnessed a dramatic shift to the political centre. This shattered the far Right. But it also shattered the electoral hopes of ex-liberation organisations like the PAC and AZAPO. Despite their long histories of armed and unarmed anti-apartheid struggle, neither could muster more than 1% of the popular vote.

This shift also adds immeasurably to

the disorientation of the radical Left, whose tactics in the immediate preelection period displayed little grasp of the pitfalls of electoralism.

However much the Left may deplore this shift to the centre there is no denying the electoral achievement of the ANC. Almost winning a two-thirds majority (66.4%) nationally, the Congress-led alliance swept the board with between 65% and 88% of the vote in seven of the country's nine provinces.

Only in Kwazulu-Natal did the ANC (39.3%) come (a very close) second to Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (41.9%). In the Western Cape, the last bastion of the 'New' National Party, the ANC emerged as the most popular party with 42% of votes cast but failed to win a majority in the provincial legislature. In these two provinces the ANC faces the prospect of coalition government with parties to the right of centre.

The Democratic Party—the voice of liberal capital and, increasingly, of the conservative white minority—is now the official opposition with 9.55% of the national vote. This represents a significant advance on their performance in 1994 but gives a hollow ring to their claim to be the only real alternative to the ANC.

Any assessment of what has happened to politics in South Africa over the past five years must look beyond the unique combination of 'Mandela magic' and the considerable achievement of the ANC leadership in adapting from 'freedom fighters' to parliamentary rulers.

Among the ANC's immediate goals in 1994 were the consolidation of democracy in South Africa and the construction of national unity. Above all else loomed the huge task of overcoming the heritage of apartheid.

The ANC government has accomplished more than a little of what they set out to achieve—as a party without any previous parliamentary experience working against the grain of a civil service steeped in apartheid practice.

Their most important achievements include the construction of a viable system of government with a new constitution and a comprehensive bill of rights. A battery of progressive legislation has been passed on a wide range of issues and compromise rather than confrontation has led to a dramatic reduction in the level of right wing-inspired violence that wracked the country during the negotiation period leading up to the 1994 elections.

They have set the country on the path to national unity with a new sense of national identity and common purpose. They have begun to deliver much-needed social services—housing, education, health services, water, electricity—and removed many of the most hated symbols of white minority rule.

But services delivery remains some way below the levels the ANC's core constituency might have expected. And the systems used to provide housing, schooling and basic utilities to the rural and urban poor all too often prove unsustainable in the long term. And little has been done to transform the apartheid city with its sprawling ghettos.

That there has been change is beyond question. What is in doubt is its extent, and the price that has been paid by the ANC in reaching the compromises it has made.

The ANC not only retained the support of the black majority, but increased it, despite their failure to deliver on the promises the made in the heady days of 1994.

This is a clear indication that the majority of South Africans still believe that, given the circumstances under which the ANC came to power, no other party could have done better. For the most part the black majority seems to have accepted the ANC's contention that, despite their best intentions, the terrible legacy of apartheid could not be overcome in five short years.

But the question remains: how much more could have been achieved over the last five years if the ANC had not been so willing to appease local capital, foreign investors and those who grew fat on apartheid?

Every critique of the ANC government has centred on the sharp rightward shift in government policy away from the radical policies of the liberation movement and the Reconstruction and Development Programme on which the party won the 1994 election.

This shift is encapsulated in the adoption of a new, IMF and World Bank-approved, macro-economic policy. Known by the acronym GEAR, this strategy endorses a depressingly familiar range of neo-liberal policies including 'sound money', export-oriented growth, the privatisation of public services, government austerity (cutbacks in social expenditure), a refusal to resist the effects of globalisation (on the basis that 'there is no alternative') and an over-reliance on (some say obeisance to) foreign investment as the key to future prosperity.

GEAR has been accompanied by an extremely cautious approach to land redistribution, a labour reform programme that equates strikes with lock-outs, a taxation policy that favours capital and burdens the workers, the lack of a radical industrialisation policy based on internal need, and an unwillingness to

attempt any significant redistribution of wealth. Not surprisingly, the Left has been highly critical of the government's economic policies.

But the government shrugs off criticism, claiming that it is helpless in the face of globalisation and the international financial crisis. Mbeki promises to do more when circumstances permit.

The election results show that no other party was able to launch a coherent, generalised, criticism of government policy, or realisable aspects of an alternative strategy. The Democratic Party and New National Party were seen as tainted by the apartheid past. The Inkatha Freedom Party was perceived as an ethnically-based group at war with the ANC. The PAC and AZAPO—despite their 'struggle' credentials—simply lacked credibility as mass parties.

The ANC also had the considerable support of the COSATU trade union federation, and the Communist Party, its partners in the governing tripartite alliance. Both COSATU and the SACP swallowed their preelection misgivings about GEAR and the impact of globalisation, and give uncritical support to the ANC. They provided an army of articulate political canvassers for the electoral campaign.

The overwhelming electoral victory of the ANC poses crucial questions for the Left. Although the South African left is well versed in the politics of anti-imperialism, and has a long experience as radical opponents of capitalism and apartheid, the left has failed to respond to the birth of electoralism.

In a historical period when calls for revolutionary change no longer resound—despite the urgent need to put socialism back on the agenda—the country's many small left groups have become increasingly marginalised. They display a persistent inability to present viable alternatives to the pervading pro-capitalist consensus.

The 'big battalions' of the struggles against apartheid—the unions and the mass democratic movement—have all moved into the dominant political camp represented by the Tripartite Alliance (ANC, COSATU and SACP).

The left, with strategies and tactics from a bygone political period, has failed to translate its radical anti-capitalist, socialist critiques of the negotiated settlement, of consensus politics, of neoliberalism and of globalisation into viable mass based campaigns on which to build an electoral intervention.

Left groups need to go beyond their critiques of ANC politics. For example, how do they explain the growing, almost total, hegemony which the ANC has achieved? If the two-stage theories of the SACP, and its belief that post-apartheid South Africa has entered the national democratic stage of the struggle for socialism, are bankrupt how can the party's continued influence in the trade

unions and other mass structures be explained? Why does COSATU, the most representative and combative of formations representing the working class continue to support the ANC despite their sharp disagreements with many aspect of government policy?

The radical left will only gain ground if it can develop an explanation that goes beyond conspiracy theory, beyond cynical claims about the duping of the masses, beyond the historical role of the ANC in struggle, and beyond the 'magic of Mandela'.

The left has argued that the revolution has been deflected. But that begs a whole series of questions about how—in

a period of consolidated democratic transformation and electoral politics—the struggle for socialism and the revolutionary transformation of society can be put back on the political agenda.

What difference would a revolution, as against a negotiated settlement based on class compromise, have made? And how shall the left proceed to build a mass presence capable of taking on and defeating the ANC? Through electoral challenge or on the streets? What, in other words, are the politics of a way forward? ★

Comments to <brecker@new.co.za>

## ANC in government Pupils of the World Bank

Patrick Bond

ANC and Communist party leaders have claimed that that local and international power relations are not optimal for a serious challenge to corporate prerogatives. But they have rarely tried to explore South Africa's room to manoeuvre. Instead, the ANC government since 1994 has repeatedly endorsed and implemented neo-liberal economic strategies. Social policy consultants have advised that market-oriented solutions will fix problems caused by the failure of the market.

Black farmers' associations and rural social movements accuse ANC Land Affairs and Agriculture minister Derek Hanekom of failing to redirect agricultural subsidies, allowing the privatisation of marketing boards, redistributing only a tiny amount of commercial farmland (much of which was stolen by whites within living memory), and failing to support large communal farming projects. The World Bank lent key policy advisors to Hanekom in 1992-94.

Housing minister Sankie Mthembi-Mahanyele and her predecessor, the late Communist Party leader Joe Slovo relied on bank-driven processes. Closed-door agreements were been immediately violated by the banks with impunity, while black loan defaulters and their communities have been dealt with harshly. The result has been tiny housing subsidies, sufficient to build a tiny hut, often without internal water and sanitation, and continuation of

the apartheid policy of black housing developments located long distances away from urban opportunities. There is a nearly complete lack of new rural housing and an insensitivity to women's design needs.

In 1997, Welfare minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi attempted to cut the child maintenance grant by 40% and for failing to empower local community organisations and social workers.

Minister of constitutional development Valli Moosa oversaw a frightening local government fiscal squeeze, intensifying municipal water and electricity cutoffs, the increasing privatisation of local services and low infrastructure standards such as mass pit latrines in urban areas. A World Bank mission wrote the first draft of infrastructure policy in late 1994.

The depressing record of ineffectual, conservative social policies is similar to many other countries that have fallen under the influence of Washington technocrats.

But the ANC performed admirably in a number of areas: it has ended most formal racial discrimination and diminished South Africa's notorious sexism and homophobia; the 1996 constitution includes (so far untested) socio-economic rights; it has provided free primary health care (first for pregnant women and children under six years, and in future for all), legalised abortion and legislated to improve workers' rights and health and safety laws. In the June elections, a majority of voters decided that the party was the best bet for the future. ★

# Booknotes

## South Africa's trade unions

*The Trade-Union Left and the Birth of a New South Africa*, by Claude Jacquin

Published 1999, IIRE (#26 in the NSR series. 92 pp., £3.50, \$US5.00, f10.

Founded in 1989, the (con)federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU until 1985, COSATU thereafter) organized hundreds of thousands of black workers in South Africa's newly emerged auto, steel and other industries.

For thousands of leading activists, these union federations were an embryonic political leadership in the fight against *apartheid* and for a transformed society and nation.

For a decade the country's "independent trade-union Left" contended with the ANC and Communist Party over leadership and strategy, putting forward a vision of democratic socialism counterposed to the CP's strategy of "national democratic revolution". But this current fell apart in the early '90s, when COSATU's most notable leaders became CP and ANC leaders.

This is the story retold and explained in Claude Jacquin's *The Trade-Union Left and the Shaping of a New South Africa*. Jacquin covered South Africa for *International Viewpoint* and other publications, travelling many times to South Africa and meet many people in his cast of characters.

His book shows the origins of FOSATU in the country's post-World War II industrialization and the strike waves of the 1970s. It maps the intellectual foundations of the FOSATU leaders' views, showing how they were both rooted in the anti-Stalinist traditions of the Cape region and appealing for a national milieu of newly organizing black workers.

It chronicles the debates and negotiations that made possible FOSATU's 1985 fusion with ANC-aligned unions to form COSATU, and the conflicts and maneuvers that the shaky new federation survived.

Then it explains how and why so many of the trade-union Left's leaders gave up their socialist perspective in a time of major economic crisis and organizational difficulties in the late 1980s, and converged with a CP leadership that was itself doing drastic rethinking in the context first of *perestroika* and then of *perestroika's* failure.

Finally the book draws lessons for the future working-class Left. [PD] ★

*Voices of Color*, edited by Yolanda Alaniz and Nellie Wong, Red Letter Press, 1999, 160 pp, paperback, ISBN 0-932323-05-7. US\$12.95 (plus shipping \$2.00)

In 35 articles, taken from the "Voices of Color" column of the *Freedom Socialist* newspaper, writers of different races, genders, and sexual orientations report on labor and community organizing campaigns, Native struggles, opposing racism within progressive organizations, and movie and book reviews.

This anthology reflects the Freedom Socialist Party's analysis of the political issues which connect sex, sexuality, and race, particularly in the USA. [JD] ★

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## Youth Camp

The 1999 European Revolutionary Youth Camp will be held on 24-30 July in the French Massif Central. Over 600 young revolutionaries are expected.

Themes include • Against the bosses' Europe • against the Nato bombs and Milosevic's ethnic cleansing • For a different Europe • for popular and social democracy • self-determination for the Kosovars • Fight for change • Plus our regular streams of education and discussion on ecology, feminism, and les-bi-gay liberation.

For more information, contact your local International Viewpoint seller or 4<sup>th</sup> International group.

## Revolutionary rap music

The new CD from Red Dagger is now available for free download as twelve mp3 files or mail order purchase.

[www.mp3.com/classlifezearle/](http://www.mp3.com/classlifezearle/)

The mp3 files can be played on freeware programs like WinAmp or Mac Amp, available at:

<http://www.mp3.com>

## SAMWU

The latest edition of the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) magazine *Workers' News* is now online. There is also a SAMWU article on rural water—the demand for 50 litres free per person per day

[www.cosatu.org.za/samwu/](http://www.cosatu.org.za/samwu/)

## Seattle WTO meeting

A new free electronic news bulletin will highlight events, meetings, forums, and other planning activities during the buildup to the World Trade Organization's Third Ministerial meeting, to be held November 29 to December 4, 1999, in Seattle, USA.

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## Net Working



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[rvanstaveren@iatp.org](mailto:rvanstaveren@iatp.org)

## "American Socialist" archive (1954-59)

Supporters of Bert Cochran and Harry Braverman challenged the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party on a broad range of issues in 1946-1954.

What began with policy over Walter Reuther and the UAW spread to an extensive examination of the nature of the economies in Eastern Europe beginning with Yugoslavia and continued through the Maoist-led revolution in China.

As the opposition spread to embrace a third of the party, James P. Cannon, leader of the party expelled the opposition group in 1953. Those expelled created the Socialist Union of America, and published *The American Socialist* from 1954-1959.

<http://home.inreach.com/soldoll>