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Bosnia

Stop the war

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European Forum of Left Feminists

*A multi-cultural and multi-ethnic
Europe: Alliances and networking*

Athens, Greece, 3-5 November 1995

Nationalism and racism, endemic in much of Europe, are undermining the existence of multi-cultural, multiethnic societies. The war in Bosnia, stricter border controls in Fortress Europe, the sometimes violent disintegration of the former states of central and eastern Europe, and the rise of fundamentalism are crucial questions for left feminists.

In addition, a new pattern of migration into the southern countries of the European Union is leading to new forms of racism. Unless we build strategies for the recognition of divergent ethnic, religious, language and cultural groups or minorities, and acknowledge the right to difference, we will see further polarisation in Europe.

As left feminists from many organisations and backgrounds, we need to strengthen alliances and networking between ourselves. Speakers have been invited from white European, minority ethnic and migrant women's organisations from Algeria, Belgium, Britain, Greece, Italy and the former Yugoslavia. We hope to have participants from 24 European countries, from Russia to Spain.

Participation costs are low, and reductions may be available for women from eastern Europe and others in financial difficulty. To register, or for more information about the programme, please contact us as soon as possible.

Greek Organising Committee, Zan Maureas str. 15, Athens 117-41, Greece tel/fax +30 1 9239315, tel. +30 1 3632200, tel. +30 1 6463471

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Bosnia: one and (in)divisible?

The ministers of foreign affairs of Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Bosnia and Herzegovina have agreed in principle to a plan which marks a radical shift in the conflict which is ravaging Bosnia and Herzegovina. But each party has agreed for quite different

reasons.¹ For the Serbs, the essential point of the new agreement is the Bosnian government's recognition of a "Serbian Republic" within Bosnia. This state within the state is to have its own constitution and use the Serbian dinar as official currency. It will have its own, already notorious, armed forces.

*by Catherine Samary
Paris, 19 September 1995*

NOW THAT the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic has achieved the recognition of his "Serbian Republic", the same status could be accepted for "Herzeg-Bosna". Unless unification with Croatia proper is proposed.

The "Serbian Republic" is still without an internationally accepted capital. This is the fundamental issue in the siege of Sarajevo. Karadzic wants an ethnic partition of Sarajevo, like the 1947 partition of Jerusalem. The Bosnian government is radically opposed to any division of the town, which would mean new walls, barriers between, the separation of families, and endless conflicts. A huge number of citizens in the Bosnian-government-controlled parts of Sarajevo have signed a petition opposed to any partition.

The other concern of the Bosnian Serb forces continues to be the creation of a state which can hold together. The logic of their war has been to link the Serbian "enclaves", to "carve out" a wide enough "ethnic corridor" in the north-east of Bosnia to link the two halves of the territory under their control, to "solve" the question of the mainly-Muslim "enclaves". Zepa and Srebrenica fell this summer. Bihac was re-connected to central Bosnia after a lightning Croatian advance in September, and it seems the Bosnian Serbs will suggest that they occupy Gorazde in exchange for withdrawing from a territory adjacent to Sarajevo.

The "peace plan" awards 51% of Bosnia to the Croato-Muslim Federation and 49% to the Serbian Republic. At the moment of signing, the Bosnian Serb forces controlled over 60% of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The recent Croatian and Bosnian offensive may "solve" this problem. The Serbian population is fleeing the "restituted" areas but it seems that Serbian forces have not resisted very much. This might indicate a tacit agreement on the way "restitution" is meant to take place.

The terms of a cease fire seem to be emerging, but at the cost of adding thousands more people to the more than three million refugees and displaced persons. And it will involve the completion of the ethnic cleansing of the various territories.

Cease-fire or not, we are a long way from any coherent and stable "sovereign" Bosnian state. Nothing has been established yet. What form of government and parliament? Elected by who, and with what powers? All we know is that this will be a country with two constitutions, two currencies, two armed forces and two foreign policy.

THE AGREEMENT allows the Serbian Republic to establish relations with Serbia, and the Croato-Muslim Federation to form a confederation with Croatia. Cultural and economic relations with neighbouring states are normal. On the human and family level they can be essential. They

can also be a confidence-building measure which weakens the secessionist ideas held by those parts of the Serbian and Croatian populations in Bosnia which still see "their" neighbouring state as the best framework for defending their interests. But if these special links with Serbia and Croatia are established without any defeat of the policies of ethnic cleansing, in negotiations dominated by nationalist currents, these links will prove to be a step towards the final disintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, first into two states, and eventually into three.²

The tough "solution" of the Serbian question in Croatia has prevented the military and political unification of the "Serbian Republics" of Bosnia and Krajina (Croatia). This weakens the Greater Serbia project.

The dynamics which characterise the Croato-Muslim Federation are contradictory. The struggle to make it into a multi-ethnic and democratic framework, which recognises all its peoples as essential components of the whole, continues. Serbian recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina can only encourage this process.

A BLOODY SUMMER

The Krajina question (domination of the territory by Croatian Serb secessionists) had to be "solved" sooner or later. It is true that the negotiations dragged on and on partly because the Krajina Serbs had set their hopes on



Karadzic and the unification of the "Serbian lands" rather than on obtaining their full rights inside Croatia.

A brief look at the map of the bizarre crescent of a country called Croatia is enough to understand that the occupation of one quarter of this territory was a serious challenge to the viability of the state. Krajina sits on the main communications routes between the coastal and inland branches of Croatia. And while Krajina is a dirt-poor rural region, it overlooks the Dalmatian coast, Croatia's rich source of hard currency tourism revenue. To say nothing of the need to absorb 400,000 Croats "cleansed" from their villages of origin in Krajina.

But there were two ways to defend Croatia's viability. The first would have been to oppose great Serb nationalism by convincing the Serbs of Croatia that they would not become second class citizens in an independent Republic of Croatia, and that they were not under threat (as many of them thought at the moment of independence). The multi-national nature of the Croatian state should have been affirmed and confirmed.

Unfortunately, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman made "Yugoslavism" (including the very idea of a multi-national state) into the main target of his election campaigns. In this he went much further than Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

The military re-conquest of Krajina, and the subsequent flight of thousands of Serb refugees from Krajina into Bosnia, are part of this second logic. As Croatia's sole remaining independent newspaper *Feral Tribune* commented, Tudjman had wanted to "cleanse Krajina for years... and he did it as soon as he could"³

"As soon as he could" also means 'as soon as he could come to an agreement with Serbian President Milosevic that the latter would not intervene'.

As for Milosevic, since autumn 1993 his main concern has been consolidating his power, chiefly by achieving the lifting of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro). The whole logic of the European negotiators has been to consolidate a Milosevic-Tudjman alliance, recognising each others' frontiers, and agreeing on the "orderly" partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina on an ethnic basis (be it on the basis of the front line at the moment of cease-fire, the "cantons" of the Vance-Owen plan, or the recognition of a "Serbian Republic" in Bosnia, as proposed in the latest plan). Milosevic and Tudjman were planning the division of Bosnia long before the outbreak of war. In this great game, Krajina represents an essential piece for Croatia, and a pawn of little value for Serbia — and an exposed pawn which it would cost too much to defend militarily. The other Serbian-

occupied zone of Croatia, the rich lands of eastern Slavonia, is quite another matter. The two parties may agree that the region be recognised by Serbia as part of Croatia, but awarded a substantial degree of autonomy by Zagreb. The Croat opposition has for some time claimed that the "ethnic cleansing" of the region's main town, Vukovar, at the beginning of the war, was in fact part of the deal between Tudjman and Milosevic.

Milosevic used nationalism and the defence of "Serbian interests" when he thought that an alliance with the extreme-right nationalist currents in Serbia could consolidate his own power. But the war, and the 400,000 Bosnian and Croatian Serbs who have sought refuge in Serbia proper as a result, are increasingly unpopular with the base population of Serbia proper. In this new context, the idea of a total confrontation aiming to separate Croatia from one quarter of her territory, and definitively cutting that country's main communication routes, was clearly impossible.

In both domestic and international terms, it seemed more profitable for Milosevic to break with his former allies, the extreme right Radical Party of Vojislav Seselj. Better to come to an agreement with the Croatian President Tudjman. The break with Seselj in autumn 1993 has been followed by a new turn in the official media, which has "discovered" the

"excesses", even the "crimes" of "extreme Serbian nationalists".

This led to real tension between Milosevic and the radical Serbs of Krajina, who removed Milosevic supporters (who were ready to consider an agreement with Croatia) from positions of power in their "Serbian Republic" of Krajina. This left Krajina in the hands of Seselj supporters. Stimulated by the victories of the Bosnian Serb General Mladic, the authorities in Krajina voted their military and political union with the "Serbian Republic" in Bosnia.

Unable to control Krajina, Belgrade's propaganda became increasingly critical, which only increased the bitterness of the population of Serbia against their cousins who "held Serbia hostage". And when the Croatian offensive against Krajina came, there was no reaction from Belgrade.

In other words, the Croatian army had a green light from Belgrade. It also exploited the exasperation of world opinion with regard to Karadzic's troops' victorious offensives against the Muslim enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica in July. American military and political support was virtually explicit in this offensive.

REFUGEES

The Serbian refugees from Krajina will be used to reinforce the construction of "ethnically pure" states. In Croatia, the "rampant" ethnic cleansing of the Serbs⁴ (over 300,000 have fled, not counting the recent exodus from Krajina) will accelerate. There is every reason to expect that the real fears of the Croatian Serbs, the fears which nourished the secessionist project, will be amplified. There will be new "spontaneous" departures.

In Serbia the new refugees are a means of pressure for expelling the non-Serb population. But the resistance of Serbia's Albanian minority (which is a compact majority in the southern province of Kosovo) suggests that these refugees will eventually be settled in the "cleansed" regions of the "Serbian Republic" in Bosnia. This is the inexorable logic of the "partition plans" for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

BOSNIA READY TO EXPLODE

Despite the essential role of Zagreb and Belgrade, the Bosnian conflict is not only a war of external aggression. It is also more and more a civil war opposing secessionist Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats to a mixed group which wishes to maintain Bosnia and Herzegovina. Muslims (in the ethnic-cultural sense) form the overwhelming majority of the

population. All political currents are present in the population, and in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is dominated by the Democratic Action Party (SDA), but not necessarily by its Islamic wing (except for the region of Zenica).

The Islamic current in Bosnia oscillates between acceptance of partition and the struggle to maintain a state. The SDA tends to monopolise the real structures of power. But this is a complex and divided formation, only held together by the war. And from time to time the division between an Islamic and an anti-clerical wing comes out into the open.

The Prime Minister Haris Siladzic (anti-clerical wing of the SDA) is much more popular than President Alija Izetbegovic (Islamic wing of the SDA). But each offensive on the Croato-Muslim or Muslim-Serb fronts increases popular support for the establishment of a Muslim state. And yet the creation of the Croato-Muslim Federation in Bosnia strengthens the hand of Siladzic, who is trying both to consolidate his power in the SDA and reach out to other, non-nationalist forces. His wing of the SDA expresses a non-religious "Muslim nationalism" — after the Serbian and Croatian ravages of Bosnia, many Muslims now feel that they are the only real Bosnians. Having said this, we should not forget that a large number of "Muslims" reject the ethnic-national identity ascribed to them, preferring a civic citizenship open to diversity.

The Islamic current is, in its essence less attached to the Bosnian state as such. President Izetbegovic has never hesitated to use his function, his powers, and the funds he receives from various Islamic states to attempt to re-Islamicise the Bosnian Muslims.⁵ Since the beginning of the war he has oscillated between accepting the ethnic partition of Bosnia (giving him a smaller, but more Muslim state which would be easier to Islamicise) or trying to Islamicise the Muslim component of a larger Bosnia and Herzegovina, formally non-confessional, but with many areas of life structured through separate ethnico-cultural communities. One of the advantages of the second option is the continued strength of traditional values (Islamic, Catholic and Orthodox) in the Bosnian countryside.

But there is a second Bosnia and Herzegovina, the mixed one. This society continues to struggle against all which stifles and destroys it. Mainly urban, it is supported by those of all origins who want a multi-cultural citizenship. This current is the major reality in Tuzla, a city mainly

Muslim in its ethnic composition. In the 1992 elections the people of Tuzla voted above all for non-ethnic political parties (liberals, socialists, social democrats) which had their origins in the former Communist League.

These Bosnians participate in the political life of the Croato-Bosnian Federation, through the opposition parties in the parliament, but also in the Citizens' Forums and the Serbian and Croatian "Civic Councils". Four of the supporters of this current, members of the Bosnian Presidency, recently denounced the Islamicisation of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Zenica region. Which proves that the Islamic currents can be opposed inside Bosnia and Herzegovina. Having said this, the "civic" current does not want to participate in the government, given the negative balance sheet they draw of their participation in the government, without significant power, in the first part of the war.

Unfortunately, we cannot today talk of social movements and trade unions organising the workers of all the national groups, and seeking support in the neighbouring republics to combat socially and humanly reactionary policies. Movements like this are for the time being suffocated by the logic of war, and the ideologies which dominate. This is one of the key issues of the coming period, and should be a top priority for solidarity movements like the International Workers Aid's programme for Tuzla.

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The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: an overview

by Catherine Samary

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How will the Bosnian army and government behave on the territories which they conquer from the Bosnian Serb forces of General Mladic? And how will the Croat armed forces behave? In favour of a Greater Croatia, anti-Serb and very quickly becoming anti-Muslim? Or in favour of an alliance consolidating the Croato-Bosnian Federation, and giving it an anti-Serb character? Or even that of a current faithful to the tradition of co-existence present among all the peoples of Bosnia? The fear of the Serbian population and their flight in advance of the advancing Bosnian and Croatian forces are surely inevitable reflexes. And the risk of reprisals against them is heightened by the Karadzic-Mladic strategy of involving the civilian population in ethnic cleansing whenever possible.

We should remember what the logic of this war was, especially now that these objectives are being realised. Whatever the causes and responsibilities, the crisis of the Yugoslav federation consolidated currents which favoured the construction of ethnic-based nation states in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina struggled desperately to find a compromise maintaining some form of Yugoslavia, right up until the day they were faced with the *fait accompli* of the declarations of independence of Slovenia and Croatia.

The Serbian leadership and Serbian nationalists favoured a federal Yugoslavia, without accepting that the constituent republics have real sovereignty. And they refused to accept the transformation of Yugoslavia into a confederation unless the frontiers of the various components were first withdrawn. Even before the war, they accepted that the massive displacement of populations would be an inevitable mechanism in the creation of "ethnic frontiers" to replace the "false frontiers" of certain republics, and to completely suppress "false republics" like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and (for those in favour of a real centralisation, Montenegro too). "Artificial nations" like the Muslims (let alone "Bosnians") and Macedonians or Montenegrins would no longer exist.

This proved to be a point of agreement with Croat nationalists, also in favour of "sorting out" the Serbo-Croat frontier, at the expense of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The war has been the means for realising by force what could not be agreed by negotiation during the many secret agreements of Tudjman and Milosevic. In the sense that none of the populations concerned would have "spontaneously" accepted its massive displacement. The only way to push four million people into exile and transit is by force.⁶

Notes

1. The Bosnian government is happy that Serbia recognises the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina within its original borders. But this is not the same as the consolidation of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state on that territory.
2. Croatia recognised the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. This did not stop them establishing and proclaiming, that same year, a Croat state, Herzeg-Bosna, in the western part of the republic. Nor did official recognition of the Bosnian frontiers stop the Croatian army and the HVO militia making war on their "Muslim allies" to "clean" Herzeg-Bosna and its "capital city", Mostar. The end of open hostilities and the establishment of the Croato-Bosnian federation in Bosnia, under US pressure, in Spring 1994, did not challenge de facto this "republic", which has its own army, and uses the Croatian Kuna as legal currency. Mostar might be the capital of "Herzeg-Bosna", but the town is formally under the "supervision" of the European Union, which has established a provisional administration. Nor has the new "republic" been recognised internationally.
3. Reproduced in *Courier International*, 17-23 August 1995.
4. Documented and condemned by the country's human rights organisations.
5. His *Islamic Declaration* (1970) has often been used to portray the Bosnian government as an Islamic state. While the work expresses Izetbegovic's deep conviction in the need for an Islamic state and religious structuring of all areas of life, the author also criticises those who see the Koran as the source of all knowledge. He pleads in favour of science, education, and the study of the experiences of other societies. According to Izetbegovic, Islam should win over peoples' minds, and not be imposed by a coup in a state where Muslims form a minority. Several months ago, President Izetbegovic praised the Titoist partisans of the second world war, who were able to consolidate their victories precisely because they were able to rebuild confidence between communities torn apart by a war between currents promoting ethnic hatred.
6. The last population transfers comparable in size were supported, sometimes organised by the victorious powers at the end of the Second World War.

The cynicism of the great powers

There is no single, consistent imperialist position on the crisis and subsequent war in former Yugoslavia. Bosnia has neither oil nor a direct strategic interest. It makes more sense to talk of cynical "statesmanship" in the pragmatic defence of the interests of the major powers.

The real divergence in interest between the imperialists must be weighed against their common interests: affirming the "civilising" role of the club of rich countries, finding a partnership with Russia in order to manage the crises of "post-communism", and staying outside any Balkan war.

by Catherine Samary
Paris, 19 September 1995

YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND the "gesturing" of NATO and the UN in Bosnia unless you understand the fundamental contradiction in their policy. They want to play the role of policeman, capable of intervening by force, but they want to do this without going to war, and without loss of life of their troops in a ground operation. Positions are evolving rapidly, and this contradiction is probably the only constant factor. The recent NATO bombings [of Bosnian Serb targets] doesn't modify this basic contradiction.

Until the declarations of independence in June 1991, the USA (which means the International Monetary Fund too) and the principal European governments opposed the separatist tendencies, preferring a strong pan-Yugoslav state, able to manage the country's foreign debt and willing to carry out a privatisation programme. In 1989 they clearly supported the liberal federal government of the Croat Ante Markovic, in his conflicts with the leaders of all Yugoslavia's constituent republics. Encouraged by his international support, Markovic encouraged the Yugoslav Army's intervention in Slovenia. At this time the army was already polarised between those who saw Markovic as a means of maintaining a Yugoslav state which would defend their privileges, and other officers who were switching from "Yugoslav" to Serbian nationalist goals.

Croatia and Slovenia quickly sought German and Austrian economic support for their bids for independence. This they obtained, thanks to the powerful Croat

lobby and historic anti-Yugoslav "tradition" in Germany, and the historical links between Austria, Slovenia and Croatia from the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. German support for the Croatian and Slovenian secession from Yugoslavia also hoped to see the emergence of "Mitteleuropa" (Central Europe), a German-dominated DM zone built out of the most developed regions of the former "socialist" countries of central Europe.

GERMANY presented the other great powers and European states with a *fait accompli*. The common construction of Europe obliged Britain and France to line up with Germany, at least formally. This opened the way to the diplomatic recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, and later on Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite the negative recommendations of the Badinter Commission.¹

The main concern of British and French negotiators has been to seek a Serbian counter-balance to Germany's influence. They have placed their hopes in a Serb-Croat alliance (personified by Serbian and Croatian Presidents Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman), which they hope will be capable of imposing stability in the region.

German support depended on Croatian oscillation between two strategies, an alliance with the Bosnian Moslems against the Serbs, and a tacit accord with Serbian President Milosevic. But there is an increasing tendency for

Germany to support the United States position.

The United States for a long time stayed outside what they considered to be an European problem. They were overjoyed to see the difficulties of the formation of a "common" European policy. In the second phase, the US tried to meet several objectives: presenting themselves as defenders of the Muslims, though without real commitments, in order to satisfy public opinion agitated by the mortar attacks on Sarajevo; improving, through Turkey, US influence in the region, and at the same time, recognising the effect on public opinion of the Vietnam trauma and Somalia fiasco, to avoiding involvement in any war. For Clinton the demand to lift the arms embargo for the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a way of incorporating all these objectives. He can support the Muslims without really getting involved, and criticise European plans which "sanctify of the ethnic cleansing of the aggressors" in grand moral and legal language.

His first bet was on a Croato-Muslim alliance against the Serbs, and he put his support behind the current Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Siladzic, leader of the non-clerical, pro-American wing of the SDA [Party of Democratic Action, mainly Moslem]. American support for the establishment of the Croato-Bosnian Federation in spring 1994, military aid for this coalition, and American proposals for NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb

targets were all intended to modify the balance of forces on the ground.

Then Clinton changed his position. European leaders were demanding that he participate in a common front, accepting the Europeans' logic of "political settlement". The US President accepted the constitution of the "Contact Group" (France, Germany, Britain, Russia and the United States), which sought to harmonise the conflicting positions of the great powers. In concrete terms, Clinton reversed his support for lifting the embargo for the Bosnians. An unilateral US rejection of the embargo would have meant the end of the European "peace plans" and made it necessary to withdraw the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) from Bosnia, to avoid reprisals.

European negotiators accused the US of blocking their negotiation process, and

disinterest in the UN, NATO and, by implication, American promises to protect the besieged populations of "the zones". The collapse of these pockets, and the pictures of the murder and misery of their "cleansed" population, who had been denied the means to defend themselves, could only magnify the decline in Clinton's popularity in American public opinion.

The same events also triggered the fury of the Islamic world, where people increasingly perceive the abandoning of the Bosnian Muslims, and the Russian intervention in Chechnya as an anti-Muslim drift in policy dating back to the war with Iraq and the continuing embargo against that country.²

This context has had an effect on American diplomatic and military policy over the summer and into the autumn. The

plans", the new plan recognises the "Serbian Republic" in Bosnia as a state-within-the-state, to be doted with its own constitution, armed forces, currency and its links with the neighbouring state - Serbia proper.

The new plan takes up the Contact Group's old ideas of partition, only with more cynicism. The "principle" behind the new percentages of territory allocated to each entity is simple: the new states should be defensible, or in other words should not comprise indefensible enclaves. Of course, this means more or less explicitly renouncing the supposed ethnic justification for the frontiers of the proposed cantons. "Realpolitik" will do for the leopard-skin map of Bosnia and Herzegovina what all the grand speeches never did.

NATO and the Rapid Reaction Force have recently acquired a new autonomy of action designed to bypass the slow decision making process of the UN. The main beneficiary alongside Clinton is the French President. Jacques Chirac can increase the frequency of his condemnations of the "Serbian aggressor" and his support of a "multi ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina". Though it was the "slap in the face" of the honour of "our soldiers" which led him to support the creation of the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF). And for all the grand speeches, the ethnic partition of "sovereign" Bosnia has never been so "organised", in both military and political terms.



placing European ground troops in danger. They also opposed US proposals for air strikes. Their fears were confirmed when Bosnian Serbs did indeed take UNPROFOR troops hostage. The European powers told Clinton that if he lifted the arms embargo unilaterally, he should send US ground troops to ensure the orderly withdrawal of the UN.

THE REPUBLICAN MAJORITY in both houses of the US parliament used the Bosnia question to mark their opposition to Clinton, transforming it into a domestic issue. The Republicans voted massively in favour of a bill lifting the embargo on arms for the Bosnian governmental forces, which Clinton then vetoed.

In July the Bosnian Serb forces of Radovan Karadzic launched an offensive against the "safe zones" of Zepa and Srebrenica, marking their growing

aim has become a quick diplomatic success at any cost, which will push the arms embargo debate out of the centre-ground, and reinforce Clinton against his domestic opponents. A "new plan". But how to make this new plan credible if, just like the previous European plans, it is based on a tacit agreement between the Serbian and Croatian presidents Milosevic and Tudjman, and the ethnic partition of Bosnia?

The Croatian Army's offensive against the Krajina³ certainly had the "green light" from Belgrade, but also from Washington. To say nothing of American weaponry.

The "tough talk" which has accompanied the spectacular bombardment of Bosnian Serb targets in September has not challenged the legitimacy of the declared goals of the secessionist Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. Unlike all the previous "peace

RUSSIAN CONCERN with NATO and RRF air strikes does not reflect a real concern with NATO's "anti-Serb genocide" (as the Moscow media describe the bombardment). All Russia wants is for its pretensions about being a major power to be taken at least a little bit seriously. The marginalisation of Russia reflects its impotence and its incapacity to have an influence on events. The symbolic presence of Russian troops will perhaps be the way to save face and reinsert Moscow into the diplomatic game. The Bosnian Serbs could also save face if they make the evacuation of a part of their heavy weapons conditional on the deployment of a Russian buffer or observation force.

But there is also a tacit deal being made between Clinton and Yeltsin: Russia accepts the application of the US plan for Bosnia, and Washington agrees to consider Chechnya as a purely "internal Russian matter".

The United Nations come out of all this rather discredited. But this is benefiting a militarist logic. NATO's role as the armed wing of the United Nations

and "policeman of the civilised world" has never seemed so legitimate. Never has the United States seemed to be as "efficient" a high command as today.

It is difficult to oppose the call for NATO air strikes for some very simple reasons. The major movements informing about Bosnia and mobilising against ethnic cleansing see NATO air strikes as the way to silence the mortars which have been bombarding Sarajevo, and a way to end the war. What is more, these activists think that the air strikes will disarm the military forces on the ground. So even the pacifists are being swept up into this logic.

Second, the mediatisation of the war has made everyone aware of the most visible history of violence - that of the nationalist Serbian forces. The visibility of Serb nationalist violence is certainly in part the result of "anti-Serbian" sentiments - plenty of warmongers have been calling for the bombing of "Milosevic-Hitler" in Belgrade. But we cannot respond effectively to these pressures (in other words convince people whose anti-imperialist instinct is, to say the least, very weak) by abstract "anti-imperialist" slogans. And adopting a "pro-Serb" position which would not denounce the extreme right Serbian currents called up by the sorcerer's apprentice Milosevic would be of even less use to us. We should express our outrage together with all those who refuse ethnic cleansing. And our principle should be to denounce these practices wherever and whenever they take place. Not just in one of the "camps".

We should oppose the NATO intervention, by showing the cynical logic which hides behind it, and its incapacity to oppose, never mind block or reverse, the reactionary policies present on the ground. The current to build is also the current of systematic opposition to state policies, and systematic encouragement of multiple, internationalist links with the populations concerned.



Notes

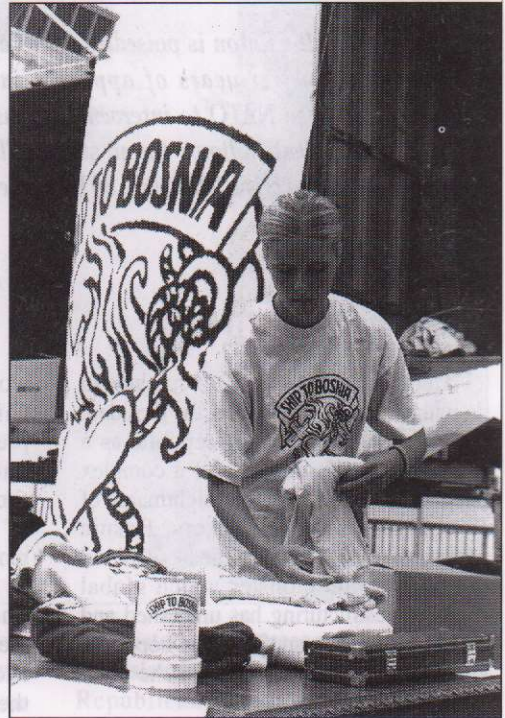
1. Established by the European Community to study the requests for recognition of the various successor states. The recommendation was positive for Slovenia and Croatia, but expressed reservations about recognising Croatia, since there were insufficient practical guarantees concerning the Serb minority there. The Commission opposed the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, given the depth of the constitutional crisis in the former Yugoslav Republic.

2. Telethons in late July raised \$7 m. in Jordan and \$43 m. in the United Arab Emirates. The tonnes of material aid arriving testify to the emotion and solidarity of the Muslim population of a number of other countries.

3. Area of Croatia under the control of secessionist Serbian Croats from the beginning of the Yugoslav conflict until its (re)-conquest by Croatian forces in August 1995.

Ship to Bosnia

IN 1994 SWEDISH DOCK WORKER and trade unionist Leif Jansson visited the Bosnian mining town of Tuzla as part of an International Workers Aid (IWA) delegation. The journey gave him the idea of organising a ship of solidarity - sailing from port to port in Europe collecting food, medicines and clothes for the people of Bosnia.



THIS IDEA IS NOW REALITY! On 30 September the cargo ship Haväng left the harbour of Luleå in northern Sweden. Hospitals

in the Finnish capital Helsinki have donated hospital materials, and one of the Swedish farm workers' unions has provided a fire-fighters' truck.

THERE IS SPACE for 100 containers on board. The ship left Sweden with 35, thanks to solidarity from the national graphical workers' and food processing workers' unions, and the active support and publicity of the social-democratic daily newspaper *Aftonbladet*.

THE SHIP will reach the Croatian port of Makarska before the end of the year. On the way it will pick up aid provided by Scottish trade unions (in Aberdeen), public service unions in Antwerp, and the CGT union confederation in Barcelona.

AT A RECENT MEETING in Geneva four international union federations, Metalworkers, Food, Construction and Public Employees, decided to support the campaign.

Trade unionists in ex-Yugoslavia are waiting!
Don't let your union miss the boat!

Radvaldsgaten 14, 118 46 Stockholm, Sweden. tel. +84620532

Clinton and Bosnia

U.S. President Bill Clinton is poised to claim a major foreign policy victory. After years of apparent indecisiveness, Washington pressed NATO to intervene against the Bosnian Serbs. If a peace treaty follows the air strikes, Clinton will take credit for resolving a crisis left to him by his predecessor.

But no treaty can guarantee a stable peace for very long. And Clinton's foreign policy is laden with pitfalls. The U.S. president has silenced his critics for the moment, but he still has numerous obstacles to overcome — objective and subjective, international and domestic.

by Kit Adam Wainer

New York, 25 September 1995

CLINTON'S BOSNIA POLICY has little to do with Bosnia itself. Rather, the president sees the former Yugoslav republic as a small but significant piece of a complex international puzzle. In the nightmares of Washington's policy-makers, Bosnia represents the dark side of the New World Order. It is the monster which global capitalist restructuring has unleashed and which threatens to snuff out the hopes the Clinton administration has for the post-Cold War world economy.

Following the lead of capital itself, all of the major capitalist powers have become advocates of globalization and free trade. Clinton successfully campaigned for the support of the U.S. Congress for the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Washington hopes that the elimination of government services, regulations, and impediments to capital mobility will help capitalism replenish itself after more than two decades of sluggish growth.

Before that hypothesis can even be tested, however, the Clinton administration must address severe international crises its policies have exacerbated. The threat of violent and reactionary nationalism arises almost inevitably out of capitalist globalism. Clinton's speeches acknowledge that militant jingoism in Europe is in part a result of the lightning pace of economic change and the destruction of living standards such change entails.

Yet neither the White House nor any major world leader is prepared to offer relief. As most of the former Communist

world descends rapidly into poverty the Clinton administration is far too preoccupied with reducing the federal budget to even consider serious aid packages. Thus, there is no Marshall Plan in sight. Besides, the very thrust of globalization is to allow capital to follow its natural course, going only where it can find profits. That means bypassing vast areas of central and eastern Europe and allowing the latter to rot, just as capital and the state have allowed major industrial centers of the United States to rust.

BOSNIA, therefore, awakens Clinton from the euphoria of a world economy without borders and reminds him of the dangers he is helping to create. Militant jingoism and nationalist warfare threaten to destabilize European restructuring and undermine all bourgeois plans. The former Yugoslavia is only one threat, although probably the most severe one. In Bosnia the president also sees Armenia and Azerbaijan, Macedonia and Greece, and the civil wars in Georgia. Beyond them he sees bigger dangers: Greco-Turkish and Russo-Turkish conflagrations. Last spring Clinton's Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs expressed his boss' fear of nationalist violence in the pages of Foreign Affairs.

If any of these malignancies spread — as they have already in parts of the Balkans and Transcaucasia — general European stability is again at risk. And for Germany and Russia, the two large nations on the flanks of central Europe, insecurity has historically been a major contributor to aggressive behavior.¹

It is difficult to believe that the Assistant Secretary is genuinely worried about a fourth reich. His exaggeration is

more likely crafted to alarm others in Washington of the dangers European nationalism poses to their interests.

RECENTLY the United States has intervened throughout the southern Balkans to prevent the spread of the Bosnian model. Since 1992, as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have encouraged the Macedonian government to restructure its economy and reduce inflation, Washington has bolstered its influence over the governments of Albania and Bulgaria. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency has taken over Albania's largest air field and there is evidence of an increasing CIA presence in Macedonian politics.² The White House's aim has been to prevent the spread of the Bosnian war into Macedonia. To that end Clinton's aides have pressed the Sali Berisha regime in Tirana to curb its support for Albanian separatism in Macedonia and attempted to reduce Greco-Macedonian tensions. The United States has also sent a battleship to the Aegean Sea to mute the dispute over oil reserves between Athens and Ankara. For these efforts the Clinton administration has won the praise of the otherwise scornful voice of Misha Glenny.³

Over the same period, the United States became more involved in the Bosnian war itself. U.S. Vice President Al Gore helped broker the 1994 accord between the Bosnian government and the Croatian nationalist militias. Since then the U.S. military has established an intelligence-gathering center on the Adriatic island of Brac.

However, it is not the United States' aim to be Europe's police officer. Quite the contrary, for Clinton the Balkans

Kit Adam Wainer is an activist in the United Federation of Teachers in New York City and is a member of the U.S. revolutionary socialist organization Solidarity.



represent a major test of his central military goal: the fortification of multi-lateral defense forces. Elements of this larger policy include the gradual expansion of NATO and its transformation into a more activist and interventionist force than it ever was during the Cold War, the incorporation of former- Communist countries into NATO's Partnership for Peace program, and vague promises of full NATO membership to a select set among the former-east bloc. Strobe Talbott, Clinton's chief officer for Russian affairs articulates his administration's perspective on the need for a vast "collective security architecture:"

"[T]he lesson of the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia is not to retire NATO in disgrace but to develop its ability to counter precisely those forces that have exploded in the Balkans. And many of the nations in the region see NATO as having that potential. Representatives of several Central European states have said publicly that, for them, the Bosnian tragedy is an argument for joining NATO — and for adopting the standards of internal order and external behavior that will make them eligible".⁴

Efforts to integrate eastern Europeans into NATO's Partnership for Peace have proceeded. In August 1995, fourteen partnership members participated in joint military exercises in Louisiana, U.S.A.

"Collective defense remains an imperative need of European and transatlantic security, and central to American engagement in Europe," Talbott adds. "Just as an individual power keeps a standing army in peacetime, so the transatlantic community needs NATO."

TALBOTT, like Clinton, has a broad vision of transatlantic cooperation. He urges the expansion of the European Union, as a force for democracy and free trade. Furthermore, he credits the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for helping to reduce tensions between the newly independent Baltic states and their ethnic Russian minorities.

Collective defense arrangements also have the advantage of shifting the responsibility for military security off of Washington's shoulders. The new thinking in Washington is that Europeans should supply most of the necessary fighting forces and pay for them as well.

U.S. policy has not been a constant since the end of the Cold War, however. Rather, it has emerged gradually, finding its most sophisticated form only under the Clinton administration. Warren Zimmerman, Ambassador to Yugoslavia under former-President George Bush, for example, laments his government's failure to craft a clear policy as Yugoslavia was breaking up. From 1989 to 1991 Bush

supported the preservation of the Yugoslav federation, resisting calls from Republican Senator Bob Dole to encourage Slovenian and Croatian independence. Bush, however, became disoriented when the Serbo-Croatian War brought Yugoslavia to an end between 1991 and 1992. At that point the president dismissed the former Yugoslavia as a "European problem" and Zimmerman did not encourage the use of NATO force to stop the shelling of Vukovar and Dubrovnik.

At the time, Zimmerman met with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman. The Zagreb leader told the U.S. Ambassador of his plans to join with Serbia to partition Bosnia. Zimmerman's mournful recollection reveals the extent to which his administration had failed to develop a viable Balkan policy.

"With some heat I asked, 'Mr. President, how can you expect the West to help you get back the parts of Croatia taken by the Serbs when you yourself are advancing naked and unsupported claims on a neighboring republic?' There was no answer. I added, 'And how can you expect Milosevic to respect a deal with you to divide Bosnia when he's trying to annex part of Croatia?' Amazingly, Tudjman answered, 'Because I can trust Milosevic.' On the way down the stairs after this surreal discussion, I asked one of Tudjman's aides if I had gotten too

emotional in defending the integrity of Bosnia. 'Oh no,' he said, 'You were just fine.'"⁶

Zimmerman was stuck representing an administration which had not yet considered a sophisticated response to the social and political catastrophes which befell southeastern Europe after the Cold War. Consequently, he had no alternative but to pray that he had not offended Tudjman by hinting that his government might have a policy.

Clinton came to office in 1993 and gradually the development of "collective security architecture" became a prime objective of U.S. foreign policy. His State Department has pressed for an expansion of NATO's role and the use of United Nations peacekeepers as a genuinely multi-lateral force. In State Department thinking, the development of reliable collective defense far outweighs any particular outcome in the former Yugoslavia. Consequently, U.S. policy in Bosnia has had the appearance of being directionless and Clinton has been accused of indecision.

This assessment, however, is false. Clinton's emissaries have been trying for years to incorporate the region's strongest powers into various peace plans backed by multi-national forces. From 1993 through 1994 that agenda led Washington to objectively aid the Serbian nationalist militias by refusing to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia, or take any stern measures against the Serbian forces. But as the tide of the war began to turn in 1994, Washington began to court the Zagreb regime and the United States became more closely allied with Tudjman. Perhaps the one constant feature of Clinton's evolving agenda has been the desire to partition Bosnia to appease its two stronger neighbors.

The NATO bombardment of Bosnian Serb positions in August 1995 signalled a partial success for U.S. policy. Coming on the heels of Croatia's stunning victory in the Krajina earlier that month and in the context of the Bosnian government's growing military might, NATO's air strikes may have the temporary effect of compelling the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and the Sarajevo regime to accept a partition plan neither really wants.

Yet a Bosnian peace will be fragile. And the forces that threaten it also raise severe doubts about the prospects for a viable collective security architecture. First, all signatories to a NATO-imposed peace are likely to use the truce as a respite to prepare for a new round of fighting. The Serbian militias will reorganize and thus, so will the Bosnian

government. Belgrade and Zagreb will begin preparations to annex swathes of Bosnia.

Second, many of the policies designed to prevent the spread of fighting are also creating new problems. IMF and World Bank austerity measures have stabilized the Macedonian dinar and brought inflation down to 20%. However, these gains have come at the cost of a staggering decline in production and a surge in unemployment to between 20% and 30%.⁷ These are precisely the conditions which have driven so many to reactionary nationalism in the first place!

Third, the goal of expanding NATO is fraught with difficulties and Clinton's plans have been contradictory. Incorporating former east-bloc nations as full NATO members is problematic because most have outdated military forces and, therefore, have little to contribute to collective security. Romania's desire to make itself more attractive to NATO has led it to invest 10% of its budget on its military, while its domestic economy is in shambles.⁸ Furthermore, expansion of NATO eastward is seen in Moscow as a threat.

Fourth, the problem of defining Russia's role in the collective defense matrix has already sparked contention among the western powers themselves. Germany, for example, has expressed sympathy for Moscow's protest that the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is forcing it to destroy its arsenal at too rapid and costly a pace. Bonn is far less interested than are Washington or London in urging Russian compliance. (9)

Finally, all of these weaknesses have created grave doubts about Clinton's global agenda in the minds of Congressional Republicans and even some Democrats. The often raucous debates between the President and Congress over how to handle Bosnia reflect more than mere partisan bickering. They are reflections of the contradictory position the United States finds itself in. It fears the spread of nationalism but will not ameliorate any of its economic roots. It wants to compel peace but with someone else's soldiers and at someone else's expense.

Clinton's politics of collective security have not yet proven adequate to the great tasks his government must undertake. Even if the latest round of NATO bombing finally forces a peace treaty, it will be a questionable victory for the U.S. president. After all, NATO's aerial campaign comes only after the United Nations peacekeepers have consistently failed to broker any treaties or protect their

safe havens or even their own soldiers. Furthermore, NATO's latest actions come primarily at the request of the United States and, therefore, illustrate little of the bilateralism Clinton preaches.

Whether successful or not, Clinton's agenda has little to do with the preservation of a multi-communal Bosnia, or even the physical survival of its inhabitants. Clinton has repeatedly demonstrated his willingness to placate genocidal governments in the hopes of containing the Bosnian conflict within its present borders. There is, therefore, nothing humanitarian about U.S. intervention and little reason for humanitarians to pray for its success.



Notes

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Stop the imperialist military intervention

by Livio Maitan
Paris, 24 September 1995

THE SITUATION in former Yugoslavia has changed in the last two months. The Croatian army's intervention in Krajina and the massive NATO attack [against the Bosnian Serbs] illuminate the fundamental dynamic of this conflict.

Let's start with the responsibilities and objectives of the current leaders of the various parties to the conflict. Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic has a primary responsibility for the disintegration of the Yugoslav Federation. To keep his power within a bureaucratic regime in crisis, he launched a virulent nationalist campaign, which could only alarm the other peoples of Yugoslavia, and encourage secessionist tendencies. And those who insist on portraying Serbia as a bastion of "socialism" or anti-imperialism should note that Milosevic, just like the leaders of the other Yugoslav republics, had already begun flirting with the "market economy".

He has since watered down his strategy, for clear reasons. It is easier to shout out the ideology of Greater Serbia than to translate this ideology into a concrete political project, never mind carry out this project. Milosevic has discovered this, to his cost. He quickened the explosion of the federation, and provoked anti-Serb feelings and political decisions in the other republics. And yet the crisis in the Yugoslav army prevented him from solving the question by force. As Stojan Serovic comments in the independent weekly *Vreme*, all Milosevic can proclaim nowadays is the "Lesser-Greater Serbia"¹

Milosevic is trapped. He has become the target of the outrageous currents with whom he was for a time in an alliance, and which now accuse him of weakness, even

Events in ex-Yugoslavia have provoked a wide-ranging debate within the European and international workers' movement. We publish here a contribution from our regular contributor Livio Maitan, member of the Italian Party of Communist Refoundation ("Rifondazione")

treason. And at the same time he must take into account the growing weariness of the poorer classes, less and less willing to carry the burden of a war which has caused a vertical drop in their standard of living.

Given this context, Milosevic has chosen the path of compromise (though without going back on a number of what he considers to be faits accomplis; the tight control over Kosovo, and a number of territorial demands). His goal is the lifting of the embargo, stemming the disintegration of the economy, and preventing any later aggravation of the conflict which could have unforeseen consequences for Serbia itself. The Bosnian Serbs could hardly be overjoyed by this change of direction: hence the conflict between Pale and Belgrade, and the murderous actions of the desperate soldiers of General Mladic against the unfortunate city of Sarajevo, and the enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, with new "purification", and new convoys of desperate people fleeing their villages and towns.

CROATIA'S LEADERS were for a time not involved in major military operations, though they never gave up the idea of intervention in Bosnia, not just to settle the score with the Serbs, but also to counterpoise the Muslim influence. As they gradually realised that Milosevic was no longer able to re-launch the conflict at a higher level, that they could count on concrete international sympathy, and that the Bosnian government would support them, they went on the offensive against Krajina. They deployed a large part of their restructured armed forces, "modernised" with the direct assistance of the United States.

A large part of the international press has skated round the consequences of this intervention for the Serb population. Once more we saw people flee: tens, hundreds of thousands of them.

The third rascal, the Bosnian government, believed that no agreement, and therefore no durable cease-fire, was possible until they had imposed a more favourable balance of forces, by military means. This was what motivated the Bosnian army's various offensives during 1994 and 1995. The failure of these offensives could only reinforce the other strategy supported within the Bosnian leadership, that of ensuring a direct military intervention by the European powers, and above all the United States. Lifting the embargo on arms was only a supplementary goal. And embargo or no, the Bosnians have in fact received a significant quantity of armaments from abroad.

IN THE BEGINNING, the United States wanted to preserve the status quo, in the form of the Yugoslav federation. They worried about the situation becoming uncontrollable. And they saw that the economic choices already taken by the federal and republican leaderships represented an increase in the potential for penetration by imperialist capital.

But once the process of secession started, there new "independent" states were recognised quite quickly, with Germany the first major power to take this step.

As the conflict became more and more intense, the European powers and the USA hesitated. There were no important economic interests, and the strategic imperatives of the cold war were no longer valid. So the imperialist powers marked time, and became involved in a very limited way only, through the filter of the UN operation.

INTERNATIONAL OPINION became increasingly concerned, as the conflict continued to degenerate. The situation became more and more serious, and the implications for a whole region of Europe more and more difficult to predict with certainty. So despite the multiple diffe-



rences between them, the imperialist powers decided to intervene, as energetically as possible.

The stakes were highest for the US. As the world power with hegemony pretensions, America had to show that in a serious situation like this, they were still able to impose their authority, and play the role of world supervisor, by virtue of their military superiority.

In this sense, and despite all the obvious distinctions, the intervention follows the same logic as the Gulf War. What is more, it creates an extremely serious precedent.

The intervention has clearly changed the situation on the ground. One of the reasons for hesitation was the conviction that an airborne intervention would not be sufficient, and that it would be necessary to deploy ground troops: such a decision would have been very difficult to take in Europe and in the US. This difficulty has now been overcome. The US and their allies bombard from the air and the sea, destroying the Serbian military system, without avoiding a number of civilian establishments. And at the same time, the Croat and Bosnian armies occupy the disputed territory.

Developments over the next few months are difficult to predict. Nothing is definitively "solved", and all kinds of reversals of fortune are possible. This

uncertainty is one more reason to try to be clear about the attitude Communists should adopt.

THERE IS NO QUALITATIVE social, political or ideological difference between the regimes in place in the republics of former Yugoslavia. These regimes have begun the restoration of capitalism (a remains a precarious and contradictory process). They have suppressed, or seriously eroded, the gains for workers, peasants and all democrats which were the result of the Yugoslav revolution and the Federal Republic which it created.

None of the governments in place respects even the most elementary political rights. They all make use of authoritarian methods. They have changed, or tried to change, the map of the region through war. They are inspired by reactionary nationalist ideology, favouring the ethnic purification which they have all practised, though to different degrees. As Salim Beslagic, Mayor of Tuzla, said in Rome on 6 September, "this is not a confrontation between the peoples, but between the national oligarchies"²

All this applied to the Bosnian army and government too. They now follow the same dynamic as the Serbian and Croatian forces. The courageous partisans of a multi-ethnic solution (from a Communist and internationalist point of view, the only

valid solution) do not represent more than a small minority. They deserve our solidarity and support, but they can hardly influence the orientation and the actions of the Bosnian government and its army.

THE WAR MUST STOP. All military operations should cease immediately. This is the condition *sine qua non* for reversing the perverse dynamic of nationalist and racist hysteria, destruction and massacre, to make possible the re-emergence of the most basic forms of civil society, and to sketch out political solutions which respect the interests and aspirations of the peoples concerned.

Those who doubt the sense of such a demand should consider this: About six months ago the precarious cease-fire was broken. The conflict flared up, with new killings, ethnic cleansing and exodus of population, mainly poor peasants, at a scale more massive than before. The International Red Cross talks of 350,000 refugees. No nation, no national group has benefited from this latest round of war. All have again paid the tragic price.

Are the Bosnians right to celebrate the change in the balance of forces, and the failures encountered by the Bosnian Serbs? From a nationalist, or a short-sighted perspective, perhaps. But the situation is still unstable, and peace is not at all assured. In the new context, the future of the former Yugoslavia, and Bosnia in particular, will be determined much more by the interests and demands of the major imperialist powers than by the will of the peoples.

Communists and internationalists should under no pretext support such a perspective. In the face of a typical imperialist project, it is impossible to shuffle in silence. We must say "stop the bombing! Stop the NATO intervention!"



Notes

1. *Vreme*, 2 September 1995.
2. This pertinent characterisation has not, unfortunately, prevented Beslagic from supporting a NATO military intervention.

Workers' Aid?

Dominique Duclois and Annick Coupé of the French communication workers' union SUD¹ participated in the August 1995 convoy to Tuzla organised by Workers' Aid for Bosnia

International Viewpoint: Why did SUD support the convoy?

SUD had not previously been involved in any real solidarity with Bosnia. Partly through lack of time, but also because the question is quite complicated. As a trade union, we don't have a deep analysis of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, the course of the war, and who is responsible. We decided to participate after trade unionists from Tuzla visited Paris in January-February 1995. This visit clarified for us who was the aggressor and who the aggressed. The multi-ethnic and multi-cultural aspect of the Bosnians' struggle seemed to express the same values that we as a trade union defend. Our struggle against the far right and racism here in France is linked to the struggle in Bosnia on the same questions.

We also felt that, if the trade union movement doesn't involve itself in the solidarity campaign, we will be leaving the field open for extremists and fundamentalists of all kinds. And last but not least, SUD has always said that solidarity doesn't stop at the gate of your workplace, nor at the country's frontiers.

The Tuzla trade unionists who visited Paris made an appeal for French participation in a British convoy that was being planned. I should note that, while it proved easy for SUD to get involved, I don't think we really managed to mobilise across the PTT (Post Office/Telephone company). Of course, collecting material and deliv-

ring it over there is positive. The problem is being able to explain what is happening in Bosnia, and the need for solidarity, here in France, inside the PTT.

This difficulty partially explains the progressive loss of the idea of international solidarity across the French trade union movement, and not just concerning Bosnia. The strong tradition of solidarity in the [mainly Communist] CGT federation, and the Polish solidarity work of the [moderate] CFDT federation is fading, because of the difficulties facing the trade union movement. The disintegration of the East European countries, and the particularly complicated situation in Bosnia also have their effect. Most people start feeling that there is no difference between the different warring parties - because they don't understand what's going on.

How was the August 1995 convoy organised?

The coal-mining region of Tuzla collected important aid for the British miners during their great 1984 strike. The war and the fascist siege of Tuzla led them to request aid for themselves. This is how Workers Aid was created — to support the workers of Tuzla. SOB (France) was formed in 1993 following contacts with the British campaign. Only a handful of people were involved at the beginning, but we have managed to organise two convoys to Tuzla.

Four SUD militants accompanied our 38 tonne lorry, which carried foodstuffs. As well as delivering the aid, we wanted to show out support for the workers there by our very presence in the besieged city.

As we drove down the Croatian coast, the effects of the war became more and more tangible. In the north we were held

up by the large number of trucks transporting wind-surfing equipment for tourists. But in Masenica the bridge had been dynamited. The whole Zadar region was in ruins. We finally arrived in Split, where we met up with the other participants, 20 vehicles, mainly from Britain, but also from France, Spain, Portugal and Ireland.

We were blocked for two days in Split by the formalities demanded by the Croats of "Herzeg Bosna".² While we were waiting we saw a convoy of a hundred trucks carrying petrol: presumably as part of the preparation for the offensive against Knin, the main town of Krajina [Croatian region until recently controlled by Croatian Serb secessionists].

The next stop was Mostar, at the frontier between "Herzeg-Bosna" and Bosnia. The Muslim part of town was completely destroyed by the Croats at the beginning of the war. The [historic] bridge was destroyed, and the mosques dynamited. The Croatian side of town is intact.

The people we spoke to told us that the Croats are blocking the UN initiatives to reconstruct the town, because they refuse all co-operation with the Bosnian Muslims. Most of our contacts thought that 80% of the Mostar Croats would prefer the partition of the town. We discharged part of the aid, and moved on.

We followed the river Neretva for 100 km, through a region where everything had been destroyed. In one village the

Other aid initiatives

AJUDA OBRERA (CATELONIA) AND ARQUITECTOS SIN FRONTERAS

International work brigade to reconstruct university buildings (2 groups of 35 participants). Shares many of the priorities of IWA, but has some very militant demands which go beyond IWA's broad platform

Contact: tel/fax +34 3 186180 (Diego)

HELSINKI CITIZENS ASSEMBLY

Six hundred participants are expected for the fourth Helsinki Citizen Assembly in Tuzla, 19-22 October 1995

How to provide concrete aid to the people of Bosnia, and at the same time reach out to our natural partners in former Yugoslavia — trade unionists, feminists and left radicals? This is the challenge facing International Workers Aid and Workers Aid for Bosnia. Both organisations recently organised convoys to the mining town of Tuzla in north-eastern Bosnia. Here are their reports.



mosque had been dynamited, in the second the Catholic church is riddled with bullet-holes. We were astonished to see that there are a number of Croat zones inside Bosnia. And each time you pass through a frontier post, into a town flying the Croat flag, where the cars carry Croatian number plates. We used a UN track subject to intermittent Serb sniper attacks. You drive at night, with all the lights off.

International Workers Aid: Tuzla projects report

★ We support the Kreka mine "Heart to Heart" women's association's appeal for funds to produce shoes in the Aida shoe factory in Tuzla (at a unit cost of 50 DM). IWA's goal is to raise funds for at least 1,000 pairs of shoes (including for the 450 women working in the Kreka complex). We are also helping them find funds and equipment to start a souvenir business and to make better use of the mine kitchen's vegetable gardens

★ The two mammographs and the echograph machine have been delivered to the Gildings primary health centre in Tuzla (the central clinic refused them, as they are not new models). We also donated 3,300 DM for primary installation costs. The machines were transported to Tuzla by *Médecins sans Frontières* and *Equilibre*, so we saved some funds which we can use for another project.

★ We hope to sign an agreement with the primary health centre to provide a breast control and smear test at a cost of 1 DM per

Finally we arrived in Tuzla. We were surprised to see the factories working - all we had seen so far had been former factories converted into barracks and warehouses for the largest army in Bosnia - the United Nations Protection Force. Tuzla is still an industrial town. The power station and the mines are still running. People work one month, and spend one month at the front.

woman. It should be easy to raise money for this project abroad.

★ New attempts are being made to start a trade union for health workers. This is an opportunity to build solidarity among nurses unions in the West.

★ The Danish and Flemish IWA groups are working with local schools and teachers groups/unions. 10,000 DM from Flemish IWA and 4,500 DM from the Danish group (a grant from the European trade union Education International) have been delivered to local projects under IWA supervision.

★ Other IWA projects under way include women's and trade union newspapers, and co-operation with those in Tuzla who wish to build or renovate the trades unions.

For more information contact your local IWA group or write to: International Workers Aid - Belgium, c/o Jenny Mees, Manteluisstraat 12, 3500 Hasselt, Belgium, tel./fax +32 11 22 27 66

Our meetings with the trade unions revealed that we and they have quite different conceptions of trade unionism. In fact, there are not independent working class organisations in Bosnia. The old trade unions exist, and their representatives are elected, but they are very linked to the state apparatus. For example, we came to one meeting which we thought we had arranged with the trade unionists of the post office, and we were received jointly by the directors of the post office and one trade union representative. Having said this, there was no blockage of our desire to contact ordinary trade unionists. We spoke with a number of miners, and with the women's association of the Kreka mine complex.

We know that there is a class struggle in Bosnia too. It takes the form of a trade union struggle, and a struggle against the nationalist parties, including the SDA [Party of Democratic Action, in power in Sarajevo. Muslim nationalist]. This is why we didn't just deliver our material aid, but tried to make contact with the local trade union opposition currents too.

What do the trade unionists of Tuzla think about privatisation?

A privatisation programme was adopted by the Yugoslav federal government at the beginning of the 1990s. The war stopped all this, but the debate did start. We

were told that the miners of Kreka had voted against the privatisation of their mines. In some other mines, the miners apparently bought shares in their mines. We had the impression that the miners there understand the risks of privatisation (profitability criteria, redundancies and so on), but at the same time they think that privatisation is the way to re-launch the town's industrial potential.

How was your aid distributed?

Our first step was to visit Radio Tuzla and the television, where the arrival, goal and contents of our convoy were announced. The miners have their aid distribution

controlled by representatives of Workers Aid. Unfortunately, there is no workers' control of aid distribution via delegates or trade union representatives.

One comforting fact, in Tuzla, is that there is no black market, except for some luxury products. Which suggests that the possibilities for diverting aid are minimal, especially since convoys have started arriving regularly.

What now?

All the SUD comrades who participated in the convoy want to go back again. We will be transmitting the new requests from Tuzla, and making new appeals. And

we will be going back to make contact with those militants who want to build and independent workers' movement, not just in Bosnia but also in Serbia and Croatia.

This kind of solidarity should be encouraged. I think it is something we can reproduce in a number of other situations. Algeria for example



SUD can be contacted at
PO Box 74, 75960 Paris, CEDEX 20 France.

Notes

1. See *International Viewpoint* #267, June 1995.
2. No particular problems were experienced with the customs authorities of either Croatia proper or the Bosnian government.

Life in Tuzla: "People don't eat rich

Jenny Mees visited Tuzla in July-August 1995 for IWA - Belgium. The materials published here are edited extracts from her report dated 29 August 1995, available from IWA Belgium, Manteliusstraat 12, 3500 Hasselt, Belgium. tel./fax (+32 11) 222766

THE REGION OF TUZLA, and particularly the town itself, is still the multi-cultural and democratic society that we support. Don't doubt it. But... the pressure is high. Life is hard. There is a lot of corruption and favouritism. A lot of undemocratic machinery at work. For example: who can stay at work and who has to go and fight? Who can get a job with the municipality? Who can get an apartment? Who will receive an aid parcel? Who can get papers to go abroad, and who will have to stay?

You see more girls wearing the Chador (Islamic head-scarf), and more people use new, religious forms for greeting and saying goodbye. There are more people in the mosques, and more religious life. This is all the influence of the many rich Islamic humanitarian organisations. People want to survive, and many are making a way for themselves by betting on the SDA card.

But people are also striving to show their affinity with their own Moslem cultural heritage. This is stimulated by some teachers in the schools, but also by the new books from the Bosnian Ministry of Education. TV Sarajevo also plays a role. There is a new emphasis on the Muslim cultural and historical heritage of Bosnia. People want to know more about all this - without being "big" Muslims. This is surely normal- every nation needs to have roots in a common language, culture, history, etc. Of course, many people stress that they are Europeans, with an European culture... but this is somehow difficult. Europe is letting them down, is not interested in them. And what is "European culture" any-

way? To dress like people in London and to use a computer? A nation needs more.

If the war ends, with some acceptable political solution for Bosnia, then this process can develop. But now? The (small?) group of very active people who invest themselves in the fight for an European identity, for an outspoken multi-ethnic and civic option are moving in an emptiness, without roots in the mass of



the town's population. Because the option they propose seems so powerless, so without future, and because their solutions and options are so cut off from those of the maybe not-so-educated and enlightened ordinary citizens, let alone the mass of refugees.

For example, one of the posters produced by the Citizens' Forum (Forum Gradana) after the fall of Srebrenica could have been understood in a quite different way than the publishers intended. Having said this, the

Forum organised three days of petitioning for the re-installment of Prime Minister Haris Siladjić after he resigned, with a huge success. Which shows that there is another reality - that of living together as good neighbours, in mutual understanding. Bosnians are not at all fanatical or intolerant people, not even after three years of war. If only they are given some kind of chance.

Only the most marginal people still go hungry nowadays. Food and the most common daily goods are cheap in Tuzla. But most people still have no money whatsoever. So vegetable plots and gardens still play a major role in almost everyone's life.

People don't eat rich. Most meals consist of flour, pasta or rice and the garden vegetables (onions, potatoes, beans, cabbage).

Some people have a second job (taxi-driver, working for a foreign NGO, night-watchman, repair man) which brings in some cash. Most regular day jobs are unpaid. You can also trade your possessions. You can still see many street-vendors, and people selling furniture and other belongings.

Most people get something from time to time, even those who are not on any of the priority lists. I have the impression that access to a packet also depends on the activity and energy of the individual concerned. And those in work usually get one meal at the office or factory, typically a thick soup and big piece of bread.

Water is connected for a few hours early morning and late afternoon. Electricity is connected all the time, and rationed to 6 kW/day for each household. It could be worse. Gasoline is rather cheap, at 1-1.5 DM/litre, and there are a lot of cars in the streets. What is very expensive is material for domestic repairs (paint, nails, tools) and office equipment. One photocopy costs 1 DM.



Russia

What Stability?

Russia is preparing for parliamentary elections in December 1995, and a presidential election in June 1996. The "party of power" is making the necessary preparations to remain in power, and continue the massive theft which characterises the capitalist "development of Russia". The stakes are so high that there is a real risk of authoritarian measures if the population votes the "wrong" way.

by Poul Funder Larsen
Moscow

AFTER YEARS OF POLITICAL TURMOIL and economic decline, the political elites in Russia have found themselves a new mantra: that of "national accord" and "stability". The Chernomyrdin government proclaims the success of its policies of "financial stabilisation" as prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), while privatisation is now said to be irreversible. The political superstructure of this government "success" is Chernomyrdin's "Our Russian House" organisation - the quasi-official "bosses' party". In the parliamentary elections of December 1995 this party will defend the colours of the current pro-capitalist government, with the ultimate perspective of keeping the Yeltsin-Chernomyrdin tandem in power until and after the Presidential elections of June 1996. The absence of a strong, credible opposition gives the "bosses' party" a chance of success. But this is far from certain. No amount of government propaganda can cover up the consequences of five years of botched pro-capitalist "reform": production had dropped 50%, unemployment has risen from zero to 13%, whole industries have been destroyed, and violent and white-collar crime is rampant. Not to mention a few wars here and there on the periphery of the "empire".

STABILISATION WITHOUT STABILITY?

Since the freeing of prices in January 1992 unleashed hyperinflation, the government has made "financial stabilisation" its top priority. IMF style. The coming of stabilisation has been announced regularly, at least twice a year. But it has never materialised. The latest attempt, to drive inflation below 2% a month through budget austerity, has, not surprisingly, failed. Official sources now admit that inflation in December 1995 will be 7-8%, no lower than in the summer of 1992, three years and half-a-dozen "stabilisation" plans ago.

And yet, in this latest "stabilisation" plan, government spending on education, health care, culture and science has been tightly controlled, with disastrous results. But at the same time the huge commercial monopolies, formed in the process of privatisation of nationalised property, and operating in what is largely a fictitious market, have utilised their privileged position to hoard super-profits. One prominent example is Gazprom, the world's largest producer of natural gas, and in asset terms probably the largest company in the world. This giant has not only avoided paying taxes, but has hiked its rates to consumers far quicker than the general development of costs and prices would call for. Incidentally, Gazprom is the personal fiefdom of Chernomyrdin, the man at the head of the "stabilisation" government.

Far from facilitating decentralisation and generalising prosperity, as the liberals promised to do in the 1989-1992 period, privatisation has in fact paved the way for a new hypercentralisation. A few individuals now control quite enormous fortunes. The political corollary of this process has been the forging of new alliances among the groups in the state apparatus which reflect the interests of the various monopolies. And the criminal corollary is the flood of economic crime and contract killings which has engulfed all spheres of Russian economic life.

CHERNOMYRDIN'S "NEW DEAL"

The Chernomyrdin government has become the symbol of a "New Deal" carried out to the detriment of the overwhelming part of the population. After the most odious monetarists (Ygor Gaudier and Boris Fyodorov) were forced out of the government, following the liberal defeat in the December 1993 elections to the Duma (parliament), Chernomyrdin forged an alliance between leading managers in those parts

★ RUSSIA

of Russian industry most dependent on western investments and markets (oil and gas extraction, the metal-working industries) and representatives of "nationally oriented" Russian capital (the banking sector, parts of the defence and agro-industries). The Chernomyrdin government thus became the central bargaining institution for the lobbies and apparatuses competing for power and influence. In this process, President Yeltsin has unavoidably lost out, and the dominant position in Russia is now that of the Prime Minister, Chernomyrdin.

The material basis for the convergence of interests is the privatisation process. "Red" directors (those in whom the hard-line opposition of the early 1990s had so much trust) have been transformed into managers in a commercialised, if not fully capitalist, environment. The commercial expression of this is the increasingly dominant position of the new Russian banks (that is commercial banks organised in the 1988-1991 period). To illustrate: earlier this year a consortium of banks "offered" to bail out the cash-strapped government in exchange for major stakes in the remaining large state enterprises, due to be auctioned off in 1995-6. This concrete proposal eventually came to nothing. But it does show the growing self-confidence of the up-and-coming Russian bourgeoisie.

Of course, the future of this new class depends on the political struggle in society as a whole, and in particular on the struggle for control over the state apparatus. The fortunes of these "new Russians" have been created solely by pilfering state property and assets. Their future is linked to that of the state apparatus on which they have been acting as parasites. Economic reform à la Chernomyrdin has been a boon to these layers, while destroying large parts of Russian industry producing for the home market. Much of Russian light industry has come to a standstill. And even after five years of constant decline, output in this sector will drop a further 35% in 1995.

The Chernomyrdin government has succeeded in keeping its fragile alliance together, despite the social costs of reform and the fierce competition between the sectional lobbies. Chernomyrdin's success is based on his identification of the 'lowest common denominators': the things that are sure to keep his coalition together. They are three: continued privatisation, subsidies for the strongest lobbies, and a free hand for the monopolies. From the hard-line liberal Chubais to the "Red Collective Farmer" Zaveryukha, the government is united. The success of this approach (and the "principles" of the opposition) can be illustrated by the ease with which the government avoided a threatened no-confidence vote by parliament in June of this year. The government simply allocated a slice of new credits to the agro-industrial complex. And then the majority of the Agrarian Party faction in the Duma switched their support from the opposition to the government.

THE VIOLENT FACE OF RUSSIAN CAPITALISM

The pro-capitalist drive has created an unprecedented wave of criminality. Russian society has been shaken several times over the last few years. This is an important factor in the abysmal popularity ratings of Yeltsin and his government.

In 1994 alone there were more than 500 contract killings of businessmen and public figures. Among the victims were

Russia's top investigative journalist Vlad Listyev, three Members of Parliament, and countless bank managers and company directors. These numbers indicate the extent to which the privatisation programme, in the absence of a market infrastructure and legal framework that would secure some, even rudimentary form of economic competition, has led to outright barbarism. In a monopolised environment dominated by Mafia clans with deep roots in the state administration, the only means of "competition" is the physical liquidation of competitors.

Seven reshuffles of the secret services in less than four years, and a massive reallocation of resources to the Ministry of the Interior has not had any positive effect, because these organs are themselves infected by criminal structures and corruption.

Any systematic struggle with organised crime in Russia would have to take the form of a struggle with the present state apparatus, which is responsible for atrocious crimes.

The war in Chechnya is a case in point: tens of thousands of Russian citizens have been killed by the Russian army, and a whole region destroyed in a military adventure that will have serious repercussions for years to come. This undeclared war was initiated and executed by Yeltsin and the "power ministries" (Defence, Interior, and the secret services) without the slightest democratic decision-making or possibility of parliamentary veto. The "division" between "hawks" like Defence Minister Grachov and "doves" like Prime Minister Chernomyrdin boils down to a discussion about whether, after systematically destroying Chechnya, one should try to "divide and rule" in the framework of a negotiated settlement, or simply continue to wage war for years to come. The Budyonovsk disaster exposed the utter incompetence of the police and military, coupled with the economic constraints, had enabled the second option to gain the upper hand, as a means of political damage control.

A lasting political solution is still to be found. Russia is likely either to demand the de facto capitulation of the Chechens, or to insist on the partition of the republic, incorporating northern Chechnya into Russia proper. This would reduce southern Chechnya to little more than a Bantustan. The ethnic cleansing of Chechens from the Stavropol region of Russia proper, which borders on Chechnya, is a worrying development, suggesting a development towards the partition option.

TWO ELECTIONS

All this sets a sombre background for the elections to the State Duma (lower house of parliament) in December of this year, and the presidential elections of June 1996.

The sheer number of parties and the possible permutations of alliances makes the results difficult to predict.

Chernomyrdin's "Our Russian House" party is virtually synonymous with the state administration. It can count on unlimited material resources and media access, which should secure the "Party of Power" a decent result in the December 1995 elections to the Duma. But since Yeltsin's constitution, baptised in the gunfire of October 1993, relegates the Duma and the Federal Council (upper house of parliament) to the role of a discussion club with a high-profile membership, the most important election is the presidential one. The Duma elections should be seen as a testing ground for the Spring 1996 presidential election campaign.

The chances are that Yeltsin will seek re-election. His current popularity rating is 7-8%, and so his chances of success are unclear. Chernomydin would seem to be a better candidate for the elite.

A large number of equally unpopular candidates will face each other in the first round. Only the two best placed go forward to the decisive, second round. Only a small percentage of total votes could result in Yeltsin facing the extreme right leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in the second round. In which case Yeltsin could still win. In any case, Yeltsin's strongest card is not any of his (very limited) political successes, but the weakness of all wings of the opposition.



OPPOSITION IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY

The liberal current is in crisis. In December 1993 they could muster 25% of the vote, but they are now scattered among a series of unimpressive parties, and will fare much worse in the next elections. The old liberal establishment has been side-lined by the marked shift in the economy away from the dominance of comprador elements towards the emergence of "national capital", and the consequent shift in Russian politics towards a consensus on the need for a strong, active state. It should also be noted that a part of the old liberal establishment has been genuinely repulsed by Yeltsin's atrocities in Chechnya.

A change of generation has taken place in the remaining, "hard" opposition: the communist, "patriotic" and chauvinist forces. Pre-December 1994 leaders like Rutskoi have been pushed aside. The party and leaders likely to do well in December 1995 and June 1996 are more soft-spoken. They are closer to the pro-capitalist, "centrist" consensus that has emerged in Russian politics since October 1993.

Besides the maverick Zhirinovskiy, the main force on the nationalist wing will probably be a bloc of moderate "patriots" in favour of pro-capitalist reforms, led by General Alexander Lebed. The exact outlines of such a bloc are still

undecided, with the allegiance of many fractions as yet undeclared. But one thing is sure: the future of Russian democracy is threatened by the popularity of a man like Lebed, who had identified the former Chilean dictator Pinochet as one of his political idols.

The Communist Party might become the strongest single party in the new Duma, although CP leader Gennady Zyuganov has no chance of winning the presidential elections. The big question concerning the Communists and their cousins in the Agrarian Party is what programme they will present. Zyuganov has always been strong on nationalist rhetoric, but is rather evasive when asked about concrete policies to reverse five years of Yeltsinism. Any victory for the CP would mean little change in the government's economic policies, and increase the probability of a "Russia first" foreign policy.

In these circumstances, the choice for leftists is not an easy one. Some militants try to work with the trade unions, but it now seems that no clear-cut pro-labour bloc is likely to emerge in time for the elections. Other militants are trying to build up an internationalist and socialist opposition within the Communist Party, or at least to secure the presence of independent socialist candidates on the Communist Party candidate list.

THE AUTHORITARIAN OPTION

The political situation remains one of "uneasy calm". Many media observers predict a rise in economic and social tensions during the autumn, creating an unpredictable climate for the election campaign. It is true that there is no real stabilisation in sight, and that real incomes are still falling. Having said this, the workers remain largely passive, and those struggles which do take place are not generating a clear opposition dynamic. But if the December elections do result in an outcome which goes against the interests of the "Party of Power", Yeltsin can always play the "Nazarbayev option": call off the presidential election, or hold a referendum proposing to avoid any such event, in the tradition set by Presidents Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Karimov of Uzbekistan.

It will not be difficult to regroup supporters of this last option among pro-Yeltsin politicians and the new business elites. But this would not guarantee stability in the short or medium term. Any such move would trigger a political crisis as important as the events of September-October 1993



Transcaucasus

From ethnic conflict to power struggle

Have the ethnic wars in the Transcaucasus reached their limits? Successive attempts to break the May 1994 cease-fire between Azerbaijanis and Armenians in Gorni (Mountainous) Karabakh have failed. So have attempts to break the cease-fire on the Georgian-Abkhasian front.

The cease-fire has transformed the epicentre of the struggle for power and domination to the domestic scene. It has not brought relief from the extreme tension in the region.

by Vicken Cheterian
Geneva

IN THE LATE 1980's, popular movements erupted in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. National claims were combined with democratic demands. Repression from the centre and the subsequent inter-ethnic confrontation radicalised both public opinion and the new leaderships in the direction of radical nationalism.

At the time of independence, the titular nations in each of the three republics were influenced by the idea of creating "greater" national homelands, challenging the legitimacy of the borders defined in the early 20s, and accepted by the United Nations following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.¹

The policies of the new leaders enjoyed initial popularity. But the substantial ethnic minorities in Georgia and Azerbaijan felt threatened by the rise of chauvinism. The old-new ruling elite insisted on their right to self-determination, but could not accept the same right for other ethnic groups living on 'their' territory.

These minorities turned to Russia for support, in self-defence. These invitations corresponded with the agenda of the new rulers in the Kremlin, who sought hegemony in what they now called the "near abroad". But Russian intervention (sometimes direct, sometimes indirect) reinforced the majority sentiment in Tblisi and Baku (the capital cities of Armenian and Azerbaijan respectively) that their struggle against the ethnic minorities in "their" republics was a struggle for their own independence from the "Russian empire".

There was a time when the Karabakh conflict might have been solved "internally", by the agreement of Armenians and Azerbaijanis. But since the Russian intervention, the conflict has an international dimension, and finding a solution is now much more complicated.

Beside the open wars in Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia the region also suffered a number of hidden conflicts, which did not reach the same degree of "heat"². The polarisation of the population around new national identities created the tension. Once sponsors were found to provide the hardware, bloodshed was almost inevitable.

But the mood of the populations changed rapidly. Their image of their "great nation" was torn to pieces or became irrelevant in the face of a sudden, violent degradation of their daily living conditions. Nationalist politicians had presented as the means towards economic progress and cultural renaissance. But they failed drastically. One year after independence, Armenia lived through a winter without heating or electricity, with industries paralysed. Over half a million Armenian citizens left the republic to seek a better life elsewhere. Azerbaijan gained independence but lost control not only over the ethnically Armenian-dominated province of Karabakh, but a larger territory surrounding the rebel province and linking Karabakh to Armenia proper. Azerbaijan now has over one million displaced persons. As for Georgia, once one of the richest Soviet Republics, the average wage had fallen to \$ 5-6 US, while prices are approaching those on international markets.

MISERY AND LUXURY

Nowhere else in the former Soviet Union has the fall in living standards been as dramatic as in the Caucasus. And the population could only watch as the new ruling elite began to exhibit their new riches: imported luxury cars, huge new country houses, and travel to Europe and North America. The new ruling elite condemns Soviet egalitarianism as "old-fashioned" and "an obstacle to progress". Corruption was certainly commonplace in the Brezhnev era, but it has grown out of all proportion since independence. The isolation of the ruling circles in the middle of "their" impoverished nations could hardly have happened faster.

At the beginning of the Armenian-Azeri conflict, those who fought in and around Karabakh were mainly volunteers. But both sides soon had difficulty recruiting soldiers. Military police began raiding markets and metro stations, collecting all 18-45 year old men, and sending those who could not pay a bribe to the front. Arriving at the front line a few days later, these men often went into combat without training, and probably without motivation. The war has

★ TRANSCAUCASUS

been frozen for over a year now, but forced recruitment continues. The objective is probably no longer military, but political - the intimidation of the population.

GEORGIA

In January 1995 former Georgian Defence Minister Tengiz Kitovani organised a military campaign to "liberate" Abkhazia. Before setting off from Tblisi he announced that the war in Chechnya gave Georgia the best opportunity to find its own military solution, and that he had a promise of Russian support in his adventure. His convoy was stopped by the Georgian army near Zugdidi, and Kitovani is still imprisoned.

Kitivani's main aim was not Abkhazia, but de-stabilising the regime of President Eduard Shevardnadze. He calculated that the unresolved questions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Karabakh, with their hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons, would provide a rich source of instability. But if his adventure shows one thing, it is that the population is tired. The medium to start ethnic wars is no longer present.

Two wars against ethnic minorities, and two civil wars have created a real crisis of legitimacy for whoever rules in Tblisi. President Shevardnadze came to power in 1992 after an armed rebellion. Through careful manoeuvring, and strengthening the secret police, he has tried to marginalise armed militias like the Mkhedrioni of Jaba Ioseliani. The capital city came close to explosion in May this year, when President Shevardnadze demanded that Ioseliani disarm his group. Ioseliani formally capitulated, but his Mkhedrioni not only retained their arms, but continue to dominate the most lucrative trading in the city, including the petrol business. Political assassinations are increasingly frequent as the country approaches the general elections scheduled for November.³

AZERBAIJAN

The struggle for power has spawned several "mini" civil wars. Each defeat on the Karabakh front has brought the ruler in Baku near to downfall. President Elichibey was overthrown in one such rebellion, and succeeded by former Politburo member Haydar Aliev. In his turn Aliev survived two putsch attempts. The first attempt followed his September 1994 authorisation of an \$8,000 m. oil deal with western companies which excluded Russian interests. The second revolt, in March 1995, left scores of dead, wounded and arrested.

Oil-rich Azerbaijan has the means to solve its economic and social problems, and become a factor contributing to the development of the whole region. But the history of the Middle East (which starts at Georgia's borders) how how petro-dollars can be a source of tragedy. Azeri oil already generates international competition and interference. As in the Arabo-Persian gulf, instability combines with oil money to support arms purchases, which only add to the insecurity of the region. Oil revenues and the related corruption are also leading to the social polarisation of Azerbaijan, deepening discontent and fuelling new struggles.

ARMENIA

The republic for a long time enjoyed a level of political stability unique among the Caucasian states, and this despite the persisting war in and around Karabakh. One factor of this stability is the homogenous ethnic makeup of Armenia - less than 5% of the population describe themselves as other than Armenian. Yerevan authorities claimed that theirs was the most democratic country of the CIS, with an active opposition and free media, and without political prisoners.

The paradox is that this relative superiority evaporated just as the war in Karabakh stopped. The end of the war enabled the power struggle in Yerevan to grow sharper. A number of journalists were beaten up by unidentified attackers in the Autumn of 1994, and several newspaper offices attacked with molotov cocktails. Opposition sympathiser Hampartisum Galistan, former mayor of Yerevan, was assassinated, which sent a shock wave through the opposition.

In December 1994 President Ter-Petrosian accused the main opposition party Tashnaksutium of harbouring a secret organisation, "Dro", responsible for terrorist attacks and drug trafficking. The party was banned, several activists imprisoned, and over a dozen publications closed, including the country's largest daily Yekir. Opposition and independent figures criticised the illegal methods used by the president and the Minister of the Interior, which seemed to be part of the forthcoming election campaign.

TROUBLE AHEAD

The ruling group in Armenia won the parliamentary elections of July 1995 by marginalising the opposition. The same scenario might be repeated in Georgia and Azerbaijan, where general elections are scheduled for the end of the year. Unpopular ruling elites are ready to sacrifice what is left of press freedom, human rights and democracy in order to preserve their power. And political power in the Transcaucasus is closely linked to economic power and the possibilities of becoming fantastically rich in the period of "privatisation" of the former Soviet economies. Ethnic war might be less and less probable, but these newly-independent republics risk become police-states once again.



Notes

1. Armenian president Lev Ter-Petrosian was previously leader of the "Karabakh Committee" which mobilised the Armenian population for the unification of Armenia and Karabakh (a relatively autonomous ethnic Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan). Former Azerbaijan president Abulfaz Elichibey fought against the secession of Karabakh from Azerbaijan, for the independence of Azerbaijan from Russia. He also made a number of declarations in favour of unification with "north" Azerbaijan (the former Soviet Republic) and "south" Azerbaijan (the north-western province of Iran). And Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first freely elected president of Georgia, tried to abolish the autonomous status of South Ossetia and Adjara.

2. Between 1990 and 1993 tension or clashes took place between the Georgian authorities and the autonomous republic of Adjara, the Armenians in Akhalkalak and the Azeris in Marneuli. The overthrow of Gamsakhurdia by an alliance of his former supporters and his enemies deepened the schism in Georgian society between the Kartveli majority and the Megreles of Western Georgia.

3. In Azerbaijan, the authorities repressed the July 1993 proclamation by rebel army officers of the "Talış-Mughan Republic" in a region bordering on Iran. At the same time they confronted the Lezgin national movement Sadval, which demanded the unification of mainly ethnic Lezgin regions in Azerbaijan with the autonomous Russian region of Dagestan.

Violent clashes took place on the border between Armenia and the Azerbaijani enclave of Nachichevan in Summer 1992, threatening to spread the war from Karabakh to the west, close to the Iranian and Turkish borders.

3. The victims include Soliko Khabeishvili, Shevardnadze's close friend and the Chairman of the Democracy and Revival of Georgia Foundation.

Cuba

A turning point in Cuban-American relations?

The Cuban transition has entered a new stage. Since the crisis of August 1994, the economic opening has widened in agriculture with the authorisation of agricultural markets; through fiscal reform and the development of private initiative. The restructuring of employment in

public enterprises and its corollary, the growth of unemployment, the decrease in subsidies, and the first fruits of wage deregulation have already led to significant social and political changes, while the economic effects of the reforms still seem limited.

*by Jannette Habel
Paris*

ECONOMIC SURVIVAL still hangs by a thread. With a harvest of sugar cane at around 3.3 million tonnes foreign currency resources will not be sufficient. Neither tourism, nor the growth of joint ventures, nor the export of bio-technology and citrus fruits carry any solution to the key problem: the country has practically no credit (except at exorbitant rates) and its financing needs are henceforth decisive to its ability to emerge from recession.

THE US EMBARGO forbids agreements with the organisations of multilateral loans. The aid accorded by the European Union or the Latin American governments is conditional. The possibility of signing a co-operation agreement with Europe, proposed by the Spanish government (which holds the Presidency of the European Union for the second half of 1995) will depend on the "progress" made by the Castro government in the field of human rights. Such an agreement (which would undoubtedly allow Havana to have access to the European Investment Bank) supposes that significant gestures will be made on the political level. The recent visit to the island by Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo must be seen in this light. The former organiser of the anti-Castro commandos Alpha 66 was captured in Cuba in 1965; arrested, he spent 22 years in prison before being freed through the intervention of Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez. Gutierrez Menoyo is the leader of the Miami-based "Cambio Cubana" group, which is considered to be moderate. His recent interview with Fidel Castro takes on a symbolic importance; "national reconciliation" with the "moderates" of Miami was part of a strategy whose objective is first and foremost to isolate the far right, grouped in Florida around the Cuban-American Foundation and its head Mas Canosa. The second meeting with the representatives of the exile envisaged for November 1995 in Havana can be placed in the same perspective; that of neutralising the Cuban-American lobby, which has imposed its choices in Washington for thirty years, to prepare the conditions for an overall negotiation.

The internal policy considerations which weigh on the decisions of the White House are well known; the presence of a rich and powerful community, over-represented by the Cuban-American Foundation in a state — Florida — where their electoral weight and financial aid are crucial elements in every presidential election.

FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES, US policy have been founded on the conviction that there exists in Cuba forces capable of overthrowing the regime on condition that they are helped by external pressures. As put crudely by a Canadian diplomat "the Americans want the head of Fidel Castro and a government of their choice"¹. In spite of all the predictions, the collapse that has been awaited for five years has still not happened. This cannot be explained solely by the repression — certainly very effective — of political liberties. Presented as a precondition for the lifting of the embargo and the restoration of normal US-Cuban relations, democratic rights and media liberalisation appear as the expression of a domineering and imperial will for a substantial part of the population of the island (more preoccupied with the satisfaction of their elementary needs). US policy is visibly hypocritical; the non-invitation of Cuba to the Summit of the Americas in December 1994 on the pretext that its president was not democratically elected contrasts with the invitation of the Dominican Republic, whose fraudulent elections have been criticised by the United States itself. This incoherence has led to a clear condemnation of the embargo by the 49th General Assembly of the United Nations on October 26, 1994 and repeated condemnations by the European Parliament and the Latin American governments. For these governments the stakes are sizeable: their almost universal desire is to reintegrate Cuba into the regional institutions, notably the Organisation of American States (OAS), as wished by its new President Cesar Gaviria.

The restoration of diplomatic relations with Cuba by almost all governments in the Americas confirms their will to normalise exchanges with an isolated, weakened island, whose revolutionary allies on the continent have disappeared or have their backs to the wall. This continental political situation is obviously not unconnected to the recent decisions of Castro. The revolutionary organisations of central America are all bogged down in negotiations, often in difficult conditions, and 1994 was marked by major electoral defeats in key countries of the continent (notably Brazil). The relationship of forces has not been as unfavourable for the Cuban revolution since its birth.

NOT SINCE 1959 has Castro appeared so vulnerable. The US government initially envisaged the overthrow of Castroism as coming from the outside (from 1961 with the Bay of Pigs invasion), then the emphasis switched to the interior, with the Americans seeking to create the conditions for a popular uprising, through sanctions. Today Washington sees Castro's fall as inscribed in the order of things without any special effort being necessary to precipitate it. This is argued by some US diplomats and relayed by the editorialists of the *Washington Post*² and the *New York Times*³, for whom the reign of the *leader maximo* is reaching its end. Why then, they ask, take the risk of a confrontation or a crisis whose costs the US would bear in the area of migratory fluxes and for which the population would render the US responsible, when the country could fall "like a ripe fruit".

Washington has never admitted that the legitimacy of Castroism stemmed from its role in the completion of the building of the Cuban nation. The historic affiliation established by Castro between the wars of independence, Jose Marti and the July 26 Movement (the generation of the centenary of Marti's birth), the resistance to the age-old annexationist will of the United States, have forged a national identity in the course of the years, reinforced by the hostility of the White House. But this latter could, in the light of the crisis, be embarking on a change of tactic, if one believes the words of President Clinton, proposing a "hand held out to the Cuban people"⁴ so as to render possible "a peaceful transition to democracy".

The recent agreements on emigration concluded between Washington and Havana could signal a significant reorientation in the policy followed towards Cuba for the past 35 years. The agreement of September 9, 1994 was signed after the crisis of August and the departure of several tens of thousands of boat people towards the coasts of Florida had obliged the Clinton government to negotiate with Havana. Immigration is the object of a growing unpopularity in the United States as shown by the success of proposition 187 in California, which involves the suppression of social benefits in health and education to illegal immigrants and their children.

The September protocol envisaged that the United States would take in 20,000 Cuban immigrants a year, on condition that this was arranged through the legal framework of the American Interests Section in Havana. An end was put to the privileged status of the Cubans, who had benefited for more than thirty years from an almost automatic right of asylum. In exchange the Cuban government committed itself to preventing the uncontrolled departure of its residents. But the

negotiations did not clarify the status of the boat people of summer 1994, held on the US military base at Guantanamo on Cuban territory and in Panama. Around 30,000 *balseros* (with some thousands of Haitians) thus were stuck a few kilometres from the Cuban frontier, without being able to go to the United States or return to their country. Aside from the explosive character of this situation (some thousands of refugees were crowded together in camps under collective tents, without work, family or leisure facilities, and already several riots had taken place) the cost of this "stay" (\$1 million a day)⁵ became unsustainable.

A new accord was reached in May 1995, which completes that of September 1994 but goes further. An end was put to the presence of boat people at Guantanamo of whom the majority were allowed to go to the United States but, henceforth, illegal immigrants will be repatriated to Cuba by US coast guards. The "joint declaration" indicates that no sanctions will be taken against illegal immigrants; the consular officers in Havana will have a right of inspection on the treatment meted out to the returnees. This "normalisation of migratory relations", according to the terms of the declaration, is, beyond the apparent limits of its field of application, important in that it refutes in practice the characterisation of Cuba as an "outlaw state" in the manner of North Korea, Iran, Iraq and Libya, states defined thus by Anthony Lake⁶ "because they have not only chosen to remain outside the family, but moreover to attack its fundamental values".

Whether one wishes it or not a certain legitimacy is thus given to the "Castroist dictatorship" inasmuch as one can judge it possible to return to it candidates for exile now treated as simple economic refugees. This explains the fury of a section of the Cuban community in Miami which for the first time, was not even informed of the secret negotiations engaged between Peter Tarnoff, the US under-secretary of state for political affairs, and Ricardo Alarcon, president of the Cuban parliament.

Through these negotiations Washington also recognises that the overthrow of Castroism is not necessarily the most desirable solution for the region; as underlined by Peter Hakim and Michael Shifter; "for Washington the most difficult political challenges could come from its three closest neighbours; Mexico, Haiti and Cuba"⁷. As to the Cuban government, it registered its satisfaction at what Alarcon, the principal negotiator of the accords, has characterised as "a 180 degree turn", the product of a "previously absent political will" on the part of the nine presidents who preceded Bill Clinton.⁸

But this policy is ambiguous, for the White House has two irons in the fire; the proposed Burton-Helms law (sponsored by Jesse Helms, Republican chair of the senate foreign affairs committee, and representative D. Burton) involves a strengthening and an internationalisation of the embargo. Even before its adoption, this legislation was the object of a warning from the European Union, which, in May 1995, recalled its "opposition to the adoption of any measure of extraterritorial scope and counter to the rules of the World Trade Organisation".

The development of commercial relations and the role of the European diplomacy is strongly displeasing to American businessmen. On the commercial plane the embargo has some perverse effects; in particular, it forbids US businessmen from investing in Cuba while the opening of the



island to foreign investments. This new law is intended to stimulate the growth of European and Latin American investments and allow the renegotiation of the debt. In Europe, outside of Spain, Germany, Britain, and Italy are increasingly interested in the Cuban market.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION has increased its humanitarian aid. This amounted to 14 million ecus in 1994 and there should be a similar total for 1995 (it was three million ecus in 1992)⁹ Allocated through the intermediary of the Humanitarian Office of the European Commission, this aid is distributed by the NGOs in the hospitals and the medical centres. But the European Union does not directly accord the aid for development to Cuba, which is not part of the Lomé Convention (which organises the development aid of the EU towards the ACP - African, Caribbean and Pacific countries) and Cuba is the sole country of Latin America with whom the EU has not signed a framework agreement for co-operation. If the EU has criticised the US embargo for a long time, European policy remains very much determined by the progress realised on the level of the economic reforms and the democratisation of the regime.

In the United States, the Republican majority in Congress could rally to the position of Helms. This latter, while in Miami during the commemoration of the 34th anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion, gave his support to the appeal of the Cuban-American Foundation for a naval blockade of Cuba.¹⁰

What will the US President do? Clinton has already announced that he will veto the budget reductions announced by the Republicans in the area of foreign aid, but no-one yet knows what his attitude is to the proposed Burton-Helms act. The risks of the Cuban transition cannot leave Washington indifferent; as much because of their potential impact in the United States as because of regional considerations. For the White House immigration has become a determinant problem of internal policy, as recent

elections have shown. The Haitian crisis, together with the crisis of the Cuban *balseros* have tended to multiply migratory fluxes. A generalised Cuban crisis would have altogether more grave effects and could persuade the State Department to make the choice of stability, relying on the progressive marginalisation of the Cuban leader through a process of reforms.

In Europe the emphasis is on a dialogue impelled by the moderate dissidents of the interior, or by the spokespersons of the exiles linked to the European Internationals (Socialist, Christian Democratic and Liberal) or by the church,¹¹ to accelerate the political transition by imposing the recognition of the political parties based in Miami and the retirement of Fidel Castro.

Havana stole a march in organising for the second time a conference on emigration in November 1995 (the first had taken place in April 1994) so as to involve itself in negotiations on the future of the country.

After the visit by Fidel Castro to France, a mission led by France-libertés, including representatives of *Medecins du Monde*, the International Federation of Human Rights and Human Rights Watch, visited Cuba in May 1995. The expected release of six political prisoners by Castro is seen as a consequence of this visit.¹² But this liberalisation, although conforming to the European demands, will not be considered sufficient for the bodies of the EU, which expect more radical institutional reforms in the area of human rights, allowing the untrammelled exercise of freedoms of expression and organisation which are today forbidden.

Fidel Castro knows how to use the tactical differences that oppose Europe, as well as numerous Latin American governments, to the White House to play for time. The positions taken by the foreign affairs ministers of the 14 member states of the Rio group, meeting in Quito in May 1995, which unanimously rejected the Burton-Helms proposal as "illegal" and "unjust" comforted Cuban diplomacy.

★ CUBA

EXTERNAL AGGRESSION is not the only danger facing the Cuban leader. Danger comes also from within, from the socio-economic mutation underway whose consequences are such that they threaten the cohesion and the popular support from which he has benefited. Castro is in effect the prisoner of a difficult contradiction; to survive he must agree to carry out reforms leading to the amelioration of the economic situation. But these reforms, by threatening social justice and jeopardising national independence, undermine the very bases of his power, or at least his legitimacy. The Cuban people have resisted for more than three decades to defend their dignity, their sovereignty, and a project of a society based on solidarity and equality despite its political limits. How long will it react passively to the collapse, not of the regime, but of its conquests? While the Castro regime has been able to survive all the external aggressions thanks to a powerful social consensus, still little appreciated internationally (hence the misunderstandings and misleading analogies with eastern Europe), can it preserve a system whose fundamentals are so strongly shaken?



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1. *Washington Post National Weekly*, July 5, 1993, cited in Thomas Paterson, *Containing Castro*, Oxford University Press, 1994.
2. See the article by Jessica Matthews in the *International Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1995
3. "Cubans like the others", *International Herald Tribune*, 4 May 1995
4. *El País*, 28 June 1995.
5. *International Herald Tribune*, 23 May 1995
6. President Clinton's National Security Adviser in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, no 2, March/April 1994.
7. Respectively president of the Inter-american Dialogue in Washington and professor of Latin American studies at Georgetown University, in *Current History*, February 1995, vol. 94, no. 589.
8. *Granma Internacional*, 17 May 1995
9. The report of the mission is not yet available at the time of writing.
10. *International Herald Tribune*, 9 May 1995.
11. *Cuba: Apertura económica y relaciones con Europa*, Madrid 1994. Instituto de Relaciones Europeo-latino-americanas (IRELA)
12. The report of the mission is not yet available at the time of writing.

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USA

The Farrakhan Factor in the 1996 Elections

by Joe Auciello

IN A NOTABLE DEPARTURE from past practice, Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam have issued a call for a Million Man March on Washington for Monday, October 16, 1995. The March is presented as

★ a protest against the oppression of Black people and a declaration of "our right to justice and our right to determine the future of ourselves and our people."

★ "a day of atonement" in which the Black Man will apologize to the Black Woman for his sins, his sloth, his personal failures, and will pledge to live up to his personal responsibilities.

★ a work stoppage and an economic boycott. The date is specifically set for a Monday so that Black men will not go to work that day; Black women will support the march by staying home, buying no products. This boycott will show the power of Blacks in the American economy ("this modern-day Babylon") by refusing to participate in it for one day.

★ a political call to all Black people to leave the Democratic and Republican parties, which have failed to address Black issues and needs, and to re-register as independents.

★ a call for unity among Black people in the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality.

Revolutionary socialists certainly support many of these demands, but overall the weaknesses of the Nation of Islam's vision and program are too integral a part of the call for a Million Man March on Washington for socialists to support it unreservedly.

POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Nonetheless, it would be short-sighted to downplay or ignore the potential significance of the Nation of Islam's plan for a march on Washington. This is a serious call by a significant organization, one whose influence is increasing. As Ron Daniels wrote in *Z* magazine in June 1994, "Louis Farrakhan has emerged as the most revered leader among the Black masses. And, his appeal is widespread...Farrakhan has developed a mass following because he is a militant voice tapping into the depths of the agony, pain, and aspirations of many within the African American community at a time when it is clear that Black people are 'the wrong complexion to get the protection' in terms of government policies..."

A recent *Chicago Sun Times* poll reveals a pronounced rise in what might be termed nationalist tendencies in the... African American community. The poll shows a very favorable approval rating for Louis Farrakhan and strong sentiment in favor of a Black political party. The Million Man March on Washington seeks to mobilize some of the most oppressed sectors of the American population against their oppression

Given the absence of leadership from traditional civil rights organizations, this march could become the means by which Blacks, especially Black youth, raise their voices most powerfully for freedom, justice, and equality.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

If successful, this march would alter the political landscape in America. A powerful turnout for the march would place the Nation of Islam in the forefront of Black organizations. If the Nation's call is heeded by significant numbers of Black men and women, then the Nation of Islam could leapfrog over the NAACP, which is financially paralyzed and politically divided. This march, with its call for Blacks to leave the Democratic Party, could also affect a Jesse Jackson presidential campaign. Jackson has recently speculated publicly about a possible run in the Democratic primaries to oppose Clinton. If the Nation of Islam convinces large numbers of Blacks to re-register as independents, then Jackson's political base would be diminished and Farrakhan's would be strengthened. Jackson would need to turn to Farrakhan for support. This scenario, no doubt, is not lost upon Farrakhan.

HINDRANCES AND LIMITS

There is no guarantee that the Million Man March will be successful. Some of the demands and strategies for building the march are likely to hinder its success and limit its impact, despite the imperative need for massive Black protest.

The Nation of Islam's call for "atonement" and the emphasis on moral self-improvement tends to reduce the appeal of the march to those who are already convinced of this point of view. Telling women to remain at home is a further handicap; it reduces the possible numbers for the march and promotes antiquated social relations between the sexes. Black men need to march side by side with Black women, not for them and in place of them. Despite the Nation's fervent appeal for Black unity, and the objective need for such unity, no coalition for the march is seriously projected. "Unity" is to

be achieved on the basis of the Nation of Islam's program. It is difficult to imagine how other Black organizations could enter the march on this basis.

IN CONTRAST: MALCOLM X'S STRATEGY

Malcolm X's strategy of separating religious and political issues in order to achieve the greatest unity and strength in action is an approach that would benefit this march. Instead, the Nation of Islam has conceived the march in a way that will require demonstrators to support the Nation's own perspectives, when a less narrow approach would draw in far more people and make a stronger statement

against oppression. Malcolm's strategy remains timely and necessary. The contradictions of the NOI call for a March on Washington reflect the contradictions of the organization itself: a conservative religious organization whose defiant opposition to white racism and the U.S. government wins it increasing support from radicalizing African Americans, especially the youth.

Still, what remains to be seen is whether the response to the appeal for the Million Man March will extend significantly beyond the members and supporters of the Nation of Islam. Certainly there is a need for massive Black demonstration and protest. But will the need for a march be strong enough to overcome the weaknesses of the Nation's strategy in building for it? ★

The Political Potential of the Million Man March

by Ron Daniels

The Final Call, 18 August 1995

[...] ON OCTOBER 16 the whole world will be watching, waiting and listening to see how large the turn-out will be and what platform, agenda or demands will be articulated. And, if Min. Farrakhan makes good on his pledge to register one million Black voters as independents, the Nation of Islam (NOI) could become a major factor in the 1996 election.

The turn to electoral politics, independent Black politics in particular, is a logical extension of the rebirth of the NOI. Steadily rebuilding its administrative, communications, educational and economic infrastructure and vigorously promoting a militant program of self-reliance and self-development, the NOI has re-emerged as a formidable force in Black America. Min. Farrakhan has demonstrated a remarkable mass appeal as he speaks to overflow crowds in rallies in city after city across the nation. A good percentage of the thousands who flock to hear the Minister speak and teach are unregistered or non-voters who have disdain for the electoral political process. No doubt thousands of those who stream into Washington for the Million Man March will not be registered to vote.

About eight million Blacks remain unregistered, and large numbers of those registered often fail to vote. [...] Polls indicate that large numbers of Black people are disaffected with the two establishment parties and disillusioned with Black elected officials. There is a feeling that large numbers of Black elected officials have lost their sense of mission, that Black politicians have become self-aggrandizing buffers within an oppressive system. They are disconnected from the grassroots and therefore incapable of promoting and defending the interests of the Black masses within the electoral political process. Thus the quality of life for the Black masses is drastically deteriorating even though Black America now has more Black elected officials than at any time in history. [...]

IT WAS MALCOLM X, in his "Ballots or Bullets" speech, who said that Black Nationalism means that Black people must "control the politics and economics of our community." Malcolm had no illusions that either the Democrats or the Republicans were concerned about the destiny of Black people. By registering a million Black people as

independents, the NOI could take the lead in aiding the Black Nation to assume control over the politics and politicians in our communities. [...]

We need to grow a new breed of Black politician from amongst the grassroots; politicians who are ideologically conscious and committed to being servants of the people. Working with Black political scientists and political activists from around the country, the NOI could develop a Malcolm X Institute of Black Politics where the theory and method of a new Black politics could be taught to community-based organizations and grassroots leadership. This is what could emerge from the Million Man March and the registration of a million Black people as independents

A million Black independents, if properly oriented and organized, could become a potent power bloc and catalyst for change in the Black community in 1996. [...] Such a bloc of voters could support progressive, community-minded Black politicians who sign a pledge to support the Black Agenda. Corrupt and unaccountable politicians would be swept from office and replaced by new politicians schooled in the new Black politics. Non-Black politicians would have to pledge to advance our interests or face defeat. [...]

A MILLION BLACK INDEPENDENT VOTERS could also have a major impact on the 1996 presidential election. Should Rev. Jackson decide to run for president as an independent and if Rev. Jackson and Minister Farrakhan could reach a mutually respectful accommodation, Black America would rise up with a vengeance at the ballot box. Rev. Jackson has already demonstrated that he is a master of voter registration. But Minister Farrakhan could reach and motivate thousands, even millions, of Black people that Rev. Jackson may be unable to reach. This unbeatable combination would stimulate an unprecedented voter registration and a voter turn-out of historic proportions. This Black flood of voters in coalition with other people of color and progressive whites would transform the political landscape of this country. The Farrakhan factor could be formidable in the 1996 election! ★

In the 1992 elections, Ron Daniels ran for U.S. president as an independent Black candidate on the Campaign for a New Tomorrow ticket. He is currently head of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

Sri Lanka

"Spectre of barbarism is haunting Lanka again"

The electoral victory of the centre-left People's Alliance in August 1994 has done little for the people. The war between the regime and the separatist Liberation Tamil Tigers continues. President Chandrika has promised to respect the

previous government's promises to investors, and the island's major capitalists. The resulting attacks on workers' and peasants' rights, have only fuelled support for racist and authoritarian forces in the majority Sinhala-speaking population

by Vickramabahu Karunaratne
Colombo, Sri Lanka



President Chandrika (left) with representatives of the World Bank

MUCH DAMAGE had already been done before President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga finally came out with a "peace" package.

First, she got involved in endless discussions with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), without any political basis¹. We of the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP)² pressed that she come out with a political framework for

devolution. As expected, her liberal pundits scorned us. Then, with the same carelessness, she moved into war, arousing all the war mongers, racists and death squads. It appeared as if she was ready to don a uniform herself. Workers were forced to contribute one day's salary for her bloody war efforts. Racists were appointed to important positions all across the media. Many of them became active

★ SRI LANKA

in collecting funds for the President's "Defence Fund".

In the meantime, she did everything possible to antagonise the workers. The Workers' Charter was postponed. The privatisation programme received the green light. A wages freeze was announced. A special police force was created to deal with worker unrest. The capitalists received a general assurance that the pro-American and pro-World Bank political and economic policies [of the previous government] would be continued. In other words, Chandrika created a hostile atmosphere within the most important social force that stood for the rights of the minorities.

Her position in relation to other oppressed classes is no better. In many areas the Samurdhi programme turned out to be a method to reduce the numbers of those receiving social welfare payments. Agriculture Minister Jayaratne had to fight openly to stall the World Bank dictates on paddy production. Apart from the increase in teachers' salary, the PA government has done almost nothing to benefit the rural poor masses. And Chandrika's war cry has turned the tables against her own supporters in the villages.

Struggles are breaking out against President Chandrika's social policies. In many cases angry villagers have attacked the Samurdhi organisers responsible for cutting names from the welfare programme list. Very fierce struggles broke out in both the industrial and the plantation sectors. The pro-governmental trade unions proved incapable of controlling these mobilisations. Even the Employers' Federation recognised that "the collective demonstrations, as much as they are against private employers, must also be seen as demonstrations against the government, and the Labour Department in particular... Recently, in the estate sector, a token strike was called and a union which made a clear statement that it would not participate found that its members joined the strikers".³ The employers are clearly very worried.

This was the scenario for the new package. Chandrika went even further. She categorically stated that she will not challenge the constitution, and seek an accommodation within the existing legal framework. This means tying herself to the need for a 2/3 majority in the parliament, and to a national referendum. This in turn means pruning the proposals to suit the UNP and the Sinhala chauvinist lobby. In other words, Chandrika brought out the plate of food only after tying our hands and plastering our mouths.

Things developed exactly as we expected. Racists, led by

Janatha Mithuro,⁴ turned on the package like a pack of wolves. Only yesterday they were busy collecting funds for their darling "Podi Madam" for her war effort. Now they are very angry that she dare propose autonomy for the Tamils.

The government's campaign defending the package has been very weak from the start. Minister G.L. Peris was left to take a beating. And every time he made a public statement, he included a concession to the Sinhala racists. "Forget the union⁵ — the unitary state will be preserved!", "No unification of the North with the East".⁶

With conditions like this, what improvements could any new provincial council in the north really make? The Tamils would be cheated. Their frustrations will accumulate around the LTTE, and the war for separation will gain momentum.

The country is moving towards a disaster. Everything is at a standstill. Chandrika's zigzag pronouncements have made "wait and see" the only sensible policy. The racists are howling in the street. The spectre of barbarism is haunting Lanka again. The UNP is waiting for the moment to tell the people "you see, our kind of barbarism would be better than this kind".

It is time for the left forces to break with any illusions in the PA, and avoid an ultra-leftism which condemns the war without embracing the implications of true equal rights.⁷ Only in this way can we aspire to give the people an independent leadership.



Notes

1. See Bala Skanthakumar, "War resumes amid government's broken promises" in *International Viewpoint* #268, July 1995

2. Sri Lanka section of the Fourth International

3. *Daily News*, 9 August 1995.

4. "People's Friends", a racist Sinhala organisation, split from the JVP.

5. Reference to any federal or confederate structure for the island

6. There is a compact Tamil majority in the north of the island, and a Tamil and muslim majority in the east.

7. "Unfortunately, the old left still prefers to count its eggs in the PA basket, while the JVP has adopted a confused and ultra-left position. They are against the war, and voted against the emergency. They are against the package. They claim to stand for total equality. My question to them is; "comrades, are you ready to replace the Lion flag with a common flag? Do you want to see the parity of languages? Removal of the special status of Buddhism? Tamil-speaking regiments in the armed forces? Fifty-fifty representation of Sinhalese and Tamils in key institutions?" Unfortunately, the JVP remains silent on these questions".

Morocco

Ila al Aman: 25 years of struggle!

The Maoist group *Ila al Aman* was founded 25 years ago. Their anniversary comes at a moment when the crisis facing the dictator Hassan II is deepening, and the space for an "above ground" left alternative is growing. The following extracts are taken from their communiqué issued recently in Paris.

THE MOROCCAN LEFT failed in 1965, and fell into the regime's trap again in August 1970, by agreeing to participate in the comic Constitutional Referendum. The Moroccan left was also marked by its interaction with developments in the Arab world at that time - the defeat of Nasser's regime in Egypt in 1967, the emergence of the Palestinian revolution, and the birth of an Arab "new left" in the Middle East. It was likewise influenced by the movements which, at that time, were shaking imperialism and the world: Vietnam, China, Latin America, and even in the heart of the capitalist system, in France and Italy. The birth of the organisation also coincided with a new interrogation about the future of the Soviet Union.

[Over the last 25 years, Ila al Aman has tried to build a revolutionary Marxist organisation, even in periods of severe repression]. This orientation would be noted in the very heart of the enemy's repressive apparatus. "Building the revolutionary party while under enemy fire", published in our underground newspaper in July 1973, formed a number of the militants confronting this apparatus of torture in the secret camps, the courtrooms and the prisons *[of Morocco].*

[The theoretical foundation of the organisation was] from the beginning marked by a rejection of the Soviet model, and the priority given to the mass movement... [as] conceptualised in the early 1940s by Mao Zedung."

In November 1972 the imperatives of the class struggle led us to establish the concept of "professional revolutionary" first elaborated by Lenin. The application of this concept allowed our organisation to resist the repression better than several other groups, up until March 1976. But, as we would analyse in 1980, the mechanical application of this concept to a structure based on the high school and university population led us to a structure which was easily dismantled once the mass struggles receded.

After 1979, the reconstruction of the organisation on the basis of the political and ideological combat with the enemy during the Casablanca trials of 1977 and in the prison system, was undertaken by militants marked by these new lessons as well as by the concepts which had shaped the foundation of our organisation. This brought the concept of

self-organisation of the masses to the forefront, in the period of urban struggle in the 1980s. [...]

As Moroccan and Arab patriots... we have always overcome the introversion and ignorance, even reject of the universal dimension, to which Moroccan and Arab patriotism, like all nationalism, has too often fallen victim. [...]

We were the first to oppose the Makhzen model which has dominated Moroccan history. This enabled us to understand the specific historical relationship of the Saharoui ethnic group with the Moroccan people better, as well as the differentiation between these two groups... and opened the way for the integration of the Tamazight (Berber) question into the national project. [...]

The commemoration of 25 years of activity comes in a period when the failure of the regime's economic policies is clear.

★ The relationship of dependence with the European Union (fishing, agriculture, exports, tourism) has become a durable crisis.

★ There is a deepening financial crisis (foreign debt, deep budgetary crisis, bankruptcy of a large number of Moroccan companies due to the servile implementation of International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organisation guidelines.

The drought has aggravated the effects of this crisis for the whole society, but particularly in the countryside, which is suffering from hunger, a water shortage, and emigration. The drought has demonstrated the dangers of the "Dam-building policy" for the peasants. The recent floods, which claimed hundreds of victims, cannot be attributed solely to the whims of nature. They are essentially the result of the [regime's] water management and infrastructure policies.

Despite the disastrous effects of these economic policies, the masses do not give up hope, and continue to struggle, in very difficult conditions, with strikes, occupations, demonstrations and hunger strikes. Examples include the struggles of the miners of Jbel Aouam, railway workers, unemployed graduates, and the inhabitants of the poorer districts.



Reprinted from Ila al Amam n° 8, December 1983

The regime replies to these struggles with a combination of repression and manoeuvres. The last few months have seen waves of individual and collective [police] interrogations, ID checks, and extortion of the citizens. The aim is to discourage the population, and to give advance warning of any coming uprising. The other side of this repressive policy is the regime's stubbornness in the face of the demands of the masses, and their legitimate demands. This is the case in the struggles of the Jbel Aouam miners and the railway workers. There is also an offensive against the public sector through the privatisation of strategic sectors and attacks on fundamental social services. An arbitrary, and serious, decision has been made to backtrack on the principles of general, free education.

At the same time, the regime manoeuvres round the various political forces, expressing its understanding of their demands for political and institutional reforms, and the interchange of governing parties.

These developments accentuate the contradictions between the parasitic Makhzen Mafia, based on corruption, racket, the drugs trade, capital flight, and speculation, and all those social components of the people who's living conditions continue to decline.

These contradictions are reflected on the political scene by the division within the reactionary parties, and the growing distinction between the techno-bureaucratic and militant

currents within the parliamentary opposition. The militant current is growing stronger within the USFP (socialist) and the OADP, while the rightist current is strengthening within the leadership of the PPS.

Nor have the "new left" currents escaped the effects of these contradictions. A broad discussion has been undertaken in recent months concerning the unification of several currents into a joint political structure. These debates have ebbed and flowed. Among the concrete gains are the permeation of the debate into all regions of the country, and the beginnings of co-ordination of activities in the mass movements. On the negative side, there are signs of the factionalisation of the leadership, non-democratic behaviour, of precipitation, a weak sense of responsibility, and non-respect of commitments [...]

The necessity to profit from the retreats imposed on the regime in recent months do not mean that the essence of this regime has changed. This is why Ila al Amam continues in the development of its own political line, assimilating the changes under way in society, and reaffirming our attachment to the struggle for a revolutionary change carried out by the masses themselves, led by the workers. [...]

WE CALL ON ALL SINCERE DEMOCRATS, whatever their political and organisation affiliation, to struggle for a minimum programme on the following lines:

- ★ Make the general amnesty effective for all the victims of political repression, without exception or reservation: "disappeared", political detainees and exiles.
- ★ Just punishment for the torturers, and explanations and compensation for relatives of the "disappeared" and deceased political detainees.
- ★ Widen democratic liberties, and make sure these liberties and human rights are respected. Get rid of the Makhzen structure of the state, and replace it with the rule of law.
- ★ Improve the living conditions of the popular masses. Protect and develop the social gains, and guarantee the rights to education, work, housing and health.
- ★ Support liberation struggles round the world, and in first place the Palestinian revolution, through the creation of an independent Palestinian state and in opposition to the normalisation of relations with the Zionist State of Israel.
- ★ Fight against the new international order, and in particular the imperialist intervention in the Arab region and the unjust blockades against the Iraqi and Libyan peoples.

GLORY TO THE MARTYRS OF OUR PEOPLE!



SOURCE: Communiqué du 25ème anniversaire de l'organisation marocaine Ila al Amam, dated 30 August 1995.

Book notes

The following publications are not available in most commercial bookstores, because what the authors have to say makes the rich and powerful uncomfortable.

Mountain Fires: The Red Army's Three—Year War in South China, 1934—1938

by Gregor Benton University of California Press, Oxford. 1992.

China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1921—1952

by Gregor Benton. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. 1996

An Oppositionist for Life: Memoirs of the Chinese Revolutionary, Zheng Chaolin.

(Edited and translated by Gregor Benton.) Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. 1996

Wild Lily, Prairie Fire: China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tian'anmen, 1942 — 1989.

edited by Gregor Benton and Alan Hunter. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. 1995.

The Chinese Revolution broke more Marxist orthodoxies than perhaps any other revolution and recently there has been an explosion in the number of good books on this fascinating subject. Gregor Benton has played a major role in this development, producing both his own studies and translations. It has been Benton's life work to study the multi—faceted reality that lies behind the stilted official histories of Maoist (and post—Maoist) hagiography.

Mountain Fires gives an account of the desperate struggle by those left behind after the departure of the Long March and the collapse of the Jiangxi Soviet. The period of the Three Year War in Central China is one of a grave defeat for the revolutionaries, in some ways worse than the better known defeat of 1927. By exploiting an immense rural crisis they managed to survive with losses proportionally no worse than those of the Long Marchers — despite the fact that the Long Marchers took with them most of the arms, supplies and able—bodied men. These 'stay—behinders' were slow to adapt to their new situation, from one in which they were rulers to one in which they were ruled, from conventional to guerrilla warfare. One of the impediments to this change was the need for Xiang Ying, the regional commander, to hide the fact that the bulk of the Red Army had departed, to create the illusion that nothing had changed. In so far as Xiang succeeded in this task, it only added to their problems, for it meant that even more troops were deployed to crush the Communists in Jiangxi. Once these Communists had made the switch to guerrilla warfare, the difficult task was to strike a balance between the need for refuge in the mountain forests and the mountains on the one hand, and the need to maintain contact with the villages and small towns on the other.

Most of the book is devoted to the experiences of the scattered, isolated, hounded remnants of the Red Army, the women, chil-

dren, and the wounded. They suffered severe repression from the encirclement campaigns of Chiang Kai—shek. They also suffered from the murderous factional fighting within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); thousands lost their lives in these 'bitter struggles'. Each of the different regions has a separate chapter and these are enriched with personal accounts by veterans of the War. Such a detailed examination might appear to be of interest mainly to specialists in the field, but don't be put off! It is the detailed study that allows a fascinating insight into the human, political and military challenges that these Communists were facing.

The sequel, *Spider's Web*, due out in a couple of years, will concentrate on the political tactics of the Communists in Central China. It reveals the startlingly unorthodox methods used by those in the towns and villages — as distinct from the more orthodox central leadership. Both of these books will be classics for years to come. *China's Urban Revolutionaries* is the first history of the Chinese Trotskyists of value. Ignored until recently by historians, Benton shows their history is rich and worthy of study. In particular it was their commitment to socialist democracy that makes their struggle of importance today: 'The need for democracy', comments Benton, 'not just as a central plank in its public platform but also as a main beam in the internal structure of the revolutionary Party itself was [an]...important theme in the history of Chinese Trotskyism.'

The first General Secretary of the Left Opposition was Chen Duxiu; he was also General Secretary of the CCP from its beginnings in 1921 through to 1927, when he resigned. He was the giant of the Chinese Revolution and much respected by Trotsky; 'a seminal and latitudinarian thinker broad enough to encompass a multitude of contradictions', says Benton. Apart from Chen, the Left Opposition also had other capable leaders including Wang Fanxi and Zheng Chaolin. Benton examines both the strengths and weaknesses of the Trotskyist movement. He shows how they misjudged the CCP and also how they failed to develop an adequate strategy after the Japanese invasion in 1937. A major weakness in some Trotskyists was sectarianism and factionalism; this led to the split in 1941 which further weakened them. However, above all, what comes through in this book is the terrific odds against which the Trotskyists were fighting; for all their shortcomings, theirs was a noble defeat. Read this book in conjunction with Wang Fanxi's fascinating autobiography, *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary*.

Included as an appendix to *China's Urban Revolutionaries*, is Benton's translation of Zheng Chaolin's *Chen Duxiu and the Trotskyists*. Maoist historians have always had great difficulty in dealing with Chen — official Maoist history argues that Chen was only associated with the Trotskyists for a short period. Zheng, however, shows that after studying Trotsky's arguments in 1929, Chen was won to and never broke from Trotskyism even though after 1937 his relationship with the leadership of the Trotskyists' Communist League of China was at times hostile. This view is supported by Chen Duxiu's *Last Articles and Letters*, edited by Benton but not yet published in English where it is clear that, despite being hostile to the Communist League leadership, Chen identified with Trotskyism and the Fourth International for the rest of his life.

Zheng Chaolin's Memoirs also provide a very frank, insightful view of the events and the characters; the combination of his matter—of—fact style, his impressive memory and his transparent honesty

is very refreshing. The translation of his book is particularly welcome because this great veteran of the Trotskyist movement (now ninety five years old), who spent thirty four years in gaol for his principles, and who has gained the respect even of his opponents, has been badly neglected by his comrades in the Fourth International.

The struggle for socialist democracy did not end in 1952 when the Trotskyists were rounded up in a nation-wide swoop. In *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire* Benton traces the development of the pro-democracy struggles in China from 1942 through to the Tian'anmen Square uprising in 1989. The book is a collection of documents which give a fascinating overview of the unfolding drama in the form of speeches, resolutions and statements by activists; there is also a final chapter presenting the 'intellectuals' critique'. A long introduction by Benton (some 60 pages) places the various documents to in their context. This follows the pattern of its predecessor, *Wild Lilies, Poisonous Weeds*; one of the five sections contains material from the earlier book. The new introduction alone makes it worth reading this book as well.

Mao believed that thanks to his reputation he could use the pressure of popular movements to police the Party and boost his position within the bureaucracy, but he was not prepared to allow those movements any real independence. In a very readable, compelling piece, Benton shows how the disastrous policies of the CCP government gradually eroded the basis of its support, first with the intellectuals, then the peasants, and finally with the workers. China, he notes, differs from the Soviet Union, since in the latter country

***Revolutionaries They Couldn't Break*
by Ngo Van (translated by Harry Ratner), Index Books,
London 1995. 234pp £11.95.**

Revolutionaries They Couldn't Break is a gripping account of the struggles that exploded between 1930 and 1945 in Vietnam, with special emphasis on the role of Trotskyist activists.

New light is shed on the origins and formation of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party (PCI), fore-runner of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

An amalgam of nationalism and Stalinism, the PCI was a devoted follower of the twists and turns of the Soviet bureaucracy. Far from leading the masses, the PCI was often way behind the consciousness of workers and peasants in their struggle against French and Japanese colonialism.

While Ho Chi Minh was looking for help from the Chinese Guomindang (Kuomintang) after their massacre of Communists in Shanghai and Guangdong (Canton), and cultivating the support of landlords and capitalists, a number of Vietnamese political activists came in France came into contact with Trotskyism. Among their number was Ta Thu Thau.

From 1933 onwards Thau and his comrades became active in Saigon politics. The authorities repeatedly annulled election results, arresting and torturing members of the group.

The Trotskyists of the Struggle group and the League of International Communists exercised a real influence, particularly in Cochinchina. They organised thousands of militants and, according to colonial records, were more popular than the PCI among the urban working class. The Trotskyists were also well implanted among the peasantry. Their literature shows close attention to rural grievances and revolutionary potential. No 'underestimation' of the peasantry here!

During the 'mini-revolution' of August 1945 *The Struggle* published a daily newspaper with a print run in excess of 15,000 copies!

Ho Chi Minh was concerned about their growing popularity. Although his own supporters had collaborated with Trotskyists bet-

the government never felt able to use the mass movement to achieve its aims. Of course, in China these movements were grossly manipulated — but there were also currents and individuals fighting to take an independent line. By the time that Deng Xiaoping took over, he was not able to risk using Mao's form of legitimisation. He therefore attempted, through economic reforms, to de-politicise the country and to create a middle-class that would serve as a new basis of support.

The 1989 uprising was the consequence both of the dynamic unleashed by the reforms (the demonstrators were supported by the powerful and privately owned Stone Computer Company) and by the failure of the reforms. The 1989 demonstrations were the first truly independent, mass actions for democracy since 1949, but also the first time there was a significant force in favour of restoring capitalism. Most of the activists, though, retained their faith in socialism.

The various documents are thoughtfully chosen. They deal with a range of issues and include a wide spectrum of political views, from those fighting for socialist democracy to those who equate progress and democracy with capitalism. This book will be invaluable for those wanting to understand future developments in China; it provides a wealth of information to enable readers to reach their own opinion on the developments there. It is also a good read.

Reviewed by Richard Owens,

E-mail 100554,3557@compuserve.com

ween 1934 and 1936 in the publication of a common paper, he wrote to the Comintern in 1939 that the time would soon come to 'politically exterminate' the Trotskyists.

In September and October 1945 he delivered on his promise, arresting and killing their leaders, including Ta Thu Thau. The repression destroyed the groups. The handful who survived in Vietnam had no choice but to abandon active politics.

The organisational and political continuity with these brave fighters for internationalism and socialist democracy, and against the bureaucratic Communist Parties is maintained by the group of comrades in France who publish *Chroniques Vietnamiennes*.

Ngo Van deserves our sincere thanks. As an eye-witness and participant in these events, he restores a forgotten chapter in the history of the international workers' movement.

The recovery of these ideas is an essential part of the construction of a genuine revolutionary Marxist party in Vietnam today. Ngo Van's book helps that struggle.

Reviewed by K. Govindan (*Socialist Outlook*, Aug. 95)

★
Recommended reading on Vietnam

Revolutionary History Vol.3 No.2 (Autumn 1990)

Vietnam and Trotskyism, by Simon Pirani (1987)

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News Reports... News

Continued from back cover/ The revolutionary left Red Electoral Alliance (Rxd Valgallianse), got its best national election results ever. In Troms, RV got 5.1%, up from 1.4!! Also in Bergen, the RV vote almost doubled, reaching 4.5%. There were very good results in a number of municipalities, against a background of a small but not negligible general increase.

Having said this, the RV vote in Oslo was a disappointment. In the last (parliamentary) elections RV made what seemed to be a significant breakthrough - winning more than 10% in several constituencies and 4.1% city-wide. This year we fell back 40%, with a score of only 2.9%.

The most important reasons for this setback is the inability to formulate a concrete policy for Oslo. RS's success last time was mainly due to revealing corruption among politicians and top-level administration. We had no such issue this time to substitute for a general concrete policy, particularly a detailed and reasoned critique of the policies of the Labour/Socialist Left Party-dominated

Success for Italian Young Communist Festival

PARTICIPATION at the first national festival of the Young Communists (JC), 16-26 August, was a great success. This event was the first test for Rifondazione's project for dialogue with the new generation. Ten days of meetings and concerts in a "super" setting, debates on international questions ranging from the war in ex-Yugoslavia to the situation in Chiapas, and on domestic questions too. [...] The programme also included a meeting of European youth organisations, with participants from the youth of the Communist Party of Catalonia, Youth League of the Greek Left (EAN), and from France both the Communist Youth and JCR-RED (Fourth International).

The JC bring their enthusiasm for a new internationalism, and commitment for a new season of struggle in the high schools and universities, and on labour questions. The project, is the construction of a political subject capable of relating to social struggles and mass movements. The JC of today are a concentration of local experiences, of local youth and student groups, active in national politics, but lacking a clear strategic perspective credible for the mass of young people. There are, for example, many young people who are excited about the radical positions adopted by the Rifondazione secretariat, happy to participate in meetings and vote for the party, but not responsive when invited to become militants.

Libertarian festival in Ruesta, Spanish State

SOME 150 LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISTS and anarcho-syndicalists from eight countries¹ came together in Ruesta, Spanish State, from 13-20 August, for a meeting called by the French organisation Alternative libertaire. This was the largest international meeting of this current for many years, and the organisers plan a "wider, and more demanding" international meeting for 1997.

A selection of speeches, debates and resolutions will be published in the coming months. Participants also pledged to co-ordinate their opposition to French and Chinese nuclear tests, their preparation for the G7 counter-summit in Lyon (June 1996), to participate in the unemployed march planned for later this year by a range of Spanish organisations, and to organise solidarity activity

ELECTION RESULTS IN NORWAY

Party	1995	since '91	since '93
Red Electoral Alliance	1.7	+0.2	+0.6
Socialist Left Party	6.1	-6.1	-1.8
Labour Party	31.3	+0.9	-5.6
Centre Party	11.8	-0.2	-5.0
Conservatives	19.9	-2.0	+2.8
Christian Democrats	8.5	+0.5	+0.7
Liberal Party	4.7	+1.2	+1.1
Progressive Party	12.1	+5.0	+5.8
Local lists	2.5	+0.2	+0.5

municipal council. On top of this, the Oslo branch of RV has been marked by severe internal conflict between Stalinists and anti-Stalinists. And RV's best-known immigrant representative ran a "multi-ethnic" slate in competition with us.

by Anders Ekland

With this project, Rifondazione has undertaken a form of intervention based on "doing": the party decides on the orientation, what they call "themes for the youth", and the youth carries out these tasks in material terms. The limits of this imposition were clear at the festival. The co-ordination structures of the JC had not been involved in the preparation and organisation of the festival, and there was clearly a division between the decision-making phase and the practical application of these decisions. This "organising by doing" risks to exclude militant youth from the elaboration of propositions and political projects.

This threatens to penalise us when the next round of mobilisations in the high schools and universities takes place, as soon as the Young Communists become involved in building these struggles and talking about our project. [...]

The real challenges for the JC, and Rifondazione as a whole, are the opposition to the government's new Decree on Youth Employment, the new contracts imposed on teaching staff, new university admission procedures (increased fees and reduced places). The party's youth project must be evaluated on its capacity to intervene in social conflicts. [...]

By Nando Simeone, *Bandiera Rossa*

to support the struggle for the right to divorce and abortion in Ireland. A joint initiative is also planned for international women's day, 8 March 1996.

For more information contact: Alternative libertaire, BP 177, 75967, Paris cedex 20, France.

Notes

1. France (Alternative libertaire), Ireland (Worker Solidarity Movement), Italy (Comunismo libertario magazine), Lebanon (Al Badil al Taharuri), Poland (Anarchist Federation), the Spanish State (Confederación general del trabajo, Solidaridad obrera), Sweden (Svengas arbetares centralorganisation) and Switzerland (Organisation socialiste libertaire). The largest organisations represented were the Swedish SAC and Spanish State's CGT (15,000 and 30,000 members respectively).

Social democratic vote collapses in Sweden

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY won only 28.1% of votes in Sweden's first elections to the European parliament on 17 September. "A Fiasco", screamed the front page of the social democratic daily newspaper Aftonbladet - the party had won 45% of votes in the 1994 parliamentary elections¹. "The economic crisis has become political," commented Kjell Pettersson of the Socialist Party (Fourth International). "Voters are now demanding a new referendum on the European Union. They are damn tired of EU-instigated cutbacks these last few years."

The Left Party (ex-Communist) and the moderate left Greens respectively doubled and quadrupled their votes. Taken together, they did better than the social democrats. The Left Party had considered its 5.3% vote in 1994 as very good. This time they polled an all-time high of 12.9%.

"It is to the honour of the Swedish voters that they chose not to protest by voting for the right-wing populists," says Kjell Pettersson. The largest right populist party won only 0.1%.

The historic defeat of the social democrats and the political establishments is the result of EU-instigated cutbacks, privatisation, and increasing unemployment.

In December 1993 a conservative government cut unemployment and sickness relief from 90% of salary to 80%. The LO trade union federation and the social democratic party organised an angry protest of 30,000 unionists. Social Democrat chairman Ingvar Carlsson gave a militant speech, promising changes when his party returned to office.

This they did in the September 1994 general election. The party argued for Swedish affiliation to the European Union, which was approved by 52% of voters in November that year.²

Then the cutbacks started! Now Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson cut unemployment and sickness relief from 80 to 75%. As has happened before in Sweden, public discontent was clearly reflected in the electoral results. Despite this clear message, Kjell Pettersson predicts that the social democrats will continue their austerity policies. But, for the first time ever, the passive support of the LO trade union federation for a social democratic government is challenged by a majority of Swedish unionists.



As for the Left Party and the Greens, Pettersson believes that "they will help the government continue its attacks on ordinary people. Both parties are eager to be seen as 'credible' political alternatives, and maybe even partners in government in the near future."

Sweden is more and more an ordinary west European country, with weak political parties, dependent on the state, and with few active members. The coming years will be hard, and the rift between establishment and voters will probably not be overcome. But who will benefit from the political vacuum, left radicals or right-wing populists?

The radical left participated in the elections through the newly-formed List for Justice. The Socialist Party (Fourth International), Offensiv (co-thinkers of Britain's Militant Labour) and an impressive list of individual union militants, often linked to the social democrats.

The list received economic support from the SAAB Scania metalworkers' union in Falun, and several other local unions. This is the first time ever that such support has gone to a party to the left of the Communists.

Founded only shortly before the elections, and with only seven weeks to publicise itself, the list nevertheless won 14,644 votes, or 0.6% of the total. "Had this been a local election, our score would have given us representatives on 30 city councils," says Kjell Pettersson of the Socialist Party. Many activists are encouraged by the list's results, though discussions on the future of this initiative are only just beginning.

Examples of the List's activities include a tour by representatives of the striking Ri-bus drivers from Esbjerg in neighbouring Denmark, and a lively and angry protest against French nuclear tests by 750 high school and university students on 8 September. This is the largest demonstration since the anti-test campaign began.

by Peter Lindgren

1. Electoral participation in Sweden is traditionally high - 85-89% in the 1994 elections. This time round only 41.2% of registered voters participated. The social democratic party received only 745,268 votes, a decline of 1,750,000, and their lowest score since the right to vote was established in 1917.

2. Swedish membership of the EU began on 1 January 1995.

Norway: Racist vote increases in municipal elections

PARLIAMENTARY AND MUNICIPAL elections confirm the long-term decline in support for the traditional governing parties. Labour go only 31%, the Conservatives only 19%. For decades the Labour Party enjoyed 40-45% support, and the Conservatives 25-30%.

To the right of the Conservatives, the Thatcherite and racist Progressive Party (Fremskrittspartiet) now regularly polls 5-15% of the vote. To the left of the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti) also captures 5 - 12% of the voters. Another winner since 1989 has been the peasant based party The Centre Party, with 8-12%.

In this new party system, the racist Progressive Party and the Socialist Left Party are the main losers or winners of each elections. 1987 saw a racist swing, 1991 a progressive swing, and 1995 shows a new swing of protest towards the racists.

The phenomenon that really characterises these latest elections is the breakthrough for the "Progressives" in the working class districts of the capital, Oslo, where the racist

increased their share of the vote from 10 to 25%. And this reflects the positive reaction of parts of the working class to revelations of a pre-election meeting of a Progressive Party MP with notorious outspoken racist organisations (the Progressive Party is not explicitly racist.)

The Socialist Left Party has totally lost the momentum build up from 1989 to 1991. It had done well opposing the Thatcherite policy of the Conservative and the Labour governments, and stressing environmental issues. As part of this success the SLP went into an alliance with Labour in the Oslo Municipal Council after the municipal elections in 1991. But the party then slid to the right, and was became unable or willing to enforce any radical measures in the Oslo municipality. Another contributing factor was also that the Party was not consolidated of active in its opposition to the European Union. That send a lot of voters to the Centre Party, earlier seen as a bourgeois party. SLP leaders thought that the key to even greater success was to become more respectable and responsible. They were cruelly mistaken.

/Continued on inside cover