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Tony Smith is professor of philosophy at Iowa State University in the U.S.A. and an advisory editor of the magazine *Against the Current*

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Letter to subscribers

International Viewpoint almost ceased publication at the beginning of 1995. The retreat of the left in many countries was cutting into our subscription income, and production prices in France were increasing faster than the wages of most of our subscribers.

As many of you know, we restructured our editorial system and shifted as many activities as possible to the Czech Republic in an attempt to save labour and material costs. This has reduced costs considerably, but the result has been persistent delays in printing and posting the magazine — unacceptable to us as well as you.

Despite these difficulties, many of you have signalled your willingness to help the magazine survive. A number of you have switched from regular to solidarity subscriptions. Others have offered to take a small bundle of magazines to distribute on a sale or return basis. Most importantly, you have signalled your willingness to write for the magazine — maintaining its close link to the social struggles all of you are involved in. Despite the persistent problems at our end, the number of subscribers has increased 15% since the beginning of the year.

This modest but real success enables us to continue planning for the future of International Viewpoint. We are investigating relocation to a more dependable printing and distribution centre. This will mean a much shorter time between our news closing date and the day you receive the magazine. Unfortunately, it will also increase our printing costs for the second half of 1995. We have to ask you to increase your efforts to find new subscribers, and to sell the magazine to your colleagues and friends.

We also have to ask those of you who can afford it to consider a financial donation. You might not be able to match the recent \$1,600 US donation from readers of the Chinese magazine October Review in Hong Kong and Canada. But even a single solidarity subscription would enable us to continue sending the magazine to militants in South Africa, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Russia, and other countries where we have correspondents and readers' groups.

The Paris collective will do everything it can to improve the content and presentation of the magazine, in the light of the criticism and suggestions you send us. But we are too few, and too far away, to make International Viewpoint a part of the left in your country. If you think you can help, contact us directly or speak to your local sales representative.

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France under Jacques Chirac

By Christian Piquet

THE MAY 7 ELECTION of Jacques Chirac is a paradox. The right is victorious, but finds itself in deeper crisis than before.

As well as the presidency and the government, the right controls four out of five votes in the National Assembly, an absolute majority in the Senate, almost all the regional assemblies and a majority of assemblies in the départements.

How come, then, that Jacques Chirac only won 20.5% of votes in the first round of the presidential election on April 24? Even in the run off with Socialist Party representative Lionel Jospin, Chirac only won the support of 49.5% of those who bothered to vote. A record 6% of those who voted deliberately spoiled their ballot paper — presumably in protest at the lack of choice!

Jacques Chirac is the worst-elected president of France's Vth Republic. The scramble for votes by four competing right wing presidential candidates (see IV April 1995) demonstrated the incapacity of the right to find a replacement for the discredited neo-liberal model, and propose a project for the difficulties the bourgeoisie faces in the late 1990s.

The origins of the crisis

The Vth Republic was founded by the General de Gaulle. He united the squabbling bourgeoisie like a new Napoleon Bonaparte. His speeches mixed populism, authoritarianism, the myth of French grandeur, and the image of class co-operation and harmony. He imposed his will on a reorganised state machine,

and forced the implementation of policies for the rapid modernisation of the productive sector. The left was defeated, the right demoralised by the victory of the Algerian independence movement. Until 1968, De Gaulle was able to mobilise a real consensus, including an important part of the working population. Since 'Bonaparte' left the scene in 1969, none of his successors has managed the same magic. Under Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, the General's once omnipresent Gaullist party was obliged to invite liberal and Christian democratic currents to share power, inviting them in from the political wilderness where De Gaulle had put them in 1958.

In the 1970s Giscard D'Estaing tried to re-centralise the right as a modernising, 'centrist' force, based on the salaried middle classes. But the economic crisis cut away at his potential base. And from the early 1980s the far-right National Front began to make inroads among frustrated right-wing voters — particularly at the expense of the RPR.

All the fractions of the RPR and UDF tried to rejuvenate themselves, and to attract new elements and categories to their umbrella. Jacques Chirac experimented with a 'French Labour' policy after 1976, then with ultra-liberalism after the 1981 election of François Mitterand. One of the inevitable results of this process was that the differences between the RPR and UDF became less and less important, and their electorate less and less distinct.

And yet, the right as a whole has had to deal with some very concrete problems. First of all, the liberal orientation taken over the last 20 years has provoked a series of disasters. These policies have not brought the economy out of the marshes. They have not even allowed any more than a small fraction of the capitalists

(financial rather than industrial) to become significantly richer. But they have brought the country to the edge of a social crisis.

More fundamentally, liberalism has eaten away at the roots of the 'republican consensus'. It has weakened several of the bonds which legitimate the state in the eyes of the citizen. Republican rule in France traditionally rested on the ideas of national interest, equality of opportunity and universal access to certain basic needs — assured by the state if needed. The recent attacks on social security, the right to citizenship by residence and not just by descent, and the challenge to the separation of church and state — all this is stripping away the alibis which the state previously used to justify its actions.

The second major problem is the 'European Question'. Deregulation of the



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ues Chirac



represent stable fractions of the major social classes. They have more and more difficulty shaping and guiding society. We can see a new 'feudal' autonomy, with the unaccountable French regions dispensing huge funds. The citizen is more and more aware that the electoral game is based on different 'machines' promoting their particular king. The trade unions are hardly a shining example of a different kind of political life (see separate article).

The Vth Republic has exhausted its original energy. Its political balance and social foundations are rotten. The state in its current form no longer unifies the various fractions of capitalism. It is no longer a dependable instrument of coercion over the social movements. It no longer pretends to arbitrate between the social classes. The president is not above, but in the front line of today's political conflicts.

He is likely to become one of the favourite targets.

In the April issue of *International Viewpoint* we discussed the particular strategies and priorities of the various right-wing candidates. Chirac, the eventual victor, was the one who chose to occupy the centre-ground left vacant by a discredited left. This was the sense of his pronouncements that the left-right division was a thing of the past. It was also the motivation for his attacks on the 'bourgeois districts' and 'financial circles' which refused to see that France was suffering. And it was the justification for his conviction that "increased salaries are not the enemy of economic growth".

Nevertheless, Chirac in power will incorporate many of the values — and individuals of the unsuccessful

conservative current of former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur. Nor will he have failed to notice that, in the second round, the massive majority of the traditional left electorate chose the Socialist Party candidate Leonel Jospin. Behind the rhetoric, Chirac does not represent something new on the right. Nor has he made significant inroads on the centre left. The left in France is now talking about a social 'third round' of the presidential election. Challenging this new president to respect his election promises. No hundred days grace for Chirac! ★

"After De Gaulle, the social base of the Gaullists was transformed. It became older and more feminised. But above all, the popular base disappeared. 42% of manual workers supported De Gaulle in 1965. Only 30% of them voted for Georges Pompidou in 1969. By 1973, their support was again that of a classic conservative party... Two parties were created, the Assembly for the Republic (RPR — 1976) and the Union for French Democracy (UDF — 1978). They shared the same social base, differing in terms of their electoral propositions.

By 1978 the average conservative voter was an old woman. The overrepresentation of those more than 60 years old implies an underrepresentation of the productive layers of society — unlike the Socialist and Communist electoral base."

Jean-Marie Donegani and Marc Sadoun, *Histoire des droites en France*, Gallimard, 1992

various national economies will provoke important social tensions. At the same time, the axe of French European policy since 1990 has been to strengthen the bond with the (more powerful) German economy. This means tying the French Franc to the German Mark. It means accepting German-level high interest rates in a country with record levels of unemployment. It is hardly surprising that the whole 'Maastricht' capitalist project is disputed within the capitalist class, and hardly surprising that there is only moderate popular support for further capitalist integration.

The third major crisis for the rightist government is the declining legitimacy of political parties and institutions as such. Across Europe, ruling parties, and the major opposition formations no longer

Massive protest vote — for the government!

The expected collapse of the ruling Socialist/Social Christian coalition after the May 21 General Election did not materialise. But, as Alain Tondeur explains, their re-election will not solve any of the country's problems.

The French-speaking Socialist Party (PS) and the Flemish-speaking Christian Social Party (CVP) remain the dominant forces in the two halves of the country. Their unnatural alliance survived the Augusta crisis (bribes to the Socialist Party in exchange for a Ministry of Defence helicopter order). The 'credit' goes to the leader of the Flemish Socialist Party (SP) Louis Tobback, who combined his authoritarian record as Minister of the Interior with a series of populist promises.

The Socialist Parties seem to have avoided complete collapse because their traditional voters were alarmed by the increasingly 'Thatcherite' neo-liberal opposition. With the right basing their electoral campaign on the promise to privatise the social security system, working men and women acted to block. They saw only one useful instrument in the elections — the two Socialist Parties, which (after years in government) campaigned vigorously for the defence of the national health, pension and social security network.

So the first lesson of the elections is that solidarity is not dead! Individualism is not the universal ideology. The second lesson is that there is a significant block of the working population which is searching for a coherent strategy of resistance to the government's austerity programme. Those who condemn the 'unstable' 'protest voter' should recognise this. As the political scientist Jan Billiet argues, "when the election campaign is concentrated on living themes — work, pensions and health — 'anti-political' behaviour loses ground."

But the elections also reveal the continuing growth of the far right in the Flemish region. The mass media might be united in condemning the Vlaams Blok (Flemish Bloc) as fascist, but the party gained 70,000 votes and one extra seat in the senate compared to the 1991 elections. Their leader, Filip Dewinter (standing in Antwerp), won more individual preference votes than any other candidate. The Flemish Bloc has stabilised an electoral base among the workers. These voters are right when they conclude that one Socialist Party swallow doesn't make a social summer. And it will take more than a militant struggle to defend the social security system to win them back.

The French-speaking far right was blocked

by the media and the courts (which invalidated the National Front electoral list for elections to the senate). Nevertheless, they have six members of the Brussels regional assembly, two in the Walloon (French speaking south) assembly and two deputies in the federal chamber of representatives. Their score in the 'red fortresses' of Hainaut province reached 8-10% in some districts.

The massive 'tactical vote' for the Socialist Parties hurt the ecologists and the alternative left candidates. The French speaking ECOLO movement lost two seats, while the Flemish ecologists stayed in parliament, but lost at least 20,000 votes to the Socialists compared to the last elections. A long way short of the 10% they hoped to gain. The extra-parliamentary left did not benefit from the same dynamic as in France (where 15% of the electorate voted Communist or Trotskyist in the first round of the presidential elections). None of the far left formations won more than 1% of the vote. The "United Lefts" (GU) initiative won only 0.7%, compared to 1.7% in the 1994 European elections. The Mao-Stalinist Belgian Labour Party (PTB) won only 0.5% of votes, and the Communist Party even fewer.

But things are far from stable. One third of Flemish voters chose a different party than at the last elections. There is a real desire for social programmes based on solidarity, and financed by the rich rather than the poor. There is also a racist-security obsession. The big question is how this explosive cocktail will affect the balance of forces over the next few months. And in particular, how the struggle between the left and right wings of the labour movement will develop.

Like in the other European Union countries, the Belgian bourgeoisie is now hesitating between a centre-left and centre-right strategy. The centre right wants to defeat the labour movement and the trade unions in a confrontation. The centre left offers to neutralise the labour movement through class collaboration and a social democratic management of the 'necessary' austerity measures. Political support for the centre-left option would be won through populist social measures, demagoguery, and the exploitation of racist ideas and fears.

So far, the bourgeoisie seems to prefer this second option. They need not be worried that

the Social Democrats will really protect the social security system. After all, the deepest cuts in the welfare net have been made by those governments that included Socialist Party ministers. Both Socialist Parties support the White Paper of former European Commission President Jacques Delors (originally from the French Socialist Party) which prioritises the reduction of 'uncompetitive' EU salary costs and employers' social security payments.

Nevertheless, concessions will have to be made. The Socialist Party must maintain a minimum credibility. They will have to resist the demands from the top capitalists for a significant reduction in public spending — mainly through social security cuts. The Belgian General Labour Confederation (ABVV/FGTB) will expect a return on its support for the Socialist Parties. And the left wing of the union movement which did particularly well in recent workplace representative elections, is in no mood to give up without a fight, or to tolerate the moderate reformism of the social-democratic leadership of the unions. All this will put pressure on the right wing of the governing coalition, the Christian Social Party (CVP) of Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene. He is worried that any further delays to his austerity programme will increase the centrifugal tendencies in the Belgian state.

The paradox is that the unexpectedly strong electoral support for the social democrats is the result of a massive current of resistance to social cuts and austerity plans. The leaders of the Socialist Parties have little to celebrate. Every step they take will reveal the contradictions which divide the labour and socialist movement. And if the left wing of the movement can find a way to support and animate the various social movements, there is a chance not only of a new wave of social protests, but the beginnings of a re-composition of the left. ★

The author is editor of the Belgian newspaper *La Gauche*, published every second week by the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP/POS), Belgian section of the Fourth International ★

Europe's trade unions -- new radicalism?

by Dominique Mezzi

MEMBERSHIP OF FRANCE'S trade union confederations has fallen by over 65% since 1974. Unions now organise less than 8% of the workforce, the lowest rate of any member of the OECD (club of 25 richest industrial countries). The CGT federation claims only 450,000 members, the CFDT probably has no more than 360,000. Only Force ouvriere (which split from the CGT in 1947) denies the existence of a "crisis", although it keeps its membership statistics a well-guarded secret.

Union strength is very uneven. "More than half of the CGT is concentrated in five professions; energy, metallurgy, rail, post and public services" (Luydia Brovelli, CGT treasurer, May 1994). Except for metallurgy, all these professions are governed by state regulations giving workers better protection than in the private sector. As a result of this concentration, the effective rate of trade unionisation of the private sector is very much lower than 8%. Half of the private sector workforce (six million people) working in small and medium enterprises, are virtually un-unionised, because of pressure from the bosses and these workers' internalised fear of unemployment. A further five million unemployed, temporarily employed or part time workers are also outside the world of trade unionism. Trade union "confederations" are supposed to reflecting the diversity of the workforce. This is clearly less and less the case.

Mass unemployment over several decades has destroyed old forms of employment, and disbanded the militants who had developed an experience there. Sectors where there have been vanguard struggles of the working class have either been destroyed, or subject to very strong erosion. The collective memory of struggle, victory and aspirations is not being passed on to new generations of workers.

But this does not explain why historic trade unionism has not succeeded in renewing its base. After all, the crisis destroys, but it also produces. The workforce has always been confronted with phases of structural renewal of its social composition and professional



structure. Old traditions wear out, but other layers of the working class begin their first experiences.

The massive entry of women into the workforce has been a major opportunity and a challenge for trade unionism. Over the last 20 years, previously unorganised, feminised sectors of the working population have been drawn into militant struggles.

Women now make up almost half the workforce. But there is a great disparity between the various feminised sectors. Areas of the private sector where women's jobs are being created (like commerce) are laboratories for the most anti-worker and anti-social forms of 'flexible working'. On the other hand, massive struggles over wages, recognition of qualifications, and working conditions have taken place in the health sector and other public services where non-unionised women are in the majority. Trade union officials caught up in their traditional routine have been staggered by the size of this new radical force.

The progressive elevation of the qualifications required of the working population, and of the number of technicians and office workers, obliges

those of us who cling to a traditional image of the working class to wake up to reality. In the old days, the least qualified layers of workers were the first to be dismissed. Not any more.

Trade unions have traditionally refused to articulate responses to questions of industrial or technological choice. These were either "the bosses problem" or the responsibility of the reformist politicians workers tended to support. Perhaps the entry of all these new highly skilled technicians into the proletariat obliges us to start thinking about these and other questions of management.

No-one nowadays goes from school to the factory and automatically joins the same union as his father and elder brothers. Today's school leaver is more likely to spend years in unstable or part time labour before she gets a stable job. Trade union activists in private industry (most of whom are over 40 years old) still have to learn how to link up with younger workers whose cultural universe is not the same. And how to reach out to immigrant, and in particular North African, working class, on more than the most basic level.

The working class has never been a homogenous bloc. But the general picture

Collectif

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AC!

Created in autumn 1993 by militants around Collectif, this new social movement, brings together the unemployed and wage-earners. Agir ensemble contre le chômage (AC! — "Act together against unemployment") campaigns for greater social rights for the unemployed (including free public transport) a 35 hour week for all, and the redistribution of wealth. AC!'s largest action so far was a demonstration of 20,000 people on May 29 1994.

One of the main concerns of the organisation is how to mobilise not just the unemployed and the young, but also those in stable work? And how to stop repeating the same truths about exclusion and marginalisation, and go on the offensive with concrete demands for job creation, and for a greater social control over working conditions?

The new strategy was unveiled at an extraordinary general assembly on April 4 this year, in the centre of a Paris branch of FNAC, the country's leading book and CD seller. Young people congregating in the shopping centre were drawn into the debate, 15 unemployed activists publicly asked FNAC for a job, and FNAC employees joined in to denounce working conditions, part time work, and contracts giving no job security. The action was organised by the FNAC trade union representatives, and AC! activists from the CFDT, CGT and CNT (anarcho-syndicalist).

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Europe's Trade Unions -- New radicalism?

in the 1990s is that of a workforce suffering multiple fractures. Trade unionism has always constructed itself in the great periods of the productive cycle and and the transformation of technology. We are evidently at a comparable turning point. Except that so far, there is a great lack of any perspective of social change.

This problem is common to labour movements all over the world, but it takes on a particular dimension in France. Trade unions here have only experienced mass recruitment at very rare moments, corresponding to the great phases of international struggle (1920s, 1936, 1945, late 60s). And this growth has been concentrated in specific professional sectors playing a determinant role in the economy (heavy industry, metallurgy, the newly nationalised industries of the post-war boom and so on). The CGT went from 620,000 members in 1914 to 2.4 millions in 1920, fell with the split of 1921, was back at 4.9 million in 1937, fell again in 1939, and peaked at 5.8 million in 1946. The increase in 1968 was relatively weak, from 1.9 to 2.3 million (the smaller CFDT doubled its membership). Since 1969, all the union confederations have been declining in membership.

The original CGT (1895-1909), was dominated by the traditional trades, rather than the concentrated and Taylorised industrial sectors. The confederation was dominated by revolutionary syndicalist militants, whose orientation was to use everyday struggles to build what they believed would be a decisive, revolutionary general strike. This founding wave of militants injected a political perspective into partial combats, to be realised in and through trades unionism itself. The 'double' tradition — fighting union and friendly, insurance union, with separation of the trade union and political tasks of the labour movement by the creation of a labour party to fight for 'social' laws — characteristic of the North European unions, developed relatively late in the CGT, as a result of the affiliation of concentrated sectors, like the miners (1908). The conflict between these two strategies led to the CGT's first internal crisis in 1909.

French trade unionism is unique in Europe in that it has only exceptionally been a mass unionism. One can roughly sum up this historic specificity by the combination of structural factors of the evolution of the workforce, by the effects this has had on the 'trade union demands' made at each stage, and by the workers' expectation of a political outlet to their partial struggles. This aspiration is the result of the place of "politics" in French

life since the revolution of 1789-93, and is latent in the modern-day struggles of the workers' movement, even when it is expressed by a rejection of the political parties.

But this 'historic' trade unionism is out of synch with the 'trade union demands' of a working class in full mutation., amid an international and national crisis of political perspective. Trade union activists are faced with a dual problem; at the base, the reconstruction of a mass practice which can unify workers, and at the summit the



ripening of a collective political reflection, integrating the balance-sheet of the past century.

Revolutionaries have held on better than other activists in the face of the decline of militancy (even if as a political force, they to have suffered the effects of the defeats of the wider movement) and nowadays frequently find themselves in positions to inspire and propose. But we are obviously not the only ones to recognise the historic crisis in the workers' movement and think about possible responses.

In the CFDT, the theorisation of the 'repositioning' of the unions in the centre of the political spectrum, accepting the fundamental economic constraints of the capitalist system began in the late 1970 and accelerated in 1986-87. The big idea was to form a non-communist front with the smallest of the 'big three' federations,

Force Ouvriere (FO) and the 300,000 member National Education Federation (FEN), which was heading towards the expulsion of its Communist minority. The hope was that this moderate coalition could then isolate the Communist-led CGT and build a 'new' trade unionism — breaking with militant traditions, anchored on social compromise, offering a range of services to its members, and attracting wider membership through its material resources and 'unitive' power.

A majority of delegates to the 1989 FO



congress rejected this 'recomposition' and threw itself into a spirited, largely verbal denunciation of liberalism. Under its president Marc Blondel, FO has since consistently blocked both 'reformist' reorganisation projects and 'radical' projects for unitary action. The most pro-capitalist of the big three federations, FO played in the 1970s the 'privileged partner' of government and the employers which the CFDT would now like to emulate. The new 'labour' rhetoric results from the realisation that the employers are no longer disposed to come to a gentlemanly agreement, even on the most moderate of demands.

The attempt by the FEN leadership to transform trade unionism resulted in a total fiasco. The radical National Union of Secondary Teaching (SNES) and Physical Education Teachers' unions were expelled

in 1992 using the most 'Stalinist' bureaucratic procedures imaginable. Outraged pro-unity currents ('unitaires') in all the FEN unions, the SNES, in primary and post-secondary teaching associations, and in the unions representing non-teaching education workers came together in a "Liaison Committee for Unity" which formed the new Unitary Trade Union Federation (FSU) in 1993. FSU candidates won 39% of the vote in workplace representatives elections in December 1993, confirming their ability to attract the more vibrant forces of the old FEN. The openly anti-left FEN list won only 23% of votes. FSU has since shown its capacities for action with the 600,000 strong demonstration in defence of secular education in January 1994.

In the CFDT itself, the leadership tried to impose its ultra-moderate line and strict discipline on the massive mobilisations that shook the health sector (particularly the nurses) and the Post-Telecom utility PTT. The result of this authoritarian intransigence was the birth of two radical, non-federated trade unions led by militants, in tune with the expectations of their rank and file, and skilled in agitating and organising for the broadest union unity in day to day and major struggles.

In the health sector, Parisian militants expelled from the CFDT created the Coordonner-rassembleur-convaincre (CRC) union, which developed quickly across the country, taking 11.58% of votes in the 1992 elections of workplace representatives.

The Solidaire-unitaire-démocratique federation (SUD) in the PTT also developed at great speed, winning 55,976 votes in the December 1994 elections of workplace representatives (a score ten times higher than the number of registered members of the union!). This impressive progression was primarily to the detriment of the CFDT structures in the PTT, but also of the CGT.

SUD and CRC now participate in the Group of Ten, which brings together non-confederated trade unions concerned with union disunity, and opposed to the centralised, distant and abstract unionism of the major federations. The principal component of the Group of Ten is the 20,000 member Unified National Union of Tax workers, which in 1994 came first in the elections of workplace representatives, winning 43% of votes.

Both attempts at a brutal "purification" of the CFDT, and the de-communisation of the FEN resulted in a resounding defeat for those who had initiated them. And yet the leadership of the CFDT engineered a



"in a period shaken by economic crisis, French trade unionism is unconvincing. It hardly matters at the level of struggles for jobs, it does not succeed in defending wage-earners, it is without real influence on the content of work organisation. It has few adherents and above all, it does not attract youth.... It is becoming so marginalised that one could, without fear of sacrilege, question its survival"

Daniele Linhart, sociologist (CRNS)

'coup' in October 1992, replacing Jean Kaspar by Nicole Notat as General Secretary. Notat's 'acceptance' speech illustrated the new style when she warned delegates that "it's not necessary to demonise the right". Such a declaration, shortly before the resounding success of the right wing parties in the March 1993 parliamentary elections signalled her expectation that the right would remain in power a long time and her willingness to construct the CFDT in the light of this. In other words, a non-aggression pact with the new government.

The problem for the CFDT leadership was that the crushing defeat of the Socialist Party was not reflected in a blockage of the social movements.

Significant and unitary social struggles broke out in 1993-94 (in support of secular education, against employment, for the rights of youth) testifying to the aspiration of many militants for a rejuvenated trades unionism, unrestricted by the union apparatus. The Notat clique turned its back on these struggles, or did all it could to brake their dynamic. Recent regional and federal congresses have revealed the significant weakening of the authority of the leadership which has resulted from this stance. A small majority of delegates at the 43rd Congress of the CFDT in March 1995 condemned the national bureau for "insufficient action... in defence of the major social advantages" of the working population. The left opposition tendency won 35% of votes on the major votes, indicating the creation of a 'critical thinking' current within the moderate majority. Congress also approved (by 57%) an opposition motion calling for legislation to move the country towards a 32 hour working week. There was even a warm ovation for CGT General Secretary Louis Viannet, indicating that the rank-and-file of the the CFDT wants unity of action, even if the leadership does not.

CGT

The CGT, the largest and most militant federation, will hold its centenary congress in December 1995. Although it has been tied to the disastrous policies of the French Communist Party (PCF) for decades, the CGT has not faced the same collapse of support. Support for the PCF reached an all-time low of 6.5% in the 1988 presidential election, but the CGT's role as France's premier trade union federation was confirmed by their 33% score in 1992 workplace elections to the Prud'homme tripartite tribunal for resolving minor disputes. The CFDT came second with 23%. But the conviction is spreading that remaining tied to the PCF will lead to the marginalisation of the CGT. This leads to two types of reaction; some wish to accelerate the process of independence from the PCF and the restating of a radical trade union project, while the identity crisis of some others leads them to cling to

the Stalinist apparatus in panic. The final result is by no means certain.

The various radical initiatives we have discussed may prove strong enough to become a new dynamic for the overall reconstruction of French trade unionism. It could draw strength from the new demands of today's struggles, from the demand for a democratic and relevant unionism. It could consolidate itself by exploiting the success of the new non-confederated unions, and by amplifying the debate among progressives on the redefinition of an offensive trade union strategy, mapping the links between day to day action and a political project which would give these partial struggles a purpose. Such a project would have to be neither self-limited nor subject to any exterior strategy. It could open the perspective of a global unification of trade unionism to all those who fight for the renewal of the labour movement, respecting their different rhythms and their insertion in different cultures and organisations. But only on condition that strong autonomy is respected in the associated structures, and not only in the debates. And there must be not just the right to circulate opinions, but the right to experimentation in action.

The revolutionary syndicalist, Emile Pouget, spoke of a true confederal trade union as "the complete opposite of those

organisms who, through their centralisation and their authoritarianism, stifle the vitality of the component units. Here, there is cohesion and not centralisation; impulsion and not desertion. Federalism is everywhere and to each degree, the diverse organisms, the individual, the trade union, the federation, the labour bureau, are all autonomous... It is this which makes the radiant power of the Confederation; the impulsion does not come from above. It starts from any point and its vibrations transmit themselves, amplifying themselves, to the confederal mass". He was describing the CGT in 1908. Can we take up this theme of the libertarian tradition? Why not? ★

Notes

Unattributed statistics are taken from *Le syndicalisme en France depuis 1945*, by Rene Mouriaux, Editions La Decouverte (1994).

The FEN refused to affiliate to either wing of the trade union movement after the cold-war splits of 1947. Dominated by social democratic thinkers, FEN theorised the necessity of abandoning "old fashioned" CGT "class struggle" trades unionism. This provoked a conflict with Communist Party supporters in the FEN, and active in the leadership of the SNES (National Union of Secondary Teaching). The break up of Stalinism accelerated the conviction of FEN leaders that there was no future for the Communist sympathisers in the union, and that the time had come for a surgical strike. ★

United States -- Labor Notes Conference

The eighth bi-annual Labor Notes conference held on April 28-30 in Detroit attracted over 1,200 activists. The related themes -- renewed workplace struggle, cross-union and community alliances, independent political action, and internationalism summarized the direction of the emerging radical wing of America's embattled trade unions.

Dave Yettaw, president of United Auto Workers Local 599 at General Motor's Buick City complex in Flint, Michigan, told how his union's strike forced the auto giant to hire hundreds of additional workers to relieve overwork and excessive overtime in those plants. This strike is generally credited with setting off several other plant-level strikes in the U.S. auto industry.

Also present were workers from Decatur, Illinois -- dubbed the "War Zone" -- where A.E. Staley, a subsidiary of Tate & Lyle, has locked-out its workers and those at the nearby Caterpillar and Bridgestone/Firestone plants are on strike. In all three cases, the issues in conflict included attempts by the companies to impose 12 or 12-hour day shifts. The same issue sparked a strike in August 1994 at the GM-Toyota joint venture NUMMI plant in California, with the union stopping this so-

called 10-hour "alternative work schedule." These three groups even ran independent labor candidates for city government in recent elections—one of whom won.

Another example of broad-based labor action was presented by leaders of the United Electrical Workers (UE). In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the UE has worked with several community-based organizations to organize African American and immigrant workers in nonunion plants. These organizations work with Progressive Milwaukee, a working class based independent party affiliated with the nationwide New Party. The thrust of independent working class politics was also apparent in the large presence of Labor Party Advocates, a trade union-based organization pushing for a labor party.

The cross-border organizing alliance between the UE, in the U.S. and the Authentic Workers Front (FAT) in Mexico was highlighted in of the main sessions as an exemplary response to NAFTA. ★

Labor Notes is a rank and file-oriented monthly magazine associated with the militant wing of U.S. labor. It supports democratic reform and opposition movements in a range of unions.

Email labornotes@igc.apc.org ★

Privatisation victims fight back

More than 150,000 Danish workers went on strike April 20. It was part of a national day of action in solidarity with 82 bus drivers who have been striking since February 10 in Esbjerg, Denmark's fifth largest city. The bus drivers have defied aggressive bosses, local and national government, and daily police brutality in their fight against the effects of privatisation, including wage cuts.

by Finn Kjeller

Public bus transportation in Denmark is one of the areas where private firms have been invited to submit bids to take over public services. They can use the fact that private and public bus companies are covered by different trade union agreements. In Copenhagen and other cities, the bus drivers' unions have been able to limit the damage by obtaining complementary agreements, ensuring that their wage levels remain the same. But that is not what happened in Esbjerg, a seaport on the Southwest coast.

There the city council put a private company, Ri-Bus A/S, in charge of running the city buses. This was not the most economical proposal by any means, but it was a local company and, incidentally, owned by three notorious right wingers with links to scab unions. The new company, with strong backing from the employers' branch association, refused to negotiate even a temporary agreement with the workers. The old contract with the municipal authorities expired on April 1 this year. The Esbjerg drivers faced a reduction in wages of between 8.5 and 15.4% (\$2,800 to \$5,700). In addition, the bosses were putting the squeeze on other benefits and on working conditions: breaks, schedules, even toilet facilities.

The invitation to submit bids was originally approved by the Social Democrats, and the choice of Ri-Bus was made with the votes of the Socialist People's Party (SF). These reformist forces have come to regret their decision. Since 1993, the Liberal Party has controlled local government in the city of Esbjerg as well as in the surrounding region. Their policies have not been influenced by the protests of working people who are affected by them. On the contrary, Esbjerg represents a breakthrough for their offensive against trade union influence, designed to make privatisations as effective a weapon as possible in the effort to redistribute wealth and income in order to benefit private capital.

Already last summer the drivers were on strike, pushing for an agreement to maintain their wages. At the beginning of February this year it was clear to them that there

would be no real negotiations—even though the drivers had offered to meet the bosses half-way, agreeing to a gradual reduction of wages. Following a near-unanimous (there was one dissent) decision by the drivers to go on strike against Ri-Bus, the intransigent position of the employers association soon hardened the conflict. Management proceeded to fire all of the strikers and advertise for new employees.

Picketing has been the central means of action throughout the strike. All of the drivers have taken part in blocking the garage area. Until the end of March the picket was effective. No city buses were running, and regional buses could not enter Esbjerg if they wanted to get out again. The bus drivers soon got the support of their colleagues in other cities and towns — plus, in some cases, from bus drivers' locals in Norway and Sweden which are experiencing the same process of privatisation. During the previous six months, warehouse workers and garbage collectors had been fired, but were successfully defended by trade union campaigns. When things started heating up in the bus drivers' dispute, solidarity grew until a large part of the Danish trade union movement was involved, defending its fundamental principles. Workers in Esbjerg had an old agreement never to accept police interference in a trade union struggle: "If the police intervene, we all stop working." This was put to the test on March 27 when the police first attacked a picket line which was more than 400 strong that day. The police, using dogs, were able to get out a few buses — which they then had to escort all over town. All major workplaces in Esbjerg immediately went on strike for one or two days.

This served as a signal for country-wide solidarity. Regional and national shop stewards conferences were called which prepared the national day of action on April 20, indicating to all that this might be a major mobilization.

Street parliament

Danish labour market regulations penalize most strikes by fines. Nevertheless, almost 200,000 showed their sympathy for the Esbjerg bus drivers on April 20. For

many in the public sector this was also a warning strike against plans for privatization: home helpers, municipal employees, postal and phone workers, etc. Private sector workers, who were even more numerous among the strikers, also reacted to the anti-social logic of the privatization policies. Most of the shipyards, bacon factories, and the other larger city workplaces joined the movement. Bus transport was paralysed by strikes or pickets in every city, as well as parts of the ferries and air-lines.

The date chosen was also designed to show resistance to the right-wing opposition in parliament which had taken the initiative to begin a debate on the pace of privatization in Denmark. (It is too slow in their opinion.) While 5,000 demonstrated in front of Christiansborg, representatives of the Unity List/Red-Green Alliance defended the strikers and the solidarity movement — or, as they were called by the Conservatives and ultra-Liberals, the "troublemakers" and "the parliament of the street".

The Social Democratic leaders, who govern in alliance with two small Liberal parties, have been more or less unable to act. The fact is that while the right-wing governments of Poul Schilter were responsible for introducing neo-liberal concepts in the 1980's, few public companies or services were actually handed over to the private sector until 1993 when Poul Nyrup Rasmussen led the Social Democratic come-back. Not only were the Social-Democrats able to persuade a majority to accept the Maastricht treaty in a second referendum, the "closet liberals" were also in a position to deliver more privatisation than the previous Conservative-Liberal government. One example is the selling off of 51% of the Giro Bank. The enterprises singled out for privatisation have come from those making a profit.

On the other hand, the local authorities have been encouraged to invite bids for other services, typically those employing women at low wages. The big service companies have been able to gain contracts by under-cutting established prices in the beginning, and raising them later. The policy of increasing competition between

private and public services means that workers such as hospital cleaners have had to work faster —either to keep their job with a new private employer or to keep the contract in public hands.

Seeing that the strike was challenging the results of its policies, while at the same time attracting the support of Social Democratic workers and party branches, the government seemed to hope that it would just go away. But this did not mean that it was neutral. While Minister of Justice Bjorn Westh took care of the police war against the pickets, Minister of Labour Jytte Andersen warned that bus drivers who spent their time picketing would get no more unemployment benefits — only the drivers never asked for such benefits since they have refused to recognize the legitimacy of the action the company took in sacking them! It is worth remembering that the police attacks take place under anti-picket regulations set down by a Social Democratic government in the late seventies.

However, Hardy Hansen MP, chairman of SiD — the federation of unskilled workers to which the Esbjerg bus drivers belong — has condemned Ri-Bus vigorously. At the same time he has tried to offer the bosses favorable arrangements, such as keeping the previously employed drivers at their original wages and letting new employees work at the lower rate. He was unsuccessful, as was the Prime Minister when he proposed himself as a mediator.

Contributions from unions all over the country have financed the strike. For the first two months the movement was largely run by local trade unions and rank and file activists. But the wave of workplace solidarity brought the SiD and the regional bodies of the trade union congress (LO) onto the scene as decisive financial and organizational supporters. Still, support committees in cities around the country were still led largely by trade union militants belonging to the far left.

After April 20, trade unions and support committees stepped up solidarity by sending coaches from Copenhagen and other areas on a daily basis. Ri-Bus has succeeded in employing some twenty scab drivers. Every morning, police attack the picket line, resulting in several casualties and arrests. Some 9 to 13

buses then run for part of the day—followed by the workers and therefore under heavy police protection.

Tensions rising

As new coach-loads of pickets arrive every day, thousands experience how the police place the city of Esbjerg in a virtual state of siege in order to discourage strike activists. Several hundred have been arrested. Not only are they chasing the flying pickets all over town, people are being arrested for just standing around or sitting on a bench. The strikers are under constant surveillance — including wire taps and being followed wherever they go. Threats have been made against scabs, but also against strike leaders. The strikers' spokesperson wound up in the hospital because of this pressure. But, as drivers' shop steward Karl Erik Pedersen said on TV, May 13, "the drivers are tired but not worn out." At the same time, the drivers are increasingly vulnerable to Social-Democratic manoeuvres.

Social Democratic politicians and trade union leaders are eager to put the lid on all expressions of outright resistance to privatisation. Their aim is to limit the conflict to the local level and to focus only on the most blatant offences against workers' rights. So far, all attempt at compromise has hit a wall of refusal by the Liberals.

The factors pushing toward an escalation of the conflict became clear when, on May 7, 400,000 kr. worth of bus windows were smashed during the night. 47 people were arrested and kept in police custody for three days on charges of malicious damage. The support committees dissociated themselves from the action. But, clearly, the drivers as well as their supporters are getting tired of being pushed around and bitten by dogs.

Plans have been made to maintain and develop broad working class support. A new day of action is set for June 1. This should be the occasion for waging a real mass blockade against the scab buses, involving groups not sufficiently present the last time. The SAP (Socialist Workers Party - Danish section of the Fourth International) puts forward the demand for LO to call a 24 hour general strike on the June 1, and for the SiD to launch secondary strikes and pickets against all firms delivering goods and services to the Ri-Bus bus company.

This strike may last for another month or more. Whatever the outcome, the bus drivers' struggle against wage cuts and privatisation has fuelled a solidarity movement the likes of which have not been seen for some time. It has revived left wing trade union networks and confirmed a trend towards a rise in the level of class struggle.

But only a victory over the Ri-Bus privatisation pirates can create a dynamic which will encourage other workers to take on the liberal diktats. ★

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The Enhedslisten experience

Enhedslisten ("The Unity List") was formed in 1989 on the initiative of the Left Socialists (VS), the Communist Party (DKP) and the Socialist Workers Party (SAP — Danish Section of the Fourth International). The Communist Workers Party (KAP) joined in 1991. Since then it has developed into an independent organisation with no special privileges for any affiliated party. Unlike similar initiatives in other countries, Endedslisten has no distinct "Green" component. The Danish Green Party is a marginal party, to the right of most European Green Parties.

Revolutionary left groups in a number of countries are considering the possibilities for regroupment with other left groups in some kind of wider organisation. As a contribution to this debate the Socialistisk Arbejderparti (Socialist Workers Party — Danish Section of the Fourth International) recently published an English translation of the "SAP and the Unity List" resolution voted at their extraordinary convention held in January 1995.

The resolution also touches on the weekly newspaper *Den røde Tråd* (The Red Thread), launched in 1991 as the result of a fusion of the weekly papers of the SAP, VS and KAP. Enhedslisten has had a distinct representation on the editorial board of the paper since 1994.

Other English-language documents published by SAP include

- A balance sheet of SAP party building (1980-85)
- A Socialist Alternative to the Capitalist and Bourgeois EC (1989)

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Labour leader declares war on trade unions

After deleting the party's commitment to common ownership of the means of production, Labour leader Tony Blair's next step is to weaken the link between the party and the trade unions which created it. But as Peter Hooper reports, this will be a hard job for the right. And an important struggle for the left.

ALTHOUGH BLAIR WON a conference majority for his new statement of free-market values (see IV #266, April 1995) the vote in the unions was much closer than in the party branches. The huge Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and the health service union UNISON opposed his changes, as did the National Union of Miners, RMT (railway) and Fire Brigades Unions. There was also significant dissent within the white collar MSF and Communications Workers' Union (CWU) unions, whose leadership backed Blair.

As it stands, Blair is offering workers and the unions little – other than the prospect of a Labour government one day. He has refused the 'soft left' union leaders' proposals for full employment legislation, or for the introduction of a £4/hour minimum wage (34 FFR/\$7 US).

But Blair also knows that the unions will make demands on an incoming Labour government. And he remembers the wave of strikes which led to the defeat of discredited Labour governments in 1970 and 1979. His goal is therefore to marginalise the unions within the Labour Party, reduce their voting strength at conferences, and cut their representation on the Party's National Executive Committee.

At the same time, Blair would like to see union bureaucrats in a stronger position within their unions, able to control their members and 'sit on' any left activists. The Blairists are particularly happy with the leadership of the CWU, which held a postal ballot on support for Blair's reform of the Party — so as to avoid exposing members to arguments against Blair from militants at union branch meetings.

The leadership of the Labour Party wants to see this kind of top-down unionism extended to questions of industrial action. National Union of Teachers' leader Doug McAvoy has already criticised his own union's conference resolutions, and announced his opposition to any vote in the union over

industrial action to prevent the government increasing class sizes in state schools.

Blair's sizeable party machine (see accompanying article) has also intervened in the TGWU, backing a rightist candidate against incumbent Bill Morris, a defender of Labour's traditional programme. The only reason there has not been similar interference in UNISON is that the right-wing opposition to 'soft left' leader Rodney Bickerstaffe is a shambles.

The right wing in the unions are not having an easy ride. UNISON recently endorsed a package of radical policies it wants to see included in Labour's pre-election manifesto. Blair's campaign to amend the Labour Party constitution has hardened up the left-wing currents in the unions and the party.

The Socialist Workers' Party and, to a lesser extent, Militant (the country's largest revolutionary left organisations) effectively encourages abstention in this struggle. They gave verbal support to Clause Four (committing the party to socialisation of 'the means of production, distribution and exchange'), but instead of building opposition to Blair, they counterposed their own sectarian party-building projects.

What now?

The exclusive focus of the Clause Four debate on a future Labour government has served to limit discussion on what to do now against the bosses and the Tory (Conservative) government. There is a slowdown in the domestic economy, especially in the privatised sectors. This is leading to new attacks on pay, jobs, conditions and hours of work. British Telecom is attempting to impose 'flexible' working hours, while the Royal Mail is trying to enforce new working practices. Some 850,000 National Health Service workers are involved in pay disputes. Three of the teachers' unions will soon ballot their members on what action to take to combat education cuts. Rail workers face new fights on pay and privatisation. Tens of thousands of jobs are

threatened by competitive tendering procedures in local government, the civil service and the National Health Service.

Some victories have been won, notably postal workers in Newcastle (NE England) and British Telecom workers in NW England. But anti-union laws overshadow the movement. Most industrial action is illegal in Britain nowadays. And almost all union leaders, 'left' and 'right', are determined to obey the law. The 'left' TGWU refuses to take (illegal) solidarity action to support the Eastern National bus dispute in Chelmsford. The greatest success of these anti-union laws is that they no longer have to be enforced. Union leaders now do the police work, and block potentially illegal action by their members.

Tony Blair and the Labour leadership have no intention of repealing these laws. But if a section of workers could overcome the inertia of the union bureaucrats, their action could prove enormously popular. This is what we saw with the recent nurses' dispute. As British Rail workers realised when they struck last year, the government is too unpopular to be able to enforce the anti-union laws.

Public sector

United public sector action in defence of pay and services is crucial in the face of the government's on-going attack. The RMT has called for a demonstration against low pay and for a shorter working week in London on June 10th. This kind of initiative must be supported and build for by the whole movement. Another good initiative was the recent conference in defence of the public sector organised by Newcastle UNISON. In the education sector, parents groups and school governors have united in the Fight Against Education Cuts campaign (FACE). The far left should make sure that speakers from these movements address each of the union conferences which will be held over the summer. ★

The Russia Working Class and Labour Movement (Part One)

The ability of the Russian labour movement to organise the working class is a key element of any renaissance of the left in that country. We are happy to begin the serialization of a comprehensive study of the Russian working class by David Mandel. Over the coming months he will discuss the economic and political situation of labour, and worker-management relations under privatization. These articles represent a survey of the situation of Russian workers and of the labour movement in the fourth year of "shock therapy" — the state-driven forced march to capitalism¹. The author is currently completing this work with further sections on collective actions and labour politics and an analysis of the perspectives for the labour movement.

I. The Economic Situation of Labour

1. Employment

The vast decline in Russian GDP (in 1994 it was just over half of that of 1990²) and the rapid growth of poverty would normally lead one to expect a major rise in unemployment. Yet, at the end of 1994, the officially unemployed, defined as those actively seeking work and claiming unemployment benefits, were only about 2% of the economically active population.³

These figures reflect the weak incentive for the unemployed to sign up at state labour exchanges, due to the very low benefits (about \$13 U.S. a month) and the stigma attached, as well as the reluctance of exchange officials to register the unemployed. Most unemployed workers avoid labour exchanges, and many of those who go do not register.⁴

In addition, enterprises have been dismissing their pensioners first, many of whom under the old system continued to work in order to supplement their pensions. For example, almost all of the 4000 jobs lost in 1994 at the giant VAZ auto enterprise were pensioners, the remaining being voluntary departures. In 1995, management plans to dismiss 5000 more workers, again predominantly pensioners.⁵ These workers, who have little chance of finding other work, do not appear in official unemployment statistics.

Another factor keeping official unemployment figures artificially low is the practice of administrative leave, which became widespread in 1993. (By law, workers can take extra leave only at their own request). Sometimes this is paid at two thirds of basic pay (basic pay is ordinarily less than half of normal takehome pay), the amount prescribed by law for work stoppages that are the fault of management. If the enterprise cannot pay but can prove to the state Employment Service that it has a realistic plan to regain solvency, employees with at least one-year seniority and no other significant familial income may receive from the state the minimum wage (far below the subsistence level) during three months

starting from the second month of layoff; or else, the enterprise can borrow the money from the state Employment Service to allow it to pay up to four times the minimum wage (still below subsistence).⁶

There are several factors involved in management's preference for administrative leave rather than permanent layoff. By keeping the enterprise's official workforce high, enterprise management can pay those actually working relatively higher wages while avoiding the heavy taxes that are applied to the part of the total wage bill exceeding an average per worker of six minimum wages. This part is not treated by the state as a cost of production but rather as profit and is taxed at 35-38%. Management may also be motivated by a desire to keep in tact as long as possible, an experienced, skilled work force in the hope that the economic situation will improve or that government policy will change.

Liberal analysts see this latter attitude as a holdover from the Soviet era that has yet to yield before market pressures - this despite the much-vaunted "success" of privatization (over 50% of the GDP in 1994 was generated by the formally private sector).⁷ For example, in the spring of 1994, when management at a Samara ball-bearing plant debated the issue of giving up its daycare facilities to the municipality, the more traditional, production-oriented managers argued that they were necessary in order to keep young workers at the plant. By contrast, the more market-oriented directors for finance and marketing pointed to mass unemployment as offering a ready supply of labour. (The Soviet system was characterized by an overall chronic shortage of labour.) But the traditionalists argued that new workers would not have the required experience or skills. The decision was postponed, but eventually economic constraints forced management to give up the daycare facilities.⁸

By not formally dismissing workers, management also spares itself the expense of severance pay, at least two months wages. At the same time, the government is not forcing bankruptcy proceedings or pressuring directors to layoff workers permanently,

fearing the added economic burden on the state budget and, more importantly, the political threat of open mass unemployment. For the government, administrative leave is a relatively safe and cheap way for enterprises to shed excess labour. But for workers, it results in a weakening of their economic and moral link to the enterprise and to its collective, undermining class identity and the potential for solidary action. Moreover, where the opportunity exists, workers on administrative leave are forced into the shadow economy, where there is no legal protection or social rights, thus pushing down wages and conditions in the legal labour market.

According to an ILO study, one fifth of all industrial workers were on forced leave in the fall of 1994, while 35% of those officially working were in fact idle.⁹ For example, in October 1994, in the Siberian city of Omsk with a population of over a million and only 3000 officially unemployed, one third of all formally employed workers in the city's defence sector, its major employer, were not working.¹⁰ In the Russian textile sector alone, two-thirds of the workers were not fully employed at the end of 1994. Over forty mills in the Ivanovo area were idle.¹¹ In the lumber industry, according to one report from the fall of 1994, half of the work force was idle.¹²

If all these workers were counted together, the unemployment rate might be as high as 20%.¹³ In 1993, the Russian government statistical office finally began to publish an estimate of what it calls "total unemployment potential" (those without work and looking for it and those involuntarily working part time). It put this at 10.1 million or 13.5% at the end of 1994.¹⁴

End of part one ★

for space reasons footnotes will only be printed at the end of the final installment — a good reason to subscribe, if you haven't already done so!

The far right advances

by Arnaldo Casterlernas

Twenty percent of voters in the recent presidential election chose one of the two lists celebrating nationalism, the family, private education and religion, and a reduction in women's rights. Catholic fundamentalist Philippe de Villiers won 4.8%, and the National Front's Jean-Marie Le Pen 15.3%. This is a considerable advance over the 1988 presidential election, when Le Pen, the only far-right candidate, polled 14.4%. De Villiers' constituency is more rural and conservative than Le Pen's, but the National Front can count on the Catholic fundamentalists as a reserve army of support — widening the appeal of the far-right, without posing a threat to Le Pen's leadership.

The far right vote is not a temporary protest vote against the big parties. A full 46% of Le Pen voters say they made their choice on the basis of the National Front's programme. Only 34% of Communist Party voters say the same.¹

Nor are National Front voters primarily motivated by the call for a strong leader. According to university researcher and anti-fascist activist Nona Mayer, "only 6% of 'LePenists' say their leader has 'statesman qualities', and only 27% say they voted for him 'so that he can become the President'. They voted for Le Pen because of his ideas."

An exit poll suggested that the main preoccupation of all voters were unemployment (cited by 29%) and social inequality (16%). In comparison, 54% of Le Pen voters were mainly concerned with immigration (cited by only 13% of all voters) and only 23% were concerned with unemployment. Le Pen voters were also three times more likely to cite insecurity as a major concern (14%) than the average voter (5%).²

National Front voters make a simplistic equation between immigration and unemployment. Many of them are concerned with the social and economic implications of an increasingly threatening



Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front

phenomena of unemployment, and someone is telling them that the 'solution' to this problem is 'dealing with' immigration. Three out of four Le Pen voters also say they are 'concerned' about their personal and professional future, while two thirds believe that democracy in France works badly (compared to 58% and 41% of the electorate as a whole).

Who votes for the far right ?

Trotskyist presidential candidate Arlette Laguiller (Workers' Struggle/Lutte ouvriere) was wrong when she claimed, in a television debate, that National Front voters come from the "nicer part of town" and that only a "few lost sheep" among working class voters were attracted to the extreme right. The fact is that more blue collar working class voters supported Le Pen than any other candidate. 27% voted National Front, compared to 20% for the

Socialists, and 17% for the Communists. For the first time, Le Pen also came first among the unemployed (27%, compared to 19% for Jacques Chirac and 17% for the Socialist candidate Leonel Jospin).

The major parties are adapting their policies to take account of the far right element in society. The new government of Prime Minister Alain Juppé might contain a record number of women, but all are prominent opponents of women's rights. The racist and authoritarian police and immigration laws of former interior Minister Charles Pasqua will be maintained. Just outside the government, Le Pen will be there to stiffen the right-wing, and prevent any concessions. His refusal to support Jacques Chirac in the second round presidential runoff with Socialist Party candidate Lionel Jospin enables him to speak out on social questions too, and to distance himself from any unpopular policies of the new administration.

The National Front vote was 15-20% in 21 of France's 96 territorial *départements*, and 21% or higher in 11 more. This is a clear increase on the 1988 presidential election (1-20% in 16 *départements*, 21% or more in eight). If this pattern is repeated in the municipal elections in November, the National Front will hold the balance of power in two out of three towns with over 30,000 inhabitants. ★

Notes:

1. As compared to 26% of Green voters, 23% of Trotskyist voters, and 24% of those who voted for the winning candidate, Jacques Chirac of the conservative RPR. *Libération*, 25 April 1995

Nona Mayer, Special election issue of *Ras l'front*, no. 29, June 1995

● French anti-fascists organise

The main anti-fascist movement, Ras l'front (Fed up with the Front) is not just concerned with the National Front as such. The "Appeal of 250" which launched the movement in 1990 stressed that "the progression of the far right is the result of our retreats". The movement argues, therefore, that the left must stop retreating on social and democratic issues, and move onto the offensive, not just against the fascists, but against all policies which go in the same direction — like the racist citizenship laws and new police powers introduced under former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua.

Having recognised that the failures of Social Democratic governments, and Socialist or Communist municipal councils have contributed to the rise in support for the far right, Ras l'front jealously guards its pluralist and independent character. Militants of the

various left organisations are a minority in the organisation, and the consensus so far has been to agree on elements which can bring the greatest number of anti-fascists together, while leaving each component group free to popularise its own political interpretation and strategy.

In addition, the movement encourages debate on a new social project, which could represent a different solution to the current crisis.

It is important to intervene in the anti-racist demonstrations which generally follow fascist attacks on blacks and Arabs. The participation of anti-fascists should strive to carry the greatest number of people past the stage of protest, and integrate them into an ongoing struggle against racism and fascism. Fighting fascism also means campaigning everywhere that fascist

ideas are flourishing. It means ensuring an anti-fascist presence in campaigns against marginalisation and homelessness — two areas where the National Front and its scapegoat propaganda are gaining ground. ★

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1 42 64 80 25

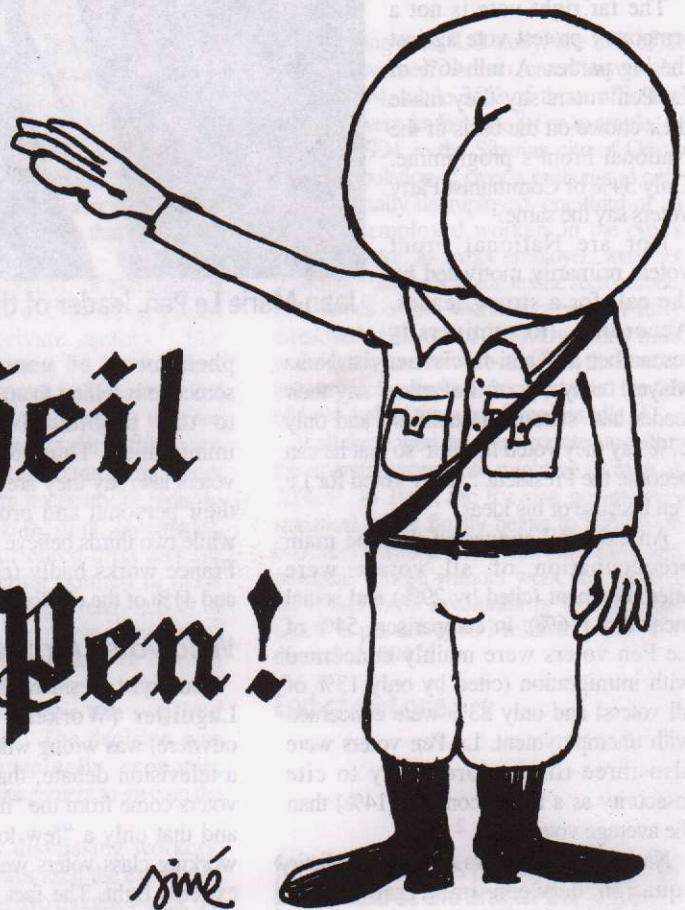
Ras l'front is also part of the
European Anti-Racist Network,
which can be contacted c/o
MRAX, 37 rue de la Poste, B-1210
Brussels, Belgium. ★

**"Jews and Arabs
friends and united",
"Our looks aren't
against the law"**

Several hundred people gathered in the heavily ethnic neighbourhood of Belleville in Paris Monday May 29, 1995 to protest against alleged racial slurs made by police officers during an identity check Friday 26 May. Fifteen people were injured Friday when about 250 Arab and Jewish residents clashed with police after harassment of an Arab resident.

Heil
Le Pen!

simé



The new FMLN

The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) has been transformed over the last three years. The abandonment of the armed struggle and the Front's insertion in a new political framework has characterised the political context in El Salvador since the end of hostilities in 1992. At the same time, the new international context obliged the left everywhere to review its historic identifications, and to construct or restate new schemas for continuing the struggle for social justice.

To find out more, International Viewpoint interviewed Mario A. Mijango, former "commandant Raul" of the ERP, now a member of the leadership of the Democratic Tendency (TD) and co-ordinator of the FMLN's agrarian affairs secretariat.

● **Mijango:** Parallel to the debate on the necessity of a political and ideological renewal to adapt to the new Salvadoran reality, we have witnessed a demand for the internal democratisation and opening of greater spaces of participation within each of the five parties which until recently made up the FMLN. During the war, all the militants unfailingly respected military discipline, but with the appearance of new political conditions, everyone thought that it was necessary to develop the level of participation inside the parties. The active participation of middle cadres and rank and file militants in the discussions has little by little undermined the positions of the traditional "historic" leaderships of each party, which has responded by trying to rein in the discussion.

Within the Popular Renewal Expression current (ERP), a number of us demanded more internal democracy and participation, and a renewal of the ERP's ideological assumptions. But we argued that it was important not to lose sight of two essentials; the social interests of the people and the construction of a model of society that guarantees social justice. Little by little, it became impossible to debate and the historical leadership of the ERP decided to resolve the problem by expelling those cadres leading the opposition.

In December 1994, the 'purged' ERP left the FMLN to set up a social democratic party, as did the majority of the National Resistance current (RN). Those of us who had been expelled decided not to found a traditional political organisation but rather to bring to the FMLN a new kind of politics based on a different organic concept; no longer a coalition of parties but a unified party with internal political tendencies.

The departure of the ERP and the RN was difficult, but necessary because our internal contradictions were tying the

hands of the FMLN, especially during the 1994 elections. Their departure has opened a space for debate on democratisation. The FMLN Convention of December 17 and 18 decided unanimously to transform the Front into a unified party with the right to political tendencies.

Our "Democratic Tendency" and the Frontist Tendency are in a much more comfortable position than the Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL), the Salvadoran Communist Party and the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC). Now that they are part of the pluralistic FMLN party, they need to review their own internal organisation.

The unification of the party allows us to better utilise our human and material. During the war period, each of the five forces had to be present in each decision-making body, leading to a great waste of energy. Each tendency must now put the interests of the FMLN above its own interests.

There is a risk that certain hegemonic currents will wish to lead the Front or worse to transform it insidiously into a single party. This would mean the political death of the FMLN. But I believe it is very much more likely that we will build a political instrument adapted to the new period. Unification will involve a necessary period of transition where each party will show the extent of its good will. We are in the process of creating internal bodies charged with overseeing this process.

The current advances reflect an aspiration of Salvadoran society which wishes to see a unified FMLN, not as an opposition but a viable governmental option.

● **Each of the former parties of the FMLN has its own popular organisations in the countryside. Will these be unified?**

We have reached a consensus that it is necessary to separate the party as a political instrument from the popular organisations. The TD wishes this separation to be very clear. The popular organisations should return to their original vocation, that of working for the social sectors they represent.

Moreover, the TD considers that the FMLN must play a role in the legal political life of the country and must accept the real autonomy of the political organisations.

Some of our partners, however, wish to unify the apparatuses of the parties and the popular organisations inside the "new" FMLN. This debate recalls that between the advocates of the single party and the defenders of tendencies. In my opinion, this kind of unification would lead the FMLN to develop a great internal political activism, which would wear it down. This would reduce its margin of manoeuvre in the political confrontation with the government. The FMLN national council recently admitted that our internal problems had prevented us from responding to the hopes of our electorate. The FMLN as a political opposition in the assembly had not been offensive enough. It is necessary that we balance our internal restructuring with political action at the national level, rather than turning in on ourselves.

● **What kind of national action?**

The FMLN must fight on two fronts. Firstly, for the complete honouring of the peace accords, which will have many social repercussions, not only for the FMLN base but for society. These accords contain in essence the model of the democratic society that we wish to build in





our country. Secondly, like the other parties, we must prepare for the elections to the national assembly and the municipal councils, scheduled for 1997. This means reactivating our municipal and departmental structures. We will try to lead a better campaign than in 1994, when we were novices.

April 30 is the date fixed for the end of the land transfer programme envisaged by the peace accords. What is happening?

Two and a half years after the beginning of this programme, only 55% of lands earmarked for the former fighters or sympathisers of the FMLN have been effectively transferred. The FMLN has pressured the government to accelerate the procedure, but the Salvadoran legislature has created numerous difficulties. The process of transfer requires around 14 complex stages. This clumsy legal framework slows down the process. The FMLN has demanded that the government accelerate and simplify it. But progress has been very slow. One should not underestimate the bad faith of the government.

The cases of 400 former fighters of the Democratic National Army (END, the army of the FMLN) and more than 2,000 occupants of land sympathetic to the Front have not been resolved. The transfer programme for former government soldiers is very much slower, which has led to recent violent actions on their part.

Land transfer will allow a reorganisation of the economic structure of the countryside. Granting a significant part of the productive land to the peasants will allow development in the countryside and a better standard of living. This requires not just the transfer of land but also sufficient credit and technical support.

● How can you raise the standard of living?

The only way to escape the current level of poverty is to create the conditions so that people can contribute to their development rather than relying on external aid. We should no longer accept foreign aid unconditionally. And we should commit ourselves to repaying it in the medium term, to be responsible towards those who help us.

The TD has campaigned among its sympathisers in the rural communities to change mentalities and make them see that they will remain poor so long as they depend on programmes of assistance. To build a true development it is necessary to

see things in the long term, to define clearly what is necessary to repay the loans. These are new ideas that shake the habits of the left.

We believe that it is necessary to go beyond the concept of large scale social ownership advanced by the left until now. This model has obviously failed in El Salvador. Co-operative ownership has not shown itself to be an efficient form of organisation.

We are not saying that private property is a panacea, which would be to repeat the errors made in eastern Europe. The TD has been one of the first forces to diffuse the new concept of social property with private characteristics. Each person could farm half his/her allotment from the land reform privately, and integrates the rest into co-operative production. We think that the creation of small productive units made up of owners trying to develop to the maximum the global value of their land can be very positive. In this manner the people feel themselves owners of the land they work and they invest. But at the same time they are conscious that to succeed in developing themselves they must remain organised. Concretely we try to associate individual ownership with a collective social expression. If you discuss with the peasants, you can see that it is the type of response they are waiting for.

Another grave problem to be resolved is the transfer of lands to the "new towns" created by the FMLN in the rural zones. During the war, many Salvadorans sought refuge abroad and many others became "displaced" inside the country. As the end of the conflict approached, these people created new communities like Guarjila in Chalatenango, Segundo Montes in Morazan, and Santa Marta in the Cabanas. These "new towns" are today confronted with two major problems. Firstly, they are not recognised as administrative areas, which cuts them off from government-financed programmes of social support. This makes them very dependent on foreign aid. Secondly, these "new towns" face many complications in the land transfer process. These communities, to a

large extent originally constructed on unleased agricultural land, have acquired urban characteristics (clinics, schools, small factories and so on) thanks to support and solidarity from abroad. This has led the owners to speculate by trying to sell their land at the price of urban and not rural land. In most cases they even add the value of the buildings constructed by the current occupants! Negotiations on over 900 properties have broken down. It is impossible to resolve this problem through the current land reform regulations, because these stipulate that the owner must be willing to sell. The FMLN is thus demanding a special regime for these towns.

A similar problem exists in the urban centres of the former guerrilla zones. At the beginning of the war, abandoned their houses were occupied by FMLN sympathisers, essentially returned refugees and displaced persons. Today, the owners wish to recover their housing or demand very high prices from the occupiers. This question too cannot be resolved under the existing land transfer legislation, because the cost of urban accommodation is much higher than the 30,000 colons accorded to each occupant to buy land. Again a specific regime is needed.

We reserve the right to appeal for legal mobilisations of the rank and file. The negotiating table has its limits and the possibilities of dialogue are exhausting themselves. If the government decides to block everything, the FMLN will call for mobilisations for the right to land. ★

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Racist Terror in Oklahoma

by Tom Barrett

ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR people died in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. This is the worst case of non-governmental terrorism in U.S. history. (Massacres of Native Americans by U.S. military forces frequently had higher death tolls.) The victims were employees and clients of federal social service agencies — a cross-section of the city's working class. Nineteen were children in day care because their mothers needed to work to provide for them; the victims as a whole were disproportionately African American. In the initial hours after the blast media began to speculate about the loyalty or propensity to terrorism of the entire Islamic population — Middle Eastern immigrants, non-Middle Eastern immigrants, and even the [African American] Nation of Islam. The scapegoating was so blatant and so racist that even President Clinton and Attorney General Reno had to caution against it.

In fact, the bombing seems to be the work of fanatical members of the "Michigan militia." These white supremacists — and thousands like them in other organizations — gather for combat training on weekends — using real assault rifles, loaded with live ammunition. Their "officers" are often veterans of elite military units with links to the shadowy underworld euphemistically called the "intelligence community." Members of these groups claim that their enemy is the federal government; some may actually believe it. Their real targets, however, are the communities of color, the organized labor movement, and those struggling for sexual equality and freedom. Like-minded individuals carried out the murder of Dr. David Gunn and other abortion providers. Others are attempting to set up an exclusively "Aryan" homeland in the Rocky Mountains.

The more open reactionaries in the U.S. government, from President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s to House Speaker Newt Gingrich today have given varying degrees of encouragement to these forces. In comparison, government has turned its full repressive fury against those who pose no threat to public safety, but are an



Photo AP/David Longstreath

Right wing extremist Thomas James McVeigh, arrested in connection with the car bombing of the Alfred Murrah Building in Oklahoma City.

obstacle to ruling-class profits — striking Air Traffic Controllers in the early 1980s or African Americans protesting police violence today. It is remarkable how silent the "law-and-order" chorus has become since the arrest of a suspect with links with right-wing paramilitary groups. At present, Timothy McVeigh claims to be a "prisoner of war" and is responding to FBI questions only with "name, rank, and serial number." Though he has not been convicted, political conclusions about the "militia movement's" responsibility for this terrorist act can justifiably be drawn.

The millionaire-owned media promotes the notion that this bombing was revenge for the government's attack on the Branch Davidian cult's compound in Waco, Texas. That confrontation ended in a fire (started at 3 locations inside the buildings) which destroyed the compound and killed nearly everyone inside. Whatever outrage individuals in the "militia movement" may

express or even feel about the Waco incident, the attention paid to it is a diversion from the real danger posed by ultraright paramilitary groups.

Those joining militia groups are hardly fighting their oppression in the same way that a small number of Arab militants drawn to terrorism are. U.S. paramilitary groups are not drawn from the communities of color or from the most poorly paid sectors of the working class. In fact, many of their leaders make their living as gun retailers. The greatest threat they face from the government is a loss of profits — not even being forced out of business — by restrictions on the sale of semi-automatic assault weapons, guns with which it is already illegal to hunt in all 50 states.

The white males who join militia groups may claim that "unqualified" people of color and women are taking jobs away from them, but few in fact are unemployed. They may claim that the U.S. government restricts their liberties, but few if any have ever been arrested for a crime they did not commit, let alone been the victims of police violence. They complain about feminists and

homosexuals, about African Americans and Latinos, about Jews and socialists, but they would be hard pressed to demonstrate how any of those groups has had a directly negative impact on their lives.

In fact, the militia members tend to enjoy a far higher standard of living than those about whom they complain. If African Americans and Latinos are taking jobs away from white men, why is unemployment so high in the communities of color? Are the militia members concerned when cops gun down young African Americans in the street? Or do they cheer? Yet whose liberties are being threatened?

No, the militia movement is a collection of racists, sexists, anti-Semites, and labor haters, who kill people. Are they different from the Nazis or the Ku Klux Klan? Are they "fascists"? Whatever precise classification one may give them, they are a physical threat to organized labor, to

Talk Radio

The past decade has seen a proliferation of radio stations on the AM band changing to a "talk" format, since they cannot compete with FM in quality of music broadcast. Talk show announcers editorialize about a news item and invite telephone calls from listeners. Many announcers respond rudely and sarcastically to those who dare disagree with them. They red-bait, queer-bait, call them any number of names, all for the entertainment of their listening audience. The best known announcer, Rush Limbaugh is now syndicated on radio and television across the U.S.A. Bad as he is, he is by no means the most hateful or reactionary. G. Gordon Liddy, whose commitment to freedom was demonstrated by his participation in the Watergate break-in, has a talk radio show, as does Iran-Contra scandal star Oliver North. Among the worst — and most widely heard — is Bob Grant, who spews racist filth from WABC station (New York).



President Clinton caused quite a stir among these bigots when he suggested that their inflammatory rhetoric could push an unstable individual to carry out an act of violence like the Oklahoma City bombing. To be sure, this can be neither proved nor disproved. And conceding the right of the government to suppress the most right-wing of the talk-radio announcers would give them a free hand to move against networks like Pacifica, which use radio to organize for progressive social change.

Nevertheless, Clinton has a point. Right-wing talk radio announcers have given racism and sexism a legitimacy which they had lost during the 1960s and 1970s.

When they say that people of color, feminists, homosexuals, and socialists are destroying the United States of America and that the government has been taken over by "left-wingers" like Clinton, it must follow that the only possible

way to save America — save it for the white man — is to take violent action. The announcers leave the conclusion unspoken, but there is no mistaking it. Ultraright talk radio is a very real threat to the workers movement and to the communities of color, and we have every right to carry out strategies to counter that threat. We can have no faith in the capitalist government to do it for us. ★

people of color, to women, to homosexuals, and, as Oklahoma City shows, the government cannot be depended on to stop them.

The Threat of Government Repression

The Clinton administration is using the cover of the ultraright to move against the civil liberties of the workers movement. Clinton is proposing legislation to Congress which will widen the powers of police agencies such as the FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) to spy on and repress organizations deemed to be "terrorist" — by the government's peculiar criteria. The Republican leadership in Congress is proposing its own set of new laws, with only minor differences from Clinton's. In fact, both parties are using the opportunity of a right-wing terrorist attack to enact repressive measures to be used against the left — and not necessarily against groups which engage in violence.

This is not paranoia, but the harsh lesson of experience. Racist paramilitary groups have functioned with virtually no interference from law enforcement agencies for over ten years now. What a contrast with the government's war of extermination against the Black Panther Party in 1968-72.

True, the Panthers often used provocative slogans like "pick up the gun" and "off the pig" and postured as guerrilla fighters — a policy which was certainly misguided. However, at no time did they carry out acts which can even remotely be called "terrorist." They never advocated attacks on white people or anyone else because of their race or religion. And while they advocated armed struggle against the police — in response to daily police violence in Black communities throughout the United States — virtually every confrontation on record shows the Panthers defending themselves against police attack. They certainly never committed any violent act even remotely on the order of the Oklahoma bombing, which killed 164 people. Nevertheless, then-FBI director J. Edgar Hoover targeted them as the number-one threat to domestic national security. During the Johnson and Nixon administrations, the FBI and local police in a number of U.S. cities harassed, spied on, and murdered Black Panther Party activists. They hired agents provocateurs to promote paranoia about police informers within the Panthers' ranks, a tactic which unfortunately proved successful. The Black Panther Party was eventually destroyed, by a combination

of intimidation, imprisonment, and outright murder.

J. Edgar Hoover was also concerned with the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance, which grew in strength and influence in the radical movement in the 1960s and 1970s. He and the capitalist media presented American Trotskyists as terrorists — despite the movement's rejection of individual terrorism in favor of mass action and an orientation to the working class. Newsweek magazine included the Fourth International in its list of terrorist organizations, and invented a quote from Ernest Mandel to support its conclusions.

The government's different treatment of left and right radicals is hardly illogical. The Panthers were a revolutionary movement, and represented a genuine threat to ruling-class power and privilege. They could have inspired African Americans, Latinos, and other oppressed people — and ultimately all working people — to fight for their rights and living standards against the capitalist class and its government. That was the true "crime," for which they paid a terrible price. The "militia movement," like the anti-abortion terrorists, neo-Nazis, and skinheads, are reactionary, and ultimately defend the interests of the ruling class and its government. They are the enemies of people of color, of women, and of any working people who are unwilling to capitulate to the bosses' drive to lower living standards. It is irrelevant how many people they kill or maim; they will never be the victims of the kind of police onslaught which was directed against the Black Panther Party.

Ultimately the best defense against reactionary violence is a strong and militant labor movement and a revitalized struggle by the Black community and all the communities of color. We can all learn from the example of the feminist movement, which has stood its ground against Operation Rescue and other anti-abortion, anti-woman. A massive demonstration of strength and unity by working people can intimidate the purveyors of racism and sexism to the point where they no longer dare threaten the lives of oppressed people, in the streets or on the airwaves. ★

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Marketing Haiti

THE GOVERNMENT, international donors and the private sector were in the headlines in mid-May. President Jean-Bertrand Aristide hosted two conferences setting Haiti on the rails of neo-liberal, export-led "economic growth." After five days of meetings, the government had promised to reduce taxes, reaffirmed its determination to sell public enterprises and pledged to raise electricity fees. It embraced the International Monetary Fund and World Bank as "partners," their "Structural Adjustment Policy" as its guideline, and the private sector as its salvation.

The first meeting was a convening of the "Consultative Group" — the multilateral and bilateral "donors" who met with the government-in-exile in August, 1994, and again in January, 1995. This group, heavily dominated by US officials and US-dominated institutions like the IMF and WB, designed and now oversees the implementation of the "Paris Plan."

At meetings on May 11 and 12, the government gave an update to its tutors on measures carried out so far: the price of fuel now varies with the value of the gourde (Haitian currency) and the price of oil. Customs fees have been cut 50% and privatization is moving forward. Ms. Nancy Birdsall of the Inter-American Development Bank applauded "the government's firm and difficult commitment to sustained growth that is private-sector driven." Others praised the president's steady endorsement of "reconciliation" and the decision to sell state enterprises "in order to improve sorely needed services."

The only discordant note came when Prime Minister Smarck Michel hinted he would like to see "aid" paid out more quickly (only about US\$ 300 million of the promised US\$ 1.2 billion has been dispersed — mainly to cover the interest on the country's massive debt, and to pay government salaries.

The second conference was organized by President Aristide. He restated his determination to make Haiti self-sufficient in food: a laudable goal but completely at odds with the neo-liberal guidelines his government has adopted, which will drive peasants from the land and convert farms into agro-industries producing export crops. One more example of Aristide's willingness to confuse and mystify the

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population on crucial issues.

The government promised that the state will not intervene in the private sector and will "play by the rules of the game". Minister of Finance Marie Michele Rey reaffirmed her faith in "free enterprise," the "liberalization of the economy" and competition, and stressed again the need

● Teachers win 120% pay rise after student riots

After weeks of activities which ended with two days of mobilization of public school students in the capital during which 20 people were injured, public school teachers will get a 120% salary increase.

The promise came after a month-long struggle for just wages and better conditions which included a nation-wide strike, rallies and marches, one attended by thousands of teachers, students and supporters. Although the raise represents less than half of what they demanded (300%), and does not make up for inflation and devaluation over the last three years, the two major trade unions decided to accept the offer, announced by President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in a television broadcast on May 9.

Aristide bypassed Minister of Education Emmanuel Buteau, who had earlier announced that the state had only enough resources for a 30% increase. By intervening personally when the population's demands are not being met, the president gains political mileage and further propagates the myth that unpopular policies are not his responsibility, but that of those around him.

● Flag day? Under occupation ?

President Jean-Bertrand Aristide used Flag Day/University Day (May 18) to hand out tee shirts, lay the corner-stone of the long-promised university campus, and promise jobs in the Arcahaie region (where the national flag was first sewed in 1803). He also invited citizens to display the country's flag at least until the Organisation of American States (OAS) meets in Port-au-Prince later this month.

Peasant and student groups said the day should not be celebrated at all. "Can we celebrate Flag Day when there is another flag flying above it?" asked a press release of the national peasant group Tet Kole Ti Peyizan Ayisyen. "Can we say we are independent? Can we talk about national sovereignty?"

to "attract capital to promote production."

The conference ended with the announcement of several big contracts for business people who supported the coup d'etat, reinforcing even more the economic domination and privileges they sought to protect with the coup, and built up over the last three years of their de facto rule. ★

On May 8 and 9, public students took to the streets of the capital. On several occasions, when they asked private schools to close in solidarity, rock fights broke out. UN soldiers sprayed crowds with tear gas and shot in the air. On May 8 students responded by chanting "If you spray us with tear gas, we'll throw rocks," and "Down with the occupation!" The following day, similar confrontations occurred. Students at Metropolitan private school, kidnapped and beat two public school students. Others threw rocks at cars. However, many observers reported seeing armed, unidentifiable adults in the crowds, leading to speculation about provocation.

At a press conference on May 10, the teaching unions Union Nationale des Normaliens d'Haiti (UNNOH) and Corps National des Evaluateurs Haitiens (CONEH) called for teachers to "remain mobilized" and negotiate for benefits, better conditions and continuing education. The unions have been criticized by other teachers' groups and others in the democratic movement for their willingness to forego a broad, well-organized mobilization for negotiations. ★

Four student groups organized a "political-cultural" day at the university's Science Faculty. Under the banner of anti-imperialist and anti-occupation struggle and opposition to the government's neo-liberal policies, some 70 participated. Speakers stressed the urgent need for mobilization to make the university autonomous and democratic and to reform the curriculum.

The low turn-out was partly the result of 'competition' with other opposition and official events. But it also testifies to the government-encouraged confusion — on the occupation, and concerning the real nature of the government and on its objectives — which keeps people waiting and demobilized. ★

The humanitarian army: Equator's ge

The recent war with Peru brought two tendencies to the surface. Firstly, the Ecuador bourgeoisie is still incapable of playing a political as well as an economic role. Secondly, the response of the military elite is a populist social and political project, which is gaining ground. As *Carlos Rojas Reyes reports from Quito*, the chauvinist atmosphere of the war is still strong, and the generals are gaining ground.

FOR SOME YEARS NOW the military has been building links to civil society. They have concentrated their efforts on the poorest sectors — where poverty threatens to provoke an explosive social crisis at any moment. From the Indian villages of the sierra to the shanty towns of Quito and Guayaquil, the army offers free labour, and builds roads and sanitation facilities. The arrival of the army means the dissolution, or cooptation of whatever popular organisations were already working in the district. In essence, the army is trying to block popular mobilisation, by taking the lead of the potentially most explosive sectors.

This paternalistic intervention has reduced the extremes of poverty. But building a social base like this implies a political project in the background. By presenting a general or two in elections, the army can take over the country by inserting the army into civil society.

The petty bourgeoisie might be attracted to such a strategy — the political climate is bleak, and it is clear which way the wind is blowing. There is no shortage of 'organic intellectuals' to support the soldiers. The country's 'intellectuals' are already theorising the "new role" for the country's "illustrious army".

The background to all this, of course, is the historic inability of the bourgeoisie in Ecuador to transform itself into a political class. Unable to administer the state apparatus in a stable way, the bourgeoisie has accepted the leadership of one or another political fraction — hoping in vain that one wing of the right will rise above the others to represent the general interests of the class. This crisis has reached the point of massive disillusionment with the party system itself among the bourgeoisie. We can expect a generalisation of independent candidates in the run-up to the 1996 elections. Roldos has abandoned the Populist Party which made him the country's president, while Sixto Duran

dropped the Social Christian Party in order to be elected president!

The politicisation of the army and the de-politicisation of party politics are both responses to the same problem. Because the bourgeoisie is incapable of defining its common interest, different individuals and cliques compete to respond to and channel the frustrations of the bourgeoisie, but also the dissatisfied masses. At the same time, the senior figures of the key institution of the state are assuming a 'Bonapartist' role — above the factional differences of the bourgeoisie, and are ready to govern in the interest of the ruling class - despite itself.

Militarism is back

The war with Peru brought back to life all the old monsters of Latin American society — at the same time as the debate on the consolidation of civil society, and on our fragile democracies was going on, the generals have found new arguments for strengthening their hand and coming back to centre stage.

There is no lack of unresolved border disputes. This is now becoming a reason for re-equipping the army with sophisticated technology, and preparing strategies for new kinds of war.

After apparently declining, militarism is back. The army is again 'solving' international disputes and 'ensuring national security' from internal threats; in other words, taking charge of repressing all attempts to protest against poverty, unemployment and marginalisation.

American imperialism is back too. So far only in the background, keeping an interested eye on the performance of new weapons and tactics that may prove useful elsewhere.

The US. will probably benefit from this little war. Defence Secretary William Perry used the war to argue for a continent-wide meeting of defence ministers. His goal is the creation of a common intervention force for 'solving'



"What a mess !!

similar 'problems' in the future. The US could soon be authorised to intervene militarily anywhere in Latin America, wherever the situation — defined so as to include any revolutionary or insurrectional movement — justifies.

During the war, all the political factions joined together against the 'common enemy'. Not surprisingly, the government and the dominant factions attempted to maintain national unity even after the end of armed confrontation. But how to realise the neo-liberal project without major political costs? Even during the armed conflict the government accelerated the process of privatisation, and proposed new legislation increasing the working week from 40 to 48 weeks. The bourgeois opposition is in a dilemma — they support these policies, but need to take their distance from them in order to win votes in 1996.

The legal left, including retired general Frank Vargas' APRE, was unable to regroup popular frustration after the war. Having taken the lead of the pro-war (and

generals prepare for 1996 elections



Yes, lost market..."

pro-government) movement, APRE has lost credibility. The social democratic Equator Socialist Party had not recovered from the defeat of their discredited Borja administration in 1994. They did not know how to reconstruct their social democratic, mainly electoralist project. And their internal divisions were becoming sharper and sharper.

'Independents' and Generals

General Gallardo, the Minister of Defence, used his wartime popularity to enter the political arena as an 'independent'. Ricardo Noboa reacted by abandoning the leadership of the Social Christians, in favour of a personal alliance with the general. He realised, even if his party was the single strongest bourgeois faction, that the new dynamic discredited all parties. He calculated, correctly, that by joining the 'independents' he would increase his potential base of support.

Before the war, Vargas' left bloc enjoyed the support of a good number of those dissatisfied with the rightist

government and the discredited Socialist Party. But the 'independent plus military' formula of the right has denied Vargas the potential to defeat the Social Christians. The army, particularly General Gallardo, is simply too popular. The media, too, continues to intoxicate people with chauvinist nationalism.

Thus, the left is disintegrating, just as the right was. The Socialist Party has merged with Vargas' own Equator Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRE). The Castroist Popular Democratic Movement (MDP, ex-Maoist) also supports this moderate left populist bloc. Events in Eastern Europe, and a range of internal crises have resulted in the disappearance of a range of small and medium sized left organisations. Apart from the Socialist Party, the only at least semi-legal left organisation is Democratic Left (ID).

The centrist elements of the bourgeoisie are even more bewildered and confused than before. Some try to hitch themselves to the prestige of the army. Others prefer to join with the populism of APRE. Others are trying to unify the centre as such.

The indigenous movement is now the spearhead of the struggle against the oppression of the proletariat, and against the consolidation of the neo-liberal project. Before the war, the indigenous population had begun to discuss their participation in the next elections. In 1994 'Indian' organisations had passed agreements with a range of political organisations, feeling that they themselves could not present national candidates. Now, they were talking of running their own list in the elections. This shift in the political mood of the indigenous population had the potential to change the balance of forces in the country, and transform the nature of the Ecuadorian left. But the war slowed down the development of the indigenous alternative, and the movement as a whole is rather disoriented.

The war cut away the social base of the various social struggles, and continues to block any development. The main problem is not repression as such, but the wave of chauvinism and the demagoguery of 'national unity'. It was impossible to organise for the demands of the oppressed, or to demand that the poor not pay the cost of the war. And the poor are paying the

cost. There is a slow increase in social unrest, but the government is using the Law on National Security to repress all these embryonic forms of discontent.

The bourgeois government would like to maintain this 'internal war' as long as possible. But the different bourgeois factions will break ranks and seek the support of popular sectors sooner or later, as the 1996 elections approach. This should open up a limited political space for popular struggles, for the legal left, and for those sections of the indigenous movement which are linked to the urban milieu. Even so, the elite will always be able to invoke the spirit of national unity, or create a new scare of an external threat.

The way forward is difficult. More than ever before, the combination of popular struggles and legal campaigns is essential to re-launch the mass movement, and put the break on the bourgeois offensive. ★

Equator, April 1995

Bolivia: State of siege

It is illegal for more than three Bolivians to gather together in public -- unless they are policemen. Under the state of siege declared on 19 April, special permits are also needed to travel between towns.

Over 1,000 trade union activists were arrested on 19 April, in a crackdown in response to the massively successful General Strike called on 27 March. Workers and shopkeepers were protesting education cuts, wage cuts for teachers and other public sector employees, privatisation, and other anti-union regulations.

Teachers' leaders José Luis Alvarez, Gonzalo Sorucco and Vilma de la Plata are still detained, and the offices of their defence committee are routinely raided.

Protests should be sent to Presidencia de la Republica, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza Murillo, La Paz, Bolivia.

A Bolivian Union Solidarity Committee has been set up in Great Britain -- write to BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX, or fax 0171 978 9144

United Nations

by Gilbert Achcar

The United Nations (UN) is founded on the 'idealistic' principle of the equality of states. In other words, one state, one vote, whatever the population, wealth or power that state has in the world. This beautiful principle is the basic reason why the UN Assembly only has the power to make recommendations. The real decision-making power is held by the Security Council, the only body which can authorise the use of force by the UN (Charter of San Francisco, Article 7). The five post-war 'great powers' (USA, Russia, China, France, Britain) are the only permanent members of the Security Council, and each of them has a veto over any of its resolutions.

The United States was the main sponsor behind the creation of the UN back in 1945. The role of the New York based

organisation, alongside the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington, was to be the consolidation of the post-war status quo in an American-dominated world. The only limitation was the blocking power of the USSR on the Security Council — Moscow being the only member of the 'big five' likely to represent an opposition to US plans (until 1971 China's seat was held by the 'Nationalist' government of Formosa, now called Taiwan). Only 10 of the 51 members of the US dominated General Assembly in 1946 were African or Asian states.

The first major military intervention under the blue flag was the American intervention in Korea in 1950. UN support was voted after the USSR began to boycott the Security Council in protest at the occupation of China's seat by Formosa rather than the new People's Republic of

China under Mao Zedung. The USSR hurriedly ended its boycott, but the USA engineered a vote authorising the Assembly to take charge of dossiers blocked at the Security Council level. During the 1950's, the US played the General Assembly against the Security Council (or more exactly, against the Soviet veto). Examples include UN Assembly support for the US Marines' intervention in Lebanon in 1958 and the intervention in the Congo in 1960.

After 1960, the situation changed. Decolonisation in Africa and Asia brought a large number of new states into the UN. This gradually shifted the consensus in the General Assembly towards the positions of the 'non-aligned' states' movement [led by the modernising Arab Nationalist Nasser of Egypt, the secular Indian leader Nehru, and the independent 'Communist' Tito of Yugoslavia]. The number of non-permanent members of the Security Council was increased from six to its present level of ten. Only permanent members have an absolute veto, though.

This transformation of the international organisation forced the United States to change their strategy in the UN. The US used its veto for the first time in 1970, opposing the imposition of sanctions on the white regimes of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa. The gulf between the US and the UN grew throughout the 1970s. During this period the UN gave the Palestine Liberation Organisation observer status (1974),



Reform the United Nations ? To do what ?

The major powers plan to transform the United Nations to reflect the growing concentration of political, economic and military power in the world says Luis Suarez. To do this they want to

- widen the functions of the Security Council to include new problems like the drug trade and the environment
- restructure the military command of the United Nations, and build up some kind of rapid intervention force
- diminish the role of the General Assembly, particularly in terms of the level of sanction that can be voted by the assembly.
- introduce some kind of veto mechanism in the General Assembly
- reinforce the legal powers of the Secretary General

All these measures would mean a militarization of the way the United Nations works, and an increase in the powers of the Security Council, which is dominated by the major powers.

Some of the propositions might seem well-intentioned -- such as the new priority given to the struggle against drug smuggling or the protection of the environment. But we know that these

positive principles can be transformed into instruments of domination by the great powers.

Cuba would like to see the United Nations become more democratic. This would mean, for instance, increasing the number of seats on the Security Council, electing its members from the General Assembly and removing the veto mechanism. Clear limits must be put on the powers of the Security Council. The General Assembly must have a reinforced role too. Finally, Non-Governmental Organisations and other representatives of civil society should be involved more in the General Assembly. There should be other kinds of intervention, not just those of governments.

The author directs the Center for American Studies in Havana, Cuba. This article is excerpted from the transcription of his intervention at the "Other Voices of the Planet" Summit organised by the Committee for Cancellation of Third World Debt (COCAD) on 18 March 1995. ★

(Speaker) "... tea
what I was going

United States?

LA PAIX
DANS UN MONDE MEILLEUR...



"Peace! In a better world!" (in the hall) "Damn! exactly my speech to say" (General) "Me too!"

recognised that Zionism was a form of racism (1975), and called for a "New International Economic Order" (1977). More generally, this was a period of declining American influence in the world — especially after their defeat in the Vietnam war.

The 'divorce' was most marked under US President Ronald Reagan. He began a deliberate 'counter-attack' on the UN — withholding the US financial contribution to the organisation, and reducing the budget unilaterally. He also challenged the

'one state — one vote' principle by proposing that states' votes on the UN budget be counted in relation to those states' contributions to that budget.

During this period the UN condemned the US naval blockade of Nicaragua (1984), bombing of Libya (1986) and intervention in Panama (1989). There were also a number of condemnations of America's client state Israel, and of the US blockade of Cuba.

Between 1970 and 1990, the General Assembly majority frequently opposed US

hegemony. The Soviet and (after 1971) Chinese vetoes confirmed the American weakness in the Security Council, and the only military actions approved were modest "peace-keeping" actions like those in Cyprus, South Lebanon and on the disputed Indo-Pakistan frontier.

In 1990, the situation was transformed again, this time by the paralysis and collapse of the USSR. Within a few hours of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a Soviet-US communiqué had been issued. This set the tone for the Soviet green light for US intervention, including the August 1990 blockade of Iraq, and culminating in the Security Council approval for the US-led military action against Iraq.

The UN seemed once again to be a useful instrument for the US government. Domestic opposition to military interventions abroad (the 'Vietnam syndrome') has been overcome by the use of UN cover. George Bush even used the UN support for the Gulf War to ask for international contributions towards the costs of the invasion — he collected a record \$53 US billion.

In Somalia (1992) and Haiti (1994) the United States has again used UN cover to allow the deployment of troops abroad.

The new US Congress — dominated by the right-wing Republicans — wants the UN to be completely subject to US wishes, and is not even satisfied with Clinton's "UN a la carte" approach. ★

The author lectures on international relations at the Université de Paris VIII. This article is a summarised transcription of his intervention at the "Other Voices of the Planet" Summit organised by the Committee for Cancellation of Third World Debt (COCAD) on 18 March 1995.

This and other contributions are available (price \$US 10 or equivalent) in English, French or Dutch from COCAD, 29 Plantinstraat, 1070 Brussels, Belgium

Zapatista struggle continues

Negotiations between the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) and the Mexican government (see IV#266, May 1995) were due to resume on June 7. Ulises Martinez Flores of our sister publication *Inprecor para América Latina* sent this report on the situation in Chiapas state on May 26.

THE CEASEFIRE CONTINUES, as the government attempts to evaluate the strength and disposition of EZLN troops, and find ways of legalising the Zapatista movement.

Rather than demilitarising the region, the government has proposed the creation of seven 'truce' roads — allowing free movement of Zapatista troops in the forest region of Chiapas, under government supervision. No agreement has yet been reached on the confrontation in the Los Altos and Meseta zones, or the other two regions of Chiapas state.

The Zapatista strategy in the negotiations reflects a number of non-military factors which oblige them to prefer detente to force. These factors include the exhaustion of the local population, the disarticulation of their social base, and the continuing suppression of all social forums where neo-Zapatistism was gaining ground before the government intervention earlier this year.

The government is managing to exploit its aid activities within the social movement born from the EZLN revolt in January 1994. A part of the Democratic Assembly of the People of Chiapas (AEDPCH) has entered negotiations with the state over the 'Programme for Social Well Being and Economic Development in Chiapas'. This 'divide and rule' strategy will also help the government prepare for the regional and municipal elections in Chiapas — scheduled for October 15, 1995.

The legalisation of the Zapatistas opens a range of questions. Above all, what kind of legalisation the government is thinking about — given that all it offers the existing political parties is a One-Party system dominated by the ruling PRI party, dressed up by periodic but ephemeral electoral reforms.

Hot May in Mexico City

Over 1/2 million Mexican workers participated in anti-austerity demonstrations on 1 May. This year saw the first May Day demonstrations not controlled by the state, through its servants in the official trade unions. In Mexico city,



the most visible elements in the 300,000 strong march were the Independent Proletarian Movement (MPI) and the public sector bus transport trade union.

The cooperation of the MPI and other independent trade unions in the organisation of this demonstration is an important step forward. Nevertheless, the common declarations show the political weakness and lack of leadership of a trade union movement suffering after several years of repression (the public bus transport sector is currently being privatised by the state, and its union leaders have been imprisoned).

May also saw an improvement in the coordination between university unions, now committed to industrial action for wage increases. Small retailers in the pharmaceutical sector also closed their doors for one day in protest over the increase of Value Added Tax (Sales Tax).

CND

The National Democratic Convention (CND)¹ has not fulfilled its ambition of developing as a broad association of militants trying to articulate the link

between these various social struggles and the Zapatista-led revolt of the indigenous peasants of the south of the country. There has been a reduction in the pluralistic, open character of the CND, which has increasingly become a talking-shop for the sterile quarrels of the 'old left'. This has frustrated sectors of society which are entering into struggle, and which looked to the CND as a framework for concrete cooperation. As a result, a number of new movements in 'civil society' have been formed, most recently the National Democratic Alliance (founded May 17).

Unfortunately, the unification — or reunification of these forces is not yet possible. This is essential if the left is to bring real support to the Zapatista revolt, and seize the opportunities of the new situation in society to build a broad national movement for democratic and economic transformation. ★

¹ Created in August 1994 at the initiative of the EZLN as the framework for the blossoming struggles in civil society.

The IMF contribution to the collapse of Yugoslavia

by Michel Chossudovsky

In a recent study of the gradual fragmentation of the Yugoslav federation in the course of the 1980s, Sean Gervasi argues that separatist aspirations in Slovenia and Croatia gained impetus as a result of the collapse in the standard of living and the weakening of the federal system under the structural adjustment programme.

In Yugoslavia, the strategic objectives of Western intervention had been formalised in 1984 in a US National Security Decision Directive (NSDD 133) entitled "United States Policy towards Yugoslavia" labelled SECRET SENSITIVE. A censored version of this document was declassified by Washington



in 1990. It largely conformed to a previous National Security Decision Directive (NSDD 54) issued in 1982 pertaining to Eastern Europe. The objectives contained in the latter document included "expanded efforts to promote a 'quiet revolution' to overthrow Communist governments and parties" while reintegrating the countries of Eastern Europe into a market oriented economy.

After ten years of impoverishment under the structural adjustment programme, the Yugoslav economic reforms reached their climax in the late 1980s. A critical turning point was marked under the pro-US government of Mr. Ante Marcovic. The Federal Premier had travelled to Washington to meet President George Bush in the Autumn of 1989 just prior to the collapse of the Berlin Wall. A substantial bilateral aid package combined with the usual IMF-World Bank support had been promised in exchange for sweeping economic reforms including a new devalued currency, the freeze of wages, the curtailment of government expenditure and the closure of

"unprofitable" State enterprises. A new round of budget cuts and the redirection of federal revenues towards debt servicing were conducive to the curtailment of transfer payments by Belgrade to the governments of the states and autonomous regions thereby fuelling the process of political balkanisation and secessionism. The government of Serbia rejected Marcovic's austerity programme outright leading to a walk-out protest of some 650,000 Serbian workers directed against the Federal government.

A second phase of economic reform was implemented with the support of the Bretton Woods institutions in June 1990 leading to further cuts in public expenditure and a programme of wholesale privatisation of state enterprises under World Bank supervision. In the multi-party elections in 1990, economic policy was at the centre of the political debate, the separatist coalitions ousted the Communists in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenia. The 1989-90 austerity measures had engineered the de facto collapse of the federal fiscal structure. This situation acted in a sense as a "fait accompli" prior to the formal declaration of secession by Croatia and Slovenia in June 1991. Political pressures on Belgrade by the European Community combined with the aspirations of Germany to draw the Yugoslav region into its geopolitical orbit, further facilitated the process of secession. Yet the economic



and social conditions for the break-up of the federation resulting from ten years of economic stabilisation and structural adjustment had already been firmly implanted...

It is worth noting, however, that while IMF-World Bank conditionalities did not explicitly address constitutional issues, the promise of European aid was



simultaneously tied to "the adoption of economic reforms" and "the respect for minority rights". Supporting broad strategic interests, the austerity measures had laid the basis for "the re-colonisation" of the Balkans. The separation of Croatia had by 1990 received the formal assent of the German Foreign Minister Mr. Hans Dietrich Genscher who was in almost daily contact with his Croatian counterpart in Zagreb. Germany not only favoured secession, it was also "forcing the pace of international diplomacy" and pressuring its Western allies to grant recognition to Slovenia and Croatia. ★

The first IMF-backed structural adjustment programme adopted shortly prior to the death of Marshall Tito in 1980 "wreaked economic and political havoc [on the Yugoslav economy]... Slower growth, the accumulation of foreign debt and especially the cost of servicing it as well as devaluation led to a fall in the standard of living of the average Yugoslav... The economic crisis threatened political stability... it also threatened to aggravate simmering ethnic tensions".

Sean Gervasi

Bosnia-Herzegovina

No ethnic partition

This resolution was passed by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) in March 1995

THE WAR IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA is the result of a partition plan thought up by Serbian President Milosevic and Croatian President Tudjman before the war. These were taken up by the "peace plans", and carried out in Bosnia-Herzegovina by local Serb and Croat nationalist parties. Both Karadzic's Bosnian Serbian Democratic Party - SDS and its "Chetniks", and Mate Boban's Bosnian Croatian Democratic Community - HDZ with its Croatian Defense Council - HVO militias each built a 'state within the state' beginning in the spring of 1992. Each was backed by its "mother republic" and its armies.

The arrival in power of the three nationalist parties' in the Republic's first democratic elections in 1990, and the goals of re-Islamicizing the Muslims pursued by part of the SDA under Bosnian President Izetbegovic, weakened this multiethnic society from within. This was particularly true in the rural areas where communities are more juxtaposed than intermixed. These political circumstances exacerbated the polarisation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On one side were those who remained committed to this state despite everything and committed to a mixed identity - particularly in the urban centres. On the other side were those Serbs and Croats who turned toward nationalist projects of 're-joining' their mother republics.

This war is both a foreign aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina (by Belgrade and Zagreb) and a civil war. This second dimension has become steadily more important over time, because Milosevic and Tudjman are both primarily interested in consolidating power over their own republics. It will not be possible to save multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina without an agreement among all its communities - and without links with the neighboring republics. It will also be necessary to respond to the real fears which encourage people to fall back on exclusive communities - fear of unemployment, of losing one's land, one's identity, or one's life if one does not find oneself inside the "right" frontiers. Confidence can only be rebuilt through the defence of individual and collective rights, independent of ethnic origin — i.e. defending the rights of minorities, and by the pursuit of war criminals (while opposing the

condemnation of a whole people).

These are the main political stakes for any alternative to the plan for partitioning Bosnia. Realising these goals requires total independence and a critical attitude towards all the current governments, and towards all exclusive national currents, inside Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as in the neighboring republics.

There is a major asymmetry in this conflict, which the uneven balance of firepower has only deepened. Serb and Croat nationalism has always denied the existence of the ethnic-national community of Bosnian Muslims (who now call themselves *Bosnijaci* ("Bosniaks") to distinguish themselves more clearly from the Moslem religious community). Plans for the country's partition included the destruction of all traces of Muslim civilization. The equation "Muslim = fundamentalist" has been propagated through lies since the war began in order to make the West accept these policies. In fact, on the eve of the war the Muslims were the least religious of the three communities, because they had been urbanized and secularized for more than a century.

At the same time that we denounce this demonization of Muslims, we have no reason to condone fundamentalist tendencies wherever they manifest themselves. Top SDA leaders' speeches and articles against mixed marriages, and pressures from Muslim charitable organizations for head scarves and mosque attendance are realities that have to be fought, just as much as similar speeches and practices of fundamentalists on the other side. The existence of a project for Bosnia's Islamicization (put forward in a moderate fashion by Izetbegovic) is clear, as is the support that it seeks and gets from certain reactionary Arab regimes.

But this does not make the whole SDA (or the Bosnian army or government) fundamentalist. The recent public denunciation of the Islamicization of the Bosnian army's 7th Corps (around Zenica) by five members of the Bosnian presidency, and the public campaign carried on by army officers and Sarajevo's non-nationalist press on this issue, show that Islamicization is a struggle, not a finished process, still less a successfully completed Islamicization of the

state.

While the political pluralism of the SDA dominated government elected in 1990 was largely formal, the SDA is today a minority within the collegiate presidency. The non-nationalist opposition (Socialist Party, Liberal Party, Social Democratic Union) participate in the Bosnian parliament, and fight for the rule of law - particularly in Tuzla, where they have majority support.

While the logic of Serb and Croat nationalism is to build states within the Bosnian state and win territorial expansion for their mother republics, the interest of the Muslim SDA's secular wing is to preserve Bosnia-Herzegovina. But it wants to establish its hegemony there as much as possible. The Bosnian ruling elite's attachment to their state expresses plans for power and privatization that are comparable to those of the other ex-bureaucratic elites, with all the methods of the old ruling single parties - the current nationalist parties. The Bosnian government's nature is illustrated by its orientation - relying essentially on foreign military intervention to defend Bosnia-Herzegovina's frontiers.

The military dynamic of part of the army, as long as it is controlled by the SDA, can also be above all a dynamic of territorial reconquest without any serious political project that would be attractive to all the communities - or still worse, reconquest with the aim of exclusive control over reconquered territory.

Our role is to denounce that which favours and encourages fundamentalism - starting with the war in which the Moslems are the main victims, and with the plans for ethnic partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. We should also support those "bad Moslems" (bad Catholics, bad Orthodox) who resist fundamentalism. Women especially.

But it would be naive and counter-productive to believe that we can resist fundamentalism (as many defenders of the Bosnian cause imagine) while keeping quiet about Islamicizing policies, particularly those of the SDA. It is still worse to dismiss every critical comment of these policies as "pro-Serb" or "Chetnik".

Whatever the chances of success, in the face of the combined offensive of reactionary forces from all sides, our defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina should strive to base itself on



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Do the Workers have a country?

by José "Bikila" Iriarte

◆ Lenin, James Connolly and Otto Bauer have made an important contribution to our understanding of the national question — its class dynamics, the question of internationalism, the political importance of the right to self-determination.

◆ But current struggles oblige us to reconsider certain questions in the light of recent experience. How and when can nationalist and Marxist currents fuse? What about oppressed nations like the Basques — inside a state of imperialist Europe? Must revolutionary parties always cover the whole of a given state? What does independence mean in the 1990s?

◆ José Iriarte joined the Basque independentist organisation ETA in 1964. Four years later he "disappeared" to join ETA's underground leadership. In 1970 he led the ETA VI tendency which later fused with the Trotskyist LCR. He is currently active in Zutik, a left independentist organisation in the Basque country.

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works under. Minority enclaves called "security zones" are the rule, not the exception in an impossible partition of the republic into 'pure' ethnic cantons. These pockets can never be more than refugee camps - under constant threat of ethnic cleansing, but blocked from fleeing towards "fortress Europe".

● Emphasize the right of self-defense - while distinguishing armed resistance to ethnic cleansing from ethnic cleansing itself!. We should link this legitimate self-defense to a political project that mobilizes the peoples involved so that they can take charge of their own future.

● The weakness inside Bosnia-Herzegovina of any left that might develop these standpoints and axes of struggle is the main cause of our own weakness. The crisis of the so-called 'socialist' countries has produced a dramatic collapse in political consciousness and anti-imperialist or anti-

capitalist organisations. But this is no excuse for softening our criticism of our own failures, and the considerable failures of the workers' movement and the left in Western Europe with respect to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the crisis in ex-Yugoslavia. Nor must it stop us from developing solidarity "from below" (among trade unions, women's organizations, youth; against the war and ethnic cleansing, against racism, in support of pluralist media) that aims precisely at making the expression of alternative choices possible on the ground and at supporting organized resistance to reactionary policies.

We must support those such as Circle 99 in Sarajevo and the various Serb Consultative Councils of the Bosnian federation, who are fighting simultaneously against Karadzic's Chetniks and for turning the federation into a secular state, which would guarantee citizens' rights, equal rights for all the peoples, and a development project ensuring dignity for all. These forces are under attack today from all the nationalist parties.

The Croat-Muslim Federation has noticeably widened the non-nationalist currents' chances for self-expression, and supplied an embryonic alternative to the plans for partitioning Bosnia. But it remains just as fragile as the alliance between Croat and Muslim nationalist parties. The test of its viability will be how the "cantons", the federation's basic units, function in practice. The federation will explode if the cantons are set up in reality on an exclusionary ethnic basis, as is the case in Mostar. From this point of view multi-cultural Tuzla remains a symbol to defend, a symbol which

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Plan, Market + Democracy The experience of the so-called socialist countries

by Catherine Samary

◆ Economists tell us we must choose between planning (bureaucracy and totalitarianism) and the market (rationality and freedom). But the whole debate is meaningless unless we link 'economics' to the pursuit of emancipation.

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by Catherine Samary

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today is threatened. International Workers' Aid, the organisation which concentrates on building trade union solidarity with the workers of Tuzla should be one of our priority campaigns.

As for the negotiations, we should stress:

- The need to recognize and ensure for the peoples of Bosnia and the Balkans a real right to self-determination (i.e. the right to choose whether or not to live together, and if yes, how). It is essential that all currents being able to express themselves in the process of self-determination and not, as is the case in the negotiations, just the exclusionary nationalist forces and warlords.

- We have to fight the tendency to assimilate exclusionary nationalism with the defense of national rights.

- There is no simple or universal recipe for applying the right to self-determination in a non-colonial context of multi-national countries with ethnically mixed territories.

- We are against the establishment of states which award citizenship on ethnic, rather than residential criteria.

- Everyone must be free to define his or her own identity.

- Self-determination of one group must not be at the expense of another.

- We have to judge the concrete socio-political and economic dynamic of each potential new state in the world as it is today. It is impossible to fight those currents which want to create ethnically pure states without defending at the same time a state

founded on individual rights for each citizen, and collective rights for the minority peoples and communities which make up the society.

We have to insist that:

- There will be no lasting peace unless it is fair to all the communities, unless it gives coherent and systematic responses to the crisis which cannot be resolved by rapid settlement procedures based simply on freezing the balance of military forces.

- Any "peace plan" based on ethnic partition of mixed areas is a dead end. Ethnic enclaves are the rule in such plans, not the exception as is the lasting tragedy of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

- Hypocritical politicians may denounce the war, while closing their countries' doors to deserters and refugees.

- The arms embargo compounds the inequality of firepower in the war and is aimed at imposing peace by crushing one community. At the same time, we are against any military campaign aimed at a national group as a whole, against all policies of revenge and military recuperation of territories which in fact are not aimed at enabling the people of Bosnia to live together. We are against any campaign for lifting the embargo which takes on an anti-Serb dynamic and not one of defeating exclusionary policies. We put the stress on the need for such a political defeat. But we should recognise that this will only be possible if the military resistance to the various exclusionary nationalist projects deprives the nationalists of their mass base, and is able to propose an alternative to the ethnic partition of the country, such that each national group finds its place.

Given the need for the widest possible solidarity with the populations that are the victims of this war, we must not allow the question of lifting the arms embargo against the Moslems to become a cause of division within the various solidarity and anti-war associations that have been set up.

Only a Balkan Union could really ensure peace in this region, if it granted a common citizenship and equal treatment to peoples who are divided among several of these states: in particular the Albanians, Serbs and Croats. This would be an essential condition for stabilizing the borders between these states - by opening the borders to the free passage of peoples. It would also allow all those who claim a mixed identity to find their place.

The military offensive threatened by the Croat nationalists against the Croatian and Bosnian territories controlled by rebel Serbs is not the best way to break the domination of extremist Serb nationalism, nor to facilitate the return of the estimated 300,000

Croat refugees. Better to fight against the fascistic definition of what it is to be a Croat, against the idea of the nation "being the rampart of the civilised West against the barbarians of the Balkans", and to defend the place and all the religious and linguistic rights of the Serbian community in Croatia. We should also encourage the demand of both Serb and Croat families separated by borders that had previously disappeared for decades to come and go as they please.

And the best way to avoid the Albanian question becoming a Balkan conflagration is to give the Albanian community in Macedonia all the national rights it justly demands - such as the right to schools and universities in their own language. Kosovo too should regain its former political autonomy, with guarantees for the Serb minority there. Kosovo should also be permitted to develop multiple links with the neighboring state of Albania.

Since a part of the Serb and Croatian sections of the Bosnian population see their security best guaranteed by the link to their "mother" republic, a pluralistic Bosnia-Herzegovina can only survive if it maintains links with the neighboring — also pluricultural republics.

The European Union policy of developing a selective association of the richer republics and regions can only contribute to a dynamic of disintegration. But without security and socio-economic justice, without a development programme aimed at reducing the inequalities throughout this region, associated with a co-operative rather than free-market conception of Europe, the Balkans will remain explosive. Such an orientation implies a radical critique of the single-party system which utterly disfigured the goals of socialism and self-management. ★



Egypt

After 36 years, hospitals in Egypt have again begun to carry out Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The government claims this is a first step towards abolishing the practice. Feminists and human rights groups have appealed to the courts to stop the plan to reserve one day per week to the practice. They say this "bad, and illegal decision" may legitimate and thus help perpetuate a more hygienic version of a practice which must be eradicated. The Egyptian Human Rights Organisation argues that "excision (FGM)... is a crime which affects the human body and health. It violates Article one of the International Treaty against Torture, which Egypt has signed".

The country's Health Minister claims the move is a necessary step towards bringing the process into the realm of public debate, and making possible an educational campaign.

In the capital, Cairo, 73% of girls under 16 have suffered genital mutilation, and in country areas up to 95% of girls are still mutilated. The Egyptian Human Rights Organisation estimates that 45% of victims are sexually frigid as a result of their ordeal, and almost one third have either physical problems (infection, sterility) or mental troubles (fear of marriage, of sexual intercourse, or of giving birth). All versions of this practice, often euphemistically called female circumcision, aim at removing sexual desire, and the most extreme forms of mutilation make pre-marital sexual intercourse physically impossible. FGM is also widespread in Sudan, Ethiopia, and among some Moslem and Animist national groups in sub-Saharan Africa. ★

Most West European and North American countries continue to reject claims of asylum by women who say deportation would expose their daughters to FGM. ★

Iraq: US used radioactive bullets in "Desert Storm"

Alongside the thousands of victims of the US-imposed embargo, Iraqi hospitals are filling up with victims of "Desert Fever" and "Gulf War Syndrome." Many of the symptoms resemble illnesses caused by radiation or by exposure to heavy metals — loss of hair, leukaemia, fatigue, birth defects and lung or kidney damage. In the USA, 13 out of 15 babies fathered by veterans in one National Guard unit have birth defects. And 1,000

of Britain's 43,000 Gulf war veterans have contracted one of the possibly war-related illness.

At least 125,000 and perhaps 300,000 Iraqis died from the 88,000 tons of bombs dropped over the course of the 42 day war. Others are still dying from the after-effects of the 940,000 rounds of 30 mm depleted uranium (DU) bullets and 4,000 120 mm DU shells fired by US and British soldiers

"Operation Desert Storm" was the first real use of bullets and shells made with depleted uranium (DU), a by-product in the production of nuclear fuel. Two and a half times as dense as steel, DU projectiles fly 1,000 meters farther than conventional shells, at a velocity up to five times the speed of sound, and with enough punch to pierce steel-sided tanks.

In the three years since the war, Dr. Siegwart-Horst Gunther has found many children in Iraq playing with cigar-shaped DU projectiles. Some of them have contracted leukaemia. When he took one of the shells back to Germany to be analyzed, he was fined 3,000 marks for "putting into circulation radioactive materials which could pose a health threat." This January Iraqi officials filed a protest over the use of DU arms with the International Red Cross.

The main reasons for the American aggression against Iraq were control of oil and the defense of the imperialist order in the area. But the world's "greatest democracy," also used the war to test new arms, without consideration for the consequences on the civilian population or even their own soldiers. A wise commercial move, it seems. After seeing the Iraqi tanks so efficiently disabled, weapons manufacturers in other countries are now anxious to make their own DU weapons. Last fall, the US granted a British firm a license to export 158,758 kilograms of DU — enough to make thousands of rounds. Where profit is at stake, there are really no principles. ★

Sources: Arkin, William M., "The desert glows - with propaganda," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May, 1993; Bernstein, Dennis, and Thea Kelley, "The Gulf War Comes Home," *The Progressive*, March, 1995; Brown, Paul, "US Uranium Imported for British Shells," *Guardian*, 24 Dec. 1993, and Laffitte, Roland and Naima Lefkir-Laffitte, "Armes radioactives contre l'ennemie irakien," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Apr., 1995.
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Palestine/Israel

The Palestinian Authority in the Gaza strip and Jericho is detaining at least one hundred political

prisoners, according to *Al Wasat newspaper*. Thirty are supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the movement led by George Habash. The others are militants of the Islamic Jihad and the fundamentalist movement Hamas. ★

Czech Republic

Demonstrations in support of a squatted alternative cultural centre have brought Prague's long dormant autonomous youth movement out into the open. Several hundred high school students and young workers marched through the capital on 25 February under banners saying "Too many Hotels" "Housing is a right" and "Our dreams are your nightmares". Over 1,700 passers-by signed a petition protesting the town hall's plan to evict the occupants of the Ladronka alternative cultural centre so that a private company can build a hotel on the site. Earlier that day, the Police anti-extremist division had visited the squat and made physical threats against key activists. Illegal occupation of a dwelling carries a penalty of up to 2 years imprisonment under §249 of the Czech Penal Code

For more information contact the *Anarchist Magazine Autonomie*, PO Box 223, 112 10 Prague 1, Czech Republic, or visit the *Ladronka squat: Tomanova 1, 160 00 Prague 6*. ★

Britain

According to research by *The Independent on Sunday*, big business is increasingly willing to finance the anti-left activities of Labour Party leader Tony Blair. Donations are channelled through the shadowy Industrial Research Trust. Since Blair has at least 23 full time staff, some earning six figure annual salaries, his expenses must be in excess of half a million pounds each year. The right wing members of parliament employ at least 300 researchers, agents and secretaries. In other words, Blair and his supporters have a paid staff more than ten times larger than the Party as such.

Add this to the Industry Forum — Labour's sounding board in the City and the industrialist-dominated Forum for Wealth Creation, which advises Blair on issues like the minimum wage, and you see a Labour leadership more cut off from the base of the party, and better organised, than ever before.

Labour's previous leaders have all had 'presidential' longings. But Blair has gone further, building up an unprecedented political machine, accountable to him alone, and already involved in manipulating debate in the party and the affiliated trade unions.

The "Blair project" is based on assuring the party leader presidential powers over the party — and sooner or later the entire

China

Who benefits most from the reforms ? (%)

private entrepreneurs	50
Self-employed	41
Cadres	34
Professionals	22
State sector managers	18
Peasants	8
Workers	4

Based on a sample of 20,000 people in 27 big and medium cities in 10 provinces. Research carried out in late 1994 by the China Social Sciences Academy and the State Statistical Bureau. Source: Sing Tao Daily, February 24, 1995

Urban unemployment

Year	Millions
1991	0.10
1992	0.34
1993	1.03
1994	1.87
1995*	3.74

*Estimate. Source: Sing Tao Daily, Feb. 13, 1995.

► Up to 30m. urban workers and 120 m. rural workers, or one in four of the workforce in both sectors, are effectively redundant.

► The labour force grew by 9.5 m. in 1994, but only 7 m. urban jobs were created

► 90 m. rural labourers are expected to migrate to the cities during 1995

► The richest 3% of the population has 28% of total savings (290 billion yuan). There are over 1 million yuan millionaires

► Per capita 'GDP' in Zhuhai District, Guangdong (Canton) is 86 times higher than in Qinglong County, Guizhou. In 1995 the per capita 'GDP' of Guangdong Province as a whole will be 50 times higher than that of the Ningxia Autonomous Region. The ratio in 1994 was 'only' 1:37.5 In comparison, per capita GDP in the richest region of former Yugoslavia was only 7.8 times higher than in the poorest region when that country began to disintegrate.

► The economies of Fujian, Zhejiang, Hainan and Guangdong provinces are expected to grow 20-27% in 1995.

Compiled from reports by Zhang Kai, first published in October Review.

Labour government. This is the only way the right can re-shape the party. And it is the only way a Labour government will be able to force through the neo-Thatcherite reforms the leadership is planning. ★

Italy

The centre-left coalition won regional elections in nine of the country's 15 regions on April 23, including Rome and Latium. But as Franco Turigliato reports, the right carried the most populous regions of the south and the most industrial parts of the North (Lombardy, Piedmont). The right-wing block won just over 40% of the vote. The 'centre-left' (PDS, Greens, Socialists, and splinters of the Christian Democrats and Republicans) also won about 40%. The Northern League fell from 9% to 6.5%,

but remains a force to be reckoned with on the ground

The right had hoped that these elections would end their internal divisions. In fact, the instability has been prolonged. Having said this, 40% of the population has been won to the right. This block is homogenous enough to hit hard. And in places like Milan where the centre-left might take power, it is hard to see how the PDS could form a bloc with Rifondazione and the Northern League given their serious differences.

Rifondazione Comunista did well — we won 8.3% of the vote, compared to 6.8% in the 1994 parliamentary elections. Fiat auto plant worker Rocco Papandrea, one of the Bandiera Rossa comrades, was even elected to the Piedmont regional council.

The main axis of our campaign were defence of pensions, the 35 hour working

The memory of the movement

International Viewpoint, 1 and 15 June 1987

India

"The imposition of Presidential Rule in Punjab state [on May 11]... only confirms the bankruptcy of the Central government's policy" writes M. Navid. "Far from helping to contain and reduce communal polarization in Punjab, it is guaranteed to make the situation worse, as the forces of law and order are let loose to widen the repression. This will further alienate the Sikh masses of the state and push them to support those sections of anti-Centre militants who argue that the only solution is the formation of a separate country ruled by a Sikh theocracy — Khalistan..."

Only the construction of a truly secular, anti-communal front can point a way out of this tragic morass. In recent months, in parts of Punjab, there has been something of a revival of genuine anti-communalist activities, such as street theatre, demonstrations against terrorist killings, and unitary activities between Hindus and Sikhs in the villages. Cadre of the CPI, CPI-M and CPI-ML have played a prominent part. Whatever the failings of the political line of their parties, the secular belief and commitment of these cadres are beyond question. The success of these actions has made their organisers targets of the terrorists, hence the rise in the number of left wing cadres assassinated". ★

Britain

"Socialist Outlook magazine was launched at a conference on May 9-10 1987 marking the culmination of an 18 month fusion process between currents around International and Socialist Viewpoint. Speaking on behalf of the USEC, Livo Maitan welcomed the fusion of the two magazines. He ... stressed the importance of measures to maximize the participation of women in the leadership of the Trotskyist movement". ★

Spanish State

"The most important event in this pre-election period is [Basque nationalist party] Herri Batasuna's decision to campaign throughout the Spanish state. And that they have come to revolutionary organisations like the Movimiento Comunista [Communist Movement, ex-Maoist] and our party [LCR], seeking our support. Agreement has been reached on a clearly revolutionary programme, on the basis of which we will form united-front committees to support the Herri Batasuna slate [which is] the most thoroughgoing way of expressing all the desires and reasons for opposing the government's policies. This will not be easy, after so many years of anti-Basque propaganda... but these are problems that a revolutionary organisation has to deal with". ★

Back issues of IV cost \$US 1.50/£1. The bound 1994 collection costs \$25/£15, and older collections only \$15/£10

week without loss of salary, and a tax on the highest fortunes. We think this was a programme of class demands, coupled with a clear line of opposition to the Dini government and its measures. This allowed us to gather the votes of frustrated and desperate left wing voters, including many ordinary people who voted for a right wing party last time around.

Our score improved in all parts of the country, particularly in the working-class suburbs, where the right is still very strong.

Rifondazione is now an essential part of any potential left-wing alliance. Our line so far is that we have a different tactical and political perspective from the centre left, but that we are prepared to join an electoral coalition with them to defeat the right in the next parliamentary elections.

Franco Turigliato is a member of the National Committee of Rifondazione Comunista, and one of the comrades producing Bandiera Rossa, the magazine of Fourth International supporters in Italy. He was interviewed by Nora Venitia for the Belgian magazine La Gauche 10/95. ★

Spain 1936: The memory of the martyrs

Ken Loach's new film "Tierra y Libertad — Land and Liberty" provoked fierce debate after its launch in Madrid earlier this year. As Jaime Pastor reports, audiences include militants themselves persecuted by the Stalinists in 1936, members of the Spanish Communist Party, and a younger generation of militants eager to understand this dark page of their movement's history.

The Spanish Civil War of 1936 had a profound effect on the European labour and socialist movement. International Brigades were sent from many countries. But the liquidation of 'dissident' revolutionaries within the anti-fascist front by the agents of Stalin cast an especially bitter shadow over the defeat of Republican Spain by Hitler and Mussolini.

The film itself is a moving homage to the comrades of the Marxist Workers' Unification Party (POUM) and the anarchists who struggled to combine the anti-fascist struggle with a social revolution in the zones under Republican control.

Ken Loach uses the dramatised experience of a member of the British Communist Party who enlists in the POUM militia to introduce us to the main debates and conflicts on the left in Spain. The vitality of the debate, and the spontaneity of the actors avoids the simplification of these conflicts. The film concludes with one of the most tragic 'forgotten' episodes of the war — the elimination of a POUM militia by an unit of the new Republican Army led by Stalinist officers.

The great merit of this film is its contribution to restoring the memory of those Communists who struggled against Stalinism, and who, in the midst of the Spanish Civil war, became the victims of Stalinist executioners, at the same time as the original Bolshevik militants were being liquidated in the Soviet Union.

The first Spanish 'veteran' to react to the film was Santiago Carillo. Nowadays he supports the ruling Socialist Party (PSOE). But he felt obliged to defend his past in *El País*. He repeated all the old lies against those who combined war against fascism with social revolution, and accused Loach of failing to understand the nature of the anti-fascist struggle.

Several days later, former POUM youth leader Cde Solano responded in the same newspaper. He reminded Spaniards that it was not POUM which disrupted anti-fascist unity, but 'the policies which Stalin imposed on the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and the Catalan Unified Socialist Party (PSUC), and which Carillo and his friends docilely followed.'

Ken Loach's film was not meant to be an instrument of point-scoring, of 'I told you

so'. As Solano stressed, the point of the film is to reclaim the memory of those who struggled for another kind of socialism — quite different from the Stalinist 'model' which dominated left thinking at the time.

"Criticising and analysing Stalinism is a national sport now that it is dead and gone. This 'sport' is so easy it hardly earns merit for its practitioners. But to expose Stalinism back then, as Leon Trotsky and a handful of others did, with their suicidal moral and intellectual energy, that was a way to sign your own death certificate. "Land and Liberty" retells the story of the suicide of the last — the only authentic Bolshevik revolutionaries."

The Spanish left is still talking about the film. It will help the younger generation discover one of the key pages in Spanish history, and the history of the international labour movement. Let's hope that it helps many of our comrades in the Spanish Communist Party, with whom we work in the United Left (IU), to understand Stalinism better. ★

Who was the POUM?

The POUM was founded in 1935 as a fusion of the Catalan wing of the Spanish Communist Party and the Spanish section of the Left (Trotskyist) Opposition writes Vincent Scheltiens. Trotsky himself opposed this fusion. He had urged the Left Opposition to enter the Social Democratic party, where a left wing current was developing around Largo Caballero. At its peak the POUM had 7,000 members, mainly in Catalonia. In 1936 the POUM and the anarchists entered the Catalan government. The movement's leader, Andreu Nin became Minister of Justice. Trotsky attacked this participation in a coalition government with the bourgeois parties. The POUM ministers were expelled from the government in May 1937, on Stalin's orders. The 'Communist' line was that the Trotskyists were fascist agents who had infiltrated the Republican camp. The POUM and anarchist militias were crushed by force. All the remaining leaders were executed, many after torture. Despite the wide range of opinions and tradition represented in POUM, none of the leaders 'went over' to the Stalinists, and none was willing to sign an accusation of their former comrades as 'Trotsky-fascists'.

★

Book notes

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Not in Their Best Interest

Report on the repatriation of Haitian refugee children

Florida Rural Legal Services (FRLS), April 1985, 30 pages

In spite of widespread criticism, US officials forcibly repatriated another 24 Haitian children from the US base at Guantanamo, Cuba on May 16. Over 350 unaccompanied minors have been languishing in prison-like conditions at the camp for almost a year. According to the Florida Rural Legal Services (FRLS), which has been monitoring the children and fighting for their release to relatives in the US, in some cases their parents, US officials have systematically done everything possible to avoid letting them in, even refusing to reunite children with their mothers.

To assure the child's transfer to Haiti, in some cases, officials have claimed a father is waiting, when he is actually dead. In others, the youth are released to 'responsible' adults who soon leave them on the streets. In many others, the "caretakers" do not have adequate income to provide care. Some relatives in Haiti have been coerced into writing "invitations" to return. Officials even purposefully waited for one child to turn 18, to repatriate him as an "adult."

"Although the US Government claims to be acting in the 'best interests' of Guantanamo's unaccompanied Haitian children, it has never explored the strong support system available to these children in the US," said FRLS in a 30-page report, Not in Their Best Interest, issued this month. "The US Government's forcible repatriation of Guantanamo's most traumatized and vulnerable children is creating a serious humanitarian tragedy."

"Virtually all of these children [have] witnessed those whom they loved and depended on most in the world - mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers - being savagely beaten, raped or killed," FRLS said.

The details of the illegal, forced repatriations, the brutal treatment at the camp, and the apathy of the UN High Commission on Refugees are vividly recounted in the report, which also describes how some children were tricked into returning through "various ruses" or restrained in handcuffs. Some tried to commit suicide to avoid returning.

This review is reprinted from Haiti Info

Haiti Info is published every two weeks, and distributed by mail, fax, and electronic mail. Subscription US \$20 to \$100, depending on location and method of reception.

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Correction

Max Shachtman and his left: A Socialist's Odyssey through the American Century Peter Drucker, Humanities Press, 1994 [Reviewed by Ann Henderson last month]

There are two minor errors in my review of Peter Drucker's book *writes Ann Henderson*. Shachtman's group in the 1950s was called the Independent, and not the International Socialist League. And although Shachtman's personal stand was doubtful, the ISL as such did not support any imperialist force in the period before it dissolved into the Socialist Party in 1958.

It is also important to recognise that many former ISL members resisted the 'Shachtmanite degeneration' — including those who joined with Fourth International supporters in 1986 to form the revolutionary socialist group Solidarity.

I would also add that Shachtman's rightward turn was not simply the expression of an ideological shift. His support for United Auto Workers' President Walter Reuther reflects the important sociological aspect of his link with part of the labor bureaucracy.

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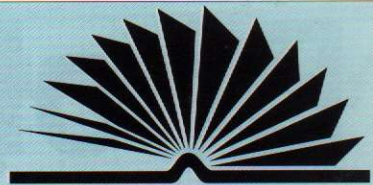
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Feminist and socialist youth camp Southern France, 22-29 July 1995

Registration is now open for the 12th summer camp organised by the European youth organisations in sympathy with the Fourth International. In 1994 1,000 participants from over 20 countries spent a week of debate and culture in Tuscany, Italy. This year should be bigger and (even) better.

Buses will be organised from most European capitals. Cost (including food, and entry to all events, but excluding transport) from 500 to 1,000 French Francs, depending on your country and circumstances.

For more information contact your International Viewpoint seller, or write to the Youth Camp Committee, c/o International Viewpoint, PECEI, P.O. Box 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France
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