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Palestine under Arafat

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Palestine

The final straw

by Michel Warshawsky
Jerusalem

"BUT THIS IS CANTONISATION!" cried Yasser Arafat, one week before he signed the Oslo B accords on the redeployment of the Israeli army on the West Bank.

"Cantonisation" is the right word. One year too late, the Palestinian negotiators have discovered the essence of the Israeli project. The West Bank and Gaza strip are being dismantled into little islands managed by the Palestinians, but surrounded by territory administered by Israel.¹ The Israelis will decide who comes in and out of the Palestinian zones, and how and when you can travel from one zone to another.

Oslo B divides the West Bank into three zones.

★ **ZONE A:** Seven towns, from which the Israeli army will withdraw within six months, passing administrative and police control to the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli army will no longer have the right to enter zone A, except for the city of Hebron, where it retains responsibility for the "protection" of some 400 Zionist colonists, who continue to disturb the life of the town's other 120,000 residents.

★ **ZONE B:** The Palestinian Authority will administer these 450 villages. "Order" will be maintained jointly by the Palestinian police and the Israeli army.

★ **ZONE C:** 68% of the West Bank, including most of the Zionist colonies, the lands they cultivate, and the roads which link them, will remain entirely under Israeli control.

This redeployment will permit the Palestinian Authority to organise elections to the 82-member Council which will manage the life of Palestinians. Without the slightest control over the West Bank's natural resources, nor over entry into and departure from the territories administered.

"This isn't a good accord," admits the chief Palestinian negotiator Abu Ala. "But it is the best we could obtain".

The Israeli promises are vague even on the concrete question of the liberation of Palestinian political prisoners. The timetable is long, and their proposals cover only one third of the estimated 6,000 detainees.

One understands why Hamas spokesman Imad Faluji could say, a few days before the signature of Oslo B, "the terms of the negotiations under way will make the Palestinian authority into a police force serving the Israeli occupier."

After 25 years in exile, Hamid Al Ghul of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) returns to discover that

"here in Gaza, we find ourselves in a large prison, guarded and controlled by Israel. And after these accords, the West Bank too will be a prison, and there will be a complicated system of passes and permissions to move from one section to another. And there will be a kapo in charge of each cell."

For Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, the presence of 12,000 Palestinian police officers with machine guns, even if they are limited to 30% of the West Bank, will push developments past the point of no return, and confirm a process which can only lead to independence.

Liberal Israelis like the journalist Nahum Barnea agree. "The accord is the end for the political concept of 'Judea and Samaria'. From now on, there will be lots of Judeas, and lots of Samarias. And all round them there will be the West Bank".²

But the facts and numbers are hard-headed, and they challenge these optimistic prognosis. There will not be a West Bank, with "lots of Judeas, and lots of Samarias". There will be a Greater Israel, with lots of little Palestinustans.

The Israeli Prime Minister Yitshak Rabin and Environment Minister Yossed Sarid see this accord as tracing the contours of the 21st century map of historic Palestine. Israel will annex more than one third of the West Bank and Gaza, including most of the Zionist colonies and the land Israel has appropriated over the last 25 years. The rest of the West Bank will be cantonised, and administered by the Palestinians under the close surveillance of the Israelis, and maybe the Jordanians too. If the Palestinians want, Israel will not really object to them giving these cantons the title of "Free and Independent State of Palestine". Or Holy Islamic Palestinian Empire, for all the difference it makes.

This is what Yitshak Rabin meant when he says that "today, I am opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state. I stress the word 'today'. Later on, we will be looking at all kinds of solutions."³



Notes

Reprinted from *Rouge*, 28 September 1995

1. 83% at the beginning of negotiations, 68% in the final Oslo B document.

2. *Yediot Aharonot*, 24 September 1995

3. *Yediot Aharonot*, on the eve of the Jewish New Year

Palestine

Third world politics in Israel's "homelands"

by *Walid Salem*
Jerusalem

AS SOON AS HE RETURNED TO GAZA¹ Yasser Arafat initiated his favourite game — working to divide the various political forces of the Palestinian opposition, and creating other parties under his own control. All these new parties were created with the explicit authorisation of Yasser Arafat. This suggests that the Palestinian Authority will demand that all political parties seek official authorisation for their activities. This seems to be confirmed by Arafat's statement, three months ago, that Hamas could participate in the forthcoming elections, if it transformed itself into a political party and agreed to support the "peace process".

The formation of these political currents is intended to guarantee the existence of a "loyal opposition".

Arafat's goal is the elimination of the old political formations and their replacement by new ones. This is the meaning behind the creation of the Palestinian Peace Movement, and of his recent promise to a delegation of the Socialist International² that he would support the creation of a Palestinian political party susceptible to join this social-democratic international regrouping.

Rank and file militants in Arafat's own Fatah party say that the repression currently directed against Hamas and the Islamic Jihad movement will be followed by the liquidation of Fatah itself, and its replacement by new parties. These militants suspect that such a process is already under way. The liquidation of Fatah would take place on two levels. On the one hand, part of the leadership would be integrated into the state apparatus, and offered senior posts. This tactic was employed at the moment of creation of the Palestinian Authority, and has become increasingly important since. At the same time, all opposition to Arafat inside Fatah would be systematically and directly liquidated.

Following a meeting with Arafat in May 1995, thirteen cadres abandoned the Democratic Front for the Liberation of

Palestine (DFLP) and declared their support for the "peace process".

Arafat has also managed to encourage a split in the People's Party, already closer to the new power elite.

SUSPENSION OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE?

The Islamic Jihad Movement denies it, but they seem to have agreed to suspend all military activity in the Gaza strip until May 1996, date set for the direct negotiations on the final status of the occupied and autonomous territories. The



Israeli border guards beat a Palestinian demonstrator in East Jerusalem, while others run to hide inside the Orient House (in the background). Israeli police beat and wounded 10 demonstrators and four photographers with rubber bullets and made several arrests during the demonstration. Photo by A. Awad, reproduced from *News from Within*

media has reported extensively on the divergence within this current, resulting in contradictory declarations by its leaders, both in the territories and in exile. For example, when he was released from prison Abd Allah Al Chami declared that Oslo "has become a reality", with which one must come to terms. He later accused the media of having distorted his statement.

Hamas also promised to stop all military activity in the zone of autonomy, and put pressure on the more radical Al Qassem units, to make them too respect this promise. This pressure was followed by a direct repression of Al Qassem, and their disarmament by force.

The PFLP has promised to suspend all military action in the territory under PA control, and to act in accordance with the legal regulations in force within these zones. In exchange, Arafat has legalised the PFLP's newspaper, allowed them to re-open their office, and ensured the release of those of their cadre who were imprisoned. Four months have passed since this agreement, and the PFLP has hardly stepped outside the new regulations.

The PFLP has never experienced a serious confrontation with the Palestinian Authority (unlike Hamas, Islamic Jihad and, to a lesser extent, the DFLP). This is partly because the movement has renounced the armed struggle and avoided any provocative actions. Eleven militants were recently arrested by the Palestinian authorities following a PFLP action against Israeli colonists and soldiers, but were released two days later.

GAZA TODAY

The campaign for the disarmament of the different formations continues, with a daily ration of searches and confiscations.

The Palestinian Authority's apparatus is now made up of 53,000 civil servants, 18-20,000 of whom are employed by one of the various security services. There are an estimated 20,000 informers among the civilian population. The monthly salary costs of this bureaucracy are \$30 m³. Of an estimated \$440 m. received by the Palestinian Authority, over half have been allocated to salary costs⁴

The high number of civil servants, particularly in the security services, illustrates the role which Israel has allocated to the Palestinian Authority. One image of this role is the PA's newly-established State Security Court. The address of this organ is secret, and it meets to pronounce sentence at one o'clock in the morning. Lawyers for the defence are not allowed to be present at any of the proceedings. The Supreme Court in Gaza illustrates another aspect of the power structure. Supposedly supreme, this court is a mere formal instance. Its decisions only take effect when approved by Arafat.

All the political forces in Gaza live in fear and expectation. The Human Rights Foundation recently refused to denounce the arrest of three young militants of the PFLP. The PA imposes a very strict control on the media, including the Arab media in East Jerusalem. There have been severe reprisals and numerous banning orders⁵

The PA is trying to consolidate the power of its Preventative Security Force in all the towns of the Gaza strip. And 150 PSA agents are employed in Jerusalem, answering to the Palestinian Authority, but under the benevolent regard of the Israeli security services.

As well as breaking the will of the political parties and persecuting newspapers and journalists, the Palestinian Authority is also trying to extend its control over the whole society. One tactic is to build links with traditional leaders



and tribal chiefs (particularly in Gaza and Jericco). Another tactic is to impose a number of regulations and supervision mechanisms on non-governmental organisations, and to persecute all those who refuse to comply.

NEGOTIATIONS BLOCKED

Arafat's negotiations with Hamas and Islamic Jihad have been blocked for months now. Both organisations say they will come back to the negotiating table only when more of their prisoners are freed and when the PA's State Security Court is abolished.

Negotiations with the other parties seemed for some time to be progressing, but have now broken down after a common delegation including Haydar Abd Al Chafi and Abd Allah Al Hourani failed to convince Arafat to accept these same two conditions as the basis for any real dialogue.

THE LEFT ALTERNATIVE

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine needs to build two kinds of alliance: a regrouping of democratic forces, particularly the FDLF, the People's Party and independent personalities inside the territories, and a wider alliance among the ten formations which opposed the Oslo accords. Within this wider alliance it is essential that the democratic bloc plays an important role. Unfortunately, the PFLP has not yet really implemented such a strategy.

The construction of the Democratic Patriotic Alliance, the framework accepted by both fronts for developing their co-operation, is very uneven in policy and membership across the various territories.

In Naplus, Hamas does not participate, despite the recent negotiations between local DPA leader Bassam Al Shaka and all ten of the anti-Oslo parties during his visit to Damascus.

In Ramallah, the People's Party has agreed to join the DPA on the basis of a common platform condemning the colonisation and affirming our attachment to Jerusalem. Rather than condemning the Oslo accords, the Ramallah DPA text speaks of "going further" and "changing" them.

In Bethlehem and Hebron discussion is still underway about the possibility of forming some alliance between the two fronts and a number of independent personalities which sympathise with them.

★ Palestine

THE PEOPLE

The Intifadah is declining, but the diversity and level of popular initiatives and activities to defend their land and resist colonisation is increasing.

The general feeling among the masses is one of disappointment with the political parties, which refuse or are incapable of acting. People are beginning to act without relying on "the politicians".

Recent examples include the three sit-ins at Um Tuba and Bet Safafa to oppose land expropriations, and the 1 April 1995 demonstration against new dams organised by Jerusalem-based NGOs "for the right to housing".

Opposition to the Israeli national celebrations of the supposed 3,000 anniversary of the foundation of Jerusalem by King David has taken various forms: a demonstration at Al Issawiya, a press conference on confiscated land in Bethanina, and a demonstration in the Beb Al Jadid district of Jerusalem over the increasing Jewish domination of the town.

Experienced political activists, some of whom have in the past been arrested for presumed membership of the PFLP, have played an important role in the organisation of these activities, be it through the movement for the right to housing, at Um Tuba or at Sowr Behir. But this was a matter of individual initiative, not evidence of "remote control" by the organisation.

The growing involvement of the masses in this type of activity is certainly positive. But it also testifies to the general weakness of all the political formations.

Today's demonstrations are peaceful, and do not degenerate into violence. One result could be not just the definitive abandoning of the underground struggle and the acceptance of legality in all forms of protest, but also a risk of confining ourselves to the struggle against the expropriation of this or that scrap of land, or the right to an apartment, without challenging the occupation as such, and abandoning the field of political struggle for the rights of the Palestinian people to a state, the right of return, and the right to self-determination. These current struggles are very important. The root of the housing problem is the

suppression of the Palestinians' right to housing by Israel, through colonisation and appropriation. But it is essential that the struggles against expropriation and for the right to housing incorporate a political struggle on the "big issues". And this is not at all the case at the moment.

JERUSALEM

A council has been established, including representatives of Fatah, PFLP, FDLP, the People's Party, Hamas and the Fida movement ⁶, and five independents (two close to Fatah, one close to the PFLP, one Muslim religious leader and one Christian). Faysal Al Husseni presides, without occupying one of these 11 designated seats.

Commissions are being established to deal with health, education, culture, tourism, commerce, land, and a range of other questions.

The prerogatives of the council, and its relationship to the State of Israel remain to be defined.

The Jerusalem Council has no official relations to the Palestinian Authority, and has the power to allocate all the funds it receives.

The Council has refused to take a position on the question of land appropriation in Jerusalem. It seems, however, that Al Hussayni has at least the moral authority of the Council to lobby and make media statements on this question.

The members of this Council are designated from above. The "representatives" of the DFLP, PFLP and PPP have not yet received the authorisation of their respective parties to participate in the Council's activities.

There is a real risk that the Council of Jerusalem is a first step towards one of three "solutions" of the Jerusalem question:

- ★ Separate Israeli and Palestinian municipal authorities to run West and East Jerusalem respectively.
- ★ A single umbrella council, de-centralised in practice to separate bodies for East and West



"from the Jordan to the sea"

Israel's parliament approved Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's peace deal with the PLO on 6 October 1995 by 61 votes to 59. Rabin donned his general's hat for the debate to try to outflank right-wingers who accuse him of wanting to return Israel to its pre-1967 borders. "The borders of the state of Israel under the permanent agreement will exceed the borders that existed prior to the Six Day War. We will not return to the lines of June 4th 1967," said Rabin, Israeli army chief of staff during the 1967 Middle East war. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Israel had conceded nothing. "From the sea to the Jordan River and from the Jordan to the sea, there will be no other army but the Israeli Defense Forces."

More than 20,000 Israelis lined the streets of central Jerusalem on the eve of the vote to protest against the deal, later surrounding the parliament building.

The 1993 agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation passed by a vote of 61-50. Since then, Rabin's coalition has shrunk and maverick legislators have crossed lines on the peace issue. Two members of the ruling Labour party voted against this latest plan. ★

Jerusalem (adopting a formal model similar to the local government structure of London).

- ★ An integrated municipal council.

The PFLP, DFLP and Hamas would, of course, refuse to participate in any of these three bodies. But the current council might just be a way of testing the water before carrying the other Palestinian forces further in the "process of negotiation".

A number of political forces have called for the abandoning of the Jerusalem Council, and the establishment of a "Workplaces Commission". In Naplus and Ramallah, such commissions have become the main common structure of the various political forces. Village and local representatives participate in these bodies to discuss local social questions.

INSIDE THE 1948 CEASE FIRE LINE

Palestinians within the 1948 cease fire line are citizens of the State of Israel, and can therefore participate to a limited extent in parliamentary politics there. The main formation supported by the members of the "two fronts" (DFLP, PFLP) is the Patriotic Democratic Regroupment. A founding congress will be held later this month, though forces already committed include the Abna Al Balad movement, Pact and Equality Movement, the Progressive Movement of Mohamed Miarri, the Roots in the Negev movement, and a number of independent personalities.

Some 59% of delegates to the recent Abna Al Balad movement congress resolved not to present a list in the forthcoming Knesset (Israeli Parliament) elections, not to oppose the presentation of any PDR list, and not to publicly endorse any electoral list.

This position represents a compromise. A small minority of delegates wanted Abna Al Balad to dissolve itself into a PDR bloc. Others wanted to impose the demand for the abolition of the Zionist character of the State of Israel on any Abna Al Balad or PDR list. In fact, of course, the Israeli authorities would probably refuse to register any electoral list with such a demand.

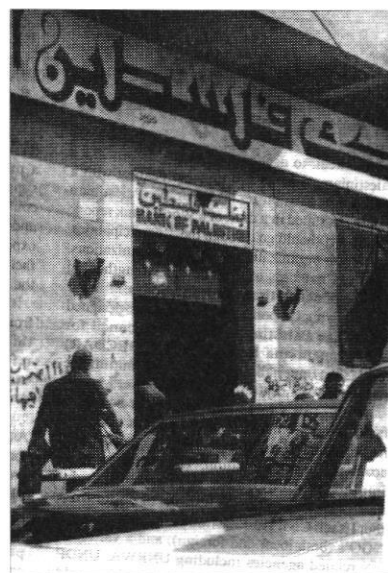
After a long and difficult debate, Abna Al Balad has emerged stronger from this conference, and is united around the new strategy.

The Islamic fundamentalist movement inside the 1948 cease fire line will abstain completely from the Israeli elections. It will neither present nor endorse candidates. This is formally a very similar position to that of Abna Al Balad. Except that the fundamentalists cannot be expected to vote the same way. Whereas most Abna Al Balad militants can be expected to vote for a PDR list.



Palestine's politicians

- ★ **Palestinian Pact Party**
Gaza-based. Supports the Palestinian Authority
Leaders Abdalah Issa and Kannan Al Saraj
- ★ **Palestinian Peace Movement**
Gaza-based. Created as Arafat's response to the Israeli peace movement, who criticised the lack of a Palestinian peace movement.
Leader: Assad Abu Sharkh, doctor at the Al Azhar University
- ★ **Palestinian Patriotic Regroupment**
Naplus-based. Supports the Palestinian Authority and the Oslo Accords, wants to "reinforce democracy"
Leader: Ahmed Tuqan
- ★ **Patriotic Unionist Regroupment**
Jerusalem-based. Same orientation as the Palestinian Patriotic Regroupment
Leader: Daud Abu Ghazala
- ★ **Patriotic Movement for Change**
Led by former members of George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), following their meetings with Arafat, this formation declares its goals as working for the re-enforcement of the Palestinian authorities and of democracy, and the "consolidation" of the perspectives of the Oslo accords.
Leaders: Khadar Al Maghribi and Youssef Al Ajrami,
- ★ **Patriotic Democratic Regroupment**
Also created by former FPLP members in Gaza, and since February 1995 incorporating also the National Movement for Change.
Leaders: Youssef Atwan and Fariss Yaghi
- ★ **Arab Socialist Baath Party**
Naplus-based, this scission of the Arab Liberation Front was created after a meeting between the fraction's leader, Jamal Al Bastami, and Yasser Arafat.
- ★ **Movement for Democratic Construction**
Reformist opposition formation, working for a constituent assembly, and stressing the importance of democratic reforms. Supported by the Palestinian people's Party (ex-Communist)
Leader: Haidar Abd Al Chafi.
- ★ **Islamic Process Movement and Islamic Front**
Both these scissions of Hamas (Movement of the Islamic Resistance) have been legally recognised by the Palestinian Authority.



Political Islam and the (absent) left

by Adel Samara

THERE ARE TWO MEASURES AGAINST WHICH TO JUDGE THIS accord: the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and the effect on the imperialist-Zionist domination of the Arab homeland.

As a solution to the rights of the Palestinians, notably the right to return, Oslo B has nothing to do with the essence of the conflict. It benefits the dependent Palestinian capitalists at the expense of the majority of the population. It guarantees the right of return for the leadership of the PLO and its police, at the expense of the right of return of two thirds of the Palestinians in the diaspora.

As concerns the second yardstick, the best interpretation one can give to Oslo B is to see it as a functional division between the Israeli central government and the Palestinian self-rule authorities. A functional division of control over the West Bank and Gaza, that is. Not a functional division of control over all of Palestine.

The direct subjection of the West Bank and Gaza to the occupation is being replaced with a "legitimation" of the occupation, as has already happened in Gaza-Jericho. This reflects the balance of power between the dependent and comprador Palestinian capitalists and the Israeli lumpen-imperialist regime.

But why has the PLO leadership decided to negotiate? Why

surrender? Why limit itself to the interests of the dependent, comprador social factions of the Palestinian people? The ambitions of these social factions never transcended the aim of having a small share in the joint exploitation (with the Israeli capitalists) of Palestinian labour. Far lower than the ambitions of a productive, nationalist capitalist class, which would seek to control its own, national market.

For a long time, in point of fact, the PLO leadership has been re-shaping the PLO's position to fit in with the ideology and interests of capital, and ruling capitalists in the region and on the global scale. This clarifies its iqlimi (regional, provincial) ideology, as the negation of the pan-Arab nationalism of the Arab popular classes....

What facilitates the signature of this agreement is the total absence of any action by the Palestinian radical leftist and democratic opposition. The last few months have seen the 'rejectionists' moving, albeit indirectly, towards acceptance of Oslo. The situation is that of the internalisation of defeat by much of the radical left. Especially the leadership.

The political Islamic movement is the only part of the rejectionist front which is still, in practice, resisting the agreement. This guarantees that movement a substantial part of popular support.

The police machine of the self-rule authorities, and the occupation forces, are responding against this development.

The radical left is unable to face the right-wing camp's surrender to the occupation, or to match the practical resistance of the political Islamic current. The radical left is formally against Oslo B. Today, I doubt the seriousness of this opposition.

The left will doubtless stay in this position for a certain period. The real development will come from the popular Arab rejection of the agreement. Such a rejection is already visible among the activities of the trade unions, writers, journalists' associations and so on.

When the agreement is applied, the Palestinian people will realise that it fails to regain their legitimate rights. And as long as the comprador Arab regimes continue to facilitate the Israeli integration-through-domination of the Arab homeland, then popular resistance will be renewed. ★



Political Islam Fundamentalism or National Struggle?

by Adel Samara

published in October 1995 by the Al Mashriq Centre for Development and Cultural Studies, Jerusalem. Price £6/\$12

Notes

1. 1 July 1994*
2. Visiting Gaza at the beginning of 1995
3. Figure given by George Al Abd at a recent press conference organised by the Abd Al Hamid Shuman in Amman, Jordan.
4. \$228 m., according to Nabil Shaat.
5. *Al Umma* (the Nation) has been banned, and the editor of the pro-Hamas newspaper *Al Watan* (the Motherland), Said Abu Sameh, sentenced to two years imprisonment for propaganda against the regime. His newspaper was closed for three months.
6. scission of the DFLP.

Portugal

R for Revolt!

The Socialist Party won an overwhelming victory in the 1 October 1995 general election. We spoke to Francisco Louça, Revolutionary Socialist Party candidate in Lisbon.

● *Why such an impressive Socialist Party victory?*

Francisco Louça: The [rightist] Social Democratic Party (PSD) had had an absolute majority in parliament for eleven years. This was the longest period of political stability since the revolution of 25 April 1974. This made possible not just a political re-alignment on the right, but the reorganisation of all the social structures which supported the government: industrialists, especially exporters, all those who have benefited from our adhesion to the European Common Market in 1986, civil servants, property owners and property speculators.

Until 1990 the Portuguese economy was growing. This was the result of European Community financing, rising exports, a much more efficient tax-collection system, and a marked decline in social struggles, particularly in the number of strikes by manual workers.

The recession which began in 1991 was at the root of the decline of the Social Democratic Party, which has continued ever since. The last four years have seen municipal and European electoral defeats for the PSD. The party apparatus was tired, and the party's hegemony called into question. Prime Minister Cavaco's decision not to stand in this last election was a fatal blow for the party.

The Socialist Party (PS) was the largest of the opposition parties, with a constant 30% of votes, compared to 51% for the PSD. The Socialists were therefore the best placed to capture popular frustration with the government. They won 43% of the vote.

● *What were the themes of their campaign?*

The Socialists said that after all the scandals and the growing social tension, only they could guarantee stability. Their political and social proposals are very close to the right's traditional programme. They agree on the essentials: European policy (including defence of the Maastricht Treaty and the planned introduction of the single European currency), privatisation and social policy. The only new point in the Socialist Party's programme was a demagogic promise on the minimum wage for the poor and homeless.

● *The Popular Party doubled its score, pushing the Communist Party into fourth place. How?*

The Popular Party (PP) is the new name of the old CDS, the weakest of the right wing parties, and an organisation with direct relations with some of the former leaders of the

dictatorship. The party used to win 12-14% of the vote, but this had declined to 4% in the 1980s, when the Social Democratic Party began to win 51% of the vote. The new Popular Party has won 9% of the vote. More than 4%, but a long way short of the CDS all-time record of 16%.

Having said this, the PP now attracts mainly urban, young and radical supporters, rather than the traditional rural support of the CDS. And this election was the first in which a right wing party dared axe its propaganda on security, policing, and foreigners. This was the first time questions like drug use became themes of political debate.

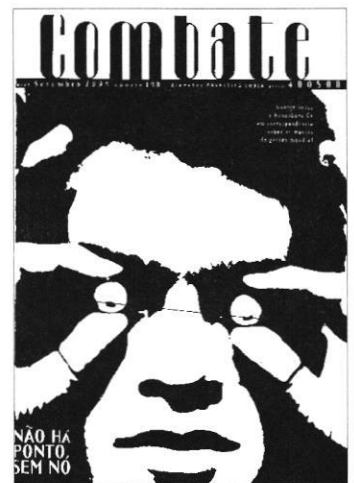
● *The (Communist Party-dominated) Unitary Democratic Coalition seems to have lost ground.*

The Communist Party vote is slowly declining from 9-10% to 8-9%. They have preserved their strongholds in the major towns and the areas where there was a land reform. But their base electorate is growing older. Their decline from 17 to 15 deputies is also due to a tactical vote for the Socialist Party.

● *And the Revolutionary Socialist Party?*

We presented almost 350 candidates, right across the country. We tried to run a radical campaign, clearly marking our differences with the Socialist Party over themes like the need for free education. We also talked about deaths in police custody over the last 15 years, women's rights, the rights of sexual minorities, anti-racism, and work accidents (Portugal has one of the worst rates of workplace injury in Europe).

The difference between the PS and the PSR is the "R" of Revolt and Revolution. And, at least in Portuguese, Demand. Our campaign was a success, in that our meetings in Porto, Coimbra, Lisbon and a number of other towns were larger, and the public younger, than in the last election. We won just over 40,000 votes, compared to 61,000 in 1991. In Lisbon we had 17,000 votes. We needed 20,000 to have a PSR deputy there. In Lisbon and a number of towns we are in fifth position, with strong scores among the young and in working class districts. ★



Ireland

The challenge facing the republicans

by Gerry Foley

FOR SOME TIME, THE LEADERS OF THE IRISH REVOLUTIONARY nationalist movement have been warning that the so-called peace process is in a crisis. On Sept. 30, about 500 activists of Sinn Féin, the political organization that supports the Irish Republican Army, met in Dublin to discuss the results of the negotiations since the indefinite ceasefire declared by the IRA more than a year ago. The negotiations have run up against two main obstacles — the refusal of the British government to offer any remission of sentence for the large number of republican political prisoners and the demand of the British government that the IRA surrender (“decommission”) its weapons before all-party talks can begin. On the eve of the Sinn Féin conference, the clandestine leadership of the IRA issued a statement saying: “[British Prime Minister] John Major’s government know enough of Anglo-Irish history to understand that there is no possibility of disarmament except as part of a negotiated settlement. Given that history, and the reality that they and their loyalist death squad allies hold the largest stock of licensed and unlicensed weapons, the demand for an IRA handover of weapons is ludicrous.”

AT THE SINN FÉIN CONFERENCE, the lack of any important British concessions to the republican prisoners was apparently a major source of tension. The *Irish Times* of Oct. 2 quoted a north Belfast delegate as saying, “Offering prisoners 50% remission [time off for good behavior] — what they had in 1989 — is an insult. There is great frustration in my area about the ‘peace process’. There were indications of tensions at the conference but not of any explicit challenges to the peace negotiations policy of the Sinn Féin leadership.” However, the same north Belfast delegate also said that: “One benefit has been the relationship Sinn Féin has developed with the SDLP [the bourgeois Irish nationalist party in Northern Ireland] and the U.S. administration. Though, they could both dump us if we go too far for them.”

THE MOST NOTABLE RESULT OF THE IRA CEASEFIRE is that republican leaders are now being treated as statesmen by bourgeois governments. In particular, the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, has been received at the White House and allowed to tour the United States and to raise money for his organization. Apparently republican activists are beginning to think that their seemingly broadminded bourgeois interlocutors might not be very reliable. Well they might. For every word the republican leaders get into the

mass media, the bourgeois rulers get in a thousand. And if the republicans now have better access to the public, they can also be more vulnerable to the pressure of public opinion, which in normal circumstances is dominated by the bourgeois rulers and press.

For example, polls show that the majority of Catholics in Northern Ireland think that the IRA should give up its weapons. That is not surprising. The IRA military struggle had long been in a blind alley, and their arsenal is derisory by comparison with the weaponry of the police and army. If there were a real chance an acceptable peace, even Catholics could think that it would be foolish to let the IRA’s arms stand in the way. In any case, the involvement of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland in the struggle is uneven, and the republicans’ popular base depends on mass involvement. On the other hand, politically experienced people, even moderates, such as some prominent Catholic priests, have expressed fears that the disarmament of the IRA before the achievement of a democratic settlement, would expose the Catholic population again to pogroms.

An international commission on decommissioning, chaired by U.S. Sen. George Mitchell, is expected to be meeting in advance of President Clinton’s planned visit to Ireland in December. In the Oct. 2 *Irish Times*, political reporter Daglin De Braden wrote: “Senior sources believe that once it has been agreed to establish the commission, it will be difficult for any of the parties to reject its recommendations.”

The British government knows better than anyone that the IRA arsenal is not a significant obstacle to peace negotiations. The advantage for them in pressing this issue is that they know that a section of the movement would regard the turning in of weapons as surrender. Thus, by making “decommissioning” a condition for negotiations, they can hope to produce a split in the movement.

At the same time, they are increasing the pressure by threatening a new military crackdown. The republican leadership has responded to these tactics by calling for mass demonstrations to demand multi-party talks. The problem is that it is difficult to mobilize masses of people for such a vague and unverifiable objective. On the other hand, there may be a basis for a mass movement for amnesty for the republican prisoners. On Sept. 27, the European Court on Human Rights at Strasbourg handed down a verdict condemning the British for shooting down three IRA members without warning Gibraltar in 1988. The following day, the British High Court condemned the Major government for delaying parole of five republican prisoners. For some years, human rights advocates defending Irish political prisoners have been winning important victories that indicate that the British repression is becoming discredited in the eyes of informed public opinion. ★

Gerry Foley is the editor of the San-Francisco based newspaper *Socialist Action*, and a former editor of *International Viewpoint*

Poland

Presidential elections

This month's presidential elections are a major challenge for the Polish population. Sections of the conservative right, supported by parts of the Solidarnosc trade union bureaucracy, are threatening to "take action" if the popular ex-Communist candidate, Aleksander Kwasniewski, wins.

*by Zbigniew Kowalewski
Warsaw, October 1995*

THE NEO-LIBERAL RIGHT, with its origins in Solidarity, was defeated in September 1993. The Alliance of the Democratic Left (SDL), led by Social Democracy of the Polish Republic (SdRP) found itself in government, in alliance with the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), itself formed from a satellite party of the Stalinist regime.

This was an earthquake. The Stalinist regime had fallen hardly four years ago. No one could have imagined that political currents with their roots in that hated regime, even transformed, could return to power, especially in so short a time.

The former anti-Stalinist opposition, which had been carried to power by the masses, was defeated by the popular vote in 1993, because successive governments from this current had made severe attacks on the interests and social gains of the workers. The restoration of capitalism was proving more difficult than the ideologues of the market had expected. The success of the Alliance of the Democratic Left was an expression of the protest of large layers of the working and popular classes against the disastrous social consequences of "shock therapy" and the policy of capitalist restoration.

THE SDRP IS NOT A STALINIST PARTY, despite its origins. The old Stalinist party, the Polish Unified Workers' Party (PUWP) dissolved once it lost power. The creation of a social democratic party in its place was no mere camouflage operation. The PUWP was the political organisation of the state bureaucracy and, towards the end of Stalinist rule, of the first nomenklatura capitalists. The new SdRP, deprived of state power, could hardly be perceived as a political representative by state bureaucrats or capitalists, even those whose roots were in the old bureaucracy. Primitive accumulation of capital in Poland is too closely linked to the state apparatus, and the parties of government for such a thing to happen.

The SdRP was forced to shift its social terrain — towards the salaried masses, and to use the support of the former Stalinist trade unions. These are the majority unions nowadays, as a result of the discrediting of Solidarity in the eyes of most workers, as the result of the way the former independent union has fallen under the political control of the right, and protected "shock therapy".

The SdRP might be a left wing party, but it does not represent a left alternative to the restoration of capitalism. The pro-liberal wing which leads the party wants to restore the market economy, win the support of the capitalist sectors, cooperate with the Catholic church, and link itself to the world bourgeoisie and the imperialist powers. They want to join the Europe of Maastricht and NATO.

The left-voting electorate thought the SdRP would be a barrier against the right, and a defender of the population's social gains. Once it was elected, the party immediately forgot its promises (which had in any case been as vague as possible), and set about managing the restoration of capitalism.

In the search for a compromise with the right, the SDL government ceded to president Walesa control over the key Defence, Interior and Foreign Affairs Ministries. It also renounced support for the re-legalisation of abortion, and for protecting the non-confessional nature of the state.

The economy has grown under the SDL-PSL government. But the salaried layers have not benefited at all. Real wages of employees in the productive sector are hardly rising. The income of health and education workers is still falling. Unemployment is no longer rising (at least in the official statistics), but there is no plan for a struggle against mass unemployment (at least 17%) and its social effects. The rhythm of privatisation has slowed considerably, but the government is trying to speed it up, and to continue dismantling the essential part of state-owned industry.

Nevertheless, the SdRP remains the hegemonic force on the Polish left. "The other left", the Union of Labour (UP) formed from the old anti-Stalinist opposition and Solidarity, and reinforced since by transfusions of members from the old Stalinist party, has different origins, but shares the same essential political nature. It too is a social democratic party, and one of secondary importance. The UP also benefited from the left turn in voter sympathies in 1993, and is well-represented in parliament. But it has no base in the trade unions. The UP not only refuses to form a united front with the SdRP against the right, but has been trying to form a coalition with the liberal right Free Union (UW) in order to chase the SdRP out of government.



The SdRP-PSL has an absolute majority in parliament. The right is represented by the Free Union and a number of small formations, while the majority of the conservative and radical right, including the Church-sponsored National-Christian Union (ZChN) have been pushed into the extra-parliamentary opposition.

The SdRP-PSL is in government, but has only limited power. The right is torn apart, and outside government, but still holds considerable power. Through Lech Walesa it has the Presidency of the Republic. It has control of the army, the political police, the national bank, and the national television stations.

This "cohabitation" is increasingly conflictual as the right becomes more and more radical, faced with a second electoral defeat.

OPINION POLLS give SLD candidate Aleksander Kwasniewski (SdRP) 25% of potential votes. The second left-wing candidate, the independent Tadeusz Zielinski, State Spokesman for the Rights of the Citizen, has little chance of reaching the second round. Zielinski is supported by the Union of Labour (UP) and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). The leadership of the UP had originally proposed Jacek Kuron as candidate, but delegates at their conference refused to support a man who is also the candidate of the party of Leszek Balcerowicz, the architect of the "shock therapy". Zielinski's victory over Kuron has provoked a crisis in the Union of Labour. Honorary President Karol Modzelewski, a Kuron partisan, has left the party in protest.

The right is presenting a range of candidates, in an uncoordinated fashion. The independent candidate Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, Director of the National Bank had, until recently, more support than either Walesa or Kuron. The slogan of her campaign is the struggle "against feminism and the subversion of the Christian moral order".

The ecclesiastic hierarchy is openly intervening in the election campaign, joining with the right-wing to appeal to Poles to bar the way to the "post-Communist" Kwasniewski. Even Jacek Kuron, himself attacked as "post-Communist" by the non-liberal sections of the right and by most of the ecclesiastic hierarchy, has publicly supported this public position of the bishops.

These three forces have recently enabled the incumbent, Lech Walesa, to regain second place in the polls, with sufficient support to beat Kwasniewski in the second round.

The liberal current is the only part of the right-wing to have an influential party to represent it. The conservative and radical right continue refusing to ally themselves with the Free Union against the SdRP and the SLD. But despite its dispersal, the right remains a powerful and menacing force. After all, there is also the "ecclesiastical party" — the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the "military party" — the general staff and the military hierarchy, and the "trade union party" — made up of the hierarchy of the Solidarity trade unions.

THE ECCLESIASTICS want to install a confessional state in Poland. The military want to support Walesa, and to ensure that the military bureaucracy can actively participate in political power. And the Solidarity leadership supports a confessional state and a corporatist regime. Solidarity President Marian Krzaklewski has threatened to call for a Polish re-make of the "march on Rome".

Solidarity is still a workers' union, but its leadership is completely in the hands of the right and the far right. The union continues to mobilise part of the working class, in particular the mining proletariat of Silesia. The union's slogans mix justified workers' demands and extremely reactionary demands. The ideological workshops of Solidarity have concocted a "synthesis" of revolutionary syndicalism and integral nationalism, similar in many respects to the ideology of the French and Italian workers' movements at the beginning of the century.

The most extreme current in Solidarity, openly anti-semitic, is led by Zygmunt Wrzodak, and has its stronghold in the Ursus tractor factory in Warsaw. It was trade unionists from Ursus who used an anti-government demonstration this June to call for sending the ministers to the gas chambers.

Warsaw Regional President of Solidarity, Maciej Jankowski, has condemned the "fascist methods" of his colleagues at Ursus. But he himself insists that, if Kwasniewski becomes president, his union will unleash "a revolution, which will not be of the velvet kind [against] Communist power".

The Catholic clergy certainly shares the sentiments of father Henryk Jankowski, the pro-Solidarity priest whose anti-semitic diatribe met with enthusiastic applause at the recent Solidarity congress. The audience that day included Lech Walesa.

FIGHTING THE RIGHT in Poland today means preventing the installation of a right-wing dictatorship. The restoration of capitalism cannot be taken all the way without a radical, necessarily violent change in the balance of social forces, and a transformation of the structures of society. Political democracy, even the bourgeois type, is incompatible with the consolidation of the process of restoration.

In the best case, an electoral victory for the left will slow the growth of this tendency. But it will not reverse it, since this left is itself in favour of the restoration of capitalism. There is an urgent need for an anti-capitalist alternative. But there is no sign of such an alternative on the horizon. ★

Greece

The spell is broken

The Greek bourgeoisie played the sorcerer's apprentice when it allied itself with the Serbian and Bosnian Serb elites. The spell is now broken. And the whole of society is paying the price.

*by George Mitralias
Athens, September 1995*

GREECE HAS BEEN PART OF THE YUGOSLAV CRISIS since the beginning. It gave unconditional support to the Belgrade regime and its representatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And it has refused to recognise the existence of the Republic of Macedonia. It has even imposed an economic blockade on the country.

The consequences are numerous and far-reaching. A nationalist wave has swept over the country. The Yugoslav conflict and the Macedonian crisis have led all tendencies in the political class towards extreme forms of chauvinism. The political spectrum is transformed.

In 1993, a split in the classic right wing "New Democracy" party led to the creation of the "Political Spring" party, and the collapse of the rightist government. The social democratic party (PASOK) returned to office.

In PASOK, like the other parties, nationalist and warmongering tendencies have emerged. These currents talk of "Orthodox Christianity being menaced by Papism [Catholicism] and imperialism". They long for the day when "Greece will share a frontier with Serbia" — which implies the military destruction of the Republic of Macedonia.

This chauvinist degeneration has created a new dividing line within the Greek political class. The traditional left-right polarisation has slowly lost its intensity, to be replaced by a polarisation between isolationist chauvinists who advocate a strong-arm policy towards Albania and Macedonia, and more moderate nationalists who try to calm expansionist desires in order to maintain Greece's position inside the European Union.

More importantly perhaps, these changes at the top have been accompanied by a transformation at the base. Millions have marched in the street to denounce the "encirclement" of Greece by the Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Turkey, Papism, America, the West and/or the Islamic crescent.

They invoke an elective affinity between Serbs and Greeks: the same cult of the ethnically "pure" state and the same unstoppable faith in the messianic mission of our "chosen people". They condemn the "international anti-Greek and anti-orthodox conspiracy". And they propose an "orthodox axis" of Greeks, Serbs and Russians.

THIS IS A REAL POPULAR MASS MOVEMENT, encouraged by demagogues, the media, an overwhelming majority of intellectuals, and above all by the last two governments — first New Democracy, then PASOK.

It has passed from words to actions. There are systematic and openly racist search and control operations aimed at undocumented Albanian immigrants. There are terrorist actions inside Albania, some carried out by the same Greek fascist commandos who fight in Bosnia alongside the Bosnian Serbs.

The day after Srebrenica fell, several Athens daily newspapers reported with joy that "the Greek flag now flies over Srebrenica". Later that day one Greek volunteer announced on the country's largest television station that "once the artillery stopped, we went in to carry out the cleaning operation". This whole underworld is manipulated by the Greek secret services. Such statements have become common currency.

80% of the population declare sympathy for racist, chauvinist ideas. From Prime Minister Papandreou and the Orthodox Church to the major newspapers and the trade unions, "opinion-makers" have declared their faith in an "ethnically pure and homogeneous state" in Greece. Logically, this can only lead them to support ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.

A part of big Greek capital recognises that this isolationist, anti-western and bellicose orientation of the bourgeoisie until now is an economic and diplomatic disaster. They want to

extend their field of operations into the newly-opened economies of Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria. They denounce the "visionary" policy of the majority of the Greek political elite as a dangerous delusion. They appeal for a policy of "normal" economic penetration of the neighbouring countries. In all the major parties, "moderates" are coming to the fore.

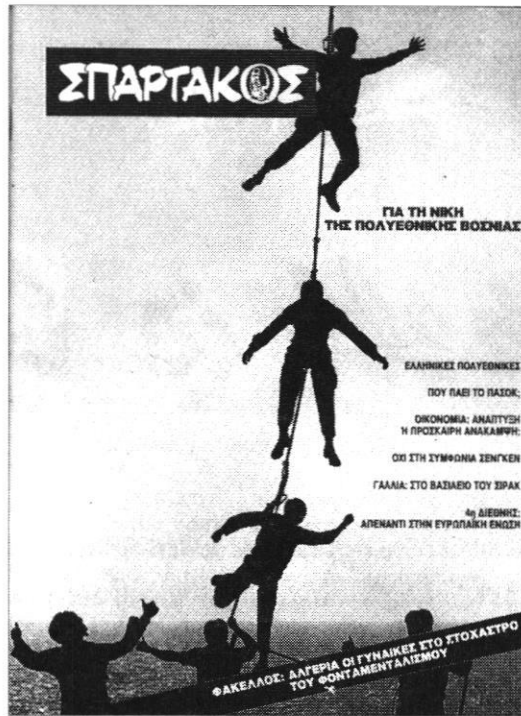
IN THE NAME OF THIS REDISCOVERED REALISM, the advocates of "Greater Greece" have calmed down, and changed strategy. Profiting from the disorientation of public opinion and the passivity of the traditional left, the pragmatists now call for the normalisation of relations with Albania and Macedonia. Adventurism has not worked, so they adapt. On 13 September Prime Minister Papandreou signed the document recognising, at long last, the existence of the Republic of Macedonia.

It would be naive to think that this explosion of Greek nationalism was an unpleasant episode which is finally over. It has left a number of open wounds in Greek society. They will not heal quickly.

New Democracy and PASOK were temporarily able to arrest their irreversible decline by playing the nationalist card. Both parties now emerge so weakened and discredited that nothing seems able to prevent their disintegration, sooner rather than later. Faced with such a crisis, the major currents of the bourgeoisie are already considering how to transfer their support to more effective political instruments.

As for the left, the balance sheet is almost as negative as for the major parties. While the (Stalinist) Communist Party and the Left Coalition refused to support anti-immigrant police campaigns, and abstained from the anti-Albanian and anti-Macedonian hysteria, both parties were unable to defend what should have been their principle strength — solidarity between workers of different ethnic and national origins.

The Greek left has been unable to orient itself in a world where "actually existing socialism" no longer exists. They mistakenly thought Milosevic, Karadzic and Mladic were "Europe's last anti-imperialists". Hence their "anti-imperialist" support for the chauvinist policies of the Greek government: including alliances with the reactionary hierarchy of the



Orthodox Church, and even the extreme neo-nationalist currents in Greek politics. The "well-meaning" left stands accused and culpable. The Communist Party even more so [...] In branding Bosnians, Albanians, Macedonians and the few "cosmopolitan" Greeks who opposed Karadzic's macabre activities as "sworn enemies of Greece" the Greek left failed the most decisive of tests.

THE WORST IS PERHAPS BEHIND, but society has been transformed by the experience. The left and the trade unions were unable to present an effective alternative to the simplistic slogans of the neo-Orthodox and pogromist mobs. Anger at growing pauperisation has been channelled towards substitute targets: "the foreigners who take the bread from our mouths".

We gave chase to the "Other" — all those who are different, or even poorer than we were. Greeks "discovered" imperialism and the class enemy just north of our frontiers. All there is in reality are a few poor neighbour states looking for their place in the sun. We have been fighting with ghosts.

We are waking up from this collective nightmare. But several painful surprises await us. The political divisions may look the same, but the whole terrain has shifted to the right. Fascist groupings, openly calling for the uprooting of minorities of all kinds, have emerged in both the major political parties. Such groups did not exist before the Yugoslav crisis.

The intelligentsia was once clearly to the left. Nowadays our intellectuals have discovered the eternal "values" of Orthodox Christianity, and are cultivating the ideas of "Greece the immortal". That is, when they are not busy visiting Pale or Banja Luka to have themselves photographed alongside the Bosnian Serb General Mladic.

THE APPRENTICESHIP IS OVER. The Greek bourgeoisie is now paying the price of its adventurism, caught up in a web of its own making. Just as the bourgeoisie tries to make us forget yesterday's expansionist dreams, and as it strives to "normalise" relations with our northern neighbours, our rulers find it more and more difficult to "normalise" their own monster children. One day after Papandreou recognised the Republic of Macedonia, the Communal Council in the north Greek town of Florina voted to wipe out the shame which the town carried. The good citizens of Florina were thinking of the headquarters of "Rainbow" — the political party which represents this country's Slavo-Macedonian minority. One hour after the vote, there were no traces of this "shame". All had been consumed in the fire. ★

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Morocco

New Marxist monthly

Sonia Leith speaks to Abdelmumen Shbari and Abdallah Elharif, editors of the new radical left monthly Annajh Democrati (The Democratic Path)

● *What is the general climate in Morocco?*

ELHARIF: The economic and social situation is deteriorating. This is reinforcing the contradictions between the classes. The Moroccan people, supported by international democratic forces, had managed to seize certain improvements, particularly concerning human rights and political liberties. An important number of political prisoners have been freed, the majority of exiles have returned, some information has been released about the "disappeared", and there has been a relative improvement in the legal status of women, and of Amazigh (the Berber language, spoken by up to 40% of the population).

The level of popular struggle is certainly lower than in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But the potential is shown by, on the one hand, a series of very "hard" strikes, like the one-month long railway workers' strike and the two-year strike at the Jebel Awam mine, and on the other hand a series of struggles to preserve and extend civic rights. There are still an important number of district and village-level struggles.

Two currents are vying for position in all the parliamentary political forces. A more combative current, sympathetic to the various popular struggles, is gaining ground in the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and the Organisation for Democratic and Popular Action (OADP) against the current of technocrats and those who enjoy the privileges the regime allows to parliamentary and local government representatives. Even the ex-Communist Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) is no longer a monolithic bloc. The tension inside the political parties is a reflection of the deepening contradictions in society.

Attempts to reunify the Marxist-Leninist-influenced left in a legal organisation have been underway since the early 1990s. It is worth noting that, while the roots of this left were in the high school and university student sectors, there is now a presence in both the main trade union federations, the General Union of Workers of Morocco (UGTM) and the Democratic Confederation of Labour (CDT) and in a range of associations, from the Association of Unemployed Graduates to the Human Rights Association and the various feminist associations.

So this left is now an influential pole in the trade union movement, and on the political scene in general. This is due to its 25-year long struggle, and its refusal to compromise with the regime at the expense of the population. This left has consistently refused the reactionary "national consensus", and a "social peace" which is nothing more than a class war against the working population. This left has been part of all the struggles, and has paid dearly.

SHBARI: The political situation could explode. The power is incapable of solving everyday problems, like salaries and health. Even worse, it is attempting to claw back gains like free education, which the democratic movement won at the beginning of the 1960s.

The regime is trying to apply the diktats of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and respect the demands of the capitalist institutions. This is the sense of the Moroccan signature of the GATT accords.

The regime has always combined repression with political manoeuvring, in order to guarantee stability and its own continuity. After the global and regional transformations of the 1980s, it has tried to construct a new consensus through the creation of a number of councils supposedly dealing with each of the burning questions facing the country. [...]

● *What is the effect of the Algerian situation?*

ELHARIF: The Moroccan regime has followed a different strategy towards the Islamic current. And, unlike in Algeria, there has always been an opposition, including a radical opposition. This radical opposition has had a significant influence on young people. And because it has never been integrated by the institutions of the regime, it has always benefited from a real credibility in the eyes of the population.

In Algeria, an absence of cohesion in the FLN and its protracted internal quarrels allowed the Islamic current to develop over a long period. Some FLN fractions even used the Islamists in their internal power struggle. And the radical opposition in Algeria, and to a certain extent in Tunisia, ended up by rallying with the regime [against the fundamentalists] or dissolving themselves. This doesn't mean that the struggle against the Islamists has been won here in Morocco. They have considerable resources, and the growth of their current in Algeria is only encouraging them. The discrediting of socialism since the collapse of the USSR... a framework where there is no influence of the socialist bloc... facilitates the implantation of the Islamists.

Fighting against Islamism means fighting for democracy, for a democracy which cannot be separated from its social, economic and cultural aspects. But this is where the danger which plagues the democratic opposition in our countries lies. The regimes try to confine us to the terrain of formal demands for partial constitutional and political reforms, without challenging the economic regime, and the resulting social relations. Only by doing so could the people rise from their misery, acquire decent housing and so on. Our struggle must make this link between the political and the socio-economic. The widening of democratic liberties must be

★ Morocco

exploited to organise the masses, so that they themselves can win new social and economic improvements. This in turn will reinforce the social movements.

SHBARI: The situation in Algeria is having a contradictory effect. On the one hand the Moroccan regime is profiting from the situation, since Algeria is too preoccupied by its own problems to continue to provide the same level of support to the Western Sahara question. On the other hand, the Algerian Islamists have logistic support in Morocco. The regime here does not fully know what is happening on Moroccan territory. And the war waged in Algeria reinforces the position of the Moroccan Islamists, and popularises the "heroism" of the Islamist current.

It is also true that the origins of the Algerian and Moroccan Islamic movements is different. In Algeria, they appeared in a context of the suffocation of civic liberties and a one-party state. Here in Morocco, the Islamic movement was born under the benevolent eye of the regime. It was an official movement, operating in a legal way, with the function of fighting atheism, particularly the Marxist-Leninist current and the progressive movement in general. It is in this context that we should understand the assassination of Omar Ben Jallun, and the struggle between Islamists and [democratic and left-wing] militants in the student sector.

The Islamic current in Morocco is weak, compared to its Algerian, Tunisian and Egyptian counterparts. Most of the Moroccan Islamists do not challenge the status quo, and only demand some modifications of legislation to bring it into accord with Islamic law. But there is one fascisising group, the Movement for Justice and Charity (Harakat al Adl wal Ihsen). This current is a danger for democracy.

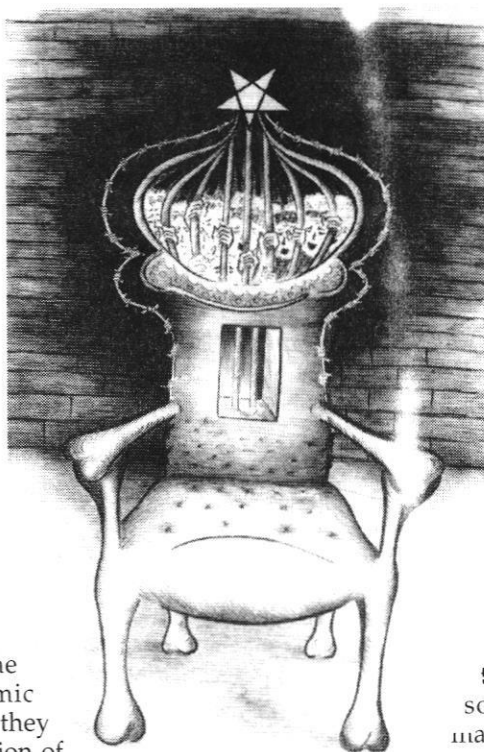
● *What led you to create *The Democratic Path*?*

ELHARIF: The contradictory situation of socio-economic decline offers a certain margin of liberty — in speech, in publication and in the creation of civic associations. We had to find a way to widen our intervention in the mass organisations and the trade unions. We wanted to find a way towards unity of ideas and politics, which could support common activity. This new publication is away of transforming the democratic gains into gains for all the people. It will be a tribune.

SHBARI: For those of us behind *The Democratic Path*, socialism is still on the agenda! Our references is the open current of Marxism, as developed by the Maoists, Trotskyists and others.

● *How will you treat the Berber question?*

SHBARI: The Amazigh (Berber) identity is an indivisible part of the multi-dimensional Moroccan identity, which includes an Arab, an Amazigh and an Islamic dimension. The



Amazigh dimension was suffocated and marginalised for a long time. The left began to realise this during the 1970s, though our response was for some time limited to the domain of principled positions. In 1993 a number of leftist militants were arrested for slogans in favour of the use of the Amazigh language during the 1 May demonstrations. Since then, the regime has tried to take the wind from the sails of the movement, by speculating about the possibility of allowing education in the Berber language.

ELHARIF: Our newspaper will defend the Amazigh question, without succumbing to chauvinism. We identify with the linguistic and cultural demands which flow from the contrasting reality of Morocco.

And we place the "Berber question" in the more general framework of the social, economic and cultural marginalisation of entire regions of the country. The democratic movement, and revolutionaries, have the responsibility of proposing specific solutions, including propositions for the relations there should be between the different parts of the country. *The Democratic Path* doesn't solutions to these questions. But we are aware of the issues. In my opinion, solutions can only be found through a struggle which will bring together the Moroccan people and the inhabitants of these unique regions.

● *And women's issues?*

SHBARI: The Marxist movement was the first to take up the woman question, back in the 1970s. In our interventions, we pushed for the formation of women's commissions, literacy campaigns aimed at poorer women, and so on. Some of the comrades arrested at the same time as me were sentenced to six years imprisonment for this kind of activity!

Women's issues have been progressively adopted by the various political forces. The Women's Section of the OADP had played a key role. There is now a unitary framework, bringing together all the [democratic] associations, and all the different currents of democratic thought, in order to propose changes to the Code of Personal Status. The effort that goes into *The Democratic Path* is the effort of militants who are also involved in this unitary mobilisation, and other struggles for women's rights. ★

Notes

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Both the comrades interviewed were imprisoned for membership of the Ila Al Amam organisation (see *International Viewpoint* #270, October 1995). Abdallah served 17 years of a 20 year sentence, and was released in January 1992. Abdelmumen served 9 years of a 10 year sentence, and was released in the General Amnesty of July 1994.

Haiti

Rising tension

PRESIDENT JEAN-BERTRAND ARISTIDE RETURNED FROM EXILE on 15 October 1994, on a US Air Force plane. The atmosphere in the capital city, Port-au-Prince, was one of joy. The same could not be said for the anniversary of this event. Prime Minister Smarck Michel had just resigned, complaining that his proposals for the introduction of a structural adjustment plan "lacked the necessary support" of Aristide and his government. US Vice President Al Gore was promptly dispatched to the island, where he gave Aristide a serious lecture (an "intense one-to-one meeting").

On 9 October Prime Minister Michel had presented the government with the draft version of a letter of intention which he proposed to sign with the World Bank. A number of ministers were sceptic, even opposed. President Aristide apparently asked Michel to postpone his visit, in order to allow more time for a public debate on the privatisation programme. A few hours later, the Prime Minister resigned.

Al Gore used his visit to repeat to Haitian journalists what Michel has been saying for weeks: without privatisation, without a structural adjustment plan, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) would not de-freeze the promised loans. Loans equivalent to 40% of the 1995-6 state budget.

MICHEL'S RESIGNATION IS A BLOW TO CLINTON'S HAITI POLICY. It follows a double defeat during the UN and US-sponsored elections: not only was the abstention rate high, but not enough of those elected are to Washington's liking. The singer Manno Charlemagne, whose anti-imperialist stance is well-known, beat the US embassy-supported incumbent, Evans Paul, to become mayor of Port-au-Prince.

Al Gore had a number of preoccupations during his visit. The new parliament is dominated by the Lavalas coalition. Its ratification of the government's economic plan cannot be taken for granted. And preparations for the presidential election, which must be held by the end of this year, are blocked¹

The Clinton administration cannot be seen to put too much pressure on Aristide. But nor can they let him move away



from the promises he made to them before his return to Haiti. In either case, this would mean admitting the disappointing results of Haiti policy, and giving the Republican Party a stick to beat Clinton with. The Republicans have in effect chosen Haiti as a field for conflict with the White House, and are currently threatening to block aid to the country.

A Haitian Senate Commission has asked the US to return the top secret archive of the paramilitary FRAPH organisation. This request came several weeks after a man linked to US secret services, and accused of several political crimes, was freed from prison and allowed to leave the country. The Haitian Minister of Justice reproached the USA for their role in this affair.

AN INTERNAL MEMO OF UNMIH (United Nations Mission in Haiti) reports that: "the economy has not improved sufficiently to assure a desperate population... This population, which had shown itself willing to wait for the situation to improve once President Aristide returned, now increasingly protests about its state. UNMIH statistics indicate that there has been a steady increase in demonstrations with economic themes over the last six months," said the memo. "While they have been relatively

small in scope, and generally peaceful in nature, the trend is negative." Mounting street protests, coupled with the landslide victory of President Aristide's Lavalas Platform in recent local and parliamentary elections, will lead to increasing pressure to block privatisation, increase wages, and retain price controls, the memo

UNMIH is exaggerating a little when it talks of "incessant" street demonstrations. But the sharpening social contradictions have led to a series of mobilisations across the country over the last few weeks. Protest has ranged from the absence of justice and corruption of the state administration to the difficulties of everyday life (rent, food prices).

According to the UNMIH document, Aristide is "the only politician with a large, nation-wide base of support". Once he goes, "the population is frightened about being betrayed, in the interests of the elite. The authors in any case recommend precisely such a treason: drawing the curtain on the crimes of the dictatorship, so as not to frighten the business milieu.

★ Haiti

The population is starting to have doubts about Aristide. True, his return meant an end to repression. And he deserves praise for having virtually abolished the army. But how come almost nothing else has changed over the last twelve months? These doubts contributed to the high rate of abstention in the elections. One of the highest abstention rates was registered in the central plateau, scene of Aristide's last pre-election series of meetings.

Aristide is trying to preserve his popularity, by manipulating and controlling the mass movement. During his tours of the provinces, he announces the creation of "presidential projects". These weigh down the public treasury, and short-circuit government policies. The President has also been careful, these last few months, to distinguish himself from his ministers. As complaints of the absence of justice rise, he has called on the people to submit to him personally the names of persons who could replace the current Minister of Justice.

Privatisation makes Aristide particularly uncomfortable. Sometimes he strongly supports the privatisation programme, which he presents as another form of "democratisation". More recently, he has promised to imprison those who dare sell off state property. His hesitation is not ideological, but tactical. For Aristide, this summer's events in Costa Rica demonstrate the risk that a clumsy privatisation programme could spark public unrest. Economic "democratisation" through privatisation means transferring public enterprises to the existing economic oligarchy, with circles close to the political elite sharing in the benefits of the transition.

Aristide is now protesting that "political stability is a key element for rejuvenating the economy". But ex-Prime Minister Smarck Michel and Finance Minister Marie Michele Rey protest that they have been attacked for applying plans which were first presented to overseas bankers in August 1994 by Leslie Delatour, a member of the Presidential Cabinet.

The events of the coming months are difficult to predict. Will the presidential election really take place? Aristide seems to have abandoned the idea of proposing a constitutional amendment allowing him to stay in office. But these last few weeks have seen a number of leaflets and graffiti demanding that his mandate be extended to compensate for the three years he passed in exile.



The new parliament is an unknown element. It took up office at the beginning of October, after an interminable electoral procedure. The first round of elections was held on 25 June. But new voting took place on 13 August in one in four of the electoral districts, as a result of widespread irregularities in the initial vote. The UN and the USA bear a large part of the responsibility.

Most of the opposition groups, who had given their support to the military dictatorship, realised that they would be marginalised when the vote took place. So they preferred to call for a boycott, and spend the summer organising a spoiler campaign against Lavalas, which they accused of all imaginable evils. These opposition grouplets had the support of the US Republicans, and some Democratic Party figures. The intense boycott campaign did not, of course, prevent those opposition figures who were elected to take up their seats.

Finally, the second round of voting on 17 September confirmed the dominant position of Lavalas, which took three quarters of seats in the chamber of deputies, and almost all of those senate seats which were up for re-election this year.

Lavalas candidates organised real campaigns in many districts, concentrating on the abolition of the army and a refusal of the privatisation programme. Many representatives talked of the danger privatisation represents for national sovereignty. But overall, this was sadly not the case. The Lavalas coalition is extremely uneven, and lacks a real programme. Many of the candidates on the Lavalas list are not members of any party. And the new batch of Lavalas deputies and senators include a good number of local big-wigs, and simple arrivistes, just waiting to be corrupted.

Having said this, there is one difference between the old legislature and this one. A significant number of the new deputies and senators see themselves as spokespersons for popular interests. They will not easily bow down before one or other of the Foreign Embassies, an emissary from the Presidential Palace, or a lackey of the business oligarchy. And that is a big thing for Haiti!



Notes

1. Under the constitution, president Aristide may not stand for re-election, and must leave the Palais national (Presidential Palace) by 7 February 1996.

Solidarity Subscriptions

This magazine is too expensive for readers in many countries. For many political prisoners, International Viewpoint is the only link to the socialist movement outside the prison walls. Until recently, we have been able to distribute one third of our print run to these activists and prisoners. But our current financial difficulties have forced us to reduce the number of magazines we distribute free to the bare minimum.

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Beijing 1995

The fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing from September 4-15 adopted a "satisfactory" action programme. It does not reverse past gains, as it seemed for a while. It consolidates the results of previous United Nations conferences. But the holy alliance of fundamentalists of all faiths is still with us...

by Sophie Massouri

THE UN'S BIGGEST conference ever confirmed the Vienna (1993) declaration that "the rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral and inseparable part of the universal rights of each human being". It also re-confirmed the advances made concerning reproductive rights at the Cairo (1994) conference on population: "these rights are based on the recognition of the fundamental right of all couples and individuals to decide freely... the number of children and the space between their birth, and to dispose of the necessary information to exercise this right, as well as the right to the best state of health in matters of sexuality and reproduction... without becoming victims of discrimination, coercion or violence..."

As we would have expected, the most difficult sections of the declaration to negotiate were those concerning reproductive rights, human rights and the rights of girls.

The struggle around women's free choice in matters of procreation, the most sensitive point, centred on paragraph 97 of the section on health.

The Vatican was faced by a number of state delegations which were determined not to revise advances in women's rights made in previous conference declarations. Mgr Peter Elliot tried to present the Catholic church's position as equidistant between the Islamic delegations of Iran and Sudan, and the European Union. "We don't suggest going back on the previous texts of the United Nations, nor on the



commitments made in Cairo. But we don't want to go any further either."

The final version of paragraph 97 affirms "the human rights of women include their right to control and decide, in freedom and responsibility, in the domain of their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of all coercion, discrimination and violence".

Women's rights in matters of sexuality beyond procreation itself are recognised for the first time. However, the Iranian delegate who affirmed that this paragraph be understood as applicable only within legal marriage, and for questions of sexuality linked to health, was supported by Japan, Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon, Argentina and the Vatican.

Once paragraph 97 was approved, opponents tried to minimise its importance by adding references to the sovereignty of

each state, and respect for "religious beliefs, moral values and traditions" to paragraph 9, in the first part of the text, which deals with the general question of equality between men and women.

While the final wording recognises state sovereignty in the interpretation of the declaration, it states nevertheless that policies, even in the name of religion, should not be in contradiction with universal human rights, as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1945 and the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993.

Paragraph 107 (k) advises countries to revise penalties for women who have illegal abortion, while stressing that "abortion should in no case be propagated as a method of family planning."

Opposition to these two paragraphs did not just come from countries with religious regimes. Rights over sexuality are at the heart of the debate on women's emancipation. They are questions of state control, and male control, over women's bodies. Both the paragraphs in question also condemn forced sterilisation and controls on maximum family size, as practised in China itself.

WHAT MADE THESE ADVANCES POSSIBLE? NGO pressure on their respective governments before this conference had been generally ignored. But Beijing revealed the existence of a structured women's movement. This movement is



not quite the same as 10 or 20 years ago. And many governments cannot afford to ignore it. The NGO forum at Huairu, near Beijing, had 25,000 participants, from all over the world, despite all the police and political pressure women's organisations face round the world.

In Nairobi, women came to denounce the World Conference. The watchwords of the Beijing NGO forum were network, caucus and lobby. Preoccupations which testify to a process of integration.

Whether we like it or not, a number of NGOs are powerful enough internationally to be real players in negotiations like the Beijing conference. US-based groups are the strongest, but the forum also testified to the strength of very political and highly organised NGOs from Latin America and South-East Asia. The regrettable absence of any significant European women's movement cannot be explained by the oft-mentioned "material difficulties".

THE NGO FORUM WAS A SUCCESS. There were 3,000 workshops, and thousands of women testifying their determination to defend our gains, and wanting to go further. All this certainly had an effect on the official conference.

The European Union declaration that it is "the duty of each state" to apply and respect the "economic, social... cultural... civic and political rights" of men and women had a real influence on the conference. The Vatican went as far as to accuse Cristina Alberdi Alonso, Spanish Social Affairs Minister and head of the EU delegation, of "preventing a consensus" on sexuality and the family. Alberdi argued, on the basis of a document approved by the EU Council of Ministers on 11 July 1995, for the recognition by the UN of non-married heterosexual couples and homosexuals. She also argued, without success, for the inclusion of the term "sexual orientation" in paragraphs 48 and 226 of the Beijing document.

SEXUALITY WAS THE LAST DEBATE of the conference, and the first time the UN had debated the subject at this level. "Sexual

orientation" was eventually deleted from the document. But as a representative of one lesbian group noted, this was only a semi-defeat. "In 1993, only two countries made public statements in favour of the integration of "sexual orientation" into the final text. In Beijing, there was a long debate. And the delegations of the European Union, United States, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Lithuania, Israel, Cuba, Norway and Jamaica all defended the term "sexual orientation". In an earlier debate, rape in wartime was recognised as a "crime against humanity".

The 181 states present have engaged



themselves to take the necessary measures to implement the final Beijing Declaration, and to ratify without condition a number of existing international conventions, including the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Of course, the non-binding character of most international texts means that implementation is up to the good will of the individual states. "We will get what we fight for", said Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. Women have perhaps won one battle in Beijing, not the war itself. The real changes will be the ones women impose through the struggles to come.



NGOs and the UN

ALMOST 2,000 Non-Governmental Organisations had accreditation to "participate" in the Beijing conference of country delegations. NGO participation is now an integral part of the UN conference ritual. Is this just a mechanism for increasing the legitimacy of the conference, or something more?

Few NGOs were present during the first World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975. They were rather more visible in Copenhagen in 1980. They were still not invited to observe the "real" debate. But thousands of women descended on Copenhagen University, creating a real counter-summit.

About 14,000 women from 150 countries were present at the NGO conference which accompanied the Nairobi conference of 1985. This was a noticeably less anarchic event than in Copenhagen. The NGO forums are now prepared by a committee — designated by the UN — which effectively controls the NGO activities organised during the conferences. Individual NGOs can suggest forum topics, but it is the New York-based NGO organising committee which approves or rejects. In Beijing there was also a Chinese organising committee, which tried to control political activity. It used all kinds of pressures to prevent, for example, commissions on the situation in Tibet.

UN General Secretary Butros Butros-Ghali first recommended to governments that they integrate NGOs in the process of preparation of UN world conferences back in 1991. As a result, the Copenhagen, Rio de Janeiro (environment), Vienna (human rights), and Cairo (population) conferences have seen not just an NGO forum, but the participation of NGOs in the governmental conference. A number of NGOs are integrated into certain governmental delegations. But it is impossible to say how far their voice has a weight in the negotiations. Some do no more than make the occasional suggestion.

Who and what do all these NGOs really represent? Accreditation was delivered by an ad hoc committee of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. In general, only those NGOs which are perfectly integrated into their country's institutions received a favourable response. Those who somehow bother the governmental delegations were filtered out at this stage. The Vatican (which, for the UN, has the status of a state) tried, in vain, to prevent the accreditation of all those Catholic organisations (like Catholics for A Free Choice, which has groups in many Latin American countries) which do not share its point of view. China itself refused to accept the presence of Tibetan and Taiwanese women ★

Note
All citations from UN conference documents are our own translation from the French version.

What about Feminism?

by Soma Malik,
Calcutta, October 1995

ALONGSIDE ALL THE DECLARATIONS AND proclamations, there were three important debates in the NGO forum: the choice of China, the relative importance of economic and sexual rights for women in the third world, and the point of participation in such events at all. None of these debates opposed women from the south and the north. The division in opinion ran down the middle of a number of delegations.

The first argument opposed “China-bashers” with those who were desperate to whitewash China’s “achievements” in women’s emancipation.¹

The second was the argument between those who argued that “the real issue” for third world women is the impact of the structural adjustment policies dictated by the Bretton Woods institutions, while sexual rights affect only women in the first world.²

Consider, for example, this statement by Vimla Farooqui, a leader of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and its women’s wing, the NFIW: “We will support the struggles of the women of the first world for justice and equality, and even the issue of the right to abortion of every woman, for which they are struggling, although this is not an issue of any importance for our women.”³

Many feminists in India rejected the possibility of any serious intervention in Beijing.⁴ In contrast, a number of Indian left-wing women’s organisations — not all of whom are feminists — produced a declaration indicating a high degree of anticipation about what the UN might achieve, if not in the here and now, then in the future.⁵ “The UN should constitute a monitoring body with judicial powers to check the activities of multi-national corporations in relation to the exploitation of labour and the environment. The present subversion of the UN mandate by the dominant powers... has to be reversed”.⁶



Making such calls signifies a good deal of faith in what the UN, or the G77, are capable of achieving. It also leads those with such expectations to take the Beijing conference very seriously. For example, Member of Parliament Malini Bhattacharyya of the Communist Party of India — Marxist (CPI(M)) has argued that “the pledge in Nairobi was for the complete eradication of poverty, not a few drops of aid in the ocean of deprivation. The struggle at Beijing was to withstand attempts to water down the Nairobi commitment.”⁷

None of these are unimportant debates. Concerning China, the question is not whether Hillary Clinton has a moral right to talk about injustice to women in China, given the intensifying bipartisan attacks on affirmative action, the right to abortion, and so on, in the USA. The real issue is whether consistent socialists and consistent feminists have any business trying to choose a lesser veil between the capitalist patriarchal system in the West and the bureaucratic-patriarchal, would-be-capitalist system in China. The brutality with which the Chinese regime is pursuing its own child family policy is

well-known. Less well-known, but highly significant, is the fact that, in those areas of China where market forces are most developed, women workers now have insecure jobs, low pay, and a working day approaching 12 hours. Chinese authorities have taken a leaf out of the Singapore or Taiwan book, and made sure that unions cannot make trouble in these areas.

The presentation of cooked-up data by the Soviet Union has been thoroughly exposed. There is absolutely no reason to treat “official” China any differently. A socialist feminist has to criticise China for its extreme forms of anti-women, patriarchal population policy, its insensitivity to women’s conditions in the transition to the market, and so on. Of course, US and European governmental criticism of China is hollow. For are they not preaching the same population policy (in Cairo), and the same economic policy?

This leads us to the second question. Aren’t structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) a bigger problem for third world women than oppression of their sexuality? The debate is a real one. But it must be said, the performance of third world representatives at the NGO conference (let



alone the governmental conference) was hardly impressive.⁸

According to Dr. Samita Sen, one of the few feminists from India

to participate in the NGO forum, "when the women's delegation from Bangladesh demonstrated against 'Norplant', no Indian or Pakistani women were to be seen supporting them. Similarly, when a few Indian women tried to attract attention to the new economic policies, hardly any women from Bangladesh or Pakistan were enthusiastic about it."⁹ Hardly a picture of solid South-South collaboration. Small wonder that Amnesty International expressed "unhappiness" with the lack of real progress.¹⁰

Not all women in the developed countries are unaware of the activities of the IMF, World Bank, and the Imperialist powers. And even though many are, it makes little effort to assume from the outset that they are all colluding with the enemy. Devaki Jain was right a few years ago, when she said that feminists in the north were not interested in nor sympathetic to the G77, but that experience was leading them to modify their stance and even to accept the leadership of Southern women.¹¹ So it makes less and less sense to treat women from the North as enemies to be fought, or at best people who ask for solidarity in their struggles, but offer no solidarity themselves. CPI leader Vimla Farooqui claims that "the struggles of the women of the first world... [are] not an issue of any importance for our women." Is she really unaware of the fact that abortion is banned or restricted in many countries? And that not all these countries are in the first world. The slighting tone in Farooqui's article is uncalled for. It betrays a callous indifference to the plight of hundreds of thousands of women every year. It certainly matches any first world indifference to Structural Adjustment Programmes.

Why counterpoise sexual rights and Structural Adjustment Programmes? Is a woman who loses her job as a result of a SAP therefore indifferent to being raped?

The right of women "to control all aspects of their health including sexual and reproductive health"¹³ was included in the official document after human rights and health movement activists argued that, in the era of AIDS, women need to have the right to refuse unwanted sexual relations. This is a damaging way of getting the text adopted, and is of little value. It reduced sexual freedom to a question of health.

Sexual freedom is important. So are economic rights. Both are important in the South. Both are important in the North. The false opposition we witnessed in Beijing represents the collective failure of the movement North and South.

There is a limit to what we can expect from a UN organised conference. But the UN has not just been hijacked by the USA, as some of those whose God collapsed in 1991 seem to believe. The UN was set up in the aftermath of the Second World War, in strict compliance with the relationship of forces at the time. And, at its best, the UN is a sum of the regimes that socialists and feminists are fighting against. The idea of appealing to the UN, of calling on it to set up a body with judicial powers to oversee the activities of the multinationals is a big joke. And a sign of utter disorientation.

In the past, women activists managed to do rather better. Based in the struggles in the different countries, and linked together internationally, they were able to project an alternative to the mealy-mouthed palliatives promised by various governments. The importance of the Nairobi conference was not in the billions of dollars pledged by the USA, but in the fact that women activists came together and projected a clear alternative. It is by such principled battles, often as a by-product, of them, that serious reforms are wrested. Battles over paragraphs, unless they are backed by the muscle of a living movement, cannot gain more than a few dubious promissory notes, which cannot be cashed in unless the political equation changes.

This is not meant to support a simple boycott. But we must recognise reality. The NGO forum was powerful in the past because it was dominated by independent activist groups, or at least contained a substantial minority presence of such groups. This time round, the UN hijacked the forum with little difficulty. Why? Because so many of the NGOs were manipulated by their donor agencies. And because the general weakness of the movement, particularly its radical wing, turned the preparations for this conference into something quite different from what happened a decade ago.

Feminists and socialists should see this sort of conference in the way Lenin analysed the Duma (parliament) of pre-revolutionary Russia. He acknowledged that the Duma was a "pseudo-parliament", without real legislative power. But he recognised that the relationship of forces did not allow anything better. And so he argued that Bolsheviks should enter even this "pig-sty".



The United Nations can do nothing that the US and the other major powers will not allow. These imperialists have no wish to return the loot extracted in the recent intensification of their exploitation. But even so, with more global co-ordination, socialist-feminists, integrating the experiences of North and South, of various countries and issues, could have used the NGO forum to project a comprehensive alternative.

To do any more than this, we would need a stronger movement behind us. Networking at UN conferences may be useful,¹⁴ but it cannot substitute for socialist internationalism, and organising which is based on that principle. Useful participation in imperialist-dominated international bodies demands of socialists and socialist feminists that we co-ordinate internationally.



Notes

1. The Communist Party of India's Bengali daily *Kalantar*, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s Bengali paper *Ganashakti*, both ran several articles on the progress of women's emancipation in China. The Maoist intellectual Dr. Amit Bhattacharyya argued, in a "Women in History" seminar at Jadavpur University, that patriarchy was related to feudalism, and had been abolished as a consequence of the 1949 revolution.
2. See, for example, Razia Ismail, "Empowerment — or power?", *Mainstream*, New Delhi, vol. XXXIII, no. 40, pp. 21-25.
3. *Mainstream*, vol. XXXIII, no. 40, p. 31.
4. See, for example, the article reprinted from *Cahiers du féminisme* in *International Viewpoint*, September 1995.
5. National Convention of Women on the Beijing Conference, February 1995.
6. Declaration of the National Convention, *Mainstream*, vol. XXXIII, no. 40, p. 33.
7. *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, 29 September 1995.
8. Many of the Indian participants in the NGO forum put themselves forward as the voice of the poor woman. Like many NGOs do in daily practice, they were in fact trying to use poor women as a power base.
9. Joseph Gathia, "Beijing Agenda: A New Commitment", *Mainstream*, vol. XXXIII, no. 45, 30 Sept. 1995, p. 26.
10. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 8 September 1995.
11. D. Jain, *Mainstream*, vol. XXXIII, no. 40, pp. 16-17.
12. *The Hindu* (Weekly Edition), 24 September 1995.
13. The effect of the massive influx of money is clear, both in the transformation of the NGOs' work, and in the very lifestyle of (mainly) metropolitan NGO activists.
14. As advocated by Devaki Jain, op. cit., pp. 16, 19. For a more critical look at how "networking" is manipulated, see Razia Ismail, op. cit.

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The World Bank and women's rights

by Michel Chossudovsky
Ottawa

THE WORLD BANK HAS BECOME A defender of women's rights — urging national governments to “invest more in women in order to reduce gender inequality and boost economic development”.¹ “[T]he Bank is to promote gender equality as a matter of social justice and enhance women's participation in economic development.”²

Through its Women In Development Programme (WID) adopted throughout the developing World, the WB dictates the ground rules on gender policy. A “market oriented” approach to gender is prescribed, a monetary value is attached to gender equality: women's programmes are to be framed in relation to the “opportunity cost” and “efficiency” of women rights. While recognising the possibility of “market failure” (and consequently the need for State intervention), the WB contends that “free markets” broadly support the “empowerment of women” and the achievement of gender equality: “It is critical that governments take the lead where markets fail to capture the full benefits to society of investment in women... Investments in women are vital in achieving economic efficiency and growth.”

The WB acts as a custodian, it determines the concepts, methodological categories and data base used to analyse gender issues. The “donor community” controls the institutional framework (at the country level) including the Women's Bureau and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Because the WB constitutes the main source of funding, national women's organisations associated with the seat of political power, will often endorse the World Bank gender perspective. The main



objective of the latter is to demobilise the women's movement while narrowly supporting the interests of international creditors.

Under the trusteeship of the international financial institutions, the “empowerment of women” is to be achieved through the usual macro-economic recipes: devaluation, budget austerity, the application of user fees in health and education, the phasing out of state supported credit, trade liberalisation, the deregulation of grain markets, the elimination of minimum wage legislation, and so on. In other words, donor support to women's programmes (via WID funded projects) is conditional upon the prior derogation of women's rights through “satisfactory compliance” with IMF-WB conditionalities. For instance, the implementation of token credit schemes earmarked for rural women under the World Bank's micro-level credit programmes invariably requires the prior deregulation of financial institutions, dramatic hikes in interest rates and the phasing out of the rural credit cooperatives. The same applies to the “anti-poverty programmes”. The latter are conditional upon the prior adoption of macro-

economic measures which generate mass poverty. The “anti-poverty programmes” implemented under the “social safety net” are geared towards so-called “vulnerable groups”: “disadvantaged women, indigenous women, female heads of households, refugees and migrant women and women with disabilities”. The structural causes of poverty and the role of macro-economic reform are denied.

Another area of WB intervention has been the implementation of scholarships and/or subsidies to girls (“Letting Girls Learn”) to finance the costs of primary and secondary school tuition including books and school materials. WB support in this area however is conditional upon the prior laying off of teachers, a major curtailment of the educational budget and the adoption of double-shift and multi-grade teaching. The WB Education Sector loan agreements specifically require the Ministry of Education to lay off teachers and increase the student-teacher ratio. The implementation of “book rental fees” and tuition fees also under WB guidance has been conducive to a dramatic decline in both female and male school enrollment. The World Bank focus is to implement cost effective “targeted programmes” for girls while at the same time prescribing the withdrawal of the State from the financing of primary education.

Cost recovery and the application of user fees in health (also under WB supervision) also derogate women's rights to Reproductive Health. The structural adjustment programmes have been conducive to the phasing out of maternal-child health programmes (MCH). The



evidence confirms a resurgence of maternal and infant mortality. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the tendency is towards the “de-professionalisation” of health services, ultimately leading to the collapse of primary health care. The Village Health Volunteers (VHV) and traditional healers have replaced the Community Health Nurses. The savings to the Treasury are applied to servicing the country's external debt. According to the World Bank, “informal health care” is not only “cost

infant mortality recorded by governments and international organisations.

The United Nations' system tacitly upholds the IMF-World Bank agenda including its perspective on gender. No overall critique of the neo-liberal policy framework was put forth in Beijing in the Platform for Action (PA). The latter is largely concerned with a statement of broad principles. As in Copenhagen at the 1995 Social Summit, many of the bracketed items in the official document (which addressed some of the more critical issues) have been eliminated. As in previous conferences, the UN organisers maintained a structure of “physical apartheid” between the “official” Conference and the NGO Forum. The organisations of civil society, namely women's organisations from around the world were held at arms length from the official process.

The World Bank perspective on gender is contained in various sections of the Platform for Action. The latter proposed the creation of “an enabling environment that allows women to build and maintain sustainable livelihoods” calling for the review of “the impact of structural adjustment programmes on

legitimacy to the WB agenda, the overall validity of the structural adjustment programme is not questioned.

Moreover, the Platform for Action views “violence against women” and “the exclusion of women from institutions of power and governance” as the main causes of gender inequality requiring “a radical transformation of the relationship between men and women” (para. 19). The focus of social conflict is distorted: under the WB gender framework, the social status of women largely hinges upon the relationship of men and women (as individuals) within the household.

The WB framework portrays a “free” market society composed of individuals of both sexes. In this context, women are identified as belonging to a separate social category distinct from men (as if men and women belonged to different social classes). In other words, the confrontation between men and women (ie. as individuals) is viewed as the main source of social conflict. The concentration of power and corporate wealth has no bearing on the analysis of gender. Modernity and “the empowerment of women” through the market process are the means to achieving gender equality. The system of global trade and finance is never in doubt, the role of global institutions (including the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions) is not a matter for serious debate. Yet this global economic system (based on “cheap labour” and the private accumulation of wealth) ultimately constitutes one of the main barriers to the achievement of gender equality. In turn, the neo-liberal gender perspective (under the trusteeship of the “donors”) is largely intent upon creating divisions within national societies and demobilising the struggle of women and men against the macro-economic model.



effective”, it is more “democratic” because it “empowers” local communities in the running of village-based health centres. Ironically, the de-professionalisation of primary health care has also led to the concurrent breakdown of data collection on mortality and morbidity. In many countries, illiterate Village Health Volunteers are now responsible for the collection of health data with the consequent effect (and convenience) of lowering the rates of

social development by means of gender-sensitive social impact assessments and other relevant methods, in order to develop policies to reduce their negative effects and improve their positive impact, ensuring that women do not bear a disproportionate burden of transition costs; complement adjustment lending with enhanced, targeted social development lending.” (para. 61). The foregoing in fact describes the practice of WB lending activity. The PA tacitly provides

Notes

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1. Two World Bank reports were presented at the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing: *Toward Gender Equality: The Role of Public Policy and Advanced Gender Equality: From Concept to Action*.

2. *The Gender Issue as Key to Development*, World Bank, Washington, HCO, 1995/01, p. 1.

Omomo Melen Pacific

Women: life blood of the Pacific

From December 13 - 16 1994 at Nadi, Fiji, a meeting of women from the Non-Self-Governing Territories and Colonies of the Pacific took place. Its purpose was to establish a grassroots network of Pacific women with the initial aim of participating in the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women and NGO Forum being held in Beijing in September 1995.

THE ORGANISER of the Nadi meeting, Susanna Ounei-Small, Assistant Director for Decolonisation at the Fiji-based Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (Secretariat of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement), found that her original terms of reference for the meeting to bring together women from the 'non-self-governing territories' as defined by the PCRC were too restrictive. They did not reflect the reality of the Pacific, so she sought to broaden these to include indigenous women from Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, Guam and Hawai'i.

It was hoped to have two women from each colony represented in Nadi, but personal circumstances and financial constraints meant that this was not always possible. Women came from East Timor, West Papua (Irian Jaya), Tahiti, Kanaky (New Caledonia) as well as an Aboriginal representative from Australia, and a Maori woman from Aotearoa (New Zealand).

The December meeting was the preliminary meeting in a three-stage project to ensure that the special needs of colonised women are heard both within the Pacific region and in the international arena. It was also the first occasion in which women representatives of all the participating peoples had been able to share their stories and to co-ordinate their activities. All felt that the meeting was long overdue.

Previously, most of the international networking from the countries involved had been done by men, leaving women with very little access to the information or the international contacts. The Nadi meeting was a valuable vehicle for the women to be thoroughly briefed about the Beijing Conference. This included presentations about the world conferences on women, including the personal experiences of two delegates, from East

Timor and Kanaky, who participated in the Nairobi Conference in 1985. As Elizabeth Cox of IWDA (International Women's Development Agency) writes:

"Men and government officials dominated Pacific participation in the Third World Conference on Women, in Nairobi in 1985. There was little or no feedback or follow up in Pacific countries. A handful of Pacific NGO grassroots development workers did participate in the NGO Forum in Nairobi, but they went at the last moment, uninformed and unprepared for such a huge event. The experience was overwhelming and not easily related to home country situations and experiences.

In a few cases the participation by workers from Pacific NGOs in the NGO Forum at Nairobi inspired small one-off events at home, but rarely did it sustain grassroots awareness raising and action over the decade between Nairobi and Beijing".¹

A follow-up meeting to assess the benefits of the Beijing forum, and to evaluate how the network will best function to support individual members in their work, is scheduled to take place around December 1995.

Susanna Ounei-Small says: "The meeting was part of our preparations for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, but the work will go well beyond the Beijing meeting to support the efforts of Pacific women struggling for independence. Despite having different colonial masters and being at different stages of struggle, the similarities of our experiences and needs are overwhelming, so we need a network to support each other wherever possible".



Notes

1. Pacific Women's Documentation Project Workshop and Project *Status Report*, October 1994

The goals of **Omomo Melen Pacific** are:

- a) to enable women from non-self-governing territories and colonies in the Pacific to come together and identify common concerns;
- b) to represent these concerns through full and active participation at the Fourth World Conference on Women and NGO forum;
- c) to establish an ongoing network and strengthen solidarity among women of the colonies who share a similar perspective and experiences;
- d) to raise awareness of peoples of Pacific colonies and their struggles - the need for de-colonisation and the right to self-determination for Kanaky, East Timor, West Papua, Bougainville, Tahiti, other Pacific colonies and the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa, Australia and the Torres Strait Islands.

The network takes its name from the Iaa language of Ouva atoll in Kanaky (New Caledonia).

Over the course of the Nadi meeting, interviews were conducted with all delegates. The contents of these interviews, together with other resource material on the struggles of women from non-self-governing territories and colonies in the Pacific form the basis of **Omomo Melen Pacific**, a 42 page publication available from PO Box , Otautahi (Christchurch), Aotearoa (New Zealand). Please include a reasonable donation to cover printing and postage costs

The Nadi meeting was also attended by observers from women's groups and media from Tonga, Fiji, AIDAB (Australian International Development Assistance Bureau), PCRC, and resource people from Corso in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and IWDA and CAA (Community Aid Abroad), both Australian agencies. Funding for the meeting came from Corso, IWDA, CUSO (Canadian University Services Overseas), CAA, and The Australian National Council of Churches.

France

2 m. public sector workers strike

by Evariste Liegenfal

THIS GOVERNMENT HAS MANAGED TO UNITE THE SEVEN TRADE unions which represent civil servants. They started by announcing a public sector pay freeze for 1996, and topped it off with hasty and ill-considered public statements.

And yet, this new unity of protest did not seem to worry the government. They increased their attacks and insults as the date set for the strike, October 10th, approached. Partly they underestimated the effect of a public sector strike. And partly, since they could not prevent the strike, they decided to make a big show of their firmness and determination in the face of social conflict.

In other words, the much discussed divergence between public sector workers and the public, between the unionised and the unemployed, has not emerged. Partly because the strikers put employment at the centre of their concerns. And the slogans and banners on the big day dealt with the degradation of labour conditions in the public service, the generalisation of part-time, fixed-term, "re-insertion", "replacement" and other precarious contracts.

Other concerns raised by the strikers included salaries, of course, and privatisation. This is an imminent threat at France Télécom, where 70% of workers participated in the strike.³



The French government wants to reduce public spending for two reasons: to please the financial speculators, and to fulfil the Maastricht criteria for European monetary union. Doing so obliges them to contradict the promises made by Jacques Chirac in order to win the presidential election earlier this year. It also obliges them to confront the social movements, notably organised labour. The result so far has been an unprecedented decline in popularity for both the president and the government.

In the current context of corruption scandals and clumsiness, the main effect of the government's tough-guy statements has been to boost public sympathy for the unions. According to one survey, 57% of the population "support" or "sympathise with the strike by those public sector workers who are protesting against the 1996 freeze in their salaries". Only 26% declared themselves "hostile" or "opposed" to the action.¹ And the unemployed seem to be slightly more sympathetic than the general population.²

More than two million people stopped work on October 10th. Public transport in the major towns of France was paralysed. Hundreds of thousands demonstrated.

There was a real desire to build not just a bond between public sector workers, but also between providers and users of public services. The schools are not responsible for youth unemployment. The unions are not responsible for the degradation of public transport and the increase in fares.

The four "reformist" union organisations receive a minority of votes in workplace elections, but have a majority of seats in the various tripartite and consultative structures, largely thanks to the previous government of Edouard Balladur.

The [Communist-dominated] CGT and the FSU (the largest education union, non-affiliated) proposed that the demonstration in Paris be composed of unitary contingents, marching by sector of employment. This was rejected, leaving each federation to march separately. Only one in five marchers joined the contingents of the four reformist unions, which are now clearly waiting for the government to make a new offer. Public Sector Minister Jean Puech has proposed meeting for negotiations "in the second quarter of 1996". In contrast, the CGT and FSU had impressive followings, as did the "Group of Ten" non-affiliated unions. These are all planning further action on jobs, salary, and security. They still demand the non-implementation of the 1996 pay-freeze, and call for immediate negotiations. Watch this space. ★

1. *Le Parisien*, 10 October 1995

2. 58% of unemployed respondents "support" or "sympathise", 20% are "hostile" or "opposed".

3. Two teachers out of three also stopped work. Elsewhere, the rate of participation was nearer to 50%.

USA

Million man march

One million black men marched in Washington DC on October 16th. Don Rojas, Minister of Information in Grenada until the US invasion, comments on the implications of the march.

● *The march was controversial both in the Black movement and among left activists. Why did you decide to participate?*

I thought it was important for progressives and people on the left generally and certainly people of color on the left to participate in this march from the position of critical support.

I thought it was important for the left not to be left out, not to be marginalized by what clearly was going to be a huge mobilization of African Americans — most perhaps from the ranks of the working class, and a lot of them young. So in spite of the serious problems that I had with the lack of political direction, and with the overall orientation of the march — the emphasis on atonement and reconciliation — I became convinced at least a week before that large numbers of men would be showing up for a number of reasons, not necessarily in sync with the call by Farrakhan and Chavis.

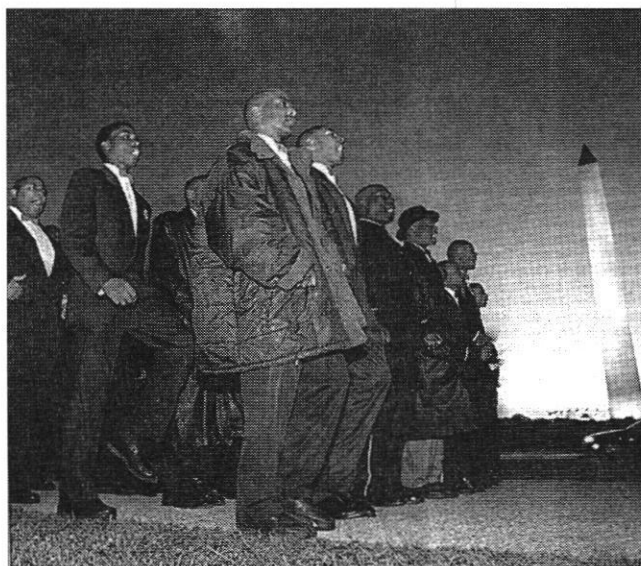
I also had a lot of problems with the exclusion of women from the march. I thought that was just another manifestation of the Nation of Islam's backward patriarchy. They have not really advanced very much on the women question and on the whole range of other questions that are critical to those of us on the left.

But as I argued on the day of the march, "I intend to march in Washington to make one simple statement to the world — the cancer of racism is eating away at the heart and soul of America, thus depriving all its people, of all colors, the fullest realization of their humanity.

I will not be marching to the drumbeat of Louis Farrakhan or Benjamin Chavis or any of the other leaders and organizers of this march but rather to the clarion call of my conscience and to the imperatives of our time. They have their agenda and I have mine. Some aspects of both overlap but they are by no means identical.

Many friends and colleagues will also be marching, not to atone for our sins before the world, as Farrakhan wants us to do, but to call attention to America's greatest sin — racism. We will be marching to protest the hemorrhaging

Don Rojas is former minister of information in Maurice Bishop's government in Grenada, former director of communications for the NAACP and a former editor of the New York Amsterdam News. His book on the crisis of Black leadership will be published next year by Times books. He was interviewed for Independent Politics and International Viewpoint on October 25, 1995, by Steve Bloom.



of Black America not only by its own hands but more severely by those with their hands on the levers of real political and economic power in this country. We will be marching to demand — yes demand, not beg — jobs with decent pay for all Black Americans, male and female. We make this paramount because without honest work a man has little or no dignity and self-respect. Jobs are among the most important debts America owes to the sons and daughters of its former slaves.

Yet the march has been so depoliticized by Farrakhan's emphasis on atonement that it is being perceived by the power brokers as posing little or no threat to America's status quo. Major establishment figures from President Clinton to Colin Powell, to the leadership of the Republican Party have embraced the "objectives" of the march, if not its caller.

● *Some women did attend. What was the response?*

There was no hostility that I observed toward the sprinkling of women who participated. I also saw a handful of whites in the audience and here too there was no hostility.

As I said on the day of the march, "no one who shares these concerns should be excluded or should exclude themselves from this march. Indeed, Black men should encourage their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters to absent themselves from their jobs, schools, and shopping malls and present

themselves in Washington to stand with their men in a forceful demonstration of Black unity and solidarity in these critical times. Now is not the time for Black women to stay at home and pray on Farrakhan's anointed 'Holy Day.'"

● *What attitude did Black women activists take?*

They were pretty much split down the middle on the question of whether or not they should support the march. Angela Davis, the most prominent opponent of the march among Black female activists, came out at a press conference in New York and very strongly denounced it. But there were other prominent and not so prominent Black women, who did express critical support for the march. Some of them actively participated in organizational work leading up to it. So there was no consensus among Black women activists.

● *What was the main reason people turned out? What messages resonated with the crowd?*

The ideas expressed by Farrakhan were not the main reasons that people turned out. They came for a range of reasons. Many came to protest to the government the terrible plight of Black males. Some did come, in fact, to seek bonding and a sense of community and brotherhood with other African-American men from around the country. I could sense that, I could hear that, I could feel that spirit of unity that sense of power in numbers and in single-mindedness of purpose. And that was a very powerful thing.

But I also saw how the crowd (and I was in the middle of the crowd) reacted very positively to the more political points made in several of the speeches. Unfortunately, the speeches were a mixed bag. Some were very backward and reactionary, some were progressive. Some were a little of everything.

It seemed as though there were two realities taking place that day. One on the stage where the speakers and the leaders of the march were expressing themselves, and another among the million men who were there. They came looking for powerful leaders. They didn't find them on the stage. They found them among themselves. They found leadership in their ranks and I think that's going to be a very positive thing in the months ahead as they return home and get involved in the civic and political life of their communities. New grassroots leadership will emerge.

How progressive that leadership will be remains to be seen. This is, I think, a challenge for those of us on the left, not only to monitor it closely but to get involved at the local level and help to give guidance and direction to that emerging leadership, particularly among young people.

● *Many Black officials and entertainers endorsed and/or participated in the march. What is the relationship between Farrakhan and these more "mainstream" elements in the Black community?*

Unfortunately most of them played second-fiddle to Farrakhan on this thing. His marathon speech — two and a half hours — was far too long. It was rambling and lacked any sharp focus. There wasn't enough emphasis on public policy issues, too much mysticism and numerology. Just the

length of the speech itself was a violation of the privilege of being the keynote speaker and did reflect, in my view, a kind of megalomania in Farrakhan. Hopefully that can be brought into check if structures of accountability emerge in the months ahead that will make the NOI and Farrakhan more accountable to African-American communities around the country.

The most powerful part of his speech was where he dealt with white supremacy, when he said that white supremacy must die in order for humanity to live. I think that's a very powerful point. I was hoping that he would develop it more, but he didn't. The bourgeois media's interpretation of this was that his old anti-white racism was expressing itself again, which of course is nonsense. A critique of white supremacy does not translate into anti-white racism.

Farrakhan's emphasis on self-help, self-improvement, self-reliance, all solid values in themselves, hark back to the days of Booker T. Washington's accommodationist position vis-a-vis segregation in the South. This was vehemently opposed by W.E.B. DuBois. Farrakhan has been called the Booker T. Washington of the 1990s. In my view while these values are good in themselves they are not necessarily an antidote to racial and social inequality. Inequality is systematic, it is structured into all the social, political, and economic institutions of U.S. capitalism and I don't think that Farrakhan and his people in the NOI understand it in those terms.

So in order to destroy the structures of inequality we need more than self-help and self-improvement. We need a broad-based mass movement that is political in nature, one that challenges the power structure.

● *Farrakhan's stakes have gone up. He is now in the ranks of major Black leaders in this country...*

Farrakhan is not, despite what many think, a flaming radical given to anti-semitic speeches, at least he isn't any longer. His effort to enter the mainstream has also had an affect on him. He learned something from the fiasco of Khalid Muhammad's vile speech on a New Jersey campus. He is trying very hard to clean up his image, and has particularly sought the assistance of Chavis, when he was still head of the NAACP, and Kwesie Mfume when he was chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The attempt by the mainstream media to demonize Farrakhan is something positive in the eyes of most black Americans. Given the hatred of the white power structure they will turn out in massive numbers to hear him speak as a simple act of defiance. And despite his sexism and homophobia he has the keen ability to capture the essence of the Black condition. He provides a voice for the voiceless, expressing the profound resentment that exists within the community. Clearly, he isn't afraid of what white people will think of him. That is why he has gained the ear of the masses in a way that no other Black leader can even hope to match at the present time. ★



First step in labor backlash

Last month's amazingly successful Million Man March in the nation's capital may well go down as a turning point in American history, writes Nat Weinstein. The massive turnout by Black men has sent a stunning message to white capitalist America. Although profoundly peaceful and orderly, this action was, nonetheless a warning that super-exploitation and oppression will not be passively endured for much longer.

AFTER DECADES IN WHICH THE WORKING CLASS HAS experienced a mounting assault on its living standards, it's no accident that those who have suffered most have taken the first big step toward mounting a fightback.

Make no mistake, the American ruling class has been deeply shaken by this massive turnout. This march was led by people they don't understand and deeply distrust. Furthermore, they are especially disturbed at the united front between Black leaders, some who see themselves as "separatists," and others as "integrationists."

The mass media and the white capitalist power structure it represents claim that their hostility to this action is based on "Farrakhan's racist, sexist and anti-Semitic agenda." Nothing could be further from the truth. They opposed the event only because it revealed the potential power of a united mass Black movement, independent of and in opposition to the racist status quo.

Louis Farrakhan and his Nation of Islam (NOI) surely have developed a political orientation that is deeply flawed and highly contradictory. But it's not the negative features that the ruling class opposes, it's the positive ones. Even more important, it's the corrections that Farrakhan made of some of his flawed political positions that worries them most. Clearly, the forces that Louis Farrakhan has helped set in motion are having an impact on society as a whole, including on himself and the sector of the Black liberation movement that he leads. And once set into motion, history has repeatedly shown, the masses of the exploited and oppressed majority are hard to stop.

Minister Farrakhan's two-and-a-half hour speech in Washington contained a significant number of these corrections, along with a reaffirmation of some of this group's mistaken concepts, as well.

The mass media, however, dwelt almost exclusively on the shortcomings of his speech, like the NOI's version of religious mythology and numerology. However, that ideology is no more bizarre than that of the solidly established religions and pseudo-scientific rubbish like astrology far more widely represented in the mass media.

Farrakhan's effort to retreat from anti-Semitism and male chauvinism was highly significant. But these efforts, especially his appeal for dialogue with Jewish organizations

in order to normalize relations, was treated with contempt by those organizations as well as the by the mass media. And the presence the fact that many respected Black women speakers like Betty Shabazz (Malcolm X's widow) and poet Maya Angelou appeared on the platform in solid support of their men was ignored and downplayed in significance.

It seems obvious that Black leaders like Benjamin Chavis, who had joined with Farrakhan to build the march, were embarrassed by some of the ideological baggage that the NOI leader carried with him into their alliance. And it's reasonable to believe that some of them prevailed on

Farrakhan to retreat from these counter-productive and indefensible positions. But what's important is that he took their advice!

The white ruling class, however, refused to accept his disavowals of anti-Semitism and sexism as good coin, and for the very worst reasons. They want Black nationalism to be identified with bigotry because this serves to undermine its potential for becoming a powerful mass movement. They love it when a scapegoated people blame other scapegoats, diverting attention from the capitalist scapegoaters, and hate it when their victims see their mistake.

DIVIDE-AND-RULE STRATEGY

Farrakhan actually gave some rather convincing evidence that his disavowal of anti-Semitism was not just to give cover to his allies, and that it was a genuine step in the right direction. This came through when he quoted from a speech made by a slaveowner by the name of Lynch in the year 1713. Lynch told his fellow slavemasters how he kept resistance to a minimum. He said, you must look for every difference among them and use it to divide "men from women, and women from men" and "those with lighter from those with darker skin," and so use "every other difference you can find." That way, Lynch said, he was able to keep his slaves fighting each other instead of fighting him.

Farrakhan may only have had in mind this strategy's application to African Americans. But this basic capitalist



strategy is applied by the ruling class to divide the working class as well. Whatever his intentions, the lesson is far-reaching and objectively serves to lower the barrier erected by capitalism between Black America and the workers' movement. Thus, all those supporting the struggle for freedom and justice have everything to gain by accepting his self-criticism at face-value.

Only America's white capitalist ruling class stands to lose from Farrakhan's self-correction. And if he sticks to his small but significant turn away from white capitalist-induced bigotry, and follows its logic through to the end, he can make a giant contribution to the struggle for emancipation.

WHY THE MASSIVE TURNOUT?

There can be little doubt that the main reason is that this was the first big response to the relentless assault on working people, especially those who can least abide being driven deeper below the so-called poverty line.

Further impetus for the march came after the prosecution's chief witness in the O.J. Simpson trial, Detective Mark

Fuhrman, was caught redhanded on tape proudly telling how he and the criminal "justice" system routinely frame up innocent Blacks and cover each other's tracks. Adding insult to injury, the media strongly implied that the "right to a jury of one's peers" is okay for whites but not for Blacks and that O.J. may have been acquitted by "a predominantly Black jury (horrors!) but he was still guilty."

And third, was the media's hysterically racist campaign to intimidate people by tagging anyone who went to the Million Man March as "racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic." This campaign boomeranged, guaranteeing the success of the event. The *New York Times* and other mouthpieces of the racist capitalist establishment went so far as to feature calls to boycott the march by prominent Black political "leaders," Black and white "feminists," and such Black "militants" as Angela Davis. It was as if to say: See, even these "feminists" and "Black militants" say, "Don't go!" The fact that all their machinations didn't work testifies to the good sense of African Americans and reveals a rising mass consciousness that is an inspiring portent of bigger things to come.

IS THE NOI RACIST?

The main charge against the Nation of Islam is that it is an advocate of the racial supremacy of African Americans. This is designed to ensnare those who may reject racism in general but cannot see the difference between the abstract idea of racism and the concrete reality. It sucks in those that blind themselves to the fact that only America's white capitalists have the social, economic, and political power to enforce racism.

But the NOI and its leaders have never advocated racism; they advocate "Black nationalism." Their nationalism is directly caused by their having been segregated and violated as a people by the rulers of capitalist America, who certainly don't deny that they are American patriots (meaning, white nationalists).

Moreover, only fools and scoundrels deny the qualitative difference between segregation, which is imposed by the powers that be, and the voluntary and proud grouping

together of an oppressed people for mutual comfort and defense against a segregationist oppressor.

There is no way that the African American minority can reverse the relations between themselves and the white ruling class, at this time, except by organizing themselves into a mass Black political movement. Ultimately, however, they will need to form an alliance with others who are exploited and oppressed by capitalism.

The lack of such an alliance, however, is not the fault of Blacks. Rather, it has been blocked by the bureaucratic misleaders of the AFL-CIO (trade union federation). The workers' movement has everything to gain and nothing to lose by forging an iron-clad alliance with all those oppressed by racism and sexism. But the labor bureaucracy believes its interests lie in an alliance with "their" bosses.

In the meantime, a united Black movement has considerable independent force and can mobilize effective resistance to oppression. The intelligent exercise of that power will attract and inspire the working class as a whole to join the Black struggle against social, economic, and political injustice. Besides, Blacks constitute 20% of union members. They are thus a potentially mighty force for change inside the unions.

WHY SUPPORT BLACK NATIONALISM?

In the first place, the nationalism of the American ruling class is totally racist and reactionary, while the nationalism of African Americans and other oppressed nationalities, being a defensive reaction against white racist oppression, is totally anti-racist and progressive. Throughout American history, the fates of African Americans and the working class as a whole have been organically linked together. But the divisive strategy of the capitalists has succeeded to a greater or lesser degree in deluding white workers with racist myths.

The biggest myth is that Black and white workers are adversaries with opposing interests. And even worse is the notion inculcated in many workers, Black and white, that the privileges of whites are a deduction from the living standard of Blacks. This false notion is deliberately encouraged by the capitalist class in countless subtle and not so subtle ways.

But whenever white workers have come to understand that they are not the beneficiaries of racism; and that their class interests are basically identical with those of their Black brothers and sisters; and therefore reach out with solidarity to Black workers, the positive results for both Black and white workers have been earthshaking.

And even more power can be generated through an alliance of the entire working class with the entire Black nationality!



Remembering Ernest



Jan Malewski's selection from the dozens of messages of condolence and solidarity received after the death of the Marxist economist Ernest Mandel, one of the leaders of the Fourth International

ERNEST WAS ALWAYS COMMITTED TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST the Stalinist gangrene in the Communist movement. He was repeatedly attacked in the crudest terms by the leaders of various parties aligned to Kremlin policy. The messages we have received from the leaders of several "post-Stalinist" parties testifies not only to their own transformation, but to Ernest's success.

"I studied, and met with Ernest Mandel... during that decisive phase when we, the PDS/SED, successors to the SED [East German ruling party], developed our critique of that bureaucratic system which called itself socialist, but was in contradiction with the very foundations of socialism. The current Ernest represented, along with others, helped me define my positions. In the previous decades, this same current personified hope and help for many democratic socialist men and women in the opposition within the SED in the former German Democratic Republic..."

Gregor Gysi, PDS, Germany

"Ernest Mandel was for many of us a revolutionary, a friend, who, in the critical moments of the transformation of the left, gave us the elements of analysis, and the encouragement to continue the struggle with [refreshed] moral, theoretical and political arguments".

Francisco Frutos, Spanish Communist Party (PCE)

"For many of us, Mandel represented an example of the effort that was necessary and must still be made to make a critical analysis of capitalism and, at the same time, do this work in close relationship with militant practice. He was thus a rather rare case of an intellectual and political leader devoted to the cause of the workers' movement and all emancipation movements. You know that for our organisation the essential principle of functioning as a political formation is the recognition of political and ideological pluralism. In this framework, the contribution of Mandel, who was also a radical critic of 'actually existing socialism' could always be useful to us in the task of reformulating a plan for an alternative society capable

regaining credibility for the anti-capitalist and internationalist left."

Victor Rios, Izquierda Unida (United Left), Madrid

"Ernest Mandel, Marxist theorist and thinker, was, in the most noble sense of the word, an activist. In his own country. Within the Fourth International, of which he was a leader."

L'Humanité, newspaper of the French Communist Party

Mohammed Harbi, one of the leaders of the National Liberation Front (FLN) during the Algerian war of independence, praises **"Ernest's contribution to the reformulation of socialism, and redefining the basis for revolutionary regroupment"** and his support for the Algerian revolution.

On behalf of Brazil's Workers Party (PT), Marco-Aurelio Garcia writes **"for more than half a century, Ernest Mandel illuminated, with his intelligence and his culture, the socialist movement of the world..."** In transmitting a greeting from "Lula" da Silva, Garcia writes **"Mandel was a friend of the PT. He travelled with us from the moment of our birth"**.

The final word goes to Fausto Bertinotti, General Secretary of Italy's Party of Communist Refoundation — "All Italian communists will remember forever the person and the work of Ernest Mandel, eminent scholar and modern

"In one of his books, Ernest incited us to work for 'the rebirth of hope'. That 'Mandelist' hope... is being reborn, with our Zapatista brothers and sisters... who are beginning to organise that great force which hope represents, way beyond the indigenous communities of Chiapas, and above all beyond Mexico's borders

Rosario Ibarra, Member of Parliament and co-ordinator of the Zapatista Consultation process

interpreter of Marxist thought. He devoted his life to a thorough, deep-going analysis of the immense contradictions of the modern world, the evolution of the capitalist system with all its unresolved injustice, the new transformations which have taken place in society on a world scale.

"He was supported in this powerful work by his confidence, his consciousness of the historical necessity and the concrete possibility of building a new society that would end the exploitation of the human race, nature and the environment by human beings. This is why his personal history is a splendid segments of the enormous effort which has been made, throughout this century, by women, by men, by dominated classes. While we, sad and moved, acknowledge his disappearance, we are helped by our common unswerving conviction of the need to continue this fight. ★

● **Commemoration meetings worldwide**

Over 1,200 militants and sympathisers of the Fourth International, from some 30 countries, and others for whom Ernest Mandel symbolised open, living Marxism, participated in the transfer of his ashes to the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris on 30 September 1995. At Ernest's final resting place, near the Mur des Fédérés, where the last fighters of the Paris Commune were shot down, Alain Krivine spoke on behalf of the French Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) and Livio Maitan on behalf of the Fourth International.



Other French participants included representatives of the French Socialist Party (PS), French Communist Party (PCF), Workers' Struggle (LO, represented by Arlette Laguiller), Mouvement des Citoyens, Convention for a Progressive Alternative (CAP), Alternative libertaire, Red-Green Alternative (AREV) and the Communist Refondateur (Refounding) current. They rubbed shoulders with Raul Roa, Cuba's ambassador in France, Michel Pablo, Bala Tampoe (General Secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile Union), Tariq Ali, Perry Anderson, and Robin Blackburn (New Left Review) as well as many leaders and members of the Fourth International who had travelled notably from all over Europe, Latin America and the USA to be present.

"For Palestinian Marxists, Ernest Mandel was an inspiration and a great thinker... Ernest was also a model of the continuity of the militant struggle., despite all the obstacles and failures on the road. His life is an example, and a great source of inspiration."

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP),
Occupied Territories

That evening, several hundred people participated in a commemoration meeting in Montreuil, near Paris. Commemoration meetings have also been held in Brussels (29 September, over 300 people), Lisbon (27 October), London (13 and 14 October, 350 participants), Madrid (7 October, 400 participants) New York, San Francisco, Toronto and Sydney (20 August, called by the Democratic Socialist Party of Australia). The Paris and London meetings closed with a moving viewing of an interview with Ernest by Tariq Ali. Similar events are planned for Barcelona (13 November), Brazil, Mexico, English Canada, Quebec and a range of other locations. ★

"The first Marxist Leninist militants in Morocco studied his Marxist Economist Theory with passion. In prison, Inprecor magazine (French edition of International Viewpoint) brought us the lessons of revolutionary struggles round the world"

Abraham Serfaty, imprisoned for 17 years as a leader of the Marxist Ila Al Amam group

Book notes

MF/World Bank/WTO: The Free-Market Fiasco **IIRE Notebook for Study and Research no. 24/25,** **1995**

"FIFTY YEARS IS NOT ENOUGH!", the International Monetary Fund's public relations director said last year in a debate in Madrid. "There is still a lot of work to be done." A more ominous threat to the well-being, in fact survival, of billions of human beings may never have been made before.

IMF/World Bank/WTO: The Free-Market Fiasco makes short work of the protestations of innocence and good intentions made by the men who preside over today's globalized economy. It does more than describe the suffering caused in Africa, Latin America, South Asia and Eastern Europe by IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organization policies. It explains why the suffering results inevitably from the neo-liberalism unanimously embraced over the last two decades by the world's ruling elites, North and South.

Published in cooperation with the Brussels-based Committee for the Cancellation of the Third-World Debt and introduced by Committee leader Eric Toussaint, NSR 24/25's articles complement each other in describing the trap in which the peoples of the South have been caught. Jacques Bourmay, Susan George and Michel Chossudovsky each help explain how IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes force countries to sacrifice their inhabitants' health, education and basic nutrition in order to devote "everything to export" and funnel money to Western banks. Applying this prescription to dozens of countries simultaneously has made export prices tumble while the volume of exports has grown, they point out, leaving export income lower than before. Anke Hintjens completes this aspect of the picture by analyzing how the latest GATT accords re-affirm the Third World's exclusion from many Western markets, while giving the new World Trade Organization unprecedented powers to enforce the inequitable treaty.

The IMF and World Bank's public relations offensive has tried to hide their responsibility for global impoverishment by talking about "social safety nets". They have been particularly glib on such fashionable topics as "the centrality of women to development" and "ecologically sustainable development". The Notebook exposes this rhetoric. Christian Ferri and Vandana Shiva show the emptiness of IMF/World Bank environmentalist pretensions, for example. Ferri shows how the World Bank continues to stifle internal critics of its ecologically disastrous mega-projects, which have displaced 2.5 million people. Shiva describes the effects on Third-World farmers, consumers and ecosystems of multinationals' increasingly bold claims to "intellectual property rights" to millennia-old agricultural and medicinal plants.

The Bretton Woods institutions' claims to have slowed or even turned around global impoverishment are wrong. Kevin Watkins describes the IMF/World Bank-created disaster area that is Africa. Chossudovsky exposes IMF/World Bank co-responsibility for the collapse of Somalia and genocide in Rwanda. James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer explain why Latin America's "lost decade" of the 1980s has not given way to prosperity in the 1990s; Michel Husson illuminates the well-known case of Mexico. Aleksandr Buzgalin, Andrei Kolganov and Jean-Marie Chauvier explain how the IMF and World Bank have managed to half-dismantle the Russian economy.

The political implications of the IMF, World Bank's and WTO's growing power are no less far-reaching than the economic and social

consequences of their policies. Pierre Rousset raises some disturbing questions about how these institutions are steadily restricting the range of democratic decision-making on a national level, and the kinds of democratic alternatives that could challenge this trend.

Emerging from the international movement that is looking for democratic alternatives, NSR 24/25 can be useful for several different audiences. For those beginning to explore these issues, it offers a wealth of information. For those already active, it provides an arsenal of arguments and advances some important strategic discussions. For all those who question today's neo-liberal consensus, it provides important elements for understanding the new tasks we face.

Le discordance des temps; Essais sur les crises, les classes, l'histoire **by Daniel Bensaid, Editions de la passion,** **Paris, 1995, 180 FFR**

This [French language] book by our comrade Daniel Bensaid has three main sections, consecrated to economic rhythms and crisis, the relationship between the class struggle and other forms of social conflict, and thirdly a number of essays on historical reason (Péguy, Derrida, Benjamin, Blanqui and Bloch). Ten of the book's 13 chapters are unpublished material.

The first section deals with the specific logic of Marx's *Capital*. Bensaid underlines the coherence of Marx's logic, and makes a number of reflections concerning crises, long waves, and the relationship between the market and modernity.

In the second section he discusses the theory of bureaucracy, the articulation between the class relationship and sexual domination, and the place of national and ethnic questions in this epoch of globalisation.

This work represents a complement to what promises to be Bensaid's major work to date, *Marx l'impestif*, published by Éditions Fayard in October 1995.

The final lines of *La discordance des temps* resume Bensaid's project, in his own, very literary style:

"Marxism" ... is accused of having preached a religion of terrestrial salvation, of having let loose the blind forces of productionism, of having blessed the weapons of science and technology, of having organised the idolatrous cult of the proletariat, and of having brought to its full realisation the totalitarian tyranny of historical reason. The prosecutors have evidence texts and citations which they put forward. In a scholastic quarrel, the defence could produce its own, symmetrical pieces of evidence, which would contradict or refute those of their opponents. But this is not some pious attempt to go "back to Marx". This is a necessary 'detour'".

Reviewed by Jean-Michel Krivine

Lean Production: The capitalist utopia?
by Tony Smith, IIRE Notebook for Study and
Research no. 23, 1995

PROGRESSIVE ACTIVISTS AND THINKERS IN THE 1990s may face more difficult challenges at the same time than ever before in this century: ecological challenges to old visions of abundance; the collapse of "really existing socialism"; the now unrivalled military supremacy of the USA; economic globalization. **Lean Production** responds to one such challenge: the claim that major economic changes now underway are making the left's old analysis and critique of capitalism obsolete.

The world economy has not only become more closely linked together in the last few years: its technology, its distribution networks, and its basic organizing units on the shop floor are also changing. The business press claims that the new "lean production" unites companies, workers and consumers in the harmonious pursuit of common interests. Innovative ways of organizing production and marketing, within an economic system that is still capitalist, are widely argued to eliminate earlier antagonisms between capital and labour, between producers and consumers, and between different companies.

Though progressives may be sceptical of these arguments, we can neither deny that changes are going on nor ignore the interpretations being put forward. This is why the IIRE asked Tony Smith, professor of philosophy and author (among other works) of *The Logic of Marx's 'Capital'*, to examine the new trends. **Lean Production: A Capitalist Utopia?**, is the result of his work.

IS DAS KAPITAL OBSOLETE?

Smith agrees that lean production is transforming many of the earlier, "Fordist" ways of organizing production. If the assertions of lean production ideologues are true, he says, then much of what Marx said about capitalist economies is essentially obsolete. He then lays out key points of Marx's analysis, explaining why Marx defined the capital-labour relationship as exploitative, saw consumers' interests as conflicting with capital's, and considered antagonism between units of capital inevitable. Picking apart the business press's arguments one by one, Smith argues that the real changes brought about by lean production do not alter the exploitative, alienating and anarchic character of capitalism.

Finally, he explains why lean production is in some ways more efficient and dynamic than the bureaucratically-planned economies that existed until recently in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He proposes a model for a socialist economy, based on grassroots participation and democratic coordination, that could match the dynamism of lean production while genuinely keeping its broken promises of cooperation and harmony.

Smith's aim is not just to respond to a theoretical challenge, but also to help people respond to the practical challenge of lean production. He considers that the most important forums for the critical analysis of new production techniques are the shop floors, offices, union halls, and political settings where workers discuss their own experiences and plan their own actions. This work is meant to contribute to their discussions and strategizing. ★

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Philosophy and Science in the writings of L. Trotsky, (ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗ ΣΤΑ ΚΕΙΜΕΝΑ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΟΤΣΚΙ) by Constantine Skordoulis, 1995, IAMOS (Athens, Greece)

This Greek-language work approaches the philosophical thought of L. Trotsky as it emerges in **Philosophical Writings 1933-35** and his writings on science while President of the Soviet Commission for Industry and Technology (1925).

In the first chapter the author presents Trotsky's writings on philosophy and science and evaluates his contribution in these fields. Skordoulis criticises the Stalinist "theory of two sciences", and Althusser's views.

The second chapter examines the philosophical foundations of the Theory of Permanent Revolution. The law of combined and uneven development appears as a specific expression of the law of transformation of quantity to quality, whose presence is dominant in Trotsky's writings on the theory of evolution and Darwin.

Skordoulis then discusses the crisis and subsequent collapse of the USSR and other "post-capitalist" societies, and tries to re-establish the relevance of theories on the class nature of these states and their potential evolution which are based on Trotsky's theoretical approach.

The final chapter presents the first translation into Greek of a number of Trotsky's writings on science, including **Philosophical Writings 1933-35** (published in English in 1986), "Dialectical Materialism and Science" (published in English in **The Age of Permanent Revolution**, I. Deutscher and G. Novack (eds.) and "Dialectics and the Immutability of Syllogism" (published in English in **Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40**, Pathfinder, New York).

Constantine Skordoulis lectures on the philosophy of physics at the University of Ioannina, Greece. This book is dedicated to the memory of Christos Anastasiadis (1910-1987), lifelong member of the Greek section of the Fourth International. ★

JUST PUBLISHED

Ending the Nightmare: Socialists against racism and fascism. John Lister (Ed.), October 1995, Russell Press, ISBN 1-872242-07-3

Includes a number of contributions to the Socialist Outlook 1994 Summer School on Fighting Racism and Fascism, and an abridged transcript of Ernest Mandel's speech to a 1987 Fourth International course in Amsterdam. £4.95, \$10 (p+p 15%) from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Make British cheques payable to Socialist Outlook Fund. Other countries write for details. ★

Political Islam: Fundamentalism or National Struggle? by Adel Samara, October 1995, Al Mashriq Centre for Development and Cultural Studies, Jerusalem (103 p.), £4/\$6 ★

The Ideas of Leon Trotsky, Hillel Ticktin & Michael Cox (eds.), November 1995, Porcupine Press

Contributors include Lynne Poole, Antonio Carlo, Stephen Dabydeen, Michel Löwy, David Gorman, Richard Day, Alan Wald, Susan Weissman, David Law, the two editors and Trotsky himself. Pre-publication price £12 (until 1 Dec. 1995) from Porcupine Bookcellar, 5 Caledonia Rd, London N1 (p+p £1.75 UK, £3 elsewhere). ★

Obituary for comrade

K A T O S h i g e r u

Comrade Kato Shigeru died on 23 September 1995, at the age of 52. He was an active member of the National Council of Internationalist Workers, a Japanese organisation in solidarity with the Fourth International.

Kato was born in February 1943 in Miyagi prefecture, north-east Japan. Soon after graduating from high school, he became a telecommunications worker, and immediately committed himself

to the workers' movement. In the mid-60s he fought against the US war in Vietnam, and the construction of the international airport in Narita. In 1980 he and his colleagues organised an independent trade union to defend workers arrested after a struggle in Narita. Towards the end of the 1980s, he joined a movement to organise the new National Organisation of Workers (*Zenrokyo*). In 1991 he became the secretary general of the Miyagi branch of *Zenrokyo*. Sendai city, where he worked, is known as a place where Trotskyists entered the Socialist Party, and succeeded in winning young workers to their movement.



Shortly before his death, Kato attended a plenary meeting of the National Council of Internationalist Workers, to listen to a report on the 14th World Congress of the Fourth International. He also visited a newly-constructed nuclear dust processing plant, with the aim of organising a movement of resistance against the plant. His sudden death is thought to have been caused by his overwork for the workers' movement.

Japanese workers will remember comrade Kato, and how he fought as a worker militant. ★

Russia: Conferences on Trotsky and Democratic Production

Scholars for Democracy and Socialism is sponsoring a scientific conference on "Problems of Democratic Production" which will also be held in St. Petersburg, Friday-Monday, December 1-3.

For more information, contact Alexander Buzgalin at e-mail <dhr@glas.apc.org>

This event will run concurrently with the second conference of the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy. This event will commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies of which Trotsky was the guiding spirit and a key political leader. Established on October 13, 1905 as a product of the workers rebellions, it survived for 50 days before it was crushed by the Tsar's military forces.

Contact Professor M.I. Vovaykov, Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Science, ulitsa Krasikova 27, 117218 Moscow. Tel: (095) 332 4525; Fax (095) 310 7001 or Marilyn Vogt-Downey, Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009; tel: 718-636-5446; fax: 212-807-1832; e-mail: <mvogt@igc.apc.org>

Ship for Bosnia to sail from Sweden to Scotland

The cargo ship Haväng will leave the port of Gothenberg on November 10, loaded with at least 35 containers of aid for Bosnian trade union relief projects. The next port of call is Aberdeen, followed by Antwerp and Barcelona, with arrival in the Croatian port of Makarska hopefully by the end of this year.

Sweden's best selling singer and novelist Ulf Lundell raised 300,000 SEK for the campaign with a solidarity concert on October 13th. He will give a second concert in Gothenberg the day of departure. Lundell joined Ship for Bosnia representatives for a recent telethon, which raised at least 260,000 SEK for the campaign. ★

For more information contact the Gotenberg Ship for Bosnia campaign at + 031 12 13 27 fax 031 14 13 11, or the Stockholm office at +84620532

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Nuclear victory for Britain's Labour right

THE LABOUR LEADERSHIP NARROWLY DEFEATED left-wing demands for the Trident nuclear missile system to be scrapped, during its annual conference in Brighton. A motion demanding that Trident be scrapped was defeated by 55.8% of the vote to 44.2% on October 6. This was the first time for some years that the leadership's views on nuclear weapons have carried the day at a party conference.

The result, along with agreement by delegates not to debate motions demanding significant defence spending cuts, were characterised by senior party sources as proof of the transformation to New Labour. Conferences of 1993 and 1994 both endorsed calls to scrap Trident, although the leadership maintained this would not affect the formation of its policy.

According to Orpington delegate Gill Collins, "50% of people in Britain now consider nuclear weapons unnecessary. The bad old days of the Labour defence bogey are going. The Tories are losing their ammunition... Trident is a massive, costly white elephant that should soon be with the dinosaurs... if the NEC and the shadow cabinet had actively promoted party policy [decommissioning Trident], the intensity of feeling against Trident would be much greater than it is."

Trade unions were split on the issue, with the giant Transport and General Workers Union supporting the call to scrap the weapon system, but the public service union Unison, the

general GMB union and the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union backing the leadership. Brian Godsell, of the AEEU, told delegates: "Defence has been the Achilles' heel of the Labour Party for too long. Now's the time to turn defence into attack."

The leadership earlier had averted one possible defeat when, citing time pressures and technical factors, it decided not to allow votes on motions calling for Britain's defence spending to be cut to the average level of other Western European countries. The previous six Labour party conferences have backed such calls.

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament chairwoman Janet Bloomfield said the decision to keep Trident was party leader Tony Blair's "first blank-cheque policy commitment which goes against the grain of public opinion". A recent MORI poll shows that, for the first time, a majority of British voters believe nuclear weapons are no longer necessary. "The British people are ready for disarmament," said Bloomfield. "The Labour Party should give it to them... There is much the party could gain from advocating a radical disarmament programme which promises that the millions currently devoted to the means of mass destruction can be ploughed back into rebuilding our schools, houses and other public services." [AN]

Popular resistance increases in El Salvador

A SERIES OF HIGH-PARTICIPATION STRIKES in July and August hit the public sector: telecommunications, water, health, and public works. Unions protested the draconian plans for redundancies which seek to prepare these utilities for privatisation, governmental plans for privatisation, the dismantling of nationalised industrial and agricultural groups (through reducing import taxes) and legislation which would effectively transform the country into a gigantic free trade zone. Workers in the clothing workshops, and the assembly plants of the free trade zones (maquiladoras) struck for their right to form trade unions.

The «forces of order» reacted violently. The government's top concern is frightening away foreign investors.

Demonstrations by demobilised FMLN soldiers are also increasingly frequent, as are deaths of former guerrillas at the hands of the police. Four years after the cease-fire agreement, demobilised soldiers of both sides are still waiting for 60% of the promised land transfers. On 28 July the Army joined with the police to suppress a demonstration of the demobilised. Such blatant infringements of the peace accords are increasingly common since the UN mission effectively withdrew in April.

The March 1995 split in the FMLN has weakened the movement's ability to react to developments. The remaining components of the front are busily preparing for December 1995, when they will dissolve into a single party.

According to Shafik Handel of the Communist Party (PCS), "the consolidation of the FMLN as the party or political subject of the revolution constitutes a historic necessity and one of the

conditions for realising successive victories until the consumation of the democratic revolution"

There has been a noticeable decline in the militant base of the (social democratic) Democratic Party (PD), formed by the two currents which left the FMLN in March. Their alliance with the right was confirmed during the July strikes, when PD leader Joaquin Vilalobos warned strikers that «such methods do not help solve the problems. They have rather more in common with the anti-democratic culture of the most conservative sectors of the right».

Several weeks earlier, the PD found itself the only party in parliament which supported the ARENA government's proposal to increase Value Added Tax by 3 percentage points.

Two of the PDs nine deputies have since abandoned the party in protest, while militant support for the party is evaporating in their popular strongholds like Segundo Montes, a town dominated by repatriated FMLN militants. [PM/AN]



Hungarian students demonstrate

SOME 3,000 STUDENTS PROTESTED ANGRILY October 5, after hearing details of an agreement between student union leaders and Prime Minister Gyula Horn.

10,000 student demonstrators had formed a human chain around parliament the previous evening. They were protesting the new basic fee of 2,000 forints (\$15) a month introduced by the government this academic year, and demanding that state spending on education to keep pace with inflation.

The National Alliance of Hungarian University and College Students has accepted the basic tuition fees, while the government will ask universities and colleges not to impose additional fees of their own this academic year.

The hated tuition fees are part of an austerity package which has triggered a wave of protest across Hungary this year. [AN]