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Another world is possible

IT was an audacious gamble: bringing together hundreds of representatives of movements opposed to neoliberal globalization from all over the planet in a big city in southern Brazil.

ERIC TOUSSAINT *

THE aim was to map out alternative paths and agree on a timetable of priority mobilizations at the very time when those who aim to push the world still further towards commodification and the domination of capital were meeting in Davos. In short, to oppose to the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos a World Social Forum (WSF) which affirms that another world is possible.

The gamble paid off from all points of view: a high participation of representatives from a very wide scale of movements opposed to neoliberal globalization; manifest convergence between the different platforms; a high quality of debate; adoption of three complementary declarations from the social movements, the parliamentary representatives and the local government representatives. Finally, widespread media coverage on a planetary level to the extent that the WEF at Davos and the WSF at Porto Alegre were systematically presented as symbolizing two basic choices facing humanity.

The World Social Forum is the culmination of more than a year's careful preparation by a Brazilian organizing committee composed of social movements (the MST movement of the landless, the CUT trade union federation, and so on) and non governmental organizations. This committee worked systematically in liaison with movements from other continents like ATTAC, Focus on global South, the CADTM, Jubilé Sud, as well as the French journal *Le Monde diplomatique*.

FROM January 25 to 30, the first World Social Forum convened in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The World Social Forum (WSF) brought together grassroots activists, international NGOs and social movements in the global struggle against neo-liberalism and corporate domination. Planned to coincide with, and provide an active contrast to, the World Economic Forum (WEF), which attracted the richest and most powerful corporations to Davos, Switzerland, during the same period, to discuss strategies to further increase their profits, the World Social Forum sought to create a place in which those involved in the struggle against globalization could gather to initiate and/or expand dialogues about developing viable alternatives to neo-liberalism. Nearly 10,000 individuals representing social-change organizations from all over the world converged in Porto Alegre for the Forum, and throughout the week they attended workshops and plenaries about creating viable global economic and social structures. The next issue of *International Viewpoint* will carry further coverage of the WSF.

The World Economic Forum, which held its own annual meeting from January 25 to 30 in Davos, Switzerland, barricaded itself against hundreds of anti-globalization protestors. Founded in 1971 by Swiss-based German entrepreneur Dr. Klaus Schwab, the WEF has grown to become one of the world's most important conventions of "global leaders" such as corporate executive officers and heads of state. The WEF allows multinational corporations unprecedented access to the government decision-makers who influence their industries, and it grants governments an unparalleled opportunity to coordinate their operations with global business. ★

The initiative was supported by the state government of Rio Grande do Sul (10 million inhabitants) and the city council of its capital, Porto Alegre (1.3 million inhabitants), both of them governed by the Workers' Party (PT).

On January 25, 2001, the Forum opened with nearly 4,000 participants. Radical speeches (like that of the governor, former trade union leader Olivo Dutra) and high quality cultural production (presenting the indigenous and African roots of today's struggles in terms of the extraordinary struggle of Black slaves for emancipation) set the tone for a 5 day race against time.

After the opening, the participants of the WSF met in the city centre for a big demonstration of around 10,000 people on the theme "March for life, another world is possible" which ended with an open air concert.

From January 26-29, each morning was taken up by four major debates which took place simultaneously with an attendance of between 400 and 900 people according to the debate. In total, then, 16 debates devoted to the big social themes and oriented towards the mapping out of alternatives.

This was followed each afternoon by workshops — nearly 360 of them in four days, organized by the movements themselves. Following this, there were "conference-testimonies" involving personalities like Lula (leader of the PT), Cuautémoc Cardénas (leader of the Mexican PRD) or

José Bové (Confédération paysanne, France).

In addition, there was a World Parliamentary Forum (in which 350 elected representatives participated) and a World Municipal Forum led by the new mayor of Porto Alegre, Tarso Genro. There was also an international youth camp with more than 1,000 participants as well as a camp of indigenous peoples and many activities involving the Movement of the Landless.

The WSF ended on January 30 with the decision to meet again in Porto Alegre on the same date as the WEF in Davos in 2002.

Convergence between movements

After the defeat of the MAI (Multilateral Accord on Investment) in October 1998, the defeat of the WTO in Seattle in December 1999, the fiasco of the annual meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in Prague in September 2000, the WSF in Porto Alegre constituted another step towards an accentuation of convergence between the very numerous movements seeking to satisfy the basic demands of humanity. This meeting was preceded by a dozen very significant initiatives of mobilization in the year 2000 in the course of which these movements have systematically acted together: Bangkok in February 2000 (the 10th UN Conference on Trade and Development); Washington in April 2000 (Spring meeting of the IMF and



World Bank); Geneva in June 2000 (Evaluation of the UN Summit on Social development); Okinawa in July 2000 (G7); Prague in September 2000; Brussels, New York and Washington in October 2000 (World Women's March); Seoul the same month (3rd Asia-Europe Conference); Nice in December 2000 (EU summit); Dakar in December 2000 ("From resistances to alternatives").

All these actions allowed the drawing up of common positions between powerful social movements (trade unions like the CUT in Brazil, KCTU in South Korea, CTA in Argentina, COSATU in South Africa, and so on), peasant movements, citizen's movements like ATTAC; indigenous movements (CONAIE from Ecuador, the Zapatistas from Mexico); the World Women's March; international networks (Focus on global south, ATTAC, CADTM, European Marches); movements of those "without" (without papers, homes, jobs, land); ecologist and pacifist movement, the radical left; coalitions around precise themes like:

- 1) the cancellation of the third world debt (Jubilee 2000, Jubilé Sud and so on);
- 2) opposition to the neoliberal offensive in trade;
- 3) support for the Tobin tax.

Points of convergence

One can try to sum up the points of agreement between these movements as follows.

The necessity of a democratic and internationalist alternative to neoliberal capitalist globalization; the necessity of realizing equality between women and

men; the necessity of deepening the crisis of legitimacy of the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, the Davos Forum, the G7 and the big multinationals; support for the cancellation of the Third World Debt and the abandonment of structural adjustment policies; support for an end to the deregulation of trade, opposition to certain uses of genetically modified organisms and rejection of the current definition of intellectual property rights in relation to trade; opposition to militarist policies (for example, Plan Colombia); support for the right of peoples to an endogenous development; financing on the basis of the taxation of capital through a Tobin type tax; support for the rights of indigenous peoples; the necessity of agrarian reform and a generalized reduction of working hours; the necessity of a common North/South and East/West struggle; the promotion of democratic experiences like the participatory budget practiced at Porto Alegre.

These main elements are all, or almost all, to be found in the declaration that the social movements adopted at the WSF in Porto Alegre (see the websites www.forumsocialmundial.org or attac.org — available only in Spanish, Portuguese and English at the moment). They are found already in the Bangkok appeal (February 2000) and in the declaration of Geneva (June 2000). It is a very encouraging sign.

Some big questions remain the subject of debate: is it necessary to "abolish" the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO or can they be reformed? In the countries of the periphery, should we fight for the suspension of the payment of the debt or rely on

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International Viewpoint

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News closing date: 16 February 2001.

Porto Alegre 1, Davos 0

AS it does every year, the World Economic Forum, comprising around a thousand of the world's chief decision-makers and some heads of state, met at Davos. To protect their meeting, the Swiss authorities employed roadblocks, closure of the Davos railway station, and a massive police presence.

Many cars carrying demonstrators from France, Italy, and Germany were stopped at the frontiers, without respect for freedom of circulation or individual liberties. The excesses of the police led to heated debate in the Swiss media.

Despite all the talk about "listening to civil society", the supporters of ultra-neoliberalism do not allow the slightest challenge, above all when it is their legitimacy that is at stake. Only Laurent Fabius could dare to claim that there was merely a "misunderstanding" between the opponents of capitalist globalization and the financial and industrial magnates!

If the heavy police mobilizations prevented any significant demonstrations in Davos itself, other initiatives were held, notably in Zurich. On Friday January 26, a forum called "The other Davos" attracted nearly a thousand participants, mostly youth and trades unionists. At the centre of the debates: the globalization of capital, its social and ecological effects; the consequences for the

labour and social situation of women; the new international law; the implications for the trade union movement; the arms race being led by the imperialist powers.

Two forums drew particular attention: that on the situation in Palestine (with Michel Warschawski) and that on "Plan Colombia" (with Janette Habel). The forum ended with a meeting where speakers included François Chesnais, Charles-André Udry, Jean Ziegler, Annick Coupé and Roseline Vachetta, who stressed the role of the European Union as relay of capitalist globalization. The second phase of the mobilization was the attempt to demonstrate in Davos itself. However, demonstrators' cars were stopped about 30 kilometers from their destination by police supported by an assault tank and combat helicopters! An improvised meeting resulted with speakers denouncing police repression and protesting against the arrogance of the self-proclaimed planetary elite who refuse to even hear the voices of those at the bottom.

These mobilizations have fulfilled one of the objectives fixed by the international networks and the various social movements: not a single meeting of the world's powerful will be allowed without popular initiatives for debate or street demonstrations reminding them of their lack of legitimacy and highlighting the disastrous consequences of their decisions. ★

François Duval

alternative media (Indymedia for example) with the anti-Davos mobilizations in Switzerland and expressed their solidarity with the Swiss demonstration. ★

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PT victory surprises right

THE red wave has been confirmed. The electoral results for the Workers' Party (PT) in Brazil's municipal elections on October 30, 2000 were favourable in the north and south of the country. The strength of the PT as a national party of opposition to president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) surprised the right and created a new environment for the presidential elections of 2002.

HELOISA HELENA AND
BETO BASTOS*

VICTORY in six capitals, reelection in Porto Alegre and Belem, reconquest of the mayorships of São Paulo and Goiânia, victories in two capitals in the North east, Recife and Aracaju, the latter achieved in the first round. Victory in important towns like Pelotas (Rio Grande do Sul), Vitória da Conquista (Bahia), Imperatriz (Maranhão), Governador Valadares (Minas Gerais) and Criciúma (Santa Catarina). Reelection in Caxias do Sul (Rio Grande do Sul) and Santo Andre (Sao Paulo).

The PT had won 105 municipalities in 1996; in these elections it won 187, an increase of 78%. Of the 5,500 municipalities in Brazil, the PT now administers 3% of the total. However, the mayorships won represent nearly 25 million inhabitants, which means we will govern for 15% of the Brazilian population. Of the 62 biggest cities in Brazil, the PT won 27%. In 1996 it won the mayorship in only five of these cities, which means an increase of 240%. These 62 municipalities, which include the 26 Brazilian state capitals, represent approximately 40% of the Brazilian electorate. In these cities the vote for the PT went up from 3,593,540 in 1996 to

negotiations without recourse to this measure?

Davos surrounded by barbed wire and protected by hundreds of police and soldiers. Porto Alegre open to all who put humanity before profit. In Davos, luxury; in Porto Alegre, dignity. In Davos the crisis of legitimacy; in Porto Alegre, the alternatives.

The meeting at Porto Alegre attracted extraordinary media coverage: nearly 500 journalists were present (more than at Davos). The media, including the most fervent defenders of the rule of capital (CNN for example) sensed that a turning point in public opinion had been reached: an increasingly significant number of citizens of the planet are opposing the neoliberal offensive. Those who mobilized at Porto Alegre were in permanent contact via the

7,838,465 votes in 2000, an increase of 118%. In these cities, the PSDB won 4,469,463 votes, the PFL 3,846,226, the PMDB 2,492,293.¹

In terms of the number of town halls won by the PT, pride of place goes to the state of São Paulo with 38, Rio Grande do Sul with 35 and Minas Gerais with 34. In Santa Catarina the PT won in 13 towns, 5 of them significant ones in the interior, Concordia, Criciúma, Rio do Sul, Chapeco and Blumenau. In the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, where we are in the state government, the PT went from controlling one municipality to controlling 11, its biggest percentage growth. With seven municipalities won in the state of Acre, where we are also in the state government, the PT now heads 32% of the state municipalities.

Expansion

The PT's electoral expansion was also expressed in towns where we did not win. We came second with a significant number of votes in Salvador (Bahia), Teresina (Piauí), Natal (Rio Grande do Norte) and Osasco (São Paulo). Despite divisions within the PT and the controversial candidacy of Benedita da Silva, we missed the second round in Rio de Janeiro by only 15,000 votes.

Of the 16 towns where the PT reached the second round as biggest party, we won 13, losing only in Curitiba (Paraná), Santos (São Paulo) and Canoas (Rio Grande do Sul). With the PCdoB² we won Olinda (Pernambuco) and we lost Fortaleza (Ceará), nonetheless in this town we stopped the candidacy of Ciro Gomes from reaching the second round. We elected the deputy mayor in Belo Horizonte in alliance with the PSB,³ beating the PSDB in the only capital where FHC's party contested the second round. Also, with the PDT⁴ we won the municipality of Niterói (Rio de Janeiro), defeating Governor Garotinho who had supported the candidacy of da rede Globo against the PDT candidate.

Overall, we increased the number of PT municipal councilors in Brazil by 38%, going from around 1,800 elected in 1996 to 2,485 at these elections. The PT elected no mayors in the states of Amapá, Alagoas, Amazonas, Roraima and Espírito Santo.

A negative aspect must also be mentioned, the defeat of the PT in 49 cities that we governed, in the main small municipalities of less than 50,000 electors. This can be explained by poor communication on



Marta Suplicy, the PT's victorious candidate in Sao Paulo

the work done by these municipalities and above all by the unity of the local right against our candidates. However it amounts to a serious concern for the PT. In Rio Grande do Sul political polarization continues, the PT gained the most votes, and won important towns like Bege, Santa Maria and Pelotas, but we lost 15 towns that we had governed.

In the state of Minas we also lost 15 towns that we controlled and party divisions surely contributed to this result, combined with zigzags in relation to the Itamar government.⁵ In Rio de Janeiro the division of the party and the coming and going in the leadership of the PDT and the Garotinho government led to a crushing defeat. We lost Angra do Reis and Barra Mansa. The subordination of the PT to ill-defined or ambiguous projects probably contributed.

Rightwing analysts had said that these elections would be dominated by municipal questions, that the choice of the electors would be decided exclusively in terms of the candidate who would present the best proposals to govern the town. This simplistic analysis masked the fear of the national character of the campaign, the fear of identification of those candidates who supported the federal government with president Fernando Henrique Cardoso; the president of recession, unemployment and despair.

This type of analysis was often adopted by PT leaders who concluded precipitately that the theme of the elections would be narrowly municipal.

Emptiness

The immediate consequence of this type of analysis was the "forgetting" of the red flag, the PT star, an emptiness of discourse, critique and confrontation. A style of campaign which did not chime in with

the PT's militant traditions, and worse, was not what the majority of the Brazilian people expected.

In reality, the PT's success stems from a number of factors. The PT's proposals represented an overall package of concrete measures which had already been successfully applied in some places. The PT presented itself as capable of governing and experimenting, which weakened the criticism of our opponents against those of our candidates who had never led a municipality.

The question of ethics and corruption was another basic factor. Among the qualities of the future mayor, being honest was a basic demand. The fact that corruption means fewer resources for social investment was understood by the people to an unexpected extent. The numerous scandals involving mayors and municipal councilors, with a special mention for the Pitta administration in São Paulo, have given a national dimension to this type of problem.

To these factors, outside more or less favourable local conjunctures, was added a subjective element of revolt against the federal government and it is this element which can explain the PT victory. Without that, it would be impossible to understand the national result, except to analyze case-by-case, town-by-town, at the local level, which would be an error.

National victory

The PT's was a national victory. The vote for the PT was a vote for its ability to govern, for honesty, but also a vote for the opposition, a conscious vote for change. As a general rule where the PT ran enthusiastically, proud of its red flags and its star, it won. Where it camouflaged itself, or adopted a more lukewarm discourse, it lost.

One can say that the PT victory was the fruit of the competence and opposition built by the PT over the last few years. There was need for a radical change, and it was the PT that symbolized this desire for the majority of the population. Generally speaking, where we won, it was in alliance with the parties of the left.

Those municipal PT leaderships who insisted on making alliances subordinated to the PSDB and PMDB (with the PT as adjunct, and in many cases not in electable positions) did not register impressive results. At Governador Valadares (Minas Gerais), with the support of the state lead-



ership, an alliance with the PFL was proposed and it was argued that without this alliance the PT would lose. The National Executive Commission vetoed this alliance, the PT ran its own list and won. Unhappily in some places alliances of this type were set up without the PT nationally being informed.

The PT faces a big task, that of organizing a social and political bloc capable of winning the next presidential elections. A national victory demands advance preparation, defined objectives, a programme of government and a political leadership with the will to win.

Against those who pursue the recipes of the IMF, the WTO and World Bank, the democratic and popular opposition of those who believe another world is possible. The social and political strength that we organize consists principally in the struggles and mobilizations of our people. However, it can only constitute itself as a hegemonic force through political confrontation and for this confrontation the PT is the principal and most valuable instrument.

During the municipal elections the abuse of economic power, the use of public goods for individual profit, the monopoly of means of communication and the manipulation of polls created an atmosphere of debate which was very unfavorable to the PT and the other parties of the democratic and popular camp. To complete this imperfect tableau of democracy, there was also the presence of innumerable parties which were the expression of no political platform other than minuscule private interests.

Urgent

It is an urgent task for the PT and allied parties to begin a national debate with legislative initiatives for a political reform which puts an end to reelection, creates public financing of campaigns, and institutes party fidelity. It is necessary also to control the unscrupulous use of opinion polls and means of communication. However, these measures to improve the electoral process are insufficient for the enormous task of helping to consolidate a

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democratic consciousness in the huge social sectors the PT claims to represent. It can only be done through the active political participation of millions to conquer citizenship and break the chains of exclusion and poverty which link them to the perverse systems of domination. Through the municipal institutions the PT has stimulated popular participation. The participatory budget and other initiatives are schools of political consciousness raising and the affirmation of democracy. ★

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thizers of the Fourth International in Brazil.

1. The PSDB (Party of Brazilian Social Democracy), social-liberal in origin, is the party of the current president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (known as "FHC"). The PFL (Party of the Liberal Front), which originated from the old party of military dictatorship, is the principal support of FHC besides the PSDB. The PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) has its origins in the legal opposition during the military dictatorship. It supports FHC and is part of his government.
2. PC do B (Communist Party of Brazil), ex-Maoist, ex-pro Albanian, is slowly questioning its attachment to Stalinism. It supported the candidacy of "Lula" at the presidential elections of 1989, 1994 and 1998.
3. PSB (Brazilian Socialist Party), a small party with a left social-democratic profile. It supported the candidacy of "Lula" at the presidential elections of 1989, 1994 and 1998.
4. PDT (Democratic Labour Party), a populist center left party led by Leonel Brizola, affiliated to the Socialist International.
5. Itamar Franco, vice-president elected with Fernando Collor de Mello in 1990, then interim president (1992-1995) after the fall of his mentor. Elected governor of the state of Minas Gerais in 1998.

Philippines: developments and prospects

IT all started with the issue of the opening of an envelope (so it seemed) in an impeachment trial in the Philippine Senate against the then President Joseph Ejercito Estrada (known as "Erap"). But it ended the latter's term in a very inglorious manner.

HARRY TUBONGBANWA

Introduction

ON that memorable day of the 16th of January 2001 in what seemed to be the defeat of the ten Senators who voted to open the second envelope allegedly containing the bank documents of ill-gotten wealth of former President Estrada, has been the beginning of the peoples' victory against a corrupt and graft ridden regime which had been representing neo-liberal capitalist globalization in the country. That day indicated also the end of the political lives of the eleven Senators who voted not to open the envelope and those who have supported the traditional dirty and corrupt political practices in the country.

In the main, the character of the January 20 peoples' power was spontaneous. Thousands upon thousands of people (the peak reached 1.8 million) bringing with them their children had trooped to EDSA shrine (symbol of the 1986 EDSA uprising that overthrew President Marcos) to express their anger and frustration on the existing political machinery and its uselessness against the power and wealth used by the Estrada regime to bribe the politicians/senators to prolong its life. It was a convergence of events that led to this display of people's power — a show of direct democracy. The organized groups and revolutionary parties, the out-of-power politicians, the retired generals and the Church had been calling the people to such mobilizations months before but to no avail. Coalitions from left to right had

been formed but they moved very slowly. In fact, before the 16th of January, almost all their resources had already been drained.

The then Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, even after she resigned from her Cabinet post in the Estrada Administration to be with the opposition had even so become unpopular. Many people looked at her action as being motivated by eagerness to take Estrada's place. But this did not stop Arroyo and her party mates, specifically the former President Ramos, from planning for a post-Estrada scenario. In fact, they were the only group to do so and it would be very advantageous to them as shown by events later.

Meanwhile, the events in the impeachment trial in the Senate from the last quarter of the year 2000 to the first half of January 2001 became a general mass course for a lot of people on how graft and corruption have been concretely practiced from the highest office of the land. The whole process was not only educational for most of the people, but it also became obvious that they began to place their hope for truth and justice in the whole process of impeachment. This explains the generally cold response of the people during this period to the call of the parliament of the streets.

The Estrada camp had been very complacent in the whole process. Confident that they had the numbers in the Senate, which is enough to block the conviction of the President, they had been trying their best to project the "changed image" of the



President. In the provinces and rural areas, the poor (Classes D and E) were generally pro-Erap. They were confident, too, that their support from the religious groups of Brother Mike Velarde (El Shaddai) and the Iglesia ni Kristo could be tapped anytime. Meanwhile, in the earlier period all anti-Erap mobilizations on the streets or on the Senate had been countered by pro-Erap mobilizations organized and orchestrated by the President's men and women.

During this period, the Administration had grossly underestimated the role of the religious groups. The role of the leadership bodies like the Catholic Bishops Conference in the Philippines, the Protestant Churches and even the Muslims' Ulama had not been obviously put into serious consideration. The daily campaigns of the Catholic Church with former President Cory Aquino to pray for Erap's resignation had resulted in the protracted debasement of Estrada's support machineries like the El Shaddai and the Iglesia ni Kristo. The Estrada Camp had not effectively addressed or grossly underestimated the role of the Church's controlled schools and media.

It was very obvious then that during this period, the Estrada Administration had been trying to buy time to prolong its life up to the May 2001 elections. It would use its massive machineries and wealth to get a fresh mandate from the people and neutralize the hope of the opposition to discredit Estrada and alienate it from the people through the impeachment case.

All these events had converged and exploded right at the face of not only the Estrada regime but also of the anti-Estrada oppositions. They were all so surprised at the fast unfolding of events that only a few people would be able to exploit and benefit from them.

1. The economic and political situation before January 16, 2001

1. The most visible sign, which had

★ Philippines

indicated that the economy was at its worst shape, was the lowest (in Philippine history) exchange value of the peso vis-à-vis the dollar. It had reached fifty-five pesos to a dollar. This had affected Philippine production so that it had almost come to a halt. The producers import almost all the materials needed in productive activities. With an almost 25% lowering of the value of the peso as against the dollar many of the small scale as well as the medium scale enterprises had folded up. In fact, almost 2,000 enterprises of this size had folded up and almost two hundred workers were laid off everyday up to the middle of January 2001.

2. The inflation rate as well as the unemployment rate had reached double digits.

3. Almost 80% of foreign investments had left the country because of the economic and political uncertainties prevailing in the country during the period. Not even the increase of the value of the dollar had changed the minds of the investors to continue their productive engagement in the country.

The investor's confidence in the viability of the country's economy had been greatly shaken when the Administration's Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industries had resigned due to the involvement of the President in illegal gambling and this volatile situation had been further aggravated by the resignation of the President's Economic Policy Advisers en masse.

4. The government's bankruptcy had been also obviously manifested by the increase of its deficit spending. At the first half of January this year, the budget deficit has reached Php139 B – the biggest in Philippine history. The government's bankrolling of the excise tax on oil products had aggravated it. The almost weekly increase in oil prices had not been felt because the government absorbed it thru the non-collection of the oil excise tax. This factor plus the non-effective structure of tax collection and laxity of its collection on the president's friends and the widespread and rampant graft and corruption practices by the Administration had added to the status of the Philippine economy as the most sick in Asia. It has been said that twenty percent (20%) of the annual budget of the country ended up in the pockets of

the government officials themselves from all levels.

5. As the trial drew nearer to 16 January, one could almost foresee the possible results at the economic level. For instance, if the defense (pro Estrada) made a score during the hearing, the value of the country's currency dived down and if the prosecution (anti-Estrada) made the scoring, the peso became stronger vis-à-vis the dollar.

The prosecution had presented credible witnesses and the defense lawyers of Estrada always had to seek refuge on the technicality, materiality or relevancy aspects of the case.

The process had progressively eaten away the patience and perseverance of the people who had placed some of their last hopes on the constitutional process on the President's impeachment. Moreover, this



included the Church, Business Sector and even a considerable section of the basic masses.

6. Meanwhile, those on the parliament of the streets could be divided into two main groups, the anti-Erap and the pro-Erap groups bringing with them much-varied ideologies.

The anti-Erap groups for instance were composed of those coming from the extreme left up to the extreme right. In KOMPIL II (Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino II), one could find the open organizations of the CPP-NPA-NDF as well as retired generals, traditional politicians, the church and the big business sectors, COPA or Council on Philippine Affairs composed of the left group of Popoy Lagman, traditional politicians (Peping Cojuangco), retired as well as active generals, and from the big business, UNO or United National Opposition composed of mostly Erap political oppositionists and other formations like Resign ERAP Movement who

had been united for the resignation if not the ouster of Estrada.

Their demands were varied based on their ideological outlook. The open organizations of the CPP-NPA-NDF would call for concentrated attack on Estrada thru the formation of the broadest possible organizations regardless of their ideologies. Hence, one could find them almost in all organizations and in any mobilizations. The Lagman group (PMP-Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino) organized on the demand for the resignation or ouster of Estrada and Arroyo (the Vice-President); their slogan is "Resign all". They were calling for the formation of a transition government. The Revolutionary Workers Party of the Philippines (RPMP-P) called for the resolution of the peoples' basic problems, not the contradiction between and among the traditional politicians. A tactic which had been the "safest" but miserably failed to rally a considerable section of the working class to exploit and maximize the current split of the ruling class at this period on their favor and interest. The Church, Business and the other politicians who are anti-Erap would do almost everything just to push for Erap's resignation.

Before the 16th of January, the mobilizations from these different groups had been very weak and slow because a large portion of the masses and even the ruling class had placed their hopes on the constitutional process (read impeachment trial) and therefore had been watching and monitoring the impeachment trial in the Senate.

Another reason for such slowness or weakness could be traced from the counter-tactics adopted by Estrada and his supporters. They had been mobilizing people to counter every mobilization launched by the anti-Estrada forces. Estrada during this period had still the superior material, financial and human resources at his beck and call.

7. The process of polarization had been manifested not along the class line but along those who were with the Estrada Administration and those against Estrada and his cronies. Obviously, the Philippine ruling class was seriously divided but so was the working class.

At this period, Estrada had still the support of (aside from his cronies Lucio Tan, Danding Cojuangco, etc.) the military and the police as well as his Cabinet and their counterpart in the Civil Society. However, it had been obvious that the

Administration's support system within the masses had been slowly undermined. The defensive movements that Estrada's supporters had been adapting had manifested this. It was obvious that they were experiencing difficulties in defending their patron in the face of overwhelming evidence presented against him in the impeachment trial.

On the other hand, those who had been fighting against Estrada still lacked the backing of an active military group. During this period, only retired military officers had openly expressed support for the anti-Estrada movements.

Clearly, there was no critical mass developing, no group could have estimated when and what would be the triggering event which would open up the floodgate of the people's anger crushing against Estrada and what he had stood for. Everybody was focusing on the 2nd week of February as announced by the Senate when the guilty or not guilty verdict for Estrada would be made. The post-Estrada scenario was seemingly prepared for dates after the 12th of February.

In fact, even a result of a survey made just before January 16 still showed that President Estrada was much more popular than his constitutionally mandated successor Ms. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. They both got negative net popularity ratings, but while Estrada was negative 16, Arroyo was negative 44.

2. EDSA People Power Part 2: From the "Impeachment Trial in the Senate to the Parliament of the Streets".

1. On the night of January 16, 2001, two big events happened on the floor of the Senate, which was hearing the Impeachment Trial of President Estrada. One was the victory of the NO votes over the YES votes on the opening of the second envelope presented by the prosecution allegedly containing evidence of the President's bank accounts of ill-gotten wealth amounting to Php3.3 billions. Eleven senators upon the instructions of the President's lawyer voted NO and only ten Senators voted for the opening of the aforementioned envelope. The 10th vote was cast by Senator Aquilino Pimentel—the Senate President—even after knowing that the NO votes had already won. After casting his vote, he immediately resigned

as Senate President, distancing himself from the process of hiding the truth.

The opening of the envelope could have been decided by the presiding judge (Supreme Court Chief Justice Davide) or by the division of the senate through votation. The Chief Justice was beaten to the draw by Senator Tatad (majority floor leader and an obvious pro-Estrada senator judge) which was immediately seconded by Senator Enrile, another obvious Estrada supporter.

Events had unfolded very fast after the votation and resignation of the Senate President, there was a walk out of the prosecutors from the House of Representatives as well as their private Lawyers, there was a call from Cardinal Sin of the Archdiocese of Manila for the people to go to the EDSA Shrine and there were thousands upon thousands of text messages of cell phones from individuals to their friends and to their friends' friends... to go to the EDSA Shrine to express their indignation over the failure of the Senate trial.

That night it was very clear that people had lost hope in the democratic institutions and political machineries like the congress and the institution of the Presidency. They started to intensify the parliament of the streets. Some would refer to this as "civilized rule of the mob" but others would say that this had been democracy in its purest form.

2. Clearly, an opportune moment had unfolded right in front of the organized forces and yet it was obvious that nobody was ready enough to take advantage of such opportunity. Thousands of people (or even more than a million) had converged in the EDSA Shrine from that night of January 16 to January 20 when President Estrada left the Presidential palace.

According to a realistic estimate, only



one percent of those who participated in the peaceful EDSA People Power part II uprising were organized and ninety-nine percent were spontaneous.

This situation has manifested several realities:

a) The left and the progressives could not transcend their differences even when confronted with such an opportunity of ousting a ruler who represented the interests of Capitalist globalization.

b) The anti-Estrada ruling class could have succeeded in playing and maximizing the differences between and among the left instead of the latter taking advantage of the split among the former.

c) The Left and the Progressive groups and parties have not taken deep roots among the workers and the urban poor in the national urban center where EDSA is, that's why they could not have shown their strength during the uprising.

d) The ranks of the Civil Society are clearly divided and so even if externally they were all campaigning for ouster of Estrada they were trying to out maneuver each other in the process and in every given opportunity.

e) To a certain extent, Estrada could have been successful in packaging and projecting that the whole campaign against him was the concerted actions instigated by the elite from Makati (the Philippine Business Center) against himself who had been working with the poor. So it's the fight between the rich from Makati and Estrada with his poor. This explains that even during the last hours (or even in his downfall) in Malacañang there were still people (looking very poor) who had been defending him even with their lives.

3. The most organized among the anti-Estrada forces would be the Ramos and Aquino forces (two ex-Presidents). Ramos and his military contacts that are still active as well as retired had been doing their homework. Since Vice-President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo belongs to their Party as the Constitutional successor, its main strategy should have been a peaceful and orderly transition of power from the old set of the elite to the new elite.

However, this means answering at least two questions:

a) How to win over the Armed Forces of the Philippines together (if possible) with the Philippine National Police?

An answer to this means fulfilling three difficult tasks: first to work out with

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the active officers to be on the people's side at a given moment, second to work within the retired officials of the Armed Forces using their moral persuasions among the younger but active officers and thirdly, the consent of the US government – the minimum is not to interfere and maximum to get their support in supplying them with intelligence and satellite reports and photos of troop movements. They learned a lesson from EDSA I, that is it will be very destructive and divisive (later on) if there are armed confrontations between and among the military (those who are against Estrada and those who are his supporters).

b) How to sustain and effectively manage the people's mobilizations?

Answering this question would even mean dealing with the extreme left and progressive groups who could have provided the core of the EDSA uprising. In this part of the answer, former President Aquino had played a very important role to contact not only the old yellow forces but also the church, especially the Catholic church, its schools and media networks. These organized groups were very successful in concentrating the mobilizations in just one area – the EDSA Shrine. Aside from its symbolic value, the purpose was again for practical management of the ouster of Estrada in a very peaceful and orderly manner. One could have just imagined the consequences if there were several large and significant mobilizations in other urban cities in the country. Outside Metro Manila the group of Ramos were aware that the left and the progressive groups had a relatively strong presence, and these could be mismanaged and chaos would surely be bad for the next president.

January 20, 2001 was the fourth day of the uprising. President Estrada was already having talks and giving concessions through secret negotiations with the Ramos and Arroyo selected group. On that day, his last request was to give him five more days before he would leave Malacañang. According to reliable sources, this would be enough time for him and his followers in Metro Manila areas to regroup and counter the EDSA anti-Erap mobilizations.

With their strength and patience's draining, the different forces in EDSA had a big debate whether to continue with their vigil and mobilizations only at the shrine or proceed to literally oust Estrada from Malacañang. Cardinal Sin called on to these forces to stay put in EDSA while the

left and the progressive groups would go to Mendiola and proceed to Malacañang. The stalemate was resolved by doing both steps; one group would go to Malacañang and the other group would remain at EDSA.

They justified these actions as both expressions of prayer that the Cardinal had called for. And to avoid bloody and destructive confrontations and clashes between the two forces of Pro and Anti Estrada in Mendiola and Malacañang, the Ramos-De Villa generals had to move fast to convince Estrada to leave Malacañang before the left and progressive groups could reach the place. And the next event was a historical leaving from Malacañang, saluted and escorted by no less than the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines together with his Deputy Chief of Staff as vividly captured and recorded by both the local and foreign media.

The above-mentioned steps by the Ramos group had maximized the weaknesses and the limitations of the revolutionary and progressive groups.

The organized defections of the Armed Forces of the Philippines as well as the leadership of the Philippine National Police were almost a miracle. On Friday,



January 19, one by one the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police including the Secretary of National Defense and the Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government had trooped to EDSA, becoming instant heroes.

Of course, this action could have been the last straw of the fall of the Estrada Government. Except that; as early as the 16th of January troop movements were reported in the well known areas of the MILF-BIAF in Mindanao and the CPP-NPA and NDF areas in other parts of the

country. This means that in order to effect the planned peaceful and orderly transition, revolutionary groups should be neutralized.

The Ramos groups would like to ensure that no armed revolutionary groups could have taken advantage of the temporary vacuum caused by the changes of the political leadership. The troop movement was mainly preventive as well as proactive.

Starting on the night of 19th January – the eve of the fall of President Estrada – secret negotiations took place between the Ramos/Arroyo group and selected people of the Estrada Administration. The new elite in the government made a secret negotiation to effect a peaceful transition of power from the elite identified with the fallen Estrada.

The above-mentioned events would tell us many things about EDSA Peoples Power part II, its conception and its essence. It would elucidate the dynamics and the dangerous directions the progressive and left groups have been leading their respective organizations.

It would tell us that a small organized but determined group like that of Ramos or even a loose group like that of Aquino could use the organized but divided forces of the progressive groups to install their candidate into power, on a constitutional basis but through an extra constitutional manner.

It would be helpful to know that Vice-President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo did not have her own strong and organized followers. She relied mainly on her party – the Lakas-NUCD (National Union of Christian Democrats) headed by Ramos. The people's uprising had intensified for three days but on the fourth day, Ramos and de Villa together with the Armed Forces Generals and the leadership of the Philippine National Police hijacked it and even became instant heroes.

And it would also tell us that the whole problem of the people's uprising against a corrupt and graft ridden government of Estrada had been replaced by those representative of the ruling elite who had convinced the United States of America's new government that it would be the best as well as most effective alternative to that of the Estrada's government. It's a people's uprising indeed, backed up by the Armed Forces of the Philippines who came out in the last day because it would strengthen rather than weaken the neo-liberal project

of capitalist globalization in the country.

3. The GMA Transition Period in "Going Back to the Future"

1. Almost a week after President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA) was installed by the people to her office, cracks can already be seen especially in the formation of her political family. Although GMA and her political party – LAKAS NUCD have assigned a three person selection committee, it has been a fact also that only around ten percent (10%) of the latter's recommendations have been listened to and heeded by GMA.

2. In less than a week in her Presidency, one of the members of her Cabinet has already resigned (Secretary Orlando Mercado of the National Defense) to protest the appointment of the National Security Adviser (Retired General and former Chief Staff Lisandro Abadia). Secretary Mercado mentioned that he cannot work with General Abadia because he has filed a case against the General regarding the misuse of the money/pension funds of the Armed Forces Retirement Services and Benefit System. Abadia is the personal choice of Retired General and former Chief of Staff Renato de Villa – the current Executive Secretary of President Arroyo (a rank equivalent to Prime Minister in a parliamentary form of government). Abadia's selection did not even pass through the selection committee.

Another appointee, the Director General of the Philippine National Police (PNP), has been vigorously questioned by those people who have been fighting against crime and violence and have been in the forefront of EDSA Part II. Again, the current Director General (General Leandro Mendoza) is the choice of Secretary Renato de Villa.

And of this writing, the two are not showing any sign that they are resigning so as not to give early embarrassment to President Arroyo, unlike the other two appointees, Retired General Leo Alvez as Presidential Assistant for Military Affairs and Retired General Alcordeo as Secretary of Energy. But what has been revealing with these appointments is that they are the generals (active and retired) who are connected with General Renato de Villa and of course with the former President Fidel V.



Ramos. If one still includes the current Chief of Staff of GMA Sec. Renato Corona – the former chief of Legal Affairs of President Ramos and the Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Communication Secretary Alvarez – a member of the Reporma Party in the congress, a political party of de Villa when he ran for 1998 Presidency.

Another appointee is the Secretary of Department of Public Works and Highways, Congressman Simeon Datumanong, a former deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives for Mindanao during the time of Ramos. Currently he is the Vice-president of Lakas-NUCD for Mindanao. This is a clear manifestation of a Ramos - de Villa controlled Presidency.

3. Obviously even the former President Corazon Aquino is not getting a "fair share" in the fruits of EDSA Part II. Only Secretary Vicky Gerchitorina who was appointed as Secretary of Presidential Management Staff is closely identified with her and the Makati Business Club.

The most vocal about not having their share is the group of the former Speaker of the House Jose "Peping" Cojuangco (the brother of Corazon C. Aquino) with his group COPA (Council on Philippine Affairs), with active Marine Lieutenant General Espinosa and the "leftist" Popoy Lagman. The latter's group (Popoy) has been calling for the resign all movement, so it puts the council in a very awkward situation of asking their share with President Arroyo while a part of them is seeking her resignation.

The group, especially Cojuangco, has been openly asking for the Department of Agriculture – one of the most "juicy" positions. But it had also been openly talked about that the post has been already

reserved for the former President Ramos' nephew, Congressman Hernani Braganza. However, during the finalization of the 4th version of this paper, Congressman Braganza has been appointed as the new Department of Agrarian Reform Secretary. The post for the Department of Agriculture will be again given to the De Villa's group.

Definitely, President Arroyo has been saying that a cabinet position will be given to the COPA and Cojuangco group but this was after talk of a coup d'etat has been circulating in the country obviously coming from this group. Again, this early the President is showing weakness on matters of appointment. She does not get her hands on in the selection process of her official political family. She is being held political hostage by the generals and the traditional politicians at the expense of the people.

4. The Church, Business Sector, the other Progressive and Leftist Groups as well as the Youth Sector (they comprised around 80% of those who sustained the four days mobilization in EDSA) have all declared in different ways and forms their apprehensions on the manner of Arroyo's early days in office. They all pledged in their own ways to keep watch on the militarization of Arroyo's Administration. They all just experienced a common nightmare with the President without a vision and living in a country which does not have any direction but down hill and because of these, they more or less agreed in many ways that EDSA Peoples Power Part III will make a difference.

The open mass organizations led by the CPP-NPA-NDF have been very clear of their direction, expecting that the newly installed Arroyo will be weak and they will further weaken this from both the outside as well as the inside of the political system. Debates however, have been observed with their open cadres and the underground cadres whether EDSA Part II was a victory for the new democratic revolution or for the strengthening of the elite's program or reprogrammed globalization.

Definitely they will engage in the electoral struggle come May thru a party list but whether this will be for propaganda purposes or for winning that struggle and whether this is for the weakening of the ruling system or strengthening the current system in the country is still an ongoing debate. This can even lead to further splits within this group.



5. Meanwhile, President Gloria M. Arroyo has been calling for healing and rebuilding of the people and the nation. An integral part of the process of healing and rebuilding is instituting justice and retribution on Estrada and his cronies.

It is only then that a healing process and a building of a nation based on Justice can begin. Unfortunately, even in this call the nation is divided, one group represented by the President of the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) Archbishop Orlando Quevedo and the current Senate President Aquilino Pimentel are calling for former President Joseph Estrada to be sent into exile to remove the rallying figure for the planned coup d'etat or any destabilization process against the newly installed government.

The other group coming from within and outside the government including the progressive and revolutionary groups has been calling for an immediate prosecution and institution of Justice against the former President and his cronies.

6. The GMA transition period therefore will be a mixture of; a little of the Aquino presidency especially the return of the new Kamaganak Inc. (cronies and relatives of Aquino during her presidency) and the destabilization aspects of coup d'etat and the difficulties in instituting justice with the new "Marcos", the bigger part of the Ramos presidency which will be the installation of an Economic Development Program based on the Capitalist controlled Globalization system and a little of "Estrada's" installation of a new batch of cronies and friends.

If a weak presidency as shown this early by President Arroyo will continue

then, it will be the "game of the generals". The Estrada's will continue to make the destabilization moves and their resources will make things move in their favor.

This early his big friends and cronies are showing that they are ready to abandon him (Estrada) to save their own necks but this will not be true of the biggest ones like Lucio Tan and Danding Cojuangco. President Estrada can even continue to claim that he is still the President so that he will continue to use the immunity accorded by the office from any crime.

The Ramos-de Villa tandem will practically manage the affairs of the Arroyo government. They will revive what the Ramos regime started with its Philippine 2000. They will put the Philippines on the economic map of the world of capitalist controlled globalization. Ramos made his debut in Davos, Switzerland because President Arroyo has just appointed him as ambassador plenipotentiary.

Cory Aquino, the leadership of the Catholic Church and her Kamag-anak Inc. will make a come back definitely to safeguard and even develop their economic interests in the minimum and political power in the maximum. In the next few months they will not be in the forefront but their people will be involved and engaged in deployment lobbying of "spoils of victory" up to the local levels.

7. In the first few days of the Arroyo presidency, she has outlined her Administration priorities: the efficient delivery of basic services to the people, continuation of the food security program, elimination of graft and corruption starting with her political family. Thru the slogan of "Leading by example" and "doing her best for God will do the rest" and the peace and order program with all the insurgents.

And to stress that her government is far different if not opposite of her successor, she promised to have effective and good governance. For her this will be based on first, moral foundation, second, transparency and third, effective implementation.

How to implement all these will be a different story. For one, the government does not have the money. It is obliged to pay immediately Php.70 B and the total deficit as of January 2001 to almost Php 130 B. As of this writing, both the Senate and the House of Representatives have not approved the budget of 2001.

That means the Php.725 B budget will

not be approved given the time left to act before its (Congress) adjournment next month. Already the Finance and Budget Departments have complained that they could not raise the proposed Php.725 B budget. At the maximum, they can only raise around Php.500 B from internal revenues and Taxes. In two weeks time the big three oil companies have announced another round of price increases.

With the bankrupt government, the budget department can only give the assurance that all the government employees can receive their regular salaries but definitely they cannot make an increase. More hardships will be expected in the next few months as the inflation rate is expected to increase and the devaluation of the peso will continue.

Foreign donors mainly finance the Food Security Program but since there is a major change of officials, the implementation of these programs will be delayed at least for a year before it will be normalized again. For the Estrada regime the foreign donors had committed to release \$12 billion either as aid or soft loans. In more than two years, the Estrada administration was able to absorb only \$8 billion.

The peace initiatives declared by the Arroyo government will be the most doable, given that if Arroyo can finish the term left for Estrada and another six years to her re-election, then she can really have enough time (9 years) to pursue her peace agenda with different revolutionary groups.

This is if the generals around her will allow the talks to be successful. They will definitely use the MNLF framework of "one country and one constitution" in the Peace Talks.

4. The Philippines 2004 and the Mindanao Factor

1. President Gloria Arroyo has to rely very heavily on Ramos and de Villa because her assumption into the office has been mainly technical and legal as the constitutional successor of President Estrada. In terms of popularity, she had been less popular than Estrada just before the latter's fall and in terms of moral ascendancy, she still has to prove her critics wrong. Issues regarding connections with the jueteng lords (illegal gambling) and unexplained wealth were not absent in her closets.

In this initial stage of her administra-

tion, her swift action on prosecuting the cases against former President Estrada and instituting justice will be putting her first step in the right direction.

This early, she should be decisive in demilitarizing her official and political families. Accepting the resignation of Generals Abadia and Mendoza as National Security Adviser and the Chief of the Philippine National Police respectively will be positive steps towards civilianization of her government.

Actual delivery of basic services with the masses rather than talking about their welfare will strengthen her relationship with the people many of whom are still placing their hopes with their fallen hero the former President Estrada.

And at this stage, she should (hands on) engage and build peace directly with the different revolutionary groups and parties and not only delegate them to her generals and military advisers. Healing and the Peace building processes should really set the right steps if such directions are taken seriously.

These can also be her best measures to consolidate her position, machineries and her supporters and effectively institute preventive measures against any destabilization efforts from her opponents outside as well as inside her government.

2. In less than five months from now, there will be elections for all local officials as well as for twelve seats in the Senate. There are around 17,000 local seats including half of the twenty four seats in the Senate which will be contested nationwide. This event can be one of the most important political exercises where the different political forces and groups in the country will do their muscle flexing in preparation for the big main event in 2004, the National Elections.

If President Arroyo can finish the remaining term of Estrada then she can still participate in 2004 elections.

During this period, the major political parties began their consolidation activities. Major congresses had been launched already by the parties like the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino or LDP, handled by the former Executive Secretary of Estrada, Eduardo Angara, Partido ng Masang Pilipino or PMP, the Former President's own party headed by his former cabinet secretaries, the Lakas-National Union of Christian Democrats or LAKAS - NUCD or the Party of President

Arroyo and former President Ramos and the National Peoples Coalition (NPC) headed by Estrada's biggest crony-Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

At present, President Arroyo has not yet chosen her Vice-President. Former President Ramos has been vocal in endorsing Senator Teofisto Guingona, the current Lakas-NUCD President, while former President Corazon Aquino has been supportive of Senator Franklin Drilon who once belonged to Estrada's coalition party-(the Laban ng Mamamayang Pilipino or LAMP) but later resigned as Senate President as a form of protest to Estrada's involvement in illegal gambling. Senator Franklin Drilon was the former Executive Secretary of former President Aquino.

Another strong candidate for the Vice Presidency is Senator Aquilino Pimentel the founding President of Partido Demokratiko ng Pilipino or PDP, who is also the current Senate President. He became very popular because he offered his resignation as a Senate President when the Senators loyal to Estrada prevented the opening of the second envelope containing



the documents of the ill-gotten wealth of Estrada.

Whoever President Arroyo chooses will determine the nature and strength of the ruling coalition party in the next few months or even up to the year 2004. This can even determine the stability or instability of her administration. This will determine the direction of the coalition the Arroyo government will have. Aside from LAKAS-NUCD there are three smaller parties which are willing to coalesce with Lakas-NUCD, namely: Aksyon Demokratiko of Senator Raul Roco, Promdi of former Governor Lito Osmena and PDP of Senate President Pimentel.

Definitely the Estrada camp and allies will use all their resources to be in power again in order to stop the persecution against him at the minimum or to be in power again at the maximum thru both constitutional and extra constitutional means. Already at this period President Arroyo has warned that she will crush any attempt to destabilize her government. Since January 20, the Philippine military has been put on constant Red Alert in their barracks.

3. In the economic field, the Ramos factor or economic development blue print will definitely prevail. Already he was sent by President Arroyo as her special representative in Davos.

The country's comparative advantage will be again given stressed like its human resources which will be systematically exported and those who will be left behind will definitely cater to the multi-national needs on very low and underpaid salaries. The country's mission and vision will be re-oriented towards more opening of its market to capitalist globalization in the name of putting the country and its resources to global competitiveness.

The country will find herself again in an active role in the economic activities of the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) as well as the South East Asian Economic formation.

And again, just like in the past, the government will fail to protect its Agricultural sector for the unlimited influx of imported agricultural products from different countries. Worst still, without building and fast-tracking of the country's basic industries it will always be dependent on imported products which will surely cause a perpetual deficit in the balance of trade of the country.

4. The Ramos Economic Development Blue Print will be based on the Mindanao factor for its success or its failure. The twin development stresses will be revived, that is linking Mindanao's cities and provinces with and among themselves and making viable the domestic economic activities thru massive infrastructure development and linking Mindanao to the markets of Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. Mindanao's contributions to the success of Philippine 2004 will be its rich natural resources aside from its precious human resources.

These stresses partly explain why
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Mindanaoans are put into strategic positions in cabinet related to infrastructure and communications and electronic industries.

These are the Department of Transportation and Communication and the Department of Public Works and Highways. Mindanao, which has been providing almost 70% of the agricultural and aquatic resources and almost 100% of agricultural export, is the main source of not only material resources but human resources as well for the success of Philippine 2004.

In this context, one should also understand the role of Mr. Paul Dominguez who was appointed as Presidential Adviser for Rural Development as well as the special envoy for the South East Asian Countries. He is from Mindanao and was the point man of Ramos in Mindanao during his term as President of the country.

5. Political stability will be one of the most important projects that the Arroyo and Ramos group will be giving big consideration so that the proper atmosphere for economic development should prosper. This is with regards to conducting Peace Talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF on the national scale and the MILF/BIAF on the Mindanao level.

With regards to the former, continuing armed clashes have been going on while in the open they (Arroyo and Ramos) have been working with the open machineries of the CPP-NPA-NDF. This should be understood in the mutual convenience of these two parties, the latter believing that the current tactic would be to oust the Estrada regime being the weakest link of the ruling class and redirect its attack on the newly and surely weak Arroyo Government even while they are conducting their peace talks.

Surely the CPP-NPA through National Democratic Front will still push through with its belligerent status, having an equal status with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) while negotiating. And surely the GRP will hold steadfastly on its frame of negotiation, which will be anything but not outside the Philippine Constitution.

Both can start with confidence building like releasing the NPA captives of two officers of the AFP and the PNP and the GRP responding by releasing some political prisoners but this will be it – they will reach a political stalemate, unless both will concede to a mutually agreed framework

for their political negotiation or resolution, it will be a matter of time when the intensification of their armed clashes will take place. But this time these can be more destructive.

It will not be very different with the MILF/BIAF at present. For instance, President Arroyo has not yet withdrawn partially or totally the “all out war policy” of the Estrada administration.

And if the Ramos framework will be used for the talks this would mean the recognition of 47 camps of the MILF which Ramos allowed during his term and which Estrada and his generals destroyed during his short term as President. One should expect that big business as well as the rightist Christian groups would disagree with this approach.

Although if it will be the Ramos formula which will be used for the Peace talks with the MILF, the appointment of the retired general Eduardo Ermita as Defense Chief, a veteran with the GRP and MNLF negotiation during the Ramos time, will be an advantage for the GRP. This means that it will be a project of subtle integration for the Moro people and the MILF to the mainstream of Philippine Society.

There will be a sort of SPCPD (Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development) type of political and economic arrangement or this negotiation will be used by the Arroyo and Ramos Administration to effect change in the 1987 Constitution by agreeing with the change of the form of the government in the country. It should be remembered that Ramos, during his time as President, tried to effect a change in the 1987 Constitution because for him it has never been friendly to Globalization.

One can observe again that there are identified groups with Ramos and Arroyo who are advocating a change in the form of government to Federalism. This means another move to change the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Arrangements can be made where Mindanao for instance will be given formal independence in order to federate with other states to form a bigger and stronger united states of the Philippines.

But first, the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), an arrangement which has trapped Nur Misuari and the MNLF integration in Philippine society; will be rendered useless and ineffective.

And this can easily be done on 14th of

May this year. A referendum will be included in local elections where people from fourteen provinces and five cities aside from those already included in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), will be asked whether they want to be excluded or they want to be included in the ARMM.

If the people like to be excluded, then this will be the end of Misuari's SPCPD, because even the four provinces currently under the ARMM do not want to be with the ARMM. It will be then a free hand for the Ramos – Arroyo government to do whatever they like with the unwanted ARMM – which will be another big reason to change the 1987 Constitution.

If, for instance, through backdoor negotiation the MILF leadership will show openness with the arrangement of an expanded ARMM then it will be done during the May 14th Elections. This means that people will now like to be included in the ARMM. It should be remembered that the Chairperson of the Commission on Elections had retired and two or three other members of the commission are retiring before May 2001.

This means that the Ramos-Arroyo Administration will see to it that their replacements will be most friendly with them and easily agree with the results this tandem would want in the May local elections this year and this includes the results of the ARMM referendum.

And if the MILF/BIAF will not agree to this, the Ramos/Arroyo regime can develop the MNLF led SPCPD as a counterforce to the MILF. With thousands of MNLF forces who have been already integrated with the AP and the PNP, this scenario can always be possible. It will be MNLF against the MILF. And it could be the bloodiest war in Mindanao.

What is definite though is that before any economic development should be implemented, political stability will be assured by Ramos/Arroyo Administration or even with Ramos alone.

They will be ready to make political and economic concessions as long as this will not become a hindrance to the implementation of capitalist controlled globalization in the country. Meanwhile, the 2001 May election will be a gauge of the Arroyo Presidency up to 2004. And surely Ramos and his men and women will be the making or unmaking of the political career of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in 2004 to 2008. ★

2001: a Chinese Odyssey

IN the analyses that marked the beginning of the New Year, the People's Republic of China occupied a special place. In Washington, representatives of the establishment seem convinced that the major competition on the international scale in the coming decades will be between the US and China.

LIVIO MAITAN*

MORE generally, there was speculation on the socio-economic evolution of the world's most populous country and more particularly on the possible consequences of Peking's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). Without going back over the whole analysis developed in this magazine in recent years,¹ we will try to focus on the developments of the last year and grasp the tendencies which are emerging following the economic transformations underway and the effects which they are having on the social tissue.

Recall first that, as might have been expected, growth rates are now in single figures: 7% in 1999 and around 8% in 2000. 2001 marks the beginning of the tenth five-year plan: as Li Peng reminds us, an average growth rate of 7% is predicted. To counteract the danger of a slowing up this year, the government envisages having recourse once again to stimulants of the "Keynesian type" (which, according to the *Financial Times*, could reach 18 billion dollars).

Effort

From now on a major effort is projected to ensure the development of the backward western provinces. In the more long term a doubling of the gross national product (GNP) is envisaged by 2010. Even taking into account the reservations of certain specialists according to which the official figures are usually overvalued by 2-3%, the validity of these predictions is questionable to the extent that the Chinese economy is and will be still more conditioned by the vicissitudes of the world capitalist economy, which, needless to say, does not have to respect the parameters of what remains of Peking's central planning.

It is enough to recall on this subject that the US has become the first importer of Chinese produce. The question is posed, then, of to what extent the slowing up of the US economy — or, worse still, an eventual recession — could affect the Chinese economy and notably its balance of payments. What is more, if China is admitted to the WTO, it would have to, in the five coming years, reduce significantly the different measures of protection (tariffs or taxes) currently existing.² What will be the fallout in the national economic sectors which are now more or less in equilibrium

and what will be the consequences of the restructurings that will prove necessary?

To take some examples, according to experts in the matter, among the 126 enterprises in the car sector — whose production remains, moreover, very modest — only 40 will be in shape to survive. In the food sector, according to one of the officials in Peking, Li Shijing, only half of the 10,000 existing companies would survive. The difficulties could be still more serious for agriculture, where, remember, a clear majority of the active population still



works. Bearing in mind that each person active in this sector in China earns 0.1 ha, against 0.5 ha in Europe and 1.4 in the US, and that a great part of agriculture remains managed under the form of the familial economy, we can understand the affirmation of the Chinese researcher Hawn Xu: "China could not compete with the companies of the US, Canada and Australia: the decline of the agricultural sector is only a question of time". The lowering of agricultural productivity is moreover, at the origin of the apparently paradoxical phenomenon of the abandonment of land at a time when there is a shortage of cultivable surfaces.³

It is then probable that there will be some particularly heartrending transforma-

tions in the rural areas where, moreover, there has been for quite a while the phenomena of a vast "surplus" population, in part itinerant, or an active under-employed population. Finally, it is difficult to envisage what the contribution to GNP of foreign companies will be and to what extent these latter will weigh on the choices of the government itself.

Pertinent

This question is all the more pertinent in that the presence of foreign capital in the country continues to deepen under a number of forms. The year 2000 had already marked an upturn in relation to a certain slowing up in the preceding period. There has been, among other things, a flow of capital from certain South East Asian countries to China which now receives more than 60% of investment destined for the underdeveloped countries of the region.

Last year, powerful oil companies like Exxon Mobil, BP Amoco and Royal Dutch Shell, which have bought shares in China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec) to the tune of \$1.8 billion, also showed an increasing interest in China. On the other hand, Sinopec floated shares worth a total of 3.8% billion dollars (3.4 according to other sources) on the international markets. Shares have also been floated on the international markets for the telecommunications company China Unicom, whereas China Mobile, the most important mobile phones operator, who had planned a share issue of 6 billion dollars (a record figure for a company in the state sector), finally recorded a profit of three times that amount (50% coming from the USA, 30% Asia, 20% Europe). Globally, 9 billion dollars worth of shares were floated on the

international markets during the first six months of 2000. Let's add, moreover, that henceforth it is hoped to involve foreign capital in arduous restructuring operations in loss making state companies. The problem of these companies remains, even if, according to the official sources, some progress has been made.⁴

Numerous foreign banks have been operating in China for a long time, although with a whole raft of limitations. This presence is now quite significant in the metropolis of Shanghai, where these banks are authorized to grant loans, receive deposits and participate in the exchange markets in the name of joint ventures of foreign companies and state sector companies. They have taken on 50% of the financing of the commercial sector. Another important sector has been opened to foreign companies, that of insurance. For example, at the end of October, after a visit from the European commissioner Pascal Lamy, Ma Yongwei, president of the Commission for the regulation of the insurance, said that, even before joining the WTO, China was disposed to admit seven companies from the European Union into this market. Some foreign groups could be involved even in the setting up of pension funds: no need to stress the quasi-symbolic value of this. Zhu Li, president of Galaxi Securities, the leading company in this sector, wants to see a foreign participation of up to 33%.

Private banks

It should be added that Chinese private banks are also starting to operate. The first of these banks, Musheng, has drawn the attention of investors to the extent that it has been able to amass 495.4 million dollars, more than hundred times its initial offer — the company's shares have increased their value by 57%. Another example, in another area: the ministry of construction has drawn up measures seeking to "encourage non public companies to enter the sector of urban public transport" in the city of Peking.⁵

Some novelties have also been announced in the area of the stock exchanges. The two which exist, that of Shanghai and that of Shenzhen, have until now had the same areas of activity although their operations are on a very different scale. It is envisaged henceforth that the distinction between share A, aimed at Chinese investors, and share B, destined



Party official Hu Changqing, recently executed for taking bribes

for foreigners, will be eliminated. The Shanghai stock exchange is to carry out all kinds of operations whereas that of Shenzhen is to concern itself with shares of the type listed on Nasdaq on Wall Street. According to Craig Smith of the *New York Times*, 50 million Chinese participate in the share market, thus more than in any other country apart from the United States. If one also takes into account the fact that personal bank deposits amount to 800 million dollars, one can conclude, says Smith, that "the Chinese markets have the potential to finance a private sector boom". According to *The Economist* (December 23) the Chinese stock market was the best performing last year.⁶

It is not easy to draw up an overall tableau of the respective weight of the big economic sectors. Recent figures like those we have looked at confirm that the presence of foreign capital is not at all marginal and that China is increasingly integrated in the world capitalist market. If one believes the figures advanced by different sources — such as a report of the International Finance Corporation — in 1998 the private sector represented 33% of GNP and the state sector 37%.

Non-state

As to the non-state collective sector, it is far from being homogeneous, including in fact a significant percentage of private enterprises. It is completely plausible that the evolution since 1998 has strengthened the role of the private sector. Whatever the truth, this sector is the most dynamic, with a rate of growth of around 25% a year, which allows it to absorb a part of the workforce laid off from the public sector.

As we have stressed in other articles, the importance of the changes which have taken place is confirmed by the fact that

the Chinese economy is henceforth marked by phenomena more characteristic of a capitalist economy than of a bureaucratized transitional society (overproduction, of course in relation to effective demand, upwards and downwards evolution of prices, property crises, and so on). In the recent period one has also witnessed a delirious stock market euphoria recalling, obviously maintaining a sense of proportion, phenomena on other stock exchanges around the globe, with the usual bitter disappointments which follow.⁷

A Bank of China notable is undoubtedly exaggerating when he says: "The transformation underway is one the most complex ever attempted in human history". But nobody would question that the transformation taking place is very profound, whatever judgment one has from a revolutionary point of view.⁸

Social effects

The changes which have taken place since the end of the 1970s, which have deepened in the last decade, could not fail to have major social effects.

We will not recapitulate on what has happened and is happening in the countryside where the standard of living continues to be palpably inferior to that of the towns (at the end of 1998, the annual per capita income was 2,162 yuans in the countryside and 5,425 in the cities).⁹ Nonetheless, until now the restructurings carried out on a vast scale have affected the urban layers most directly. It is precisely urban unemployment which has reached unprecedented heights: from 15 to 20% (*Le Monde*, September 19). To give some examples, according to Zhang Yubin, of the Economic Institute of the City, in Harbin, a city of 2.4 million inhabitants, 350,000 people are unemployed (half that figure according to official estimates). In Shanghai the number of textile workers has fallen from 500,000 at the beginning of the 1980s to 160,000 now. The predictions are far from optimistic: according to Hu Angang, a very well known Chinese economist, in the five coming years the state enterprises will dismiss around 20% of their labour force. As to the measures taken or envisaged to counteract these tendencies, this is what *Beijing Review* has recently had to say (number 50, 2000): "In China as a whole some 12 million workers and laid off employees have in the past three years received a professional training

allowing 7.8 million of them to refind work... 10 million other unemployed people should receive training in the framework of the second three year programme, from 2001 to 2003".

The official sources have claimed several times that poverty has significantly decreased. In its last number for the year 2000 *Beijing Review* estimates that "the number of those who are unable to meet basic needs fell from 250 million in 1970 to 34 million at the end of 1999".

The notion of "basic needs" obviously leaves margins of interpretation. In fact, non-official sources estimate the number of poor at around 90 million.¹⁰ What is more, a favorable evolution does not seem to be necessarily ensured for the future if a government text sets the objective not only of "reducing the number of poor people in the rural regions" but also of "preventing the impoverishment of the urban population".¹¹

Spectacular

However, the most spectacular change continues at another level of the social scale as a consequence of the emergence of wealthy layers, indeed the formation of a veritable bourgeois layer. The analysis of banking deposits seems in itself to confirm such an evolution: 80% of deposits belong to 20% of depositors. More precisely, it is the Chinese press itself — not only the international press — which refers to capitalists who operate in different economic sectors. Last November, the magazine *Forbes* even published a list of the richest people: first place belongs to the "red capitalist" Ron Yiren, an old acquaintance, who is worth an estimated 1.9 billion dollars, followed by the younger Liu Yomgxing with one billion. The same magazine has also mentioned the case of Ren Zhengfei, former army officer turned entrepreneur in the telecommunications sector and the former chicken farmer, Liu Yonghao, who has also become a capitalist. For his part, a former peasant, Wang Shuzian, became a textile entrepreneur who is also involved on the stock markets.

Some empirical figures of this nature allow us, moreover, to grasp more concretely how the process of formation of a bourgeois layer is developing at a triple level: reappearance of the old capitalists or their "heirs"; people who have been able to accumulate fortunes launching themselves into ventures, initially modest,

through their previous activity; transformation into capitalists of notables from the dominant bureaucratic layer. Obviously we do not have statistical evaluations on the respective weight of these three components. But it is obvious that the former bureaucrats are favored, at least in an initial phase, given that they dispose of higher incomes and can exploit their positions of control in the state structures at various levels.

Criminality

However, there is another aspect that should not be forgotten and which justly preoccupies those partisans of the new course who claim to be keeping their hands clean: criminality, more or less organized, is very much present in the capitalist accumulation underway. The international press has recently described the case of Chang An-lo, who leads a life of Croesus in Shenzhen, having spent six years in prison in the USA after being found guilty of heroin trafficking and who is wanted by the police in Taiwan as head of a criminal gang of 15,000 members. This character threw an extravagant feast at which a well known party ideologue and a former doyen of the party school were guests.¹²

The former criminal organizations, the Triads, have also reappeared. Presumed links with the Triads led to the resignation of the mayor of the big city of Shenyang, Mu Suixin, towards the end of last year. More generally, the spread of corrupt practices at all levels continues to be denounced, in a more or less routine fashion, in official texts and discourses. To stick to some recent episodes, the official press announced the resignation of the deputy mayor of Hangzhou and a 15-year jail sentence for general Ji Shengdé. In the



same period, 14 notables from the province of Fujian were condemned to death for corruption and smuggling.

Finally, the growth of the economy and more particularly its modern sectors in the private sphere has determined the emergence of what might be called "an urban middle class", a phenomenon which has understandably attracted the attention of sociologists. Li Qiang, doyen of the sociology faculty of the University of Qinghua, who has observed transformations of middle classes on a world scale, has correctly stressed that in China also "the traditional middle class is on the decline, while a new generation is in the process of appearing". The new middle class "comprises people who have a higher level of education, are employed in foreign capital enterprises or new commercial areas and are displaying a veritable bulimia in consumption".

Categories

Two categories of employee are designated: "The first work in the state or collective property enterprises and form the majority of urban employees. The others are those who have been discarded from the existing structures of the planned economy and are involved in market competition, like the liberal professions, the different kinds of entrepreneurs, the heads of small and medium enterprises, the managers and the employees of the recently founded enterprises and the employees of foreign capital enterprises". These latter enjoy "significantly higher" incomes.¹³ It is above all the employees of the foreign capital enterprises and the newer companies who now constitute "the bulk of the new urban middle classes".

A survey by the National Bureau of Statistics fundamentally bears this out. For his part, Zhu Ling, of the Economic Institute of the Academy of Sciences, thinks that this phenomenon has not yet stabilized whereas the journalist Xie Liangjun believes that in any case the emergence of such layers is a factor of social stability. Let's say that it implies differentiations which could, under certain conditions, acquire a dynamic whose effect would be the opposite of stabilization.

Zhu Ling does not hesitate to draw a conclusion that it is a little surprising for a well known official publication: "In China, the majority of the population does not receive the biggest share of income. On the contrary, a mere handful of people share

★ China

among themselves the lion's share of the society's wealth".¹⁴ Here are the marvels of a "socialist market society"!

In his report to the central committee in October last year the prime minister, Zhu Rongji, summed up the problems to be resolved in the course of the Tenth Five Year plan: "the irrational structure of the industries, uneven development of the economy between the different regions, backwardness of science and technique, growing pressure on employment and the deterioration of ecological conditions in some regions, growing disparity in incomes, corruption and waste."¹⁵ Fundamentally, these are objectives which have been formulated a number of times in the past few years. Their recapitulation is, in fact, an implicit admission that, despite persistent growth, the major problems remain to be dealt with.¹⁶ As we have mentioned, at least in some ways, they could worsen if the specific weight of foreign capital and the private sector grows and depending on the extent of China's integration into the WTO.

Dynamic

Chinese leaders are not unaware that the dynamic that they have unleashed is provoking and will provoke more tensions, conflicts, indeed explosions at the social level. Some incidents in the course of the last year have undoubtedly confirmed their fears. In February, in Yangizhang, in the Lioaning, 20,000 sacked miners went into the streets for several days to fight the police. In the rural regions, workers dismissed without compensation have been involved in some harsh conflicts. In November a thousand workers at a textile enterprise in the department of Funing, in Jiangsu, organized a campaign against the corruption of the leaders and the passivity of the trade unions.

More generally, according to statistics from the ministry of Labour, between 1992 and 1999 labour conflicts increased by a magnitude of 14, reaching the figure of 120,000. What is more, we see once again attempts to set up autonomous trade unions. The most significant recent case is that of the textile enterprise in Funing mentioned above, where an initiative was taken by an electrician called Cao Maobin who had worked for the company for 17 years. Cao said that the most important thing was that trade unionists were elected by the workers themselves. According to



him, moreover, it is his movement that pushed the employees of another enterprise in the region to struggle to obtain subsidies which were rightfully theirs (these workers encircled the seat of local government).¹⁷

Project

In such a context what is the strategic project of the current leading group in China? To judge it on the basis of what they have long claimed, the essential precondition of the development and the modernization of the country is an increasingly radical economic reform going hand in hand with a growing integration in the world capitalist market. In this sense, whatever the differences, they share the same terrain as the Gorbachevian reformists although they are pushing the changes much further. But the basic difference resides, according to them, in the fact that, whereas in the Soviet Union the goal was a progressive erosion of the existing political-institutional framework, China has maintained and will maintain this framework, for the essential, safeguarding absolutely the hegemony of the party and the identification of party and state.

In the final analysis, if one grasps the underlying logic of certain formulations and takes note of the distant horizon sketched for the transcendence of the backward conditions of the country, it is not arbitrary to draw the conclusion that the current leading group is convinced that for a whole period a development of the capitalist type will be necessary before embarking on the construction of socialism. It amounts to an ideological approach in the strict sense, that is, at best, a mystification which is at the same time a self-mystification. One could even add, a little paradoxically, that the Chinese propose, a

century later, a rehashing *sui generis* of a Russian Menshevik theory which both Trotsky and Lenin struggled against.

The question is posed of whether such a project, whatever the characterizations and value judgments, could effectively be realized.

We have already invoked a major difficulty from the economic point of view: The increasingly organic integration of China into the world economy — and this will be still more the case after formal entry into the WTO — will increasingly condition development at the national level, by relativising the choices made in the framework of the Plan and the impact of the decisions of the government itself and by sharpening, among other things, cyclical vicissitudes. The emergence of a more consistent and articulated bourgeois layer, capable of making its own international links, will not be without effects either.

Counterweight

Secondly, the idea that an effective counterweight would be represented by the remaining political-institutional framework, even if remoulded to meet new needs and pressures,¹⁸ could be shown to be completely illusory. Indeed, already today the people who make up the state, party and army apparatuses have very little in common not only with the protagonists of the revolutionary process of the 1930s and 1940s, but also with the leaders, cadres and militants of the 1950s and 1960s.

What is more, they and their successors cannot avoid being conditioned and remodeled by an overall evolution of society which will sharpen in the years to come, not to mention the decades. The new context, moreover, is and will be still more marked by a cultural crisis, a veritable cri-

sis of values, of which there are already tangible signs.¹⁹ It is probable that, as certain commentators claim, the narrow ruling nucleus itself is currently experiencing differentiations in the face of problems like entry into the WTO, the methods with which to approach the wave of social malaise, the eventual softening of the authoritarian regime.²⁰ With even more reason, it can be supposed that the social cleavages which are emerging will have a growing impact at different levels on the political structures bequeathed from the past and the people integrated into them.

It is difficult to give exhaustive replies to such questions. Nonetheless, if the “neo-Menshevik” project seems to us perfectly illusory, the hypothesis that a capitalist restoration carried out in a framework which, despite all, maintains the traits of a bureaucratized post-capitalist transitional society, is also highly implausible.²¹ In other words, there are socio-economic and political-cultural contradictions which will finally lead to upheavals and explosions. China, like other countries in the world, will not experience a very peaceful evolution in the first decades of the millennium that has just begun. ★

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1. In addition to previous articles by the author and by Roland Lew in this magazine, see Lau Yu Fan (*IV* 317-8, Dec 2000-Jan 2001) and Zhang Kai (*IV* 319, February 2000).

2. According to the agreements, custom duty on industrial products should fall from 50% to 24.6% and for agricultural products from 31.8% to 14.5%. More particularly, the most significant reductions concern wine — from 65% to 12% — and cars — from 80% to 25% (the tariffs on some cars will fall in five years from 63.5% to 25%). Moreover, foreign companies can no longer utilize in part local materials or components for their manufacturing production in China; some 100% foreign companies will no longer be obliged to export at least half of their production; foreign companies will be able to buy up to 25% of the mobile telephone networks from the entry of China into the WTO and up to 49% three years later.

3. The abandonment of the land and the rural exodus are also stimulated by excessive local taxes, which are sometime completely arbitrary.

4. See, for example, *Beijing Review*, no. 44, 2000.

5. See *Beijing Review*, no. 49, 2000.

6. On the stock exchange vicissitudes in China see, among others, *International Herald Tribune* of 22 and 29 December, 2000 and January 2, 2001. Since autumn 2000 the establishment of a second market, independent of those in Shenzhen and Shanghai, has been envisaged more concretely (*Beijing Review* no 42, 2000).

7. According to the *Financial Times* (December 28) the stock market value of China Mobile alone at one point surpassed the values of the markets of Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines taken together. As for the disappointments, *Le Monde* (29 December) mentions, among others, the case of four Chinese Internet companies quoted in New York, which have fallen by more than 80% in the space of six months.

8. During the international conference organized by Espace Marx, Attac and other institutes and organizations (Paris, November 30–December 3, 2000) the author of this article participated in a debate with a Chinese representative referring to a series of data and elements of analysis taken up here. As might be expected, our interlocutor did not share our appreciations on the dynamic of the situation and our judg-

ments, but he explicitly admitted that the analytical figures were absolutely incontestable.

9. According to the World Bank “the growth of incomes of rural families has experienced a dramatic slowing up and the growth of spending on consumption has been virtually zero in the course of three years”.

10. 90 million Chinese earn less than a dollar a day (*Financial Times*, January 3, 2001). According to *The Economist* (December 23), there are 80 million poor.

11. See *Beijing Review*, no. 52, 2000.

12. See *International Herald Tribune*, January 2, 2001.

13. Competition from the private sector is increasingly affecting the press sector, as *Beijing Review* itself indicates in number 51, 2000: “Many journalists and columnists [at *China Daily*] have opted for foreign companies or mouthwatering private salaries”. *Le Monde* (November 28, 2000) cites the example of an editor in chief of the Chengdu Commercial, who accepted an offer from the private competition and saw his income increase six times over.

14. See *Beijing Review*, no. 51, 2000. The preceding issue of the same magazine published a long article on the medical system where it emerges that sick people needing care in some hospitals have to pay sums beyond the means of ordinary citizens.

15. See *Beijing Review*, no. 44, 2000.

16. For example, an eloquent figure relating to regional disequilibria: income in the western regions with 300 million inhabitants is ten times inferior to that of Shanghai.

17. Some information on this subject was published in mid-December by the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

18. In his October report Zhu Rongji spoke of the necessity of promoting a reform of the political system, by the introduction of a grass roots democracy allowing “the population to directly exercise its democratic rights, in respect for the law”. In other words, advancing in the area of the rectifications already introduced in the last decade, without any qualitative change in the authoritarian régime of the bureaucratized transitional society. Some problems are posed for the leaders following the diffusion of the Internet and restrictive measures have already been adopted. The concerns are justified if it is true that, as reported by *Le Monde* (December 29), messages like the following circulate: “The principle contradiction that exists in China today is between the people and the government... It is necessary that the people once again have the power in its hands... Overthrow the bourgeois class and the feudal regime, whether inside or outside the party”.

19. The spreading of a fairly large scale of the Falun Gong sect, which has undergone several waves of repression without being destroyed, is undoubtedly one of the signs of this value crisis. Such a crisis cannot be counteracted by the application of stereotyped precepts such as those contained in the December governmental text already quoted, which recommends, among other things, “valuing social and familial virtues characterized by respect for the law and discipline, marital understanding, love for the elderly” and also envisages “rapid enrichment”.

20. As we write, *Foreign Affairs* has published the record of conversations between Chinese leaders during the Tiananmen crisis, which in our view reveal nothing fundamentally new (see *Le Monde*, January 10, 2001). According to some commentators, this leak reflects currently existing divergences.

21. Such a hypothesis corresponds to the wishes of both the sectors of the bureaucracy most integrated in the growth of private capital and those more linked to foreign capital, of significant economic sectors of the capitalist countries and of the leading political groups. Former Fiat boss Cesare Romiti returned from China full of enthusiasm, saying: “China is becoming the America of the future”.



Workers defend rights

WITH China launching the market economy, all types of enterprises, in particular the privately owned ones, unabashedly go after profits and squeeze whatever they can from the workers.

ZHANG KAI*

INFRINGEMENTS of workers' rights have become rampant, and newspapers such as *Workers Daily* or *South Workers Newspaper* have been reporting on workers' petitions to the authorities or even workers' actions. The following is based on these reports.

Infringements on workers' rights are mostly manifested in the following:

1. Irregularities in the employment system. The Labour Law stipulates that labour contracts in black and white should be drawn up between the employer and the employees, with clauses clearly stipulated as to the term of service, nature of work, labour safeguards and conditions, remuneration, and conditions for termination of contract. However, many enterprises now lay off large numbers of workers but at the same time employ labourers coming from the countryside or casual workers. They seldom enter into any labour contract with these workers, and if any labour disputes arise, the workers have no way to safeguard their legitimate rights. Even in cases where contracts have been drawn up, the management refuse to comply with the conditions.

2. Deprivation of the right to employment of large numbers of workers. The “iron bowl” of the past has now turned into “clay bowl” under the Reform. The management has the powers to impose dismissals or retirements in the name of

increasing efficiency. State-owned enterprises are no exception. For example, the Geophysical Explorations Institute, a subsidiary of the Heilongjiang Provincial Geological Bureau, ordered 260 staff to "collective resignation". Each person was given a one-off compensation of RMB 20,000 (USD 2,500) which meant to release the management of any ties with or insurance responsibilities for the staff.

The Institute actually earned profits of RMB hundreds of thousands and even up to a million during 1995-98. After the 260 staff members were sacked, new staff members were recruited.

3. No guarantee of wages. Deferred payment or non payment of wages are common and grave. The Workers Daily of 1 Nov 1999 commented that "it is really 'news' to hear that anyone can now receive their wages regularly every month. Whether they are state owned or privately owned enterprises, the prevalent phenomenon is delayed payment of wages. The amount involved is startling." Investigations made by the Workers Daily show that even if the enterprises are not running on a deficit, they still defer wage payments and divert the funds to other usages. Some enterprises pay wages in kind - whatever stocks that cannot get sold and stay in the warehouse, so some workers are "paid" clothes or charcoal. Some issue the workers with a blank piece of paper making promises of compensation. Some enterprises, in the name of putting workers on "probation", employ workers at a cheap rate for a short term and then dismiss them when the "probation" period is over.

4. Arbitrary prolongation of unpaid working hours. Many enterprises force workers to overtime work violating the maximum number of overtime working hours allowed by the Labour Law. For example, a big shoe factory in Zhongshan, Guangdong Province, which is run on joint capital from Chinese and foreign investments, had for six months been compelling workers to over time work until midnight, and not even did workers get a holiday on

May Day. In Panyu in Guangdong Province, the Xingtai Shoe Factory, also run on joint investments, had workers do over time work for a minimum of four hours every day for over six months. Some enterprises operate on paying the workers not by their hours of work but by tasks, and

the standards set by the management force workers to be able to finish them only by over time work.

5. Compulsory deposits, shares or loans. Many enterprises force workers to pay several thousand yuan of deposit or shares, or else they will not get the job or the remuneration. In 1999 alone, in Jilin Province, the Labour Department, with its inspections and interventions, managed to recover for 200,000 workers illegal deposits amounting to 55 million yuan. The newspaper report said that the phenomenon was prevalent and was not specific to any place, and the reasons were that the enterprises used this as a means to amass capital, and their employees, in order to retain their jobs, failed to fight back.



6. Industrial hazards and lack of safety precautions. Labour casualties are high, since the management does not care for safety measures and workers are prone to accidents due to their fatigue after long hours of intensive work. Though required by law, most enterprises are reluctant to buy labour insurance for the workers. As at the end of 1999, only an average of 37.5% of workers were insured.

7. Violation of personal safety of the workers. There have been occasional reports on how enterprises conduct illegal body search, abuse and assault on workers. In Guangzhou, one enterprise had a wounded worker put under illegal detention for over a month for fear that the worker would complain against his industrial accident.

Why are such phenomena so rampant? The reasons include:

1. The enterprise management hold absolute power over employment or dismissal of workers, and the large "reserve

army" causes workers to tolerate harsh working conditions and remuneration.

2. The government laws are inadequate and are more protective of the management than of the workers.

3. Many officials are keen on developing their local economies and are prejudiced towards the investors.

4. Many enterprise unions compromise with the situation, and workers do not get support from the union.

No choice

Yet, compelled by the worsening situations, workers have no choice but to fight back, either by strikes or protests, or by taking the management to court. For example, in Beijing, 5,234 such court cases for 1999 increased by 64.2% over 1998. Of these, collective labour dispute cases numbered 242, an increase of 78.5% over the preceding year. A suburban county of the Beijing District witnessed an increase of labour disputes of 5.7 times from 1995 to 1999. The Shanghai Labour Bureau statistics also yield similar trends, that labour disputes were increasing by an annual rate of about 30%. The labour disputes in Beijing in 2000 also sounded alarm: the first six months saw dispute cases and involved workers around delayed wage payments increase by 120.37% and 118.1% respectively over the same period in the preceding year.

Due to censorship, newspaper reports of workers' strikes and protest actions are limited. According to China Labour Bulletin, there had been increased strikes and sit-ins since 1999. Some recent actions in 2000 included a sit-in strike of 1,000 workers of Arsenal Factory 3508 in Chengdu starting from July 10, 2000, demanding satisfactory dismissal terms for the workers when the factory closed down. On August 5-6, over 1,000 workers and family from the state-owned coal mining company blocked the traffic and demanded sufficient livelihood subsidies. 6 organisers were arrested. On September 25, 500 workers from a state owned steel factory in Yunnan Province blocked the railway linking Chengdu and Kunming, in protest of a rumoured dismissal of workers. The waves of worker protests are prompted by the worsening conditions, and they cannot be simply contained by high-handed measures. ★

Return from Vietnam

YOU traveled in the three provinces of Vietnam and you noticed a certain number of significant changes from your previous visits.

In 1997-1998 Vietnam became a consumer society. Qualified youth sought then above all to go abroad to earn some money. Now the foreign companies established in the country seek local managers and pay them well: in 1997-1998 they could earn a monthly salary of US\$ 200; in 2000 it is US\$ 800 (remember the monthly average is US\$ 100). Add to this the possibility of traveling free of charge to Thailand or Singapore for "training".

These youth now want to stay in Vietnam. Previously the dream was to go to France or Japan. There was also the USA as a model for the middle classes and significant elements of the popular layers. But even if people know that quite a few families settled there have several cars and superb houses it is also known that it is not the paradise so much hoped for: it is hard to find work with an unrecognized Vietnamese qualification, one encounters racism even among black people and Puerto Ricans.

In short even if the cult of the Yankee dollar persists the idea now is to get hold of it on the ground rather than by traveling abroad.

■ Did you have the impression that the transition to the market economy is accompanied by an awareness that it will not resolve all problems?

Since the opening of 1986-1987 Vietnam wants to enter the international community. It wants to be part of ASEAN (created to contain the Vietnamese revolution) and it currently holds the presidency. It wants to join the WTO. Many leaders are sent abroad and the ruling layer has undergone a transformation: the current ministers are between 50 and 55 years old, their advisers and service and department heads travel everywhere and start to reflect on the effects of the market economy and globalization.

One can distinguish schematically two currents: the conservative current (the "old-timers") who oppose globalization "highest stage of capitalism" and the

TUAN has lived in France since the late 1950s and has been returning regularly to Vietnam since 1990. Jean-Michel Krivine spoke to him about his most recent visit.

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younger current who do not reject globalization as such. Books on the demonstrations at Seattle have been translated and people know about ATTAC.

On the economic level Vietnam has been less affected than the "dragons" by the Asian crisis of 1997 (it has no stock exchange), however foreign investments have fallen. The priority is now given to agriculture (export of rice) and oil. The sector profiting from regional relocations (for example from Taiwan) has slowed up. Near Petit Lac in Hanoi, where a commercial center is supposed to be being built, the building sites are silent.

The current desire of the rulers is to make eyes at the US. Clinton's visit was seen in this optic; as a lame duck president he was in fact a commercial traveler for the multinationals. Some months ago a trade agreement was signed with the US which had been rejected less than 2 years ago. Some of the placards welcoming Clinton were supplied by General Electric.

■ What's happening with foreign languages in this context?

Russian, once obligatory, is no longer spoken. English spreads increasingly and in Hanoi I saw some shops with their frontage in English. French is reviving a little after the Francophone Summit.

■ Did you notice any significant political changes?

Yes, undoubtedly. For about three years now the older generation have been talking about the past and raising hitherto taboo questions. For example, there were references to the nationalist leader Nguyen an Ninh on the centenary of his birth, September 29, 2000. Ninh was much better known than Nguyen ai Quoc (the future

Hô Chi Minh) in the 1930s and he participated with the Communists and Trotskyists in the episode of the newspaper *La Lutte*. He died of exhaustion at the camp of Poulo Condor in 1943. Although he was rather a "fellow traveler" of the Communists he was little spoken of after Independence: he would have overshadowed the prestige of Hô. Moreover he suffered the colonialist repression at the same time as Ta thu Thau, the popular Trotskyist leader assassinated by the Stalinists in September 1945. To speak of him would have awoken inconvenient memories among the old.

However, for the centenary of his birth a big meeting was authorized for the first time in Hô chi Minh City. More than 200 people attended, mainly the old and party members. The old Communist Tran van Giau spoke and said, tears in his eyes: "Ninh taught me to struggle for the revolution in a conscious manner"! For two years now many books have referred to him. His son has published a big book where he presents the Trotskyists as revolutionaries who saw things differently from the CP.

■ There was a lot of talk three years ago of the revolt of the peasants of Thai Binh against the corrupt bureaucrats. Has this movement left any traces?

I'll say! I'll give you an example. At Hô chi Minh City, 7 rue Le Duan, there is the office of the National Assembly. For one year now the pavement opposite has been occupied by 200 people who are there permanently, night and day. They have constructed a forest of placards and banners, which say "Long live president Ho chi Minh!" and "Long live the Vietnamese Communist Party!" but also carry complaints against the behavior of the bureaucrats of this or that village and demand justice.

The press does not have the right to meet them or speak of them, there are piles of plain clothes police all around them, one cannot approach them to take photos although I did succeed in getting some. However, the government is disarmed for these are the families of heroes of the fight for Independence and the use of brutal methods would be seen very badly by the people. If the Vietnamese press is silent on

★ Vietnam

this subject, that of Asia speaks regularly about it.

As to corruption, it simply grows and everybody is aware of it. Envelopes circulate before any foreign contract: the job goes to whoever pays the most. We don't know too much about the ministers themselves, but as to their entourage... I have seen with my own eyes (it was pointed out by my taxi driver) the superb princely abode being built for the son of the prime minister. It is more sumptuous than that of former president Thieu.

■ So there's a certain degree of relaxation of the control of the population?

Undoubtedly, the people have less fear. They can speak with each other. The police are showing less zeal and becoming more "professional". The intellectuals are under "discreet" surveillance. Contrary to Russia, there is no opposition press or unofficial trade unions (although there is a desperate need for them...). Thus, the newspapers cannot comment directly on the current discontent of the civil servants but the *Hô chi Minh City Worker* publishes without comment meaningful "readers' letters".

The new technologies also favor an opening to abroad without any control being possible. Computers all have a free E-mail. One can even have access to *Rouge*. There is a rash of cyber-café's in Hanoi and Hô chi Minh-City, you often have to queue. The rates are modest — 400 dongs a minute (1 dollar is worth 14,000 dongs). Recently the authorities seized a book which related events which displeased them (the "Hundred Flowers" of 1956-7), protests soon circulated through E-mail.

■ Do you believe that there is a perspective for the rebirth of a genuine socialist ideal in Vietnam despite the caricature that the current régime makes of it?

There is undoubtedly a subterranean opinion, certainly very much a minority one, above all among the intellectuals of 35-40 years, among the writers, artists, filmmakers, having contacts with abroad. Since 1997 one senses the change: there is a thirst to understand and for some a liberated Marxism can help here. Our translations of Trotsky (*The revolution betrayed, Literature and revolution, My Life*) have been very well received in the country and we continue to translate. I have already told you 2 years ago how surprised I was in 22 *International Viewpoint* #328 February 2001

Hanoi to find in a bookshop the book *Marx l'intempestif* by Daniel Bensaïd, translated into Vietnamese. It's not the easiest book to read, yet the first edition of 800 copies sold out in one year, the second of 1000-1200 also, and we are on the third!

We are witnessing a paradox: the market economy needs a certain degree of democracy to function and to a certain extent that allows the real opponents of this economy to express themselves. That was unthinkable seven or 8 years ago, nobody could have a fax machine, access to the Internet or simply the right to make photocopies. However to set up foreign companies these tools are indispensable — every company needs E-mail.

I do not say that thanks to the market Vietnam will know a real democratic blossoming but it will be rid of the previous political shackles. Colonization itself did not have solely negative effects. Thanks to it, people like Nguyen an Ninh, Ta thu Thau or Hô chi Minh were able to come to France, absorb the conquests of the French Revolution and struggle to liberate their country.

Certainly, there are the "conservatives", men aged from 75 to 80, but they lead less and less. The historians, even the best known, want to rewrite the history of Vietnam. For example, the magazine *Yesterday and Today* has published a study on the family of Hô where his brother appears in an entirely new light. Until now he had been represented as a victim of colonialist repression for anti-French activities, in fact he was a drunkard involved in some shady rackets. Unthinkable a short time ago...

The renaissance of the socialist idea comes from below, it is still fragile and the big question is: what can be done from outside to help it? The leaders, for their part, extol "Chinese market socialism", ten years late, after having severely criticized it. They translate the Chinese "theoretical" writings on the "market economy with a socialist orientation" at the Institutes of Economy and Sociology with the inscription: "internal circulation".

It is vital that we make our ideas known to those Vietnamese who review their past with an increasingly critical eye and do not consider the market as the last word in the development of society. The change is certainly still minimal, but it is a qualitative change: nothing will be like it was before. ★

Tribute to Boudarel

IT'S comforting to discover a current Vietnamese text which pays tribute to Georges Boudarel. His story began in February 1991 when Jean-Jacques Beucler, a former deputy in the French parliament and a prisoner of the VietMinh from 1950 to 1954, accused Boudarel of having directed a camp for French POWs and of having blood on his hands.

JEAN-MICHEL KRIVINE

“L'AFFAIRE Boudarel” began and continued for several years. The charge against Boudarel of “crimes against humanity” was finally ruled to be “unfounded” by the French courts.

It might have been expected that he would receive energetic support from the Vietnamese authorities and his former comrades. Instead there was silence. Why?

Returning to France in 1967 following the introduction of an amnesty law, Boudarel cast a more critical eye on the doings of the Vietnamese Communists. Now a university teacher at Jussieu in Paris, he wrote a series of books which were critical of the methods of the Vietnamese bureaucracy in muzzling intellectuals. The Vietnamese authorities did not forgive him.

Certainly, this beginning of a “rehabilitation” also requires some commentary and if Boudarel is totally innocent of the accusations made against him, he accepts that, in line with his thinking at the time, he participated in the “reeducation” of prisoners using the “Maoist” techniques he would later criticize, but which Huu Ngoc still seems to approve of (does he still approve of them in his heart of hearts?).

Georges Boudarel is currently in a rest home. Even if he cannot immediately take up the invitation to return to Hanoi, he has the comfort of knowing his Vietnamese friends have not forgotten him. ★

Boudarel, a noted scholar on Vietnam

HỒỮ NGOÀI

IT happened during the first Indochina war in the heart of the military zone of Viet Baéc, where the headquarters of the Department of Political Work Among Enemy Troops was established. In 1951 to 1952, while trotting among huts hidden beneath giant bamboo groves in the jungle, I came across a young Frenchman of about 24 or 25 years of age. He was a big, gawky man wearing a pair of shorts and a boy scout hat with an emaciated face and thoughtful eyes. He spoke loquaciously, desirous of knowing all and learning all about the Vietnamese resistance. He had just made a trek of six months covering some two thousand kilometres along the future Hoà Chí Minh Trail. He was Georges Boudarel, a professor of philosophy, who had just deserted a French high school in the occupied zone and crossed over to the Vietnamese side. After our first meeting, I came across him often in my capacity as a cadre of the Bureau of Re-education of European and African prisoners of war. More than a year later Boudarel would become deputy head of the POW camp 113. Following Nĩeãn Bieãn Phuũ he went to Hanoi, married a Vietnamese and worked as a sub-editor on the French bulletin of the Voice of Vietnam Radio and also at the Foreign Languages Publishing House.

In the early sixties, with a heavy heart, he returned to France where his death sentence for high treason had been abolished. He taught the history of Vietnam for two decades at the Paris VII University until the beginning of the 90's when his quiet life was disrupted by a thunderclap. J.J. Beucler, a former POW of Vietnam and former French Minister of Ex-combatants, denounced Boudarel to public prosecution without warning, accusing him of crimes against humanity. Beucler called the professor a "butcher" and accused him of causing a massive number of prisoners' deaths at Viet Minh POW camp 113.

The trial lasted many years and was regarded as a mini Dreyfus affair. If offered to right-wing politicians still nostalgic of colonialism and to the "orthodox party" a good occasion to exalt jingoistic patriotism. In spite of the counter-offensive of the Committee in Defence of Boudarel set up by his colleagues, friends

and well-informed intellectuals, the accused was subjected to a rabid and concerted campaign of denigration. They invaded his private life, threatened to murder him and used a thousand and one means to defame him, they even "forgot" to pay him his salary. But justice prevailed. He came out of the court completely exonerated from the trumped up charges, but demolished physically and broken down morally.

No, he had not betrayed his country by protesting against colonial conquest, he had not committed any crime against humanity by seeking to enlighten the prisoners about the nature of the war in Vietnam. On the contrary, he had done honour to the French democratic tradition; he did not want his country repeating in Vietnam the crimes committed by the Nazis on French soil.

Colonel Pierre Thomas, who rallied to Boudarel's defence only after a laborious enquiry, has given a judicious explanation of the high percentage of deaths in POW camps in Vietnam: the murderous tropical climate, the lack of medicine, insufficient food (caused by the French encirclement itself) and the low morale of the internees. No beating, no torture, no maltreatment of any kind. As for the moral torture and the brainwashing, there were no such things. Nevertheless, even a serious work such as the Dictionary of Philosophy (Larousse - 1975) echoed this prejudice in its entry. It stated "Methods of psychological conditioning were used by armies of the Viet Minh during the Indochina War". The political and psychological work conducted in the POW camps tried to give the detainees an understanding of the unjust character of the Indochina war and the legitimacy of our resistance. They were asked simply to demand peace and their repatriation, not to turn their arms against the French troops. There was no physical or moral constraint. According to the testimony by Lieutenant Xavier de Villeneuve in his answer to an interview in *Le Monde* on July 14, 1952, "I have myself signed many declarations (demanding an end to the war in Vietnam) together with my comrades. We have suffered no pressure."

Now let us leave Boudarel, the apprentice politician too naive to succeed, and talk about Boudarel the Vietnam scholar — no less honest and untiring. His love for Vietnam made him choose this country

and its people as the object of his research and his life's work. "This country has held and still holds for all of us a big place in our lives. For some of us it is the native country, where nostalgia will never fade away. For others, it is a country which is both very far off and very near. We wish that it will again be the hope of tomorrow." This collective profession of faith from a generation captivated by Vietnam has the stamp of the heart and the pen of Boudarel in it. Cartesian to the roots of his hair, Georges does not want a blind love. He has not hesitated to make some critical opinions, which have been misinterpreted.

He made conscientious preparations before undertaking studies of Vietnam: during his sojourn in Vietnam he lived the life of the people, learned the language, translated contemporary novels and followed courses of literature and history at the Hào Noãi University. He built up a rich library on Vietnam at his home in Romainville, including a unique collection of postcards on Indochina. Together with Chesneaux, Brocheux, Hemery, Fourniau, Devillers and Feray — Boudarel belongs to the generation of French Vietnam researchers marked by the 1945 to 1954 war. His main works are: *Private Property and Collective Property in Ancient Vietnam* (translation and commentaries on works by Nguyeãn Kim Chung and Nguyeãn Nõuc Nghinh - in collaboration), *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam* (in collaboration); *Memoirs of Phan Boãi Chaâu: Phan Boãi Chaâu and the Vietnamese society of his times; Giaũp, Hoà Chí Minh; Insertion of the Central Power in the Village Cults in Vietnam: sketch of questions from the writings by Ngoã Taát Toáá; The Vietnamese Diaspora* (Autobiography) and translations of novels by Ngoã Taát Toá, Nguyeãn Công Hoan and Vuõ Troĩng Phũĩng. Georges' last manuscript *Cultural taboos of Vietnam - Vieät-French lexicon* (unfinished) is still in our hands. We hope that he will come to Hanoi as soon as he can so that his Vietnamese friends could offer him some comfort. He needs it very much because he is now very sick, having been hospitalised for two years following an infection and even more so because of the unjust and unjustified attacks to which he has fallen victim. ★

From Vietnam News.

Debates on the Spanish left

INTRODUCTION

AFTER their electoral defeat in March 2000 at the hands of the Popular Party, the main parties of the left in the Spanish state have held some stormy congresses. The general secretariat of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) unexpectedly fell into the hands of a candidate from outside the charmed circle. At the congress (Federal Assembly) of the United Left (Izquierda Unida — IU, which today essentially comprises the Spanish Communist Party and some radical left forces) two PCE leaders faced each other and Francisco Frutos, the current general secretary of this party was defeated for the post of general coordinator of the IU.

The debates at the IU congress might seem difficult to grasp and confused. Two main issues were effectively run together: the future political orientation of the IU (where the forces of the radical left opposed the orientation of the two main PCE currents) and, determinant in the defeat of Frutos, the question of the maintenance of the pluralist character of the IU, which is largely linked to the confrontation underway inside its main component, the PCE, for control of the party apparatus. The diverse components of the radical left had different appreciations of the importance of this latter point. We publish here three articles which, while not presenting an overall picture of the debates taking place on the Spanish left, give an illustration of them.

Two are devoted to the recent congress of the IU. The first, written by Jaime Pastor, a leader in the 1970s and 1980s of the LCR, section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state, presents the balance sheet of this congress from the viewpoint of *Espacio*

Alternativo, a radical left current of the IU which contains the majority of activists who identify with the Fourth International in Spain. The second, written by Diosdado Toledano, a trade union leader at SEAT in Barcelona, and Pedro Montes, economist, presents the viewpoint of forces identifying with the Fourth International grouped around the review *Quadernos Internacionales*, who do not participate in *Espacio Alternativo*. It may be seen that, apart from tactical divergences concerning the recent IU congress, they are not agreed on the potentiality and modalities of recomposition of the radical left inside the Spanish state. The third article is written by Antonio Garcia Santesmases, spokesperson of the Socialist Left inside the PSOE, and presents the perspectives of this left tendency within that party. ★ [J. M.]

“The crisis of the United Left remains open”

JAIME PASTOR*

AT the end of October 2000 the sixth Federal Assembly (congress) of the United Left — Izquierda Unida (IU) — took place. The victory of the list led by Gaspar Llamazares (ex-coordinator general of the IU in Asturias and a member of the leadership of the Communist Party of Spain — PCE) with 42.59% — as opposed to that led by Francisco Frutos (Secretary General of the PCE) with 39.38%, and that headed by Angeles Maestro (ex-deputy and member of the PCE leadership) with 18.02% — allows us to maintain some hope that a new stage in the life of the organization will help it emerge from its current impasse. But the narrowness of the victory obtained by a very heterogeneous bloc and the particular conditions in which this relative triumph occurred did not give very much margin for optimism concerning the ability of the new leadership to emerge from the crisis of political orientation in which the IU finds itself.

Crisis

The context in which the preparatory process for this Assembly took place was that of a prolonged crisis, which began during the municipal and autonomous Community elections of 1995, worsened after the coming to power of the rightwing Popular Party (PP) in 1996 and the expulsions¹ from IU in 1997, and deepened with the electoral setbacks of 1999 and March 2000.² If we add that — with the exception of the campaign for a 35 hour working week — the IU has experienced a process of internalization of its crisis in a general framework of relative social demobilization (in which the responsibility of the majority trade union leaderships is fundamental) and has continued to zigzag to achieve an agreed programme of govern-

ment with the PSOE, it is easy to understand why passivity has been the dominant trait of IU members and why the percentage of participation was so low in the debates and election of delegates.

The problem of the replacement of Julio Anguita, Coordinator General of the IU, became the main subject of the debates. The basic political debate was thus obscured by polemics concerning the candidatures to this post. Hence the draft Political and Organizational Theses were very little discussed and, except so far as the Basque conflict is concerned, there were no significant political controversies, beyond statutory subjects of secondary importance.

Three points of view

Despite everything, it cannot be denied that the presentation of the three candidatures was a manifestation of the existence of at least three different points of view on the crisis of the organization and how to resolve it. For the list of Frutos, the electoral defeat of the IU was above all the product of its presence in the pact of Lizarra with the Basque nationalist parties and the lack of homogeneity and centralization of the organization. For that of Angeles Maestro, the basic problem has been the conciliatory behavior, reaffirmed in the course of recent years, towards the trade unions and the PSOE — above all, through the pact signed during the last general elections; this list called for the reconstruction of an IU with a more confrontational attitude to these forces, more “Communist”, centralized and homogeneous, taking autonomous action initiatives.

For the team represented by Llamazares, the crisis was the fruit of the weakening of pluralism and the internal federalism of Izquierda Unida and bad relations with both “old” and “new” social movements. For our part, finally, we insisted on the combination of external (new cycle of right wing government and social demobilization) and internal (the constant twists and turns in relation to the PSOE and the Basque conflict, the resolution of internal conflicts through intrusions on the autonomy of the federations and the lack of political education in relations with the social movements) causes.

The candidacy of the Secretary General of the PCE, Francisco Frutos, against Llamazares added a new line of fracture



Former IU leader Julio Anguita

inside the majority to this panorama. For there were, on the one hand, those who were ready to impose the discipline of the PCE inside the IU and on the other those who defended the autonomy of this latter against their own party. The fact that finally Julio Anguita decided to make public his support for the list of Llamazares and his agreement to appear on it as number 2 aggravated this conflict.

Anguita's choice

Anguita's choice had contradictory effects: if it won some support for Llamazares' list, doubts appeared as to his will to genuinely break with the recent past. Because of the relative complexity of the processes of differentiation there was a diversity of “sensibilities” in the three candidatures. Thus, Llamazares' list embraced both the sectors who had supported the recent electoral pact with the PSOE and others, like Espacio Alternativo, who had openly criticized this agreement; which seems to us, despite this important divergence, indicative of a will to open a new stage in which respect for pluralism, federalism — notably the political autonomy of the Basque federation to develop its own policy — and the sovereignty of the IU in relation to the leadership of the PCE, can be guaranteed. To this we should add that during the Assembly, Llamazares stressed

the importance of strengthening links with the alternative movements and avoided any defence of the electoral pact with the PSOE.

Among those supporting the candidature of Frutos were significant sectors of the PCE apparatus in Madrid, Andalusia and other regions, firm partisans of the urgency of turning to the right on the Basque question as well as strengthening the image of a “party of government”, obsessed with a conception of internal homogeneity which would render still more difficult the presence of currents like ours.

As to Angeles Maestro's list, it embraced both members of the PCE leadership (who might be qualified as nostalgic for “actually existing socialism”) and other militants, more radical and anti-Stalinist, but for the most part marked by sectarian traits, which stopped us from having good relations until now. They defended a document which was presented as a political alternative to the official document but in reality was no such thing, except on the trade union question. Although their platform did not contain an explicit critique of the electoral pact with the PSOE, it is perhaps this question that allowed it to capitalize on the discontent of some of the delegates against the two main candidates, who have not made a genuine self-criticism on this subject.

Axes

The existence of several axes of differentiation also explains why members of the critical sector of the Workers Commissions trade union divided, some supporting the candidacy of Llamazares (recognizing that the central battle was for the defeat of Frutos) and the others that of Maestro (with a discourse more critical of the trade union leaderships). The small PASOC (Party of Socialist Action) was divided between the candidature of Llamazares (thus according more importance to the confrontation with the PCE leadership) and that of Frutos (giving priority to the anti-Anguita position). Another little party, the Republican Left, remained outside the game, except for one dissident member who finally appeared on Frutos' list.

An important result of this Assembly was, then, the internal fracture of the three founding parties of the IU and, notably, of the majority party, the PCE, whose plural-

★ Spain

ity is finally expressing itself and mixing openly with other components of the IU.

Espacio Alternativo approached this Assembly in difficult conditions. It should be recalled first that, despite the fact that during the 5th Federal Assembly of 1997 EA presented its own list (in alliance with a minority current from Madrid) which gained 9% of the votes, since this date some comrades have left IU (this was the case in Extremadura and La Rioja but also individual members in other federations), even if they remain linked to our network of collectives. This has not stopped our extension to other regions (Murcia, the Baléarics and Castilla y León) and notably among youth, during the student mobilizations of last spring; but we have not been able to capitalize on all this inside the IU with a more significant presence at this Assembly.

Profile

EA had around 4% of the delegates, so the problem was posed of how to combine its own political profile with support for one of the candidacies. The first task was accomplished through a political document which, under the title "For a "left of the left" alternative, federalist and pluralist", was published in the Bulletin of Debate which was distributed throughout the organization and received some support in the form of amendments to the official text. We argued in this document that the IU should recover its political credibility by affirming its willingness to develop a project of a left alternative, clearly differentiated from the social-liberal, social-democrat statist or nationalist type projects. On the basis of this contribution, we abstained on the official theses, shared by Llamazares and Frutos. During the Assembly we also distributed a special number of our publication *Corriente alterna* as well as the manifesto which had been approved by our Second Confederal Meeting last May.

The most difficult subject to resolve was that of the candidacy. Once the presentation of our own list was ruled out, given that it was very difficult to count on the 10% of support necessary, we decided almost unanimously to join the list of Llamazares. The reasons for this were that, despite our political differences with him and the other members of this list, only this candidacy offered certain guarantees of the IU's turning outwards in order to improve

its relations with the social movements, respecting internal plurality and the federal character and the policy of the Basque organization. Our final decision was taken during a Confederal Coordination a week before the Assembly, although since our second meeting in May we had improved relations with Llamazares and his team (it was precisely at this meeting that the latter had participated at a round table on "The Left Alternative in Europe" with a representative of the Bloco de Esquerda from Portugal, another from the LCR in France and a comrade from Espacio Alternativo)

Finally, among the 32 posts obtained by the winning list at this Assembly (as against 30 for Frutos and 13 for Maestro), we won two of them: one for Concha Denche (until now Federal Secretary of the Environment) and the other for Oscar Matute (a member of the leadership of Esker Batua, the Basque federation). There are still other members of our current who can be elected among the 75 members which correspond to the Federations for the definitive composition of the new Federal Political Council. One of our comrades will also probably be a member of the new Permanent Commission.

Some days before the Federal Assembly, one of the best Spanish experts on Gramsci, Rafael Díaz Salazar, published an article in the newspaper *El País* under the headline "The futures of the IU".³ In his opinion, the main dilemma for this formation is between an alternative ecosocialism and a "Communist refoundation": the first option is associated with a "neocommunist" articulation of the social question and the ecological question around a renewed anticapitalist project; the second is identified by him with a turning inwards and a reluctance to make a critique of the past which prevents a renewal of the links with the new generations.

The author openly opts for the first alternative and points to the support for such an option represented by collectives like that around the alternative left review *Viento Sur*.⁴ Even if the choices are more complex than would appear from this article, we can certainly agree with him on the necessity of going in the direction he suggests.

Triple choice

For in reality during the Assembly of the IU there was a triple choice: there is now a "post-communist" IU (represented

by Llamazares) faced with two variants of "Communist refoundation", one (that of Frutos) which resembles that of Cossutta in Italy, and another (that of Maestro) which oscillates between the Portuguese model of Cunhal and another of the "Castroist" type. One can then say that the winning list was defined more by what it did not wish to repeat (a return to the past under one form or another) than by a clear anticapitalist project, for the radical ecosocialist influence inside this bloc is still very weak.

The new leadership will find itself facing several challenges. The first and most immediate is that of ending the "internal war". The defeat, for the first time in the history of the IU, of a Secretary General of the PCE by another member of his own leadership announces a new type of relationship and opens a scenario of conflicts inside this party, which moreover should begin to prepare for its Congress, set for December 2001.

Neutralize

The new Coordinator will probably try to neutralize these tensions inside the IU with a policy of integration of the Frutos sector in the federal leadership, which could have contradictory effects: on the one hand, it could help to "pacify" the IU but, on the other, the price could be to give it too many powers and block the process of "renovation". It is not by chance that one of the responsibilities demanded by the Frutos sector is that of international policy, where recently there has been a return to more "campist" discourses and where relations with the Communist parties of all the regions of the world (including the Chinese and Russian CPs, present at this last Assembly) continue to be privileged. In any case it is clear that debate inside the PCE will be more tense and a rupture may be difficult to avoid in the medium term.

It is necessary to take account also of the profound division which exists in the two biggest federations, those of Andalusia and Madrid, and the danger of factionalism inside the Basque federation (where the PCE, in the minority, continues to push towards an increasingly moderate line). Faced with these conflicts the new leadership will try to strengthen the federal character of the IU and ask at the same time for respect for the criteria of plurality and cohesion in public discourse; but its

political authority and its ability to resist the combined pressures of Andalusia, Madrid and the leadership of the PCE are still to be proved. To all this should be added another sizeable obstacle: a serious financial crisis, produced not only by the electoral defeat but also bad management over the recent period; developing political initiatives and campaigns with very slender resources and a substantial reduction of the apparatus, will not be easy for a formation which has “forgotten” the necessary education on the need for a solid base of self-financing as guarantee of political survival; there is thus the risk that, through lack of means to finance full timers, the institutional representatives in the Spanish and European parliaments will also concentrate the political responsibilities in the federal leadership.

The second problem is that of demonstrating with short term gestures and initiatives the real will to begin a new phase in relations with the social movements and with the national and nationalist lefts, despite the difficulties. All this is a priority, for dialogue with the PSOE, whose new leadership continues to evolve around the “Third Way”, should play a secondary role. Without however abandoning the task of making a balance sheet of the municipal pacts with this party and attempting to revise them by developing objectives which push to the left and help to prepare a counteroffensive against the central government of the PP.

Axes and themes

The third and undoubtedly the most important problem is finding the axes and themes of a response to the political and social situation so as to rally all the forces of the IU around objectives of intervention which transcend the internal confrontation. In this framework, there are some proposals that we should develop: a reformulation of the campaign for the 35 hours, a unitary pressure on the trade unions against the “flexibilisation of the labour market” and for social rights in the EU; a firm defence of a dialogue-based solution to the Basque conflict based on the recognition of the right to self-determination; a radical opposition to the penal reforms that the government of the PP is pushing through Parliament under the pretext of the “anti-terrorist struggle”, and a reaffirmation of a plurinational federalist project against the neo-Spanish centralism of the PP and sec-

tors of the PSOE and the IU; finally, a clear and practical support to the movements against capitalist “globalization” and the initiatives which are also beginning to develop in coordination with those which exist at the scale of the EU.

Around these latter and other activities it may be possible to make new links with a social and cultural left which seems to be taking on a new breath and emerging from the dominant perplexity and resignation. For it is only with the preparation of a renewed social opposition that it will be possible to do better in future electoral confrontations. In any case, it will be on this terrain that Espacio Alternativo will try to work and strengthen itself, as a political organization working both inside and outside the IU, according to the agreements taken during our meeting in May.

On the Basque conflict there was an amendment from the Basque and Navarre federations to the official document discussed during this Assembly which reaffirmed, among other things, the right of the two communities to decide on “their relations with the rest of the Spanish state, including the possibility of independence”, that is the right to self-determination.

This text was accepted inside the delegates’ commission where it was debated and finally incorporated into the official document; but, a few days afterwards, the first critical voices among the leaders close to Frutos and Llamazares were heard. It is probable that this will be the first test of the new leadership’s willingness to respect the policy of Esker Batua which, despite ETA’s unjustifiable and deadly attacks, continues to defend the right of all Basque citizens to decide on their future. ★

* Jaime Pastor is a member of the Espacio Alternativo current. He was a member of the federal presidency of Izquierda Unida until the sixth Assembly.

1. A little before Izquierda Unida’s 5th federal Assembly (held in Madrid on December 5-7th, 1997) the Julio Anguita leadership expelled the New Left current (Democratic Party of the New Left), close to the PSOE, as well as other sectors. Espacio Alternativo — although the political opposite of this current — had then argued that divergences should be resolved with this current in the framework of the debate of the 5th Assembly and not through administrative measures which, in many cases, went beyond the rules defined by the federal statutes. The expulsion of the New Left led the majority of Iniciativa per Catalunya (IU in Catalonia) to leave the IU.

2. See *IV* 320, April 2000 and 321, May 2000.

3. This article appeared on October 26, 2000.

4. The author makes a very positive mention of the “important collectives of intellectuals of magazines like *Mientras tanto*, *Viento Sur* or *El Viejo Topo*”; it should be said that *Viento Sur* is the review of the collectives linked to the Alternative Left — which works inside Espacio Alternativo — and the Basque organization Zutik; some members of Espacio Alternativo participate in the editorial boards of *Mientras tanto* and others collaborate with *El Viejo Topo*, which does not really have a proper collective.

For a leftwing revival of the IU

**DIOSDADO TOLEDANO
AND PEDRO MONTES***

THE sixth federal assembly of the IU was a setback for those who wished to confine its activity to settling the question of who was to succeed Julio Anguita. An essential debate on the causes of the IU’s crisis and its political solution took place, both in the work of the commissions and in the plenary assembly. To a great extent, this was due to the “Alternative Document: for a leftwing revival of IU”, which represented a contribution to the necessary process of tactical and strategic clarification.

Alternative

More than 800 delegates participated in this congress, often selected in very debatable conditions, under pressure, or even, in the case of Madrid, in the absence of the most basic democratic transparency. The delegates supporting the “alternative document” defended a radical critique of the electoral pact with the PSOE, the necessity of a turn to the left and the urgency of practically supporting the right to self-determination to provide a solution to the national conflict, particularly in Euskadi.

The two main candidates to succeed Anguita as general coordinator, Francisco Frutos and Gaspar Llamazares, beyond differences of style and opportunism in speech and alliances, supported the right turn which lay at the heart of the document “For a 21st century left”. Voting for this document, whatever the sensibilities and divergences displayed, meant that one could not clearly oppose this turn.

Of the 551 delegates present, 152 voted for the “alternative document”, or 27.6%. This document was defended particularly by Angeles Maestro and Susana Lopez, the most left wing sector of the PCE, and by Jesus Albarracin, Pedro Montes, Diosdado Toledano, Domingo and J. -M. Mendez,

★ Spain

supporters of the Fourth International. The key elements of this document can be summed up as follows:

- a "13 point appeal" which defines the axis of a turn to the left in terms of political and social action and demands a more democratic functioning of the IU;

- the formulation of objectives which are radically opposed to the neoliberal economic and social policy being implemented in the European Union and defended here by the PP in power, but also in essence by the PSOE;

- against wage deregulation (at the heart of the current negotiations between employers and trade unions), against the dismantling of public social services, for the defense of a public sector of the economy (against the threats of privatization of rail transport supported by the right and the PSOE, with the connivance of the trade union leaderships of the UGT and CC.OO), for a municipal policy coherent with these priorities and which encourages the participation of citizens (with a merciless critique of practices contrary to the IU programme);

- defence of the positions of the previous federal assembly of the IU as regards the policy of alliances, for the unity in action of the left in struggle and social mobilization against the neoliberal offensive, for a programme of transformation; a unity which is not about agreements from above but which is built in an open and participatory fashion; relations with the trade unions which respect the autonomy of each and thus allow full liberty of criticism of the antisocial pacts or demobilisatory practices;

- denunciation of the internal functioning of the IU, often not very democratic as shown by the electoral agreement with the PSOE, where the rank and file but also the federal political council of the IU were short-circuited, a critique of bureaucratic practices in several federations, notably in Madrid, and so on.

Enriched

This document was enriched during the congress by integrating the contributions of the Andalusian delegation of the CUT on globalization and more broadly on the national question and the practical defense of the right of self-determination.

Shortly after the assembly opened, the partisans of Gaspar Llamazares proposed a modification of the mode of selection of



the future coordinator general, so that it was no longer done by the federal council but by all the delegates, with clearly presidentialist arguments which claimed to "give a greater legitimacy to the future coordinator". This proposal was defeated, receiving only 295 votes against 379 and 13 abstentions. A crushing blow to the camp of Llamazares which had boasted to the press that it comprised 55% of delegates.

From there on the pressures on the delegates increased, since a small number of them could turn around the relation of forces. The credentials commission only finally questioned the legitimacy of three or four delegates. The partisans of the "alternative document" who supported the candidature of Angeles Maestro were accused of various undisclosed intentions. The ballot itself did not take place in the best conditions: the ballot forms of the different candidates, for example, were not of the same format.

Results

The results were as follows: of the 75 members of the federal political council, 32 supported the candidature of Llamazares, 30 that of Frutos and 13 that of Maestro. The minorities had, then, the real possibility, in full or in part, of arbitrating between the two leading candidates.

The meeting of the federal political council ended speculation. The partisans of the "left turn" showed their seriousness and cohesion. Angeles Maestro received his 13 votes and it was thus by maximizing his own votes that Gaspar Llamazares was elected general coordinator.

Some questions remain as to the future

of the IU and the outcome of the political and leadership crisis it is experiencing. The political orientation approved by the majority will strengthen this crisis.

The drift of the new PSOE leadership towards neoliberal centrist positions, the declarations of its new secretary general Zapatero who describes the lowering of taxes as "leftwing", who presents the PSOE as liberal and "libertarian", who defends the extension of privatizations, who is at one with the PP in Euskadi, all weighs on the IU's policy of alliances. Programmatic rapprochement is only conceivable if the IU takes new liberties with its own programme (as it has already done on the Basque question), but with the risk of reinforcing its left opposition and aggravating internal conflicts.

The will to reestablish "relations" with the trade union federations, at a time when the leaderships of the UGT and CC.OO are accentuating their policy of pacts and demobilization and are daily abandoning still more the language of the class struggle (the new secretary general, Fidalgo, has just praised wage moderation), will facilitate neither social remobilization nor trade union recomposition on more combative left bases. All this generates tensions inside the IU and does not augur a more democratic functioning, nor a new more open and participative style.

Diversity

The diversity of support for the two majority candidacies and the agreement concluded for governing the IU are heavy with instability. In the camp of Llamazares one finds both the right, the barons allied to the PSOE in the government of the Balearic Islands, the partisans of Espacio Alternativo and Anguita himself, in other words the risks of fissure are legion.

This underlines the importance that the "alternative document" and the elected representatives of its platform can have. This position brings together diverse sectors of the left of the PCE, the CUT of Andalusia, militants of the Fourth International in *Quadernos Internacionales*, other Trotskyist groups like the PRT, left independents.. all committed to fighting to turn the IU to the left and take active initiatives that serve this objective. ★

* Diosdado Toledano and Pedro Montes were elected to the federal political council on the positions of the "Alternative Document". They are also supporters of the Fourth International.

PSOE: A new generation in command?

ANTONIO GARCIA
SANTESMASES*



Francisco Frutos and Joaquin Almunia during the IU-PSOE alliance

ON July 23rd, 2000, the 35th Federal Congress of Spain's Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol (PSOE) came to an end. Four candidates had contested the post of general secretary of the party: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, José Bono, Matilde Fernández and Rosa Díez. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero won the election with the votes of 414 delegates (41.69%) as against 405 votes (40.79%) for José Bono. Matilde Fernández obtained 109 votes (10.98%) and Rosa Díez 65 (6.55%).

Worst avoided

The first thing that comes to mind after the congress is that the worst was avoided. However, it is also useful to highlight the appearance of certain ideological themes in the speeches and proposals of the new leadership.

For many delegates, if Bono had won the race to become general secretary of the party, it would have meant the reproduction of the worst sectarianism which had been amply displayed by the movement of so-called renovators in the guise of half-digested populism. On the eve of the congress, his defeat seemed unlikely. Yet he was beaten because of the votes of different sectors of the left who preferred to opt for "the lesser evil".

After José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was elected general secretary, the other candidates disappeared from the scene and the media's fire was concentrated on the personality of this young man (aged 40) who appeared as the representative of a new generation, the "leader of the new times" in the words of a headline in the newspaper *El Socialista*. This victory of the unknown was hailed by the media which stressed a renewal of the leadership, with the disappearance of the members of the generation of the Suresnes congress (the PSOE congress held in 1974 in

France, at which Felipe González was elected general secretary). There has even been reference to a "new Suresnes", which should be nuanced in order to properly understand the situation.

Some have died (Rubial, Carmen Garcia Bloise), others have left the leadership of the party, like Enrique Mugica in 1994 or Felipe Gonzalez, Alfonso Guerra and Txiqui Benegas in 1997. It is true that on the eve of the congress, speculation flew as to the election of Gonzalez to the presidency of the party. Zapatero, curiously, was the warmest partisan of this proposal. Gonzalez finally renounced it, which contributed to giving the image of the beginning of a new era.

Intermediary generation

The real problem concerns the intermediary generation, the group of leaders who were not present at Suresnes but who since the 1980s have occupied positions of power in the government and autonomous communities. Natural heirs of Gonzalez, they appeared all set to succeed him. The opportunity presented itself in June 1997. Certainly, they had the qualities required, a great deal of political experience. But as a result of the internal quarrels of the leading group, erratic decisionmaking and, finally, the result of the elections, they had to renounce their goal. The resignation of Joaquín Almunia as general secretary of the PSOE following the general election defeat of March 2000 marked the retreat of that generation of leaders who had tried to survive by supporting the candidature of Bono.

The big winners from this congress are the likes of Laguina, Ciscar or Rubalcaba who supported Bono or again those, like Eguigaray and others who supported Rosa Díez. It is a generation which is still very young to abandon political life, but this congress has forced them to quit the

front stage. They are palpably of the same generation as those who take the leadership today. If there is a significant difference of age between Zapatero and Gonzalez, this is not the case between Rubalcaba and Alvaro Cuesta.

The difference is rather that the victors have only ever occupied political posts of the second rank. Deputies, provincial cadres, cabinet chiefs in different ministries, they had little to lose and knew how to seize their opportunity. If Bono won, he would call on some of them to organize the parliamentary group. If he lost, it would only be a stage in their path towards power. For Bono, on the contrary, it was a defeat with heavy consequences. Still, the losers are not going to disappear definitively. In Germany Schroeder was beaten by Sharping and one is today chancellor, the other minister of defense. A generation with such a long political experience will not disappear simply because it has experienced a defeat in a congress.

The new leadership fits into the project of Felipe Gonzalez and identifies with the ideological references which run through the documents of the so-called renovator sector. This sector had initially supported a veritable democratization of the party and greater transparency in its management. At this time Joaquín Leguina, paraphrasing Flores de Arcais, spoke of taking democracy seriously and building a habitable party.

That came into conflict with a very rigid apparatus culture, but many militants and sectors of public opinion certainly welcomed it. Among the renovators there is also a project close to the theses of Carlos Solchaga, defender of a basic welfare state, critical of the demands of the trade unions and partisan of an opening towards the postulates of economic neoliberalism.

Solchaga was the first significant leader who came out for the new leader-

★ Spain

ship and one of the new leading cadres is Jordi Sevilla, who has defended a number of his theses in his books and articles.

Urban middle class

Rereading the resolution approved at the congress and certain documents of the "New Road" one is struck by the importance accorded to the urban middle class layers. For the editors of these documents, the PSOE has distanced itself from these latter, which is fatal at the electoral level, particularly since they are considered to constitute the majority of society. The document is not very clear on this subject: do these classes form the majority of society or are they decisive in gaining an electoral majority? Whatever, much time is devoted to analysing the discontent, malaise and frustrations of these social sectors.

On several occasions, the accent is put on the change which has taken place in the developed societies. From subjects, we have become citizens, and from citizens we have become taxpayers and consumers. The text is marked by a concern to respond to the fiscal lassitude of the middle classes and by the necessity of preserving the quality of public services in health and education to keep the universality of the welfare state.

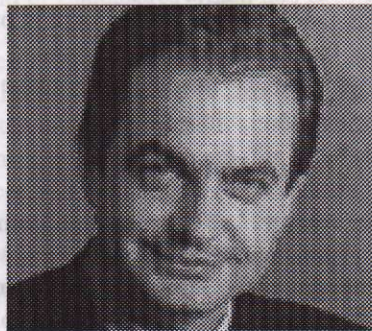
From the point of view of sociological analysis, there is something here which is undeniable. The right to education and the right to health are guaranteed, but citizens are demanding greater attention in the health centres and a higher quality in the public educational system, in the absence of which they turn towards the private sector. If the quality of public services does not improve while the tax burden remains high, the urban middle classes opt out. This is the nature of popular capitalism and the two thirds society with its difficulties in financing universalist programmes and solidarity based policies.

The nightmare of the political leaders who seek to win a majority in the elections is having to increase taxes. That is why, in one of his first declarations to the press, Zapatero stressed that he did not expect to increase the tax burden and mocked those who thought that this was necessary if the left wishes to guarantee the coverage of public expenditure (*El País*, September 10, 2000).

The problem emerges when one wishes to increase expenditure in the area of infrastructure, guarantee the quality of teach-

ing, assure the integration of immigrants, implement a national hydrological plan, improve health services, combat tax fraud and differentiate between the self-employed, the middle classes and big property owners. All this is necessary, but this society, where the urban middle classes are not the majority, sees a rapid growth of social exclusion and marginalization, and faces the problem of alliances between the middle classes, the dispossessed and the working class.

The documents of the "New Road" speak little of the working class and the dispossessed, yet this is a real problem and in a world ruled by the values of popular capitalism, the middle classes find it difficult to display altruism, universalism and solidarity. Nothing is simple but it is necessary in order to guarantee a welfare state. The "New Road" maintains an optimistic, positive, creative, discourse, hails the new technologies and the positive effects of globalization, while remaining silent on the destruction of jobs or the development of social exclusion.



José Zapatero

The left of the PSOE chose to block the greater evil incarnated by the other candidature, marked by sectarianism and an authoritarian populism. It can no longer accept the recourse to a traditionalist Catholicism or a rancid Spanish centralism. Federalism, secularism, feminism and youth were on the side of Zapatero. The left knew perfectly well that Zapatero's project was deeply marked by social neoliberalism, closer to that of Blair than of Jospin. It was amply shown before the congress and nothing has emerged to dent this appreciation.

The results of the last elections played in favour of the theses of the "Third Way" and weakened the partisans of a plural left. The right recorded a crushing victory, the left was hit by the defection of its electorate, a part of the electorate of the PSOE fleeing to the PP. The more moderate sectors saw this as confirming the danger of

any alliance with the United Left. Almunia had never really believed in this perspective in any case. Everything was done hastily and there was no time to mobilize the social base of the left. Most of the new leaders think that this radicalization brought nothing good, neither in the discontented sectors of the IU nor in the moderate electorate of the PSOE. Both the left and the center have been lost. It is necessary to regain the centrist voter and this explains the accent put on the hegemonic character of the middle classes.

The new leadership wants to end the quarrels and internal debates and begin to speak with a single voice. That responds to the expectations of many citizens who are tired of divisions which are often incomprehensible and seem reduced to personal squabbles. This was often enough the reality, but not always.

Debates

Beyond labels, clans, tribes and families, Spanish socialism is not outside of the debates which traverse European socialism. This debate opposes those who try to defend what they can of the welfare state without burdening the middle classes and those who are committed to the exacerbation of the contradictions between the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the demands of the economic markets, between the promises of democracy and the autonomy of the financial markets. Lafontaine exposed it perfectly in his recent book and it is very much the current situation.

However, to develop this debate, so that the neoliberal centrist drift does not have the last word, it is necessary that the perspective of a plural left remains the project of the IU beyond its congress and that the trade unions emerge from their apathy. If the unions do not recover their capacity of mobilization and political initiative, the left in the PSOE has no perspective.

PSOE members are tired of the years of corruption and top level squabbling. They want to win or at least recover their self esteem. For pluralism to progress, it is not just the left minority in the ranks of the PSOE that needs strengthening, but also the trade union and political forces outside the party. ★

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Old and new forms of struggle

IN the final days of November 2000 workers in Argentina observed a 36-hour General Strike, called by the country's three major trade union federations. New forms of struggle were used that grew out of the past and were generalized in this strike.

EDUARDO LUCITA*

FOR the third time in its current term — less than one year — the Argentine Government has had to face a general strike, with marches, protests and street meetings jamming the streets, roads and means of communication throughout the country in a combination of old and new forms of struggle and organization corresponding to the transformations going on within Argentinean capitalism.

The capitalist restructuring that has taken place in the country since the mid-1970s acquired a vertiginous rhythm in the 1990s leading to profound changes in the socio-economic structure of Argentina. In opposition to this violent process of change, there has been a spreading of resistance throughout the whole country in the last decade. However, this enormous social conflict has never had a centralizing focus that could guarantee its continuity. On the contrary fragmentation and dispersion were its characteristics, despite the numerous struggles and general strikes that also took place in the period.

Impact

This combination had a strong impact however on the relations of state and civil society and in the mediations of the traditional system of representation. The parties, the institutions of parliamentary democracy and the unions, had all internalized the crisis of the interventionist state¹ characteristic of populism and proved unable to channel social conflict, or at least encountered serious difficulties in doing so.

In an economic and political context that differed from the previous period, the social movement has searched for new paths through which to raise and express its resistance to the advance of the neoliberal

order that day-by-day reduces the living conditions of the workers and lower classes.

The so-called *cortes de ruta* (mass roadblocks) which first appeared at the beginning of the 1990s have extended to practically every part of the country — in large and medium sized cities, localities and towns, and rural areas. They appeared as the form of autonomous self-organization characteristic of this period, used by part of society to express resistance to conditions of increasing day-to-day impoverishment.

According to a recent study by the liberal Centre of Studies of the New Majority, “the *cortes de ruta* are replacing strikes... as an expression of social protest”. This is expressed in the following figures.

Industrial conflicts reached a peak in the period 1986/89, climbing to 3,575, falling in 1990/94 to 2,222 and in 1995/2000 to 1,228. On the other hand the evolution of the *cortes* showed the following sequence: 1997:140; 1998: 51; 1999: 252 and in the first ten months of 2000: 238.

“The average appearance of a *corte de ruta* has been one every 2.6 days in 1997, one every 7.1 in 1998, one every 1.4 last year and so far this year one every 1.2 days”²

Although this data expresses the magnitude and the evolution of the distinct forms of struggle throughout the decade, in our view it does not point to the disappearance or the loss of centrality of the conflict between capital and labour or the consequent social relations engendered by the capitalist mode of production. Rather it shows that they are being expressed in new forms.

Faced with structural unemployment

and the exclusion from production and consumption of increasingly large sectors of society, faced with insecurity and the despotism of the bosses which reigns in the factories and workplaces, the workers and popular sectors meet serious and growing difficulties in acting in the centers of production and accumulation of capital.

Hence they concentrate on disrupting the distribution and circulation of commodities and persons, thus preventing, at least temporarily, the realization of profit. It is clear that we are not talking of a conscious act, but rather an objective process, combining the struggle of the employed against capitalist exploitation and those excluded from production and consumption.

In practice these new modalities of action produce a reconfiguration and relocation of the boundaries of social confrontation.

Superficial

Other studies³ question what they call a “superficial vision” that assigns the motor role in the *cortes* only to the structurally unemployed demanding work. In fact the forces driving the *cortes* include a variety of social subjects according to the objectives being pursued in each case.

These include workers (employed or not), the structurally unemployed and diverse fractions of the petty bourgeoisie — farmers or raisers of livestock, small businesses, students — who have mobilized in order to keep their jobs or subsidies for working class communities: against arrears in pay or reductions of salary: in support of demands for reductions in taxes: for easy credit: for the reconnection of public services cut off for non payment (gas and electricity): for the creation of jobs, for diverse state subsidies (food, medicine, clothing, building materials, hospitals, transport, the refurbishment of public schools, the paving of streets) that improve the quality of life of the people.

All of this has built a unity of demands which is articulated in a complex form — some demands through their immediate character cannot go beyond the level of existing political consciousness but others exceed it — those which demand changes in policy at the state, provincial or local level. In many cases this diversity of subjects and demands comes together in a single *corte* leading to a mobilization with

★ Argentina

strong popular support.

This is particularly the case for *cortes* in medium sized cities which have developed around a hegemonic activity - mineral, oil, railways, oil - in general centralized in a state enterprise.⁴

The policy of privatization altered in a very short time the order of things established over many decades leaving the working population unprotected and vulnerable — in many cases highly qualified and previously protected through labour stability (typical of this were the cases of Cutral Co-Plaza Huincul, privatization of FYPF; Sierra Grande, privatization of HIPASAM; Libertador Gral San Martín, the technological reconversion of Ing.Ledesma; Tartagal and the privatization of Petroquímica Gral, Mosconi.)

Fragmentation

The transfer without mediation of activities from the public sector to the private and market deregulation has accentuated social fragmentation, poverty and marginalization. This process converted areas that had previously made great social progress into ghost towns without hope or a future.

New forms of struggle have always been accompanied by new organizational forms. If the *corte* has as its central novelty the reconfiguration/relocation of the area of struggle, its organizational forms are no less significant; the picket and the assembly.

The picket, the central nucleus of the *corte*, is formed by a group of men and women who organize it and assume responsibility for maintaining it, although not necessarily leading it. Because the sphere of decision making is the general assembly, plural and democratic, with the participation of thousands of people coming together in a plenary session of direct democracy. Here proposals and demands are debated and a consensus is articulated, proposals are established, collective identities and new ideas are constructed, in many cases transitory ones as the crisis sometimes obliges them to be reviewed.

In the spreading wave of *cortes de rutas* that unfolded during the months of last October and November which constituted the prelude to the 36 hour General Strike, the level of organization was superior to any known up until then.

If there is a debate regarding the spontaneous character and organization of the



cortes, what has been appreciated in the course of the last few months is that, with the deepening of the national crisis, the spontaneous component was decreasing and an inverse rise of organization was evident.

Evident

This was particularly evident in the *cortes* seen in the province of Buenos Aires, in the industrial area a few kilometers from the federal capital and in the provincial capital, where for many hours the city of La Plata was virtually cut off from all connections overland. In La Matanza, an overpopulated zone in the west of the Buenos Aires urban conurbation, the *corte* lasted ten days and according to some accounts involved between four and seven thousand people. The changes of picket duty, the internal order established, the social control, the massive assemblies discussing a global program of demands, going far beyond demands for subsidies, were among the outstanding features here.

Diverse political currents participated, including local leaders of the major parties of the system and a sort of alliance was established with the organized workers in the region.

However, this did not change the character of the *cortes*. They constituted an autonomous movement that exceeded the boundaries of both union and party.

In the zone south of the Buenos Aires urban conurbation, Quilmes, Lanus, Almirante Brown, other *cortes* advanced their political definitions and came together with their own demands, the demand for freedom and the dropping of charges against social leaders as well as a call for a general strike of 36 hours. In some cases, they questioned the participation of local political officials of the majority parties; reaffirming its autonomy, the assembly of the *corte* refused to accept the mediation of local community leaders as

well as that of the church.

In general, the *cortes* received the support of the public and thus obtained a legitimacy for the use of social force in raising popular demands. They also showed a growing will to struggle and a readiness to confront the repressive forces, as is also shown by the covered faces of the pickets, armed with sticks and slingshots.

The recent general strike in Argentina was a response by the workers' organizations to a new package of socio-economic measures that were clearly anti-worker and anti-popular, but it was also preceded by a wave of *cortes* during October and November that expressed the despair of facing an uncertain future.

It is because of this reality that the general strike received more support than any in the past decade and was accompanied by a multiplicity of marches, acts of protest and *cortes* the likes of which have not been seen for a long time. The old forms of struggle fused with the new, with the workers organized and acting in a centralized and disciplined way.

Argentina is passing through a dangerous period. The foreign debt is growing faster than the economy and demands permanent adjustment; the political crisis renders the institutions of bourgeois democracy exceedingly weak; social conflict grows day by day in explosive forms; but the social movement has not yet created a political force capable of meeting the challenge. The future is open. ★

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1. The form taken by the welfare state in Latin America and particularly in Argentina.

2. "In conclusion, a global view of the phenomenon of social protest in the last two decades shows that:

a) During the 1980s, the predominant expression of social protest was labour conflicts, with the unions making claims for higher wages.

b) At the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s, actions characteristic of non-unionized sectors who faced desperation generated by hyperinflation, came to be the predominant expression of social protest.

c) In the second half of the 90s, wage struggles had subsided before the gravity of unemployment and the chronically unemployed started to use the *corte de ruta* as their predominant expression of social protest, a situation which lasted until the early months of 2000".

Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría. Bs.As., October 2000.
(3) Nicolás Iñigo Carrera/María Celia Cotarelo, "Los llamados 'cortes de ruta'". Argentina 1993-1997. Documento de trabajo n° 14 - PIMSA. Bs.As. 1998.

Nicolás Iñigo Carrera/María Celia Cotarelo, "La protesta social en los '90. Aproximaciones a una caracterización". Documento de Trabajo n°27. PIMSA. Bs.As. 2000.

(4) O. Favaro/M.A. Bucciarelli/G. Iuorno, "La conflictividad social en Neuquén. El movimiento cutralquense y los nuevos sujetos sociales". Realidad Económica n° 148 - Bs.As. mayo-junio 1997

The perspectives of the Frente Social y Politico

THE processes of construction of the new mass political projects developed in Latin America at the end of the 20th century were characterized by their diversity of origin, structure and functioning. Their experiences involved a break with the classical schemas of construction of working class parties, that can be characterized as ideologically closed and in many cases sectarian, invariably oscillating between vanguardism and adaptation.

FERMÍN GONZÁLEZ*

PROJECTS such as the Frente Amplio (FA) of Uruguay, the Workers Party (PT) of Brazil and the FMLN of El Salvador represented, on the political terrain of the masses, the action, resistance and insurgence of the people, faced with the exhaustion of the Keynesian model and the forced passage towards neoliberal transnational capitalism.

The workers' and popular movement sought to create adequate strategies and political organizations to meet the challenge of the epoch.

The Frente Social y Politico (FSP, Political and Social Front), which is beginning this process of construction in Colombia, wishes to present a historic alternative for the construction of a unitary politics of the excluded, but it was born surrounded by enemies and great dangers. Through these circumstances it grew and became, in the words of Orlando Fals Borda, a new force which can resolve "the tasks hanging over us", of the popular struggle and the Colombian Revolution, an attempt to gather all the previous experiences of construction of the popular political projects of the masses, that began with the United Front of Camilo Torres, passing through the Patriotic Union, A Luchar, Frente Popular and the AD-M19, to name only the most significant.

While the FA of Uruguay was born out of the unity of components of a "broad" left, going from radical to Social Democratic positions, the FMLN emerged from a guerrilla demobilization articulated with a social movement and the PT was the political initiative of the unions, our FSP has to an extent a little of each one of these ingredients.

There are left parties inside it, but not

only such parties. It was born in a country at war but with an autonomy in relation to the insurgents. The decision to build it came from the fourth congress of the CUT (a trade union federation). The CTC (a peasant confederation) then joined the project. Nonetheless, this does not mean there was a definite trade union hegemony or a project exclusively of the workers.

The FSP was born out of necessity from the situation in the mid 1980s, a situation that was sharpened with the crisis of the "socialist" camp. There was always the difficulty that when the socio-political context was favourable, the possibilities never coincided with a leadership team with the authority and the maturity to lead. Or things happened in reverse and teams that were capable of building were displaced through a national and global context that favoured the forces of opportunism, vanguardism and adaptation.

Antecedents

The closest antecedents were the last frustrated attempts like that of the Frente Social Amplio formed in 1999 after the assassination of Eduardo Umaña Mendoza. However a new initiative was only possible to the extent that the workers as a class rediscovered the necessary confidence to assume responsibility for a refoundation.

For those who had buried the working class and its historical function following the productive changes in the world of work, this experience must be worth reflecting upon. Something must remain of that historical function if the trade unions, who know very well the difficulties and corporatist tendencies, have decided to take on the construction of a mass

antineoliberal project of the left, in the name of all the exploited, oppressed, excluded and marginalized.

Certainly, the origins of this movement should be studied more deeply. Still, from the beginning this initiative originating from the workers did not exclude the popular sectors, middle layers and sectors of the national bourgeoisie linked to production. There is still a lack of programmatic clarity in the matter and this clarity is the most important task before us. However elements of consensus exist allowing us to sketch an orientation for the FSP.

It is a project against neoliberalism, opposed to "Plan Colombia" and thus an anti-imperialist project of defense of sovereignty and the self-determination of peoples. It is opposed to the speculative transnational financial system of capital. It is a national and popular project, at the service of the productive sectors, which considers sub-regional and Latin-American integration necessary on the basis of democratic, horizontal, equitable principles and tries to grasp the importance of intervening on new international terrains.

Negotiated solution

It advocates a negotiated solution to the armed conflict in a framework of social transformations and dignity, denounces forcefully the context of degradation created by the war, the violation of human rights and crimes against humanity; demands respect for the autonomy of the social organizations and affirms unambiguously its programmatic independence vis-à-vis the state and the capitalist system and its organic autonomy in relation to bipartism and the insurrectional forces.

What can be noted in Latin America today is a substantial presence of social movements which simultaneously fight for immediate demands and provide a cement, a continuity, to political projects. Beyond the political vicissitudes they have undergone, their identity consists in representing the popular sectors.

All these movements have experienced significant growth as national political forces. Nonetheless, they are appreciated above all thanks to their management of local governments. Montevideo, Porto Alegre and San Salvador currently represent examples on the global scale of the participation of citizens in the drawing up of the budget and a more human model of

★ Colombia

urban development. This local and regional basis has allowed a rapid strengthening of political influence and a growth in membership, aiding access to the media.

Nonetheless, the forced coexistence with the enemy, the central government, and the traps of the legislation of a national state integrated in the strategies of the IMF, have led to a certain erosion and weakness which, although limited, can distance the forces in question from their initial project of radical struggle.

Tendencies in the same direction emerged following the formation of parliamentary groups, representing in the case of El Salvador and Uruguay relative majorities. The possibility, newly acquired, of debating with those who had previously excluded them, of having an impact in the important votes, the need for a policy of alliances in the framework of potentially winnable presidential campaigns, carries with it the danger of losing sight of the needs of the social sectors one represents. That is what happened, in the final analysis, with the AD-M19 parliamentary group in Colombia in the course of the last decade.

Growth

Growth on the parliamentary front has happened without the forces involved having made the necessary preparation, above all from the point of view of functioning and political relations with their base, which constitute the irreplaceable antidote to the seductions of state power. Thus the parties tend to become exclusively parliamentary as much in their political vision as in their hierarchical structure.

In the case of the FSP, the test of participation in local government is already underway whereas the problem of the eventual formation of a parliamentary group will be faced following the legislative elections of 2002. In the local elections of October 2000 the FSP supported five candidates for governor and some candidates for mayor in some towns. The surprise was that three of the candidates for governor, two of them very close to the FSP project, were elected.

The progressive bloc of three governors elected in October has been increased by two other governors, those of Huila and Putumayo, where "Plan Colombia" is being applied, and more still will join them. Moreover, all these governors have made a declaration that they will help build



an alternative presidential candidacy. The candidate in question will be the FSP's public spokesperson, Luis Eduardo ("Lucho") Garzon.

The most important case is that of the government of the Cuaca region, won by the indigenous activist Floro Tumubalá. The election of the latter is the result of a broad unity resulting from important indigenous general strikes, of peasants, workers and popular layers, which finally won the support also of the middle and bourgeois layers of the capital, Popayan. Thus the most traditional department of the oligarchy, the zone where "Plan Colombia" is being applied, has an indigenous governor.

The Latin American parties and fronts of the new type have the most diverse organizational structures: rank and file committees, tendencies, working groups. As for the FSP, there is a lot to do on this level: herein lies its principal weakness. It has a national presence, especially in the media, thanks to the authority that the members of the Front's national committee have won, as leaders of the workers' movement, social movements and political struggles. In this body the national political forces (Communist Party, Unidad democratica, Convergencia ciudadana and Presentes por el socialismo), the social organizations (ecologists, women, unions, municipal leaders, pensioners, truck drivers and intellectuals), personalities known in their areas and even progressive retired military figures are all represented.

Next March the FSP is to approve its political platform and the rules which fix the duties of members, the composition and functioning of the regional and national bodies and the selection of its candidates. This last point is particularly important in that there are different conceptions:

some argue for a simple electoral coordination, others for a front in which each component keeps its autonomy, others like us seek to build a broad collective organic autonomy. The future of the FSP and its tactical and/or strategic project will be determined by the structure adopted.

What role is there for the hundreds of thousands of citizens who want to fight for change, but do not identify with any political force and are not part of the leadership of a social organization? And where will they find a useful space for their participation in the activities of the FSP? It is obvious that it is precisely at the territorial or sectoral level that such people can be integrated. There should also be a democratic and representative space allowing them to participate in regional and national decisions. The new feature of the FSP, compared with the Brazilian PT, the Uruguayan FA and the Salvadoran FMLN is that some social organizations as such share leadership with political organizations.

Mistrust

These political forces had to face the mistrust of the social organizations and intellectuals towards the conception of the "transmission belt", according to which it was up to the parties to decide the political line and the social organizations to apply it. It has, then, been essential that the parties respect the autonomy of the social organizations. That does not imply that they abandon the right to influence them, from inside and outside, in the elaboration of their independent and class-based programme. Whatever, we should not pass from one extreme to the other, as sometimes happens after the conception of the "transmission belt" has been rejected.

Everyone now accepts a functioning with internal currents and tendencies. There is no doubt that the PIT-CNT trade union federation is the spinal column supporting the Uruguayan FA, composed of left, centre-left and center parties. In the case of the FMLN of El Salvador renewers and orthodox elements coexist, while there are different tendencies which characterize themselves as revolutionary in the Brazilian PT.

This situation is not without serious difficulties (which are more important in the case of the FSP where the internal regroupments are still taking place). However, the organizations mentioned

have progressively succeeded in groping towards centralized political structures where the majority decides by the application of a newly conceived democratic centralism. They wish to build an organic force that is capable of challenging the governments and posing, at least theoretically, the problem of the seizure of power. They function with collective leaderships: in the case of the PT and FA they combine such a functioning with the marked personal role of their presidential candidates, Lula and Tabaré Vasquez.

The leadership committees of the FSP have functioned up until now on the basis of a majority consensus, a formula which is not very clear but has been enough to stop paralysis resulting from temporary divergences. The functioning of the FSP leadership is specific to the extent that, from the beginning, it has been based on its external image and on the authority and credibility of president Lucho Garzon, who is also president of the CUT and until now the sole spokesperson of the Comando nacional unitario (CNU). It is obvious that such a personal role carries a danger of *caudillismo*, not necessarily because of personal factors but rather the inability of others to make collective functioning work.

Functioning

In the functioning of the FSP the elements of novelty also constitute the greatest complication. The basic idea is that the social movements reach the political terrain and give themselves their own political expression. However, this idea is not completely clear and it is not easy to apply. For the centralized political organizations without a lot of members, it is relatively easy to take decisions on conjunctural problems and questions of perspective. Such an approach is less obvious in the trade unions and mass social organizations which have to take their decisions in periodic national meetings, where sectoral problems and concrete struggles make it more difficult for leaders to analyze the conjuncture and grasp political and social tasks. We should concern ourselves from now on with setting rules which counterbalance this intrinsic weakness of the social organizations.

However, another problem is posed in relation to the trade union organizations. Many of them, like the CUT primarily, decided at their congresses to promote the

foundation of the FSP as a political project of the workers and the people. It's one thing to contribute to such a foundation, another to transform the trade union into a political current which, moreover, will not be the only one inside the trade union itself. In principle, the best solution would be building a single organization of workers and people including and respecting the expressions and multiple tendencies that exist.

However, the reality we have inherited is more complex. A solution is needed which, on the basis of a political unification project, guarantees the political autonomy of the social organizations and their distinct non-programmatic traits, structural and functional. Thus, if the majority of an organization sympathizes with the FSP, those who composed it would act as militants of the FSP, while respecting differences on the trade union or social terrain. In cases where militants of the FSP are in the minority in their mass organizations, they should have the possibility of organizing themselves internally as a socio-political current.

Context

In a context of war such as exists in Colombia, the construction of a political force exploiting the narrow democratic space that remains differs from all previous experiences in Latin America. In Colombia, there was a strong tradition of "combination of all forms of struggle", which included, on the political and military terrain, parallel constructions on the basis of the same political project. For us, such a strategy is exhausted, as is shown in practice. Following the massacres which put an end to the project of the Union Patriótica, the forces of armed rebellion no longer seek to build legal political arms and the left political forces do not consider such a strategy valid in this phase of the war, because of the existence of paramilitary forces doing what was previously the state's dirty work.

That is why the FSP affirms its organic autonomy in relation to the projects of armed rebellion, advancing criticisms and noting that there are mutually recognized programmatic and methodological divergences. Such an approach is not the product of a political maneuver. It expresses a real differentiation between the left which leads the armed struggle and the left which exploits the social spaces and the very lim-

ited democratic conquests that remain. None of the two parties rules out possible convergences in a post-conflict framework.

Problem

The problem for the FSP is how to build itself as an intransigent defender of political democracy, social transformations and human rights, in the midst of a war, whereas any criticism of the system, its accords with the IMF and "Plan Colombia" is considered subversive by the militarists and the right. It remains to be seen to what extent the system will accept this civic option of the left affirming itself without considering it as a military objective. On the other hand, the armed rebellion should respect the autonomy of the left represented by the FSP and approach divergences in a political debate, such as can be developed in the regions under the control of the FARC and in view of a national convention of the ELN.

The question is whether the social framework that "Plan Colombia" seeks to impose will lead to the suppression of the political spaces in the framework of neoliberal legality; if international and national pressure obliges the government to break the links between the Army and the paramilitary forces and if attacks on political and trade union leaders will cease; if the criminalisation of social and political protest will stop and if the government will radically oppose the dirty war against the left; if a humanitarian accord can be reached leading to a resumption of dialogue with the FARC and if the convention of the ELN can take place in a demilitarized zone.

It will, nonetheless, be decisive that the FSP is capable of systematically defining orientations which respond to the demands and partial struggles of the people; that it can draw up a programme and platform of struggles which contributes to the reconstruction of the popular social organizations and that it is prepared to act as a political leadership at the level of the masses both in the course of the peace negotiations and in the framework that follows the conflict. Wars are won politically and the social benefits are drawn when they are over. ★

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THE 18th international youth camp in solidarity with the Fourth International will take place near Rome in Italy from Sunday 22nd July to Saturday 28th July inclusive. The camp will follow the big demonstrations planned against the G8 summit in Genoa on Saturday 21st July. The proposed slogan for the camp is "against capitalist globalization, globalize our struggles".

The camp in Italy follows last year's successful event which was held in Portugal from July 23rd-30th, 2000. Eighteen delegations representing countries from Tunisia to Russia and Poland to Portugal attended the camp, with a total attendance of around 500 young people. Speakers at the camp included Portuguese presidential candidate Fernando Rosas and a member of the European parliament, Roseline Vacchetta. As is the case every year, every aspect of the camp was organised collectively by the various delegations, from the organization of the political programme to cleaning shifts. As is also the case every year, there was no shortage of leisure activities to supplement the political debate and the nightly fetes were a particular highlight. After a year which has seen ever bigger mobilizations of youth against capitalist globalization, we have every confidence that this year's youth camp will be a still bigger success! ★

For further details of this year's youth camp contact *International Viewpoint*.



Union Appeal

The Cyprus Turkish Teacher Trade Union (KTOS) is appealing for solidarity. Founded in 1968, KTOS has been known for its progressive struggle for democracy within the Turkish Cypriot community and for peace in Cyprus. On January 30th KTOS, in advertisements published in *Yeniduzen* and *Avrupa*, two daily political newspapers in the northern part of Cyprus, had said: "ANKARA, We do not want either your money, your package or your civil servants...WE DON'T WANT TO BE SLAVES" In the same advertisement, there was also a message to Turkish Cypriots saying that "Turkish Cypriots, we have the knowledge, skills, potential and sufficiency to rule ourselves." Since then the union has come under threat from right wing groups and secret police have raided the union head office and taken away all its equipment. Turkish Cypriot has leader Rauf Denktash called the Attorney General and the Minister of Education to a meeting "to ban the trade unionists from teaching" and the union believes its members lives are at risk. Messages of solidarity from trade unions, NGOs, political parties etc to Varol Oztug, Secretary General, Cyprus Turkish Teacher Trade Union (KTOS) at ybh@north-cyprus.net. ★

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