

international
VIEWPOINT
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Special report from Chiapas, Mexico

EZLN

- The Maya revolt • the effect on the left • the economic context •
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special report from Chiapas

compiled by *Eric Toussaint*

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"Welcome to the
Black Sheep Republic"
read the sign greeting
participants in Europe's
largest international
socialist and feminist
youth festival **page 31**



News deadline: September 15th

The Mexican crisis

The regime is in deep, possibly terminal crisis. And yet the political and economic climate in Mexico remains deeply unfavourable for the exploited. Resistance is very uneven. But there are encouraging signs.

Eric Toussaint

THIS YEAR SAW THE SECOND LARGE independent mobilisation on May 1st (IV#278). Hundreds of thousands of workers ignored Fidel Velazquez, *líder máximo* of the regime's labour movement. The May First Inter-Union Coalition played a decisive role in this new, independent regroupment.

Another interesting sign is the series of demonstrations and protests organised by El Barzon (the yoke), a radical middle class group mainly representing indebted farmers. This is not a proletarian sector, but a promising radicalisation is quite possible. In July, El Barzon even held its national meeting in the Zapatista stronghold of La Realidad, Chiapas.

The poorest layers of society are also deeply unhappy. On May 30th, a crowd in San Nicolas de los Garza hijacked a train. The cargo was nothing other than maize, Mexico's basic food. Which is now imported from the USA, since Mexico is no longer self-sufficient. Let there be no confusion: the poor of Mexico hijacked a train so that they could eat. In July, day-labourers in one northern state, mostly Indians from Oaxaca, raided shops. Again, they were driven by hunger.

Last but not least, we have seen impressive popular mobilisations every time the government has threatened to launch a military offensive against the Zapatista rebellion.

Unfortunately, there is still no unitary framework for these protests. Most unions representing factory workers are controlled by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The independent May 1st demonstrations show the deepening crisis of this state control over labour, but the alternative is emerging in a very unbalanced and unequal way. The PRI is certainly in a deep crisis, but it has certainly not run out of ammunition!

The death of the regime

This dossier on the Zapatista revolt and its consequences doesn't pretend to make an authoritative prediction about the development of the crisis facing the Mexican regime. But the signs of crisis speak for themselves. The neo-liberal policy adopted in 1982 has failed. The factional struggle inside the ruling party led to the assassination of two leading politicians in 1994, Colosio and Ruiz Massieu. Former President Carlos



We welcome our brothers from round the world to this corner of Mexico – the dignified heart of the EZLN [Zapatista Army]

Salinas is in exile in Ireland. His brother Raoul is under arrest. The PRI has partially lost control over its mass movements. The government is even obliged to negotiate with an Indian rebel army led by the EZLN. The criminal aspect of the PRI is developing rapidly, particularly through the extension of drugs trafficking. All this adds up to quite a crisis.

"This is not a crisis of construction, but a crisis of functioning and reproduction," Rhina Roux argued in *Viento del Sur* #2, 1994. "It is... a global crisis, affecting all three constituent dimensions of the state. There is a crisis of the structure of the state, a crisis in the relations between the governors and the governed, and a crisis in the functioning of the state and the reproduction of the ruling elite.

In other words, this is not a crisis of government, or a crisis of the ruling clique. The crisis today is a crisis of the form of the state itself."

A series of shocks

This crisis goes back to 1988, when Cauahtémoc Cardénas of the [moderate left, populist] Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) won the Presidential election, but was denied victory by massive PRI fraud. The enormous protest shook the regime. The Zapatista revolt of January 1st 1994 was the second shock. The economic crisis which exploded at the end of that year was the third shock.

Each of these shocks has been a catalyst for developments inside the regime. But the various social forces which oppose the regime have not yet begun to move in a way which would enable them to accumulate experience, force, and consciousness. The development of the PRD since 1988 has disoriented and deeply disappointed important sectors of the popular movement. The EZLN has managed to force the regime to negotiate, thanks to its audacity and the

enormous solidarity mobilisation which the Indian revolt has provoked. But the Mexican capitalist regime has weapons in reserve.

This regime has the capability to run a low intensity war against the popular peasants' movements. This includes the permanent stationing of troops in several states simultaneously (so far, Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Tabasco). Most of the troops in these states are deployed outside their barracks.

The judicial and police apparatus is far from inactive. They are arresting more and more militants, in the hope of frightening people into taking cover. The rest of the repressive work is carried out by the white guards hired by the largest capitalists and landowners (who merge, as a social and political group, with the PRI elite). Assassination has become a common tactic for the Mexican elite. The killers are never identified or arrested.

Napoleon said "you can do everything with bayonets, except sit on them." The PRI regime is not stupid enough to think that repression alone will protect their privileged position. It is working hard to maintain control over peasant and industrial workers' organisations. Television stations are under tight control. And the PRI has negotiated an electoral reform law, which the other parliamentary parties (PAN, PRD, PT) approved in July. This cost the PRI a number of concessions. But it will give much greater credibility to the 1997 elections.

The PRI is developing a number of agreements with the conservative opposition PAN. At the same time, it is launching public works, and social aid programmes, through a number of local government institutions. Unless those at the bottom can find a way to unite their various struggles, those on top will continue to control the situation. The Zapatista-sponsored Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity is a step in the right direction. Read our special report on pages 4-10. ★

The neo-liberal disaster

The neo-liberal strategy adopted in 1982 has had disastrous results for peasants, workers and a large part of the middle classes. The misery is still increasing.

Eric Toussaint

IN 1982, PRESIDENT MIGUEL DE LA Madrid launched a massive wave of privatisations. Only 100 public corporations (of 1,550 registered in 1982) are still state-owned. [*Monde Diplomatique*, 8/96]. public sector enterprises. Privatisation has enabled the concentration of capital. Ten groups now control 71.2% of the shares listed on the Mexican stock exchange. Under President Salinas de Gortari (1988-94) over \$US 100 bn. flowed into the country, mainly to buy stocks and bonds. Foreign, mainly US capitalists were able to buy privatised companies at low prices. Foreign capital now controls companies in strategic sectors, including telecommunications.

The money which flowed into Mexico didn't create jobs. It was used to buy companies, and then to "rationalise" them. Much of this money was speculative anyway: the shares thus acquired could be sold easily, and the proceeds repatriated without formalities if "more interesting possibilities" emerged in other markets.

Most of this capital left Mexico between April and December 1994 [*Dossier CADTM #12, Sep. 1994*]. The outflow started well before the elections in August, and is a major factor contributing to the financial crisis of December 1994 [*WB - IMF - WTO: The Free Market Fiasco, NSR 24/25, 1995*].

By December 1995, US banks held \$US 24.6 bn. of Mexican origin — twice as much as at the end of 1994. Mexico's current President, Ernesto Zedillo, makes the outrageous claim that the \$US 100 bn. which flowed into Mexico under President Salinas were only speculative, and never really belonged to Mexico anyway [*"It isn't our money," La Jornada, 7 August 1996*]. What he doesn't say is that, to attract this speculative capital, the Mexican state organised a fire sale of nationalised companies, which certainly did belong to the nation.

Privatisations, together with the application of the North America Free Trade Accord (NAFTA), have increased Mexico's dependence on US imperialism.

Management of the foreign debt crisis has been equally disastrous. Mexico paid \$US 125 bn. in debt servicing in 1988-92. Some of this money was the



proceeds of the privatisation wave. After paying out this money, Mexico finds itself even deeper in debt. By 1994 the country owed foreign creditors \$US 140 bn, 50% more than in 1988. By the end of 1995, debt reached about \$US 180 bn, according to the independent research centre FAPRODE.

Mexico's debt payments are a massive transfer of revenue from the workers, and the small and medium farmers towards the capitalists who own the debt. Some of these creditors are Mexican capitalists, who have "invested" in Mexico through capital they hold in foreign banks.

It gets worse. Since the December 1994 crisis, a portion of Mexico's oil revenues are pass through a US bank account, to which the US government can demand access if Mexico ever misses a repayment of its foreign debt. An eloquent symbol of Mexico's new relationship of submission to the USA.

The neo-liberal strategy implemented since 1982 has increased Mexico's structural jobs deficit. To absorb the growing workforce, 12 million jobs should have been created between 1982 and 1994. Only 2.4 million jobs were created. And the capital flight in December 1994 destroyed 850,000 jobs (production dropped 6.9% in 1995).

Twenty million new jobs are needed to create full employment in Mexico today. And things are getting worse. Official statistics suggest that for every ten jobs

destroyed in 1995, only seven new jobs will be created this year.

The purchasing power of the working population has dropped sharply. Teachers in the countryside earn only \$US 200/month. The minimum monthly salary has dropped to \$US 100. In real terms, this is about the same as when General Lazaro Cardenas introduced the minimum wage in 1935. The buying power of the minimum wage has dropped 81% since 1977. The labour time needed to assure even the 1970 level of consumption is 3.16 times longer than in 1970. Wages represented 40.3% of GDP in 1976, but only about 25% today.

Some people prefer to count in dollars. Three out of ten Mexican workers earn \$US 100-199/month, and another 35% of the workforce (but only 20% of women workers) earn \$US 200 or more. In other words, the minimum wage is the average. Almost half the workforce earn less. Three out of ten workers earn \$US 1-99/month, and the remaining five million men and women earn no cash salary whatsoever. Most of this group (3.185 million) work in agriculture. [statistics published by the employers association Coparmex, cited in *La Jornada*, 21 July 1995]

The middle classes, farmers, entrepreneurs, artisans, and members of the liberal professions have also suffered from these neo-liberal policies, particularly since the crisis of December 1994. With interest rates now around 45%, personal debt is reaching explosive levels.

Four million private account-holders are in arrears. They represent one third of the banks' clients. This is one of the factors behind the development of the El Barzon "debtors' movement." Barzon leader Juan José Qurino claims that his group of middle class people who's relative comfort is threatened now has 1.8 million members. [*La Jornada*, 21 July 1996].

Unemployment, collapsing real wages, and rocketing debt is only part of the picture of misery. Over 21 million Mexicans have no access to primary education. Fifteen thousand schools have only one teacher. Half the population has no social security cover. One in five children is malnourished.

CEPAL estimates that the number of Mexicans in poverty increased from 48.5 to 66 million between 1982 and 1992 (the country has about 100 million inhabitants). In 1982, 16.2% of the poor lived in extreme poverty. In 1992, 48.6% were classified as extremely poor. Something is rotten in the land of Zapata. very rotten. ★



This is not a happening

THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PARTICIPANTS, AND the quality of the interventions plainly contradicts those media which presented this meeting as some kind of far-left happening or festival, orchestrated by Marcos the megalomaniac. In fact, hundreds of written contributions were presented, and each participant was able to take the floor on several occasions. The Mexican workshop facilitators met together every evening, and worked until the small hours synthesising and writing down the day's deliberations. Each synthesis was presented, discussed, and amended and adopted by consensus or

Once again, they proved their impressive roots in the Indian communities.

As for the proceedings themselves, the Zapatistas mainly listened to the other delegates. Several EZLN delegates participated in each of the working groups. Most did not say much. Marcos spoke briefly in each of the four sub-groups which met at the La Realidad base. He explained how the EZLN had renounced its dogmatic "Marxist-Leninist" origins after contact with the Indian reality. He also stressed the importance of this meeting to the Zapatista strategic goal of breaking their politico-military encircling. He

new internationalism, capable of opposing capital's offensive. Having said this, how useful is the final declaration, which will now be submitted to "global" consultations? The content is very general. This may make it difficult to mobilise sufficient forces to carry out the consultation. On the other hand, the proposal to create an international network of resistance to neo-liberalism, in which all kinds of organisations could participate, is very positive. So is the decision to organise a second "World Meeting against Neo-liberalism and for Humanity," this time in Europe, in the second half of 1997. [E.T.] ★



"For humanity and against neo-liberalism," Oventic, second (of five) "Hotsprings" or forums.

majority vote. The organisers met with the co-ordinators of the national delegations every day.

Media

Over 300 journalists, from 32 countries, had full access to all the deliberations. The only controversial case was the absence of *Le Monde* correspondent Bertrand de la Grange, a specialist in misinformation about the progressive movement in Mexico. Organisers claimed that he had failed to apply for accreditation by the deadline given. Some delegates suspected that he had been barred deliberately. In any case, it would have been better if he had been present.

EZLN participation

Just by convoking this meeting, the Zapatistas made an important contribution to the struggle against neo-liberalism. But they did more. They ensured all material and logistic aspects of the meeting. This was an impressive demonstration of their force.

also stressed that the Zapatistas had no intention of imposing its views on the participants. At one key press conference during the meeting, the EZLN passed the microphone to twelve invited personalities, including Danielle Mitterand, Eduardo Galéano, Douglas Bravo, Hugo Blanco, and Alain Touraine (unpopular with the French delegation, since he "supports" the Juppé government's reform of social security).

After 15-20 hours deliberations, over 3-4 days, each of the working groups (politics, economy, culture, civil society and indigenous peoples) produced a report combining analysis and proposals. These were discussed on the seventh day of the meeting. On the eighth day, the EZLN presented the Second Declaration of La Realidad, which they intend to submit to global consultations at the end of this year.

The results of the meeting

This meeting was a great success. It was an important contribution to the struggle for a

The big issues

A wide range of experiences of struggle were presented in detail. The radical character of the analyses and the proposals was largely due to the solid Marxist base of the Latin American and Mexican participants. The main discussions included the following points:

- Refusing the Structural Adjustment Policies dictated by international financial institutions.
- Refusing the warmongering policies of the imperialist states.
- Refusing to pay international debts
- The need to satisfy social needs
- Rejecting regional treaties like the Maastricht Treaty, the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mercosur (Latin American common market agreement), and the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation accord.
- The struggle against the closing of our frontiers.
- Denouncing those responsible for the dictatorships of the 1960s and 1970s and struggling for the 'return' of those who 'disappeared' at that time and since.
- The struggle for disarmament.
- Defending social security systems, and generalising access to them.
- The fight for full employment via the reduction of the working week and agrarian reform.
- Support for feminist demands.
- Fighting narco-traffic, characterized here as a flourishing form of capitalist trade.
- Indigenous peoples' struggles for sovereignty.
- Supporting large mobilisations against neo-liberal policies — be it France's movement against the Juppé plan in November-December 1995 [IV #272-4] or the Zapatista rebellion ★



Sabino Estrada Guadalupe

[Mexico, D.F.] -- Leading PRT comrade Sabino Estrada died on Monday September 9th. A former leader of the Council of Nahuatl Peoples in Alto Basalas, Sabino was President of the Guerrero Council of the "500 Years of Indian Resistance" campaign. He represented the Council at the National Indigenous Forum called by the EZLN, becoming a member of the Forum leadership.

Those who participated in the EZLN's Forum on Reforming the State this July (see page seven) will remember Sabino, who presented the conclusions — in Nahuatl and Spanish — to the final meeting.

In the EZLN Intercontinental meeting, Sabino represented the Guerrero "500 Years" campaign in the forum on the indigenous question held in La Garrucha.

He also drafted the motion on the indigenous question which was adopted at the recent congress of the PRT. (see p. eight). In June 1995 he represented the PRT at the 14th World Congress of the Fourth International.

Sabino Estrada had a solid record of campaigning for justice and democracy in Guerrero state. He was part of the team which finally won control of the town hall away from the ruling PRI, after years of fraud and violence. He was also part of the new national leadership of the PRT.

Sabino was last seen leaving a Chilpancingo meeting of the Guerrero leadership of the PRT, to discuss his campaign for election to the state congress. Part of that campaign consisted in denouncing the numerous violations of human rights by the Mexican army, which is massively present in Guerrero.

Police say Sabino died in a traffic accident. His death is a hard blow — the latest in a series of deaths of leading PRT comrades over the last year. He will not be forgotten! JD] ★

The meeting in the mud

- The meeting took place in "Hot springs," (Aguascalientes) built next to five Indigenous communities. Each has an open-air forum seating up to 4,000 people, and roofed spaces where visitors can hang their hammock.

- Rather than isolated guerrilla bases, the EZLN encourages the Maya peasants to create these forums, which are open to Mexican and international rebels. Struggling together rather than fighting in isolation. That's the Zapatista strategy. ★



- After 5 days in La Realidad you learn how to walk with a kilo of clay stuck to each foot. "international politics is like walking in the mud," Marcos said. "Step carefully." The mud didn't stop many delegates from dancing for hours. We went to bed with mud up to our knees.

- No alcohol, no drugs. Four hours by jeep to the nearest telephone. And sixteen hours to the nearest bus stop. None of the delegates we saw had a mobile phone. Or a jeep, for that matter. ★



- Those of us from Boston, Birmingham and Berlin measure time differently from these rebel Mayas. Preparing the meeting, welcoming us, and listening to what each participant has to say: their patience seems limitless.

- Sitting quietly and watching, they notice things which we miss, as we hurry from one place to another on errands which, in the end, are of limited importance. It took a long time to appreciate this lesson. ★



•Who was there?

THERE WERE 1,600 FOREIGN participants, as well as more than 500 Mexicans from outside Chiapas. Forty three countries were represented. A majority of the foreign participants were West Europeans (the French, Italian and Spanish State delegations each had more than 200 members). The next most numerous grouping was from North America, followed by Latin America. Africa and Asia were under-represented, and Eastern Europe absent. Australian and Philippine delegates did manage to participate.

Organisations representing indigenous peoples from round the world made sure they were present at this initiative of their Mayan brothers and sisters.

The Mexican delegation was sizeable, comprising representatives of social organisations (peasants', workers', students', women's, and community groups), delegates of the civil dialogue

committees which are building the Zapatista National Liberation Front, representatives of various political parties and, of course, Indian organisations from other parts of Mexico.

The EZLN itself sent about 90 delegates: all Indians apart from Sub-Comandante Marcos. Between two and three thousand members of the local Indian communities participated in the opening and closing meetings, and guaranteed the extraordinary logistic support for the whole event.

Few of those from Europe and North America were members of a political party.

The weak participation of the Latin American left was partly due to their participation in the Fifth annual meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum (see page eight). Nevertheless, important social movements, like Brazil's Movement of the Landless (MST) and Argentina's Mothers of May Square were present.

Groups which sent representatives included Spain's United Left (IU), Italy's Communist Refoundation ('Rifondazione'), Brazil's Workers' Party (PT), several Philippine organisations with Communist origins, and the CWI (the international current linked to the British group Militant).

Numerous intellectual and artistic personalities from Mexico and abroad also played an active part in the meeting.

The Fourth International was represented by more than 50 members, from Belgium, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Porto Rico, the Spanish State and Switzerland. Three members of our International Executive Committee met with a delegation of the Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee, which forms the General Command of the EZLN. We agreed to establish fraternal relations between the two organisations. ★

Negotiations in bad faith

THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING against neo-liberalism and for humanity took place after six months of rising tension between the Zapatistas and the government. On several occasions, government provocation almost caused a new military confrontation. The most serious incident was the sentencing of two Zapatista militants to heavy terms. Comrades Entzin (sentenced to 6 years) and Elloriaga (13 years) were convicted of membership of a terrorist group — the EZLN.

The judgement flagrantly contradicted the March 1995 Law on Dialogue, Conciliation and a Just Peace in Chiapas. By this law, the Mexican Congress refused to define the EZLN as "terrorist," but as "a group of Mexican citizens, mainly indigenous people, who are in rebellion." The law authorised the free circulation of the Zapatistas, within the framework of the dialogue process. This meant that the heavy prison sentences for two civilians accused of EZLN membership represented a real cause for war, and fully justified the EZLN breaking off the negotiations which had begun in January 1996 and produced limited results in terms of the "Indian question."

The EZLN said negotiations could resume when Entzin and Elloriaga were freed. The government claimed this was impossible, since Mexican courts are independent of the political executive wing of power. They combined this ridiculous claim with a clear threat: "If the EZLN does not return to the negotiating table, the Law on Dialogue will no longer be relevant, and warrants could again be issued for the arrest of the rebels. The Army will be responsible for implementing these warrants."

Libertad para Entzin y Elloriaga!

After a powerful national and international campaign of solidarity, the two Zapatistas were released on 6 June. Negotiations resumed, and the two sides established a detailed list of subjects for discussion and the mechanisms of consultation and discussion which would be adopted.

Having "cleared the mines," the International Meeting against Neo-liberalism and for Humanity, convoked by the Zapatistas, could go ahead. It seems that the government reasoning was as follows: let them hold this meeting. We would have liked to forbid it, but it is not something which will seriously affect the balance of forces in the EZLN's favour. By allowing the Meeting, we show our good will, in the eyes of the world. Which government has ever allowed a guerrilla movement to organise a public international meeting in the territory it controls? When negotiations restart, we will



Comandante Tacho of the EZLN at the International Meeting against Neo-liberalism and for humanity.

adopt a much firmer attitude. No more significant concessions. We can resume our strategy of tiring and discrediting the enemy. If he again leaves the negotiating table, the advantage will be ours. Public opinion will become favourable to a strong fist approach.

Negotiations resumed on 6 August, focusing on the key theme of "democracy and justice." Several days earlier, Marcos had re-stated the Zapatistas' conditions for a peace settlement: replacing the current government delegation, demilitarisation of the region and implementation of specific social aid programmes, and "a guarantee that those Zapatistas who take off their ski masks will be able to travel freely," and participate, in security, in the political life of the country [*La Jornada*, 4 August].

Unfortunately, the government delegation refused all concessions. The emergence of the EPR, and the government's reaction, only worsened the prospects for dialogue. On September 2nd, the Zapatistas again walked away from the negotiating table.

What now?

The situation remains extremely tense. The Zapatistas are working on a number of fronts to break out of their isolation, and transform the EZLN into a civil force, the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN). According to Marcos, "the transformation of the EZLN into the FZLN takes two paths. The first is the construction of the Front itself, as an alternative, alongside other, civil Zapatistas. This process is under way. The FZLN is now present in all but one of Mexico's 32 states. The main characteristic which the FZLN inherits from the EZLN is the injunction not to struggle for power. FZLN representatives cannot present

themselves as candidates in local or national elections, or hold such an office.

The second path we are following is that of dialogue with the government. What matters here are the political and social conditions which will allow the EZLN to select the right political path, so as to take our demands forward. The government speaks with a forked tongue. They claim to want a negotiated solution, but in fact they are increasing the military pressure." [E.T.] ★

Reforming the state

An EZLN-sponsored Special Forum on reforming the state was held in San Cristobal (Chiapas) from 30 June to 6 July. It seems to have been a great success. Over 1,000 representatives of a range of parties and dozens of social movements began to define the outlines of a programme for reforming the corrupt and authoritarian Mexican state, and discuss the next steps needed for the emancipation of the Mexican people. It also provided the EZLN with a public tribune, in the capital of Chiapas. The meeting was well-covered in the national media. It will have national repercussions.

Among the participants were representatives of two of the country's four parliamentary parties, the (left-wing) PRD of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the Labour Party (PT). Of Maoist origin, the PT is now close to the ruling PRI. Also present were El Barzón, (radical organisation of indebted businessmen), the Civil Dialogue Committees (which are forming the Zapatista National Liberation Front), a delegation of the Commission for Conciliation and Peace (COCOPA), the Socialist Revolution Party (PRS) and two groups identifying with the Fourth International; the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) and the Socialist Unity League (LUS). ★



PRT Conference

The Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT) held a congress on July 19-21st. This was the 8th congress since the party was founded in September 1976. Of 186 delegates, 35% were women, and 50% were peasants, mostly Indians. Only 30% of delegates had been in the PRT for longer than 10 years. Average length of membership was 5 1/2 years.

Mexican guests included the president of the Mexico City PRD, the head of the Workers Party parliamentary group, and representatives of the Socialist Revolutionary Current, the Socialist Alternative and the Socialist Party. Foreign guests included the Cuban Ambassador, Columbia's FARC guerrillas, and the International Secretariat of the Fourth International.

The congress resolved to seek ways to build a new, pluralist force on the Mexican left, and participate in both the left front and the broad front proposed by the EZLN (Zapatistas). Delegates saluted the Zapatistas' fundamental contribution to the new upsurge in mobilisations by indigenous peoples, and popular forces in general. A resolution on the indigenous question was approved. This document commits the PRT to struggle for the autonomy of Mexico's various indigenous peoples.

The conference also resolved to continue its efforts to build a revolutionary party, and the Fourth International. As well as the Zapatista's Intercontinental meeting for Humanity and against Neo-liberalism, the party resolved to continue its activities in the Sao Paulo Forum grouping of Latin American socialist and social democratic parties.

The new Central Committee has 45 members. Only 31% were members of the outgoing leadership (elected in 1992). Fourteen of the CC members are women. One of the first tasks of the new leadership will be to define PRT strategy in the 1997 elections. In 1994 the party supported Cardenas in the presidential election, and presented several parliamentary candidates on the list of Cardenas' Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD). One, Edgar Sanchez of the PRT Political Bureau, was elected to the federal parliament. [ET/JD] ★

Latin American left dialogue Sao Paulo Forum

by José Martínez Cruz

OVER 120 PARTIES SENT DELEGATES TO the 6th meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum, a unique gathering of the Latin American left. This year's meeting was held in the Salvadorian capital, San Salvador. As well as the 187 delegates, there were 289 guests, and 44 observers from European, Asian, Oceanic and North American progressive organisations.

The Latin American left is in the middle of re-defining itself, and once again the forum was an important breath of fresh air, and an opportunity to redevelop political relations between the various political formations present.



Veteran Peruvian peasant leader and internationalist Hugo Blanco at the Intercontinental meeting for humanity, Chiapas.

In the months leading up to the Forum, continental workshops had been organised on specific themes, including migration, women, parliamentary activity, the environment, culture, identity and youth.

It is hardly new to say that we need an open debate on the future of socialism. For the delegates to this Forum, this debate was understood as the search for new models, and a new direction. Many participants stressed the importance of re-founding ourselves in ethical values like transparency of political life, fraternity, truth, and solidarity, as we face a system which perverts these values.

We agreed to organise a campaign in each country on the basis of the final document of the Forum. During 1997 we will deepen the analysis we have begun concerning the role of local and municipal government, the nature of power, and questions of access to that power.

Delegates stressed the importance of joint action by the Latin, Canadian and US left to protest violations of immigrants rights, particularly in the fields of working conditions and access to citizenship. There are plans to create an international network for the defence of migrants' rights, and put pressure on our various legislative bodies in order that they apply the

relevant international conventions. A specific all-Americas meeting on this theme is being planned.

We also resolved to support the "Latino march" planned for Washington DC on 12 October. This date is the anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas in 1492. Delegates will also try to build participation at the international workers meeting planned for Summer 1997 in Havana, Cuba.

This was the first time a women-only caucus met within the Sao Paulo Forum. The 49 participants initiated discussion on a wide range of economic and political proposals, sexuality, human rights, and the role of women in the media. They decided to organise a second continent-wide workshop on this theme, so as to make a better contribution to the reflection of the whole Forum on these themes.

A significant number of parliamentary representatives from the Forum's participating parties attended the preparatory workshop in Cuba earlier this year. Discussion centred on the needs and difficulties of bringing our parliamentary work into phase with the social movements.

This meeting was the first occasion within the Forum process for a meeting of representatives of the participating youth organisations. They resolved to participate together at the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students, which will be held in Cuba next summer.

Many delegates are in favour of creating a permanent secretariat, and some kind of Sao Paulo Foundation. The possibilities will be examined more closely at the next Forum, which will be held in Brazil (either in Porto Alegre or in Brasilia) at the end of July 1997.

Participants overwhelmingly voted to maximise the links of solidarity between the Forum and the Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and against Neo-liberalism, which was being held in Chiapas, Mexico at the initiative of the Zapatistas (EZLN). A Forum Commission, led by El Salvador's Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) participated at the Zapatista event, basing their intervention on the Forum's deliberations. ★

[The author is a leading member of Mexico's Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT), Mexican supporters of the Fourth International.]

• Next month in **International Viewpoint** we will publish a special report on the Sao Paulo Forum

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New PRD leadership Boost for left

IN THE THREE MONTHS LEADING up to July 21st, the opposition Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) has been dominated by an internal election campaign to choose the new party leadership. The left was trying to replace Portirio Munoz Ledo, a party "baron," who had developed a current to the right of party leader Cuauhtémoc Cardénas.

The PRD today is "above all a professional electoral machine, with all the vices and habits of this country's other such machines, all institutionalised by the state, and financed with 'state' money — i.e. our money" warns Adolfo Gilly, editor of the radical left magazine *Viento del Sur*. "Many people [who are attracted by the Zapatistas] are disgusted by this machine and its customs. But don't be fooled. When the moment comes to vote, they will choose the PRD, because they have no other electoral choice. And, despite everything, the party's *Cardénista* [left populist] ideology is still alive. The PRD invokes this memory regularly, even if it rarely respects it!"

A large section of the progressive population followed the campaign. Over 400,000 PRD members visited one of the 2,300 voting stations. The result was a clear victory for Lopez Obrador, the candidate most closely associated with the popular movement, and the left in the PRD.

Lopez left the ruling PRI in 1987, alongside Cardénas and Munoz Ledo. He led the campaign to challenge the massive electoral fraud of 20 November 1994, which "elected" a PRI candidate as governor of the oil-producing state of Tabasco.

Lopez Obrador also supported the Indian communities of Chintalpa, who challenged the way the PEMEX oil company exploits their natural resources. In 1973-92, PEMEX pumped 8.5 bn. barrels of oil, which were sold for \$130 bn. None of this money was invested in the Indian communities of Chintalpa which have been devastated by PEMEX's activities. On the contrary, their living standards have declined.

The fraudulent election provoked an enormous popular reaction, and violent confrontations. Discontent is still high. Especially since Lopez Obrador found proof that the "successful" candidate spent \$72 m. on his campaign — \$250 for every vote, more than double the salary of a typical worker!

Lopez Obrador's success in these internal PRD elections may energise the popular, radical base of the party. During his electoral campaign, he proposed a rapprochement of the PRD with the Zapatistas of the EZLN. ★

The other front

Over the last six months, the most leftist sections of the popular movement have built up the Wide Front of Construction of the National Liberation Movement (FACMLN), which groups a number of peasant and workers' organisations, and urban community groups. It is also supported by some regional deputies of the PRD, particularly in Guerrero state. The FACMLN has its origins in the "ultra-left" current of the National Democratic Convention, a now-defunct organisation created by civil supporters of the EZLN. This new front may win significant support in a number of regions and sectors, despite its deep sectarianism towards the other currents of the radical left. And the FACMLN is building itself as an alternative to the Zapatistas' EZLN. [E.T.] ★



The anti-party party?

THE EZLN'S "DISTANCE, WITH REGARD TO political parties, has often been interpreted as an anti-party attitude. Some activists in the Chiapas solidarity movements continually claim that the Zapatistas reject dialogue with political parties and, therefore, the solidarity movements should do the same!. In fact, Subcomandante Marcos recently explained, this "distance" reflects above all the EZLN critique of "those parties which claim [aspire] to have a monopoly on political representation, and whose relationship with the public consists in asking [us] to delegate [our] political participation to them [...]"

Unless the political parties realise that we need a non-party space so that society can act, can struggle for its rights, without having to join one or other of the parties, or join the Zapatista National Liberation Front, or some other structure [...] then we will reach a point where we will have a political class which has been imposed on us by the government, and parties which follow a rhythm quite different from the wider historical rhythm of the society."

The EZLN called on its supporters to participate in the August 1994 Presidential election, in the hope that Cuauhtémoc Cardénas of the PRD would defeat the incumbent of the PRI. [IV #259, 09/94] Marcos recently argued that "Cardénismo is, naturally, about rather more than the figure of Cuauhtémoc Cardénas. For millions of Mexicans, including those in the EZLN, it has signified that a good government is possible, and that [Cardénas in government] would respect us.

You can reproach Cardénismo and señor Cardénas, with everything — except to have sold out or given up [...] Whether you like it or

not, the PRD is today the only possible intermediary within the political class. Non of the other parliamentary parties is here, available for discussion."

The EZLN has also proposed to create an opposition or "broad" front (*Frente amplio*). According to Marcos, "some people imagine [this front] through electoral glasses, as an arrangement of political parties. Others, like the EZLN, give it a broader horizon, in terms of peace, justice and dignity. But whatever the level and the importance, the creation of this broad front does pose some problems. First of all: who will convoke it, and with what specific goal? [...]"

But, one way or another, to the extent that it adopts the transition to democracy as its goal, this broad or opposition front should rely on the participation of *Cardénismo* as a social movement. And, concretely, with the participation of Cuauhtémoc Cardénas."

Marcos also said that the Zapatista's newly-forming civil branch, the Zapatista National Liberation Front, "must resist the tendency, which is beginning to appear, of building a new ivory tower for a sectarian grouping, rather than building an open organisation." ★

Source: EZLN Subcomandante Marcos' address to the Transition to Democracy working group, part of the EZLN-sponsored Special Forum on reforming the state, which was held in San Cristobal (Chiapas), from 30 June to 6 July.

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Marcos tells EPR guerrillas

We don't want your support!

Eric Toussaint

ON 28 JUNE 1996, FORTY MASKED MEN WITH AK 47 rifles burst into a public meeting organised to mark the first anniversary of the assassination of 17 local peasants by the police. Among the crowd of about 1,000 was PRD leader (and former Presidential candidate) Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, scheduled to speak at the meeting. This was the first public appearance of guerrillas of the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR). In the following weeks a number of incidents involving the group took place in Guerrero, one of Mexico's poorest states, where Indian self-defence groups have existed for many years. Guerrero is best known abroad as the state which includes Acapulco. Mexico's minister of Defence called the EPR "a real guerrilla force, an amalgamation of radical groups, with better military equipment than the Zapatistas [*Proceso*, July 7th].

The EPR presents itself as the armed wing of the self-styled Popular Democratic Revolutionary Party, which is the result of the fusion of 15 organisations, mostly of Maoist origin, including PROCUP, a Mao-Stalinist party similar to Peru's Shining Path.

The EPR says it has "no links with the Zapatistas of the EZLN. Though there have been attempts to build such links. Their uprising on 1st January 1994 raised great hopes... We supported their struggle... They have now chosen the path of negotiations. In this sense, there is an essential difference between them and us. [EPR press conference, August 8th].

The emergence of the EPR has been followed by a systematic militarisation of the state of Guerrero. More than 12,000 soldiers have been deployed (without reducing the number of troops deployed to surround the Zapatistas in Chiapas). Many peasants have been arrested and tortured to admit their supposed membership in the EPR. Only after confession have they been allowed to see a lawyer. Most have immediately refuted their "confession" and denounced the torture [*La Jornada*, July 14th].

The EZLN immediately distanced itself from the EPR. Zapatista Sub-comandante Marcos has pointed out that the Zapatistas have a mandate from the indigenous base communities, which the ERP does not. We reprint here the full text of an open letter he recently addressed to EPR militants on behalf of the Zapatistas.

On August 28th, the EPR attacked ten army and police positions in Guerrero, Oaxaca, Guanajuato and the state of Mexico. There have been other incidents since. These activities have hindered EZLN negotiations with the government. They were one of the factors which led the Zapatistas to break-off of negotiations on September 2nd. ★

To: the soldiers and commanders of the Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP)

I write to you on behalf of the men, women, children and elderly of the support bases of the EZLN, of the men and women soldiers, regular and irregular of the EZLN [...] We are aware of the respectful tone you use to refer to us. We respect those who respect us: that is why we do not respect the government [...]

You have declared that "if a wrong should arise which would make the EZLN abandon its dialogue [with the government], they would have [the ERT's] modest support, as they now have our respect." [...]

I only want to say that we do not want your support. We do not need it, we do not seek it. We have our resources, modest, true, but they are ours.

Until now we are happy not to owe any political organization, national or international, anything. The support which we seek and need, is that of national and international civil society, their peaceful and civic mobilizations is what we await. Of weapons and soldiers, we have enough. As for military actions, we have the capacity we have and this is enough. What we seek, what we need and want is that all those people without a party and organization make agreements about what they want and do not want and become organized in order to achieve it (preferably through civil and peaceful means), not to take power, but to exercise it. I know you will say this is utopian and unorthodox, but this is the way of the Zapatistas. Too bad. Go on with your path and let us follow ours. Do not save or rescue us. No matter our fate, we want it to be ours. Do not worry about us.

We will not attack you. We have not fallen into the game of the dominant power which promotes the confrontation between the "good" and the "bad" guerrilla. You are not our enemy nor will we be yours. We also do not view us as "rivals in the direction of the struggle in Mexico." [...]

We do not agree with any of the pejorative labels which they have given you (and which yesterday they gave to us). To make those labels useless and inapplicable, cost us a great deal. Besides death, it cost us a great deal of work and political patience. We did not win our legitimacy with our weapons; we won it with long years of political labor with those who are now our leaders: the indigenous communities, and with the dialogue (which we have sought even at the risk of our own security, autonomy and independence) with national and international civil society.

This is what I meant when I said that the EPR had to win its legitimacy in the eyes of the people of Mexico. I did not say this to deny it to you, but to point out that it is not the political leaders (even when they are guerrillas) which give legitimacy to a movement, nor the declarations of bureaucrats. It is laughable that yesterday they ran over each other to call us "terrorists" without a social base and product of a "foreign" implantation of elements of radical university groups with a 70's ideology. Now these same people run over themselves to say that you are the "terrorists" and the EZLN has an "authentic social base".

However, it is useful to point out and repeat, that

we are different. And the difference is not what you and others have insisted upon, that you do not dialogue with the government, that you do struggle for power [...] while we do "dialogue" (attention; we do this not only with the government but in a much larger sense with national and international civil society); and we do not struggle for power [...] The difference between us is that our political proposals are diametrically different and this is evident in the discourse and the practice of the two organizations

[...] As I write this letter, I hear the news about your military actions and propaganda actions in Guerrero, Oaxaca and the state of Mexico. All I can say is that these actions appear to unite the element of surprise and sensation, and they have demonstrated once again, that this government constructs virtual realities around the declarations of its bureaucrats and not their actions. Nevertheless, the propaganda action in Chiapas appears, at best, useless and foolish and, at worst, provocative in the worst sense. This action occurs towards the end of our consultations and jeopardized the lives and liberty of the indigenous leaders who, in these days, were gathering the opinions of the communities. Did you not know we were in the midst of this process?

Why carry out a propaganda action in Chiapas if you had already demonstrated your capacity to move in other parts of Mexico? Was this to prove that you also have sympathizers in the zones where the EZLN is found? Have you fallen into the trap of the "rivalries" promoted by the government? Meanwhile, the cost of these actions will not be paid by your people, but by the Zapatista indigenous communities (who, I will remind you, have undergone almost a thousand days resisting with their armed rebellion and their poetry).

The federal army has increased its military pressure on the Zapatista communities and is installing itself now in garrisons in the northern part of the state. The government "argues" that it is not violating the spirit of the law for the dialogue, but that its military operations are "targeting the EPR" [...]

You have declared that you do not wish to "interfere" in the dialogue of the EZLN. You have already done so and you knew it. Why do you say you will not "interfere in the dialogue"? We do not deny you your actions, we only ask that you be accountable.

The remaining consequences of your operations remain to be seen. It is to be expected that they will launch a strong campaign accusing you of "terrorism", "delinquency" and the other etceteras which already fill the mouths of bureaucrats and corporate leaders. The government will presumably follow its line of "good guerrilla versus bad guerrilla" and you will be compared to us (a comparison which will be used to favor us and harm you). It is also to be expected that the government will harden its position against us, and will decide for a "military solution." The scenario in public opinion is almost ready and we have no illusions about their will to negotiate [...]

I wish you good health, and a good barricade for what awaits you. ★

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos
La Jornada, September 4th 1996

The economic challenge facing South Africa

Apartheid is dead, but South Africa remains one of the most unequal countries in the world. **Carl Brecker** describes the biggest capitalist economy in Africa

THE RECENT RELEASE OF SEVERAL STRATEGIC policy documents, which express the views of government, business and labour, provides a convenient starting point from which to examine trends within the South African economy.

The world economy is not expanding and faces recession despite pockets of growth in different countries and regions. South Africa is vulnerable to changes in the world because we import most of the machinery we need to modernise our economy. We can however lessen the impact of the downturn in the world economy by radically restructuring our own economy. A dilemma thus faces the people of South Africa. Either we transform our social system so that it serves the needs of the majority of our people or we all remain the victims of the system, benefiting only from crumbs that fall from the bosses' table.

Mass Unemployment

One good measure of the depth of the social and economic crises in our country is the scale of present and future joblessness. During the last recession (1989-93) the economy lost almost a half-million jobs. One estimate is that over the next five years an additional 1.4 million people - with about 7 million dependants - will become unemployed. Unemployment increases by about 300,000 every year.

The South African Reserve Bank recently reported that only 52,000 new jobs were created between 1993-1995. Last year the economy created only 12,000 new jobs. Yet, about 350,000 - 400,000 new job seekers come onto the labour market every year. The economy actually shed formal job positions during the first half of 1995 because of provincial government rationalisation, among other things. Recently the government auditor told parliament that rationalisation of the public service could involve a likely staff cut of 120,000.

Key sectors of the economy continue to shed jobs in mining, manufacturing and even agriculture. Commercialisation of state enterprises has already resulted in substantial job losses in the 1990's (Eskom 16,000; Transnet 40,000; Denel 15,000). Unemployment has reached historic heights with half the labour force unable to find jobs. One estimate is that over 4.5 million people were unemployed in 1994 and it's much worse now in 1996.

Many of those workers who do have jobs don't do so well. 10% of the workers earn

less than R250 (about \$55) a month. Domestic workers earn approximately R400 a month, but in some areas as little as R120. The farm workers' average monthly wage is R650, and is often much less. Black workers earn an average of only 13% of the per capita income of whites.

What economic growth there has been has not been matched by job creation. The recent budget was built on the assumption that with a 5% growth rate only a paltry 1.5% more jobs will be created this year, even though the annual population growth is above 3%. This means that unless the economy grows much faster than at present, unemployment will continue to get worse.

Gross Inequality

A third of South Africa's inequality is caused by unemployment. One third of the working people of South Africa live in poverty equal to the Congo while the white 12% of the population live in first world opulence like the USA.

While blacks make up 76% of the population, the black share of income amounts to only 29% of total income. Whites who make up less than 13% of the population take away 58.5% of total income. In 1993 the richest 15% of population enjoyed an average income of about 67 times as high as the poorest 20%.

The poorest 40% of households earn less than 6% of the total income, while the richest 10% earn more than 50% of the total income. Company executives earn forty times more than entry-level workers. The personal income of the poorest 40% fell 25% between 1975-1991; the next 40% rose 7.1%. Without even mentioning inflation, which is above 10%.

The slight shift in personal income from whites to black between 1960-1994 has gone to the richest echelons of black society, merely changing inequality from being race to class based.

Underlying Economic Trends

Under apartheid, monetary, fiscal, trade and competition policies were protective and defensive. Since the Government of National Unity (GNU), it has been turned around to facilitate the country's re-integration into the global economy. Policies of open trade, of deregulation of foreign exchange, of ending tariff protection, of privatisation, and other liberalisation policies are a big part of the reason why the dreams of liberation are not being realised.

The Reserve Bank recently said that with 85% of capacity now taken up, manufacturing (which led the expansion) was hard pressed to maintain high growth. Manufac-



turing began slowing down around mid-1995 when optimum capacity was reached. Food, iron, chemicals, vehicles and paper, which together represent more than half of total manufacturing, only reached half of their capacity because of insufficient demand. With mass unemployment and no wage income for half our labour force, this lack of demand is not surprising.

The GNU, despite the Restructuring and Development Programme (RDP), has been unable to stimulate the economy sufficiently, partly because of its monetarist policies and partly due to the size of its debt. Government debt grew from R5.5 bn. in 1971 to the enormous sum of R238 bn. in 1995. Interest, which government paid on that growing debt, rose from R4.9 bn. in 1985/6 to R34.3 bn. for 1995/6. This is a growth of 600% over 10 years. The debt cost for 1996/7 is estimated at R34.4 bn. which is equal to 20% of total expenditure. This means that, today, out of every R5 which government spends, R1 is spent on interest payments. It also means that debt costs are the second biggest item on the budget after education. Debt costs are double the amount spent on health care, equal to that on education. Paying interest on the debt means taking money away from other government expenditure - like water, infrastructure, the RDP, etc.

The fear is that, given the weakness of the world economy, South Africa may slip back into recession. Government could do something about it by radically intervening in the economy. It could direct investment according to a macro-economic development plan, use the public sector to lead infrastructure growth, and push the private investors into action through a combination of policy mechanisms. In short, the monetarist and liberalisation policies of the 'free' marketers must be abandoned if great human tragedy, worse than the last recession, is to be avoided.

Growth strategies

Deep division exists between business, labour and government over economic policy. These differences reflect the class interests they represent. Business' proposals

turn around increased private fixed investment intended to expand production for profit. Labour, on the other hand, places social equity at the centre of its proposals.

The debate on growth strategy is going before the NEDLAC tripartite forum in the near future. The differences are so wide that no party expects agreement on a general social accord. A number of mini-accords, each tackling individual policy issues, is more likely.

Remember the RDP?

The Restructuring and Development Programme (RDP) was to transform the country in 25 years, thereby overcoming the legacy of apartheid and setting surface on a path of sustainable growth. If media publicity was to be believed, the RDP was the centre of government development policy. But government policy was heavily influenced by the Reserve Bank which amounted to tight control over fiscal (government spending) policy. This control constrained government's ability to carry through the RDP. In less than three years after the first elections the RDP office, which was created to fulfil election promises, has been closed down and its staff and projects scattered throughout the various ministries.

This new government strategy is intended to generate a quantum leap in growth and job creation. It intends to do so through sustained growth in fixed investment, while also redressing income inequality and providing a social security system for the poor. The target is to create sustainable annual growth of GDP at 6% creating 300,000 - 500,000 jobs a year by the year 2000. It intends to double the poorest household's share of national income and to provide basic infrastructure by 2005. This new growth strategy is to be implemented with the 1997/8 budget.

The strategy document is not yet released. Thabo Mbeki is both guiding this process and distributing the RDP projects throughout government departments. Mbeki admits that fast growth in itself will not eliminate poverty nor improve income distribution - that depends on the growth path.

Government's framework for private sector investment in infrastructure (the National Infrastructure Investment Framework) is a clear sign that capital will drive the future growth of South Africa. Effectively big capital has agreed to buy into infrastructure development at a profit. Over the next five years surface needs between R170 bn - R230 bn investment in infrastructure. At a recent RDP conference April 1996 (which effectively cut the heart out of the RDP program) business agreed to mobilise finance to tackle infrastructure backlogs. This will be done on a project basis which offers private capital market-related returns.

Growth For All

This is the name of the growth strategy document published by the South Africa Foundation which is spokesman for 50 of the

largest corporations. It is their development strategy designed to create substantial jobs over the next 20 years, 1996-2015. It aims at a growth rate of 3.5% - 4% leading, they say, to growth of 500,000 jobs a year. It aims at doubling per capita income on the assumption of the increasing efficiency of market reforms [and] further streamlining of government expenditure and revenue, a brisk privatisation program, flexibility of the labour market and a vigorous export drive.

The Foundation's labour reforms aim at creating a two-tier labour market. The new Labour Relations Act, they say, emphasises regulation (of wages and conditions) rather than flexibility, thus pricing surface out of the global markets. They want implementation of the LRA delayed indefinitely.

The COSATU, NACTU and Fedsal Labour Caucus at NEDLAC has made a submission on growth and development strategy, "Social Equity And Job Creation". For the labour movement "it is not growth per se which is the measure of the economy's success - it is growth which fosters job creation which is critical." The labour movement proposes eleven measures to create jobs in surface: public works and mass housing programmes; modernising our industrial base; 'job sharing' arrangements; pragmatic trade and tariff policies; expanding domestic demand and local purchasing policies; training and retraining the workforce; productivity increases in the economy; creating jobs in labour intensive processes; stopping retrenchments in the economy; a programme of land reforms; and stimulation of economic activity.

In this, as in all its other proposals, the labour movement has returned to the basic proposals of the RDP which after two years has just been put on the back burner by government. [It] is "seeking far reaching changes" to the corporate structure in the country because "the concentration of power in a few hands limits the prospect of inclusive economic decision-making". They propose to "break the stranglehold of big business in the economy" by setting up an anti-trust commission and then to negotiate an anti-trust policy in NEDLAC.

As Comrade Vavi of COSATU put it: "whites have to let go the economic reins of power". The unions expect to negotiate the core principles at NEDLAC. They are seeking agreement by business and government on all these proposals in the first half of 1996. And, as Comrade Vavi said, "mass strikes are not ruled out".

There is some hope that certain of labour's proposals could be accepted by big business and government. [But] whatever the outcome of the negotiations there is very little likelihood of affecting major changes to the lives of the majority within the next five years or so; not unless labour shifts its stance from negotiation to confronting and breaking the power of big business. Given the stance of the Labour Caucus in NEDLAC this seems unlikely in the short term. The immediate task is to build strong social organisations and movements to prepare the majority to apply their own solutions. ★



Massive repression of the new left

The military regime is trying to smash the PRD and intimidate the population.

MORE THAN 20 MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLES' Democratic Party (PRD) and associated organisations have been arrested since July 8 when the PRD and the Centre for Indonesian Labour Struggles (PPBI) led a strike and rally of 20,000 factory workers in Indonesia's second biggest city, Surabaya. The workers were seeking wage increases, improvements in health and safety conditions and an end to military intervention in union protests. Many workers also carried placards defending the democratic rights of the leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), Megawati Sukarnoputri, who is now no longer recognised by the government, and therefore the electoral commission, as the official leader of the PDI. Although the PRD and the PDI are different parties with different approaches to many issues, the PRD has taken a strong stand in defence of Megawati Sukarnoputri's and the PDI's democratic rights.

Not content with these arrests, the dictatorship began to escalate its black propaganda campaign against the PRD and affiliated organisations.

On July 27, the dictatorship also launched a military attack on the headquarters of Megawati's PDI. According to the National Human Rights Commission, originally set up by the dictatorship, at least 74 people are still missing after this attack. In the evening following the attack, when news of deaths spread among the community, spontaneous rioting occurred which lasted more than 24 hours. In the next stage of its campaign against the PRD, the regime has seized on the riots, which its own militaristic actions provoked, to further escalate its attack on the PRD.

The PRD was blamed for the riots although even six weeks after the riots, the regime was not able to bring forward one PRD member arrested in the course of rioting. Accompanying these false accusations has been a campaign against the PRD associating with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The main point of this campaign is to frighten people with the memory of how the regime suppressed the PKI in 1965 - namely mass slaughter, with almost two million people killed.

The Armed Forces has ordered the arrest of all PRD personnel, thereby forcing the party's associated mass organisations, the PPBI, SMID, National Peasants Union (STN) and the Network for Peoples Art (JAKER) to continue the struggle for democracy underground.

The dictatorship has been able to capture

17 leaders and members of the PRD, PPBI and SMID, including the PRD President, Mr Budiman Sujatmiko, the PRD Secretary General, Mr Petrus Haryanto, the PPBI secretary-general Mr I Pranowo and several provincial leaders. They are all now threatened with being charged and tried under the 1962 Anti-Subversion Law which allows for a maximum penalty of death. Dita Sari and her fellow activists are also threatened with the same law. No person ever put on trial in Indonesia under political laws

members of the PRD. We are not on the defensive here, we are on the offensive. The Anti-Subversion Law will be used against them."

So far, however, only three national leaders of PRD have been captured, Budiman Sujatmiko, Petrus Haryanti, PRD secretary general and Pranowo, PPBI secretary-general. Seventeen other PRD Members have been captured, including leaders of the branch of SMID in the Jabotek working class area.



has been found innocent. In the past, political activists tried under such laws who have also been accused of being communists have been executed.

The dictatorship's aim

It is clear that the dictatorship's aim is to destroy the PRD. The dictatorship has also arrested Mr Mochtar Pakpahan, a prominent labour advocate in Indonesia, whose arrest the PRD also condemns. The PRD headquarters in Jakarta and Surabaya have been raided by the military. The house of the head of SMID in Semarang has been attacked and that of a leader of textile workers in PPBI in Bogor has been physically attacked.

Meanwhile the state party, GOLKAR, has announced that it has mobilised its alleged millions of members to arrest the scores of leaders of the PRD still operating underground. The Armed Forces has ordered the arrest of all PRD members - an illegal order under Indonesian law which requires arrest warrants with specified crimes.

The Director General of Social and Political Affairs, Sutoyo, recently told the press, "The Armed Forces will go after all the

Budiman Sujatmiko, President of the PRD and thirteen other PRD prisoners held in Jakarta have refused to sign the reports on their interrogation. This is the first time political prisoners in Indonesia have refused to sign these reports, which are later used in trial proceedings. Sujatmiko has already protested the illegal interrogation by unauthorised persons. Sujatmiko was arrested by BAIS, the chief military intelligence agency, and not the police or attorney's office. BAIS has no legal authority to make arrests.

According to Bambang Wijoyanto, one of Sujatmiko's lawyers, the prisoners can not be legally detained if they do not sign these papers. In the meantime, the lawyers also complained that they were only allowed ten minutes with their clients and were not allowed to leave any books or documents. Thirty three lawyers have volunteered to form the Indonesian Justice and Law Defence Team (TPHKI) to defend Budiman and the other Jakarta PRD leaders and

Max Lane is National Co-ordinator of Australia's Action for Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET).

members. A similar team has been formed in Surabaya to defend Dita Sari and other prisoners in East Java.

Meanwhile, the media is having a field day with the issue of "reviving communism". Tabloid and entertainment magazines have published pages and pages of articles on PRD and its leaders. The campaign against the PRD has made it a household word throughout the country. The widely circulated weekly magazine, *Forum Keadilan*, published an eight page special supplement on the PRD. The daily press have made the attacks on the PRD the front page headline news. Newsboys are shouting "PRD! PRD!" as their papers are snapped up like hot cakes. By the end of the week, no party in Indonesia, not even the PDI, would have its prog-

ramme on wage rises, trade union rights, freedom of organisation, repeal of repressive laws, and a self-determination referendum in East Timor explained in detail to the Indonesian public to the same extent as the PRD.

Budiman Sujatmiko, Dita Sari and Andi Arief are on the verge of becoming folk heros. Long interviews with Budiman's parents have revealed that he was brilliant at drawing and won competitions, educated as a pious Moslem in his childhood, only knew communism from books, loved his mother and was a lover of former President Sukarno's ideas since he was ten. SMID leader Garda Sembiring's sister, in an interview in the mass tabloid "Detectives and Romance" explained that Garda always knew by instinct when his mother was sick and would come home and that ever since he entered the university everybody knew he was "dedicated to the defence of the people and the struggle for justice and truth."

Perverse praise

In Surabaya, Major General Soebgyo Hadisiswoyo, accompanied by several other high ranking military, informed the press that "from captured documents it is clear that the activities of the PRD group are not as simple as previously thought. It is obvious from its manifestos that the thinkers and planners of the PRD and very intelligent people who have a very great understanding of the course of Indonesian political developments." "Because of this," they went on to say, "it was the task of the nation to be vigilant against all those who speak in the name of democracy but teach communism."

The army newspaper, *Berita Yudha* (*News of War*) characterises the PRD as follows: "They operate in strategic areas, among students and workers, forming public opinion through leaflets and publications. Wherever there are leaflets and an action of over 1000 people, it's the PRD behind it. They are very clever and intelligent young people. They are not only very theoretically

brilliant rivalling any scholar, but also throw themselves into the field. They are not only brilliant orators casting a spell over the people, but also understand the people in great detail." According to the newspaper, the PRD is run by young people. Quoting unnamed "activist sources", the article said that the group probably had links with "left wing social democratic" forces overseas. An army intelligence report quoted in the newspaper said that the PRD was linked to the New Peoples Army in the Philippines, Amnesty International, the Asian Students Association and the Australian workers movement.

The PRD was first formed in 1994 as the Peoples Democratic Union and transformed itself into a party in April 1996. It was formed by activists from SMID, PPBI, STN and JAKER. These organisations developed in the early 1990s when student activists joined up with workers and farmers in a series of joint campaigns for improvements in workers and peasants conditions. They developed a strategy of building their strength through mass mobilisation of workers and adopted a general program aimed at achieving a multi-party democracy, with the right to freedom of organisation for workers, peasants and all oppressed sections of society.



PRD Chairman Budiman Sudjatmiko faces trial under the 1962 Anti-Subversion Law. No-one accused under this law has ever been found innocent. Those accused of communism are usually executed.

On television, radio and in the newspapers the PRD has been attacked as attempting to revive communism and socialism in Indonesia and of using the PDI issue for its "own purposes". In a press briefing following the Politics and Security Committee of Cabinet, Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security, General Soesilo Soedarman stated that "the unrest... was manipulated by a third party, called the Peoples Democratic Party (PRD)". He stated that they used "PKI methods". Holding up the PRD manifesto, he stated that the PRD does not mention the state ideology of Panca Sila anywhere, but states that it is based on "popular social democracy". He also explained to the press that the PRD program calls on the different sectors of society, such as students, workers and peasants, to oppose the "New Order dictatorship". "For me this

is the same as the PKI," said General Soedarman.

Dita's "diary" discovered

Intelligence sources have released quotes from the alleged captured diary of gaoled trade union activist Dita Sari. Sari, who is General Secretary of PPBI (Centre for Labour Struggles) was arrested during a demonstration of 20,000 factory workers on July 8, alongside Coen Hussein Ponto, a leader of the National Peasants' Union, and many other activists. Dita has been charged under Indonesia's anti-subversion laws.

According to these regime sources, Dita's notes on the 10,000 strong workers strike at Tandes read "The Tandes Rally at the Parliament. Agitation at the parliament - a success! Success! Almost clashed with the police. Spent the night at Tunjangan. Drank tea, bought the papers. There is so much to do, and all must be done so quickly." Later the military seemed to be gleeful about her alleged comment that "the party has been established. Well, 31 years buried, slaughtered, humiliated, banned, kept under constant surveillance, betrayed. Now it is being built again. God, please bless our struggle. Is it not your promise to raise up the poor, so that some day they lead the world."

It has been announced that the military is in particular looking for "Daniel Teacoli alias Kusuma". Described as a 36 year old former history student at the University of Indonesia, he is alleged by the military to be the "conceiver and ideologue" of the PRD, though the military state no specific position he is supposed to hold. Gatra, quotes a source in the Armed Forces headquarters, stating that this Daniel was raised for two years in Cuba and masters English, German and Dutch. He is alleged to be so committed that one of his children is named Dipa, the first name of the former chairman of the PKI. Described as a s light in colour, slim and with thick hair, he is alleged to have begun recruiting cadre in 1989 in the university city of Yogyakarta which became the embryo of the PRD. Gatra does not quote Armed Forces sources to say where the alleged Daniel is at the moment.

The PRD has continued its activities even as these attacks unfold. On July 28, there was a joint protest by PDI and PRD in Surabaya; PRD led a 3,000 strike in Tandes on the same day; and a protests of 500 students in Yogyakarta. "As a defender of the peoples' sovereignty, as a party of the oppressed, [the PRD] will continue to struggle with all its strength, ability, force and stamina to continue the struggle for social justice, peace and democracy," reads a statement issued on July 31. "Democracy is the bridge that can lead to a more civilised society, reflecting the peoples aspirations. The PRD believes that 'the voice of the people, is the voice of God.' And in the middle of the current repression, with the PRD's leaders being hunted down by the regime, in the midst of the witch hunts, we will continue this struggle."

One PRD leader told *Green Left Weekly*, that their reorganisation to work under the new severe repression is proceeding well. ★

Megawati's defiant democrats

ON SATURDAY JULY 28th COMMANDOS DISGUISED AS supporters of the pro-Suharto faction of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) entered the national headquarters of the PDI to oust anti-Suharto PDI members. The dictatorship had ordered those occupying the headquarters to stop using it as a place for "democratic open forums" and to leave it to allow the officially recognised PDI leadership, of Mr Soeryadi, to take over. The dictatorship has organised a fake congress of the PDI without going through the formal democratic channels of the PDI, buying, forcing and arbitrarily choosing so called local delegates. The fake congress elected Soeryadi as a new chairperson, supposedly replacing Megawati Sukarnoputri, the legitimate elected leader of the PDI.

According to ASIET'S sources in Jakarta, at least 47 people were shot and knifed to death during the attack on pro-Megawati PDI supporters. Liberal Moslem leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, has told the media that about 100 people were killed during the attack on the PDI office. 200 were arrested. Spokespersons for Megawati have stated that there 158 of her supporters who are still missing.

Almost 10,000 PDI members later rallied to protest the attack on their headquarters. The rally was also dispersed violently by steel baton wielding military causing scores of injuries. As news of the attack on the PDI headquarters and on the rally spread, tens of thousands of young people descended onto the streets venting their anger against anything that symbolised the greed and wealth of Indonesia's current rulers. Several banks, the Ministry of Agriculture, and motor vehicle showrooms were smashed and burnt.

The PDI was formed in the 1970s when the dictatorship forced a number of non-Moslem political parties to fuse together into the PDI. Moslem parties were forced to fuse into the United Development Party (PPP). The forced fusion was aimed at eliminating the specific identity of the parties, some of which had deep roots in different parts of Indonesian society. The largest of the parties forced to fuse into the PDI was the PNI. Although the PNI had been purged of many of its more radical leaders, many of whom had been executed in 1965, it remained a large party with many supporters in small town and village Indonesia, especially in Java, Sumatra and Bali.

The other reason why the PDI has developed its radical image is the persistent struggle its membership has waged over the last three years against the dictatorship's interference in its internal life, especially over the issue of the chairpersonship of Megawati Sukarnoputri. Ever since she first came forward as a potential PDI head, the dictatorship has attempted to keep her out. It was necessary for the PDI to conduct extraordinary congresses to overcome the regime's interference. The Megawati PDI leadership is the first political leadership operating inside the dictatorship's formal political system that has persistently defied the dictatorship. This fact, combined with the reputation of Megawati's father, former President Sukarno, for being completely uncorrupted and a friend of the "little people", has transformed Megawati into a symbol of defiance and the desire for democracy.

As long as Megawati remains defiant against the attacks of the dictatorship, her popularity will continue to grow. Mass discontent with the Suharto dictatorship has always been high but has been deepening in recent years. The gap between rich and poor has been highlighted by the emergence of between 20-30 hugely wealthy families in control of gigantic business corporations which have become

HAVING ORDERED HIS
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referred to in Indonesian society as "konglomerat". The biggest of these belong to Suharto's children and close personal and political associates. At the same time, members of Indonesia's rapidly expanding and extremely young working class earn only \$2-\$3 per day, often in very dangerous workplaces. Peasants face higher and higher taxes and other administrative charges. Any acts of protest by workers or peasants against low wages or corruption have been met by military repression.

• Underground in Jogjakarta with the PRD

Many other national PRD leaders remain free and operational, including Andi Arif, chairperson of SMID. Despite the hunt for him, he still is able to organise media interviews. In the national weekly magazine *Gatra* of 24 August an article on the rise of discussion groups and interest in Marxism in the university city of Jogjakarta began: "Andi Arif still speaks explosively." It goes on to quote him one month after the arrest order: "I'm still here in Yogyakarta, heh, quite secure you see." He had arranged the meeting with the journalist somewhere in Jogjakarta and had safely got there "wearing a T-shirt with the word democracy on it, and a picture of a person holding up a red fist."

Arif confirmed to the journalist that student activists had indeed discussed Marxism, even communism, as a part of their studies. "Discussion about Marxism, the new left, was free on our campus. The vice-chancellor allowed us to study whatever we liked." The article went on to document how a number of activists involved in these discussions were later arrested and gaoled for circulating the books of the great Indonesian novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

Arif also told *Gatra* that SMID activists would not surrender. "We have issued instructions that SMID activists should not surrender. The government should follow the rule of law. Lets see them prove PRD's involvement in the rioting. They shouldn't just be lashing out like this." Assisting the PRD's ongoing efforts to speak to the masses, *Gatra* also reported the statement sent to the press via Email from his hidden headquarters by the head of the PRD's Propaganda department, I Gusti Anom Astika, "Don't waste the sacrifices that have already been made in the struggle to restore the peoples sovereignty. Close ranks, consolidate, produce leaflets ... continue the struggle!" ★

The Armed Forces have attacked the PDI for being the Trojan Horse inside of which can be found the radical PRD. However, this attack has not drawn any support except from the dictatorship's own front organisations and extreme conservative Islamic groups. Liberal Moslem leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, has rejected the military's claim that the rioting on July 27 was caused by a "communist plot" and has asserted that the Indonesian people will not believe the regime. A range of academics and other commentators have criticised the attack on the PRD, either saying that they are not communist but radical left or not even left but radical or rejecting the whole process of communist fear mongering.

The publication, MONAS, also broadcast on the Internet, has also quoted an unnamed SMID activist commenting on statements by Megawati Sukarnoputri, the popular chairperson of the PDI, no longer recognised as such by the dictatorship. Interrogators have been trying to link her to the "Budiman case". PRD leader Budiman Sudjatmiko had been a regular speaker at the Democratic Free Forums being held at the PDI office.

Megawati told interrogators that she did not know Budiman. According to MONAS, the SMID spokesperson also said that SMID "did not know Megawati." According to SMID she had not outlined her vision for the future while she was in parliament and had rarely spoken out. Asked why SMID members supported Megawati, the SMID activist answered: "That is part of our commitment to democracy. We saw that the action by the military against PDI, led as it was by Megawati, was not something that we could keep silent about. Our support for Megawati's PDI is a part of our overall response to abuse of power by the military, such as in the case of the Ujung Padang, Priok and Lampung [massacres], East Timor struggle and many others."

If Megawati, her PDI, Abdurrahman Wahid, the liberal Moslem community maintain their different forms of defiance and act in solidarity, the precedent of sustained defiance will provide the basis of a true mass democratic movement.★

International Day of Protest for Indonesia

"INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS in support of the Indonesian democratic movement are developing into one of the widest solidarity actions for many years," writes Max Lane, co-ordinator of Action for Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET).

The first major international event in the campaign will be an International Day of Protest for Human Rights and Democracy in Indonesia scheduled for October 28. October 28 is the anniversary of the 1928 Indonesian Youth Congress which helped united Indonesia's youth in its struggle against Dutch colonialism.

"In Australia there are already plans for 24hr hunger strike protests and vigils outside Indonesian consulates and Indonesian business houses in all Australia's major cities."

Support in Asia

Very strong signs of support are coming from the mass progressive forces in Asia, said Lane, especially the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU). General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, writes "the nightmarish memories of the large-scale slaughter of communists and progressive democrats in the Indonesia are still fresh in our minds. The ongoing witch hunt of PRD, PPBI and PDI leaders and activists marks a desperate attempt to nip in the bud a movement which promises to shape up as a great popular resurgence of Left and democratic aspirations."

Philippines Workers Solidarity (BMP) has committed itself to an action campaign in solidarity with the Indonesian workers movement. A press release issued on August 9 states that "Indonesian businesses in the Philippines which have connections with the Suharto dictatorship will be targets of the BMP's peaceful protest activities. Companies such as Metro Pacific, the consortium which bought the privatised Fort Bonifacio, is known to have substantial share holdings by members of the Suharto family."

At one Manila demonstration, BMP leader Sonny Melencio said Indonesia's high growth rates was based on the "blood and sweat of the Indonesian workers. We won't let that happen here". The crowd was then asked "Suharto will be coming here in November to attend the APEC conference. Will we allow him on Filipino soil?". "No" the workers shouted. In a statement read out at the demonstration, Nico Warouw, the overseas representative of Indonesia's Peoples Democratic Party, said that "the Philippines working class, student, peasant, and others are fighting against the regime of Ramos, a regime that has the same character as Suharto's.... In the spirit of internationalism, the oppressed people in all countries should fight together and help each other in order to throw away the oppressive and exploitative system."

Soon after the events in Jakarta on July 27, Thai NGOs also sent a protest statement to Jakarta. The statement condemned the Soeharto dictatorship's attack on the PDI campaign, the arrest of outspoken labour advocate Mochtar Pakpahan and the campaign targeting the PRD. In Hong Kong, the Asian

Students Association has organised a demonstration outside the Indonesian consulate condemning the crackdown on the PRD and other activists.

Support in Europe

"We are also very happy with the response to the ASIET appeal from Europe," said Lane. "The Indonesian community in the Netherlands is already organising the logistics of their hunger strike and has united behind support for the PRD. The Indonesian Tragedy Foundation, headed by author of the epic history of the Indonesian massacres of 1965,



Siregar, is helping co-ordinate the actions. The prestigious Wertheim award - named after Holland's prominent Indonesianist scholar, Professor W.F. Wertheim - has been given to Indonesia's young labour leader, Dita Sari, now in gaol. It looks like a big event will shape up in Holland on October 28. Other Dutch groups have also sent support to ASIET and will be working with the Indonesian activists."

According to Lane, the Party of Democratic Socialism in Germany has also taken up the issue and is campaigning in Germany's trade unions. A meeting of all Left and progressive parties represented in the European Parliament is soon scheduled to discuss the issue and, hopefully, decide on some kind of Europe wide campaign.

The issue will also be raised in the German parliament as soon as it resumes. The active Left Alternative Forum in Budapest in Hungary will also be preparing activities and has endorsed the campaign. The United Left in Spain has also indicated support and the issue has been covered in the major Spanish dailies.

PRD Overseas Representative, Mr Nico Warouw will be speaking at a number of solidarity events in Europe over the next two months. For further information contact ASIET at the address below.

North America.

The ASIET appeal has received over 150 endorsements from North American grass-roots political and labour organisations, says Lane. Branches of the Green Party, from California, to Massachusetts to New Orleans as well as many activists and branches of the progressive political network, Solidarity have sent in endorsements.★

Notes

1. Signed by Campaign for Popular Democracy (CPD); and joined by Union for Civil Liberty (UCL), Co-ordinating Committee of Human Rights Organisations in Thailand (CCHROT), Foundation for Children (FFC), Thammasat University Student Union (TUSU), Student Federation of Thailand (SFT), Student Christian Center, Youth Training Program for Social Development (YT), Thai Volunteer Service (TVS), Slum Dwellers' Organisation for Democracy, Labour Congress of Thailand (LCT), Political Economy Study Group, Forum of the Poor, Solidarity Asia, Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD), and various individuals students' groups, academic, journalist, social workers, NGOs and professionals in Thailand.
 2. Other US messages have come from leaders and activists in labour groups including Jobs with Justice, Washington DC., Communication Workers of America, International Union of Operating Engineers, Washington, DC., Coalition of University Employees, California, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Immigrant Rights Action Network, Nashville Tennessee, American federation of Government Employees, and the Service Employees International Union. Endorsements have also been sent from a range of community and activist organisations, ranging from the National Organisation of Women to Chicano and Pacific Islander migrant support organisations.
- In Canada, support has come from leaders and activists from the Canadian Auto Workers Social Justice Fund, British Columbia Teachers federation, and the Hamilton Coalition against Poverty.

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Vietnam's migrant labour scandal

The Vietnamese Government intends to send 100,000 workers overseas annually under its new "labour export" programme. In the first half of 1996, about 20,000 workers were dispatched. This dramatic increase in the number of guest workers (only 5,000 were sent abroad in 1995) is expected to alleviate the growing unemployment crisis. The country's "market economy with a socialist orientation" includes 8-10 million unemployed workers.

by Gerard Greenfield

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS market Vietnamese labour in the East Asian 'Tigers', Japan and the Middle East, by presenting them as hard-working and docile. Although it is argued that the rights of guest workers are protected, many of them have been subject to physical abuse, poor working conditions and underpayment of their wages. In 1993 Labour and Specialist Export Service (LSES) in Ho Chi Minh City signed two contracts with Korean firms, involving 2000 workers. The workers were sent to South Korea to work in garments, plastics and leather factories. The contracts signed by LSES banned workers from striking or quitting their jobs. This is despite the fact that LSES is a state-run company owned by the Labour Department of Ho Chi Minh City which responsible for protecting the well-being of Vietnamese workers both at home and abroad.

According to a report in the newspaper, *Tuoi Tre*, workers previously sent to South Korea by LSES had 20% of their wages paid to the Vietnamese government and another 4% deducted for bank transfers. This left workers with only US\$76 per month out of the US\$100 stipulated in their contracts. Despite the eight hour day agreed to in their contracts the working day was increased to 12 hours without overtime. When workers confronted the manager over pay and working conditions they were beaten and their wages were cut. One of the firms, Prince International, also paid US\$980 per month to a Vietnamese labour official from LSES to "manage" the Vietnamese workers.

New Destinations

Despite the experience of workers already sent to South Korea these "exports" will continue. A total of 4500 Vietnamese workers were sent to South Korea in 1993. In 1994, Vinaconex, a state-run trading company under the Ministry for Construction signed a contract with a South Korean firm, Dong A (East Asia) Construction to send 2,000 workers to Libya. And in 1995 over 5,000 workers were sent to South Korea.

The government is also seeking to expand the market for Vietnamese labour in Taiwan and Japan. In May 1993 the Vietnamese government lobbied the Taiwanese government to permit the employment of

Vietnamese guest workers as a means of alleviating Taiwan's labour shortage. Two months later an "agreement on labour imports" was signed and the first group of 1000 workers was sent to work in construction and textiles companies later that year. Since then several agreements have been signed with the Taiwanese government, which is seeking to use the Vietnamese workers to replace the country's relatively 'expensive' and 'militant' Filipino workers.

At present there are 15,000 Vietnamese guest workers in East Asia and the Middle East, but this does not include the tens of thousands of Vietnamese workers still in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Today, only 5,000 of the 90,000 Vietnamese guest workers in the former USSR have regular employment. Low wages (averaging US\$20-30 per month) have forced many to leave their jobs in search of other work. Despite the rhetoric about training, 40% of the workers sent overseas were employed in labour-intensive light manufacturing and another 26% were employed in heavy industry and construction. According to an official report in 1994:

"Some dissatisfaction was expressed over limited training opportunities, and 11% of workers returned home because of violating labour discipline. Some workers complained of low wages, poor living and working conditions."

These workers have been in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe for over a decade. Between 30,000 to 50,000 were sent there under a special economic co-operation agreement signed in 1982. A year later the Vietnamese Government suspended its participation in the ILO following accusations by other members that deductions were being made from the wages of Vietnamese guest worker to pay off part of its massive external debt to the Soviet Union. Two years later on May 31, 1985, Vietnam formally withdrew from the ILO.

Nonetheless similar agreements were signed with Algeria (1984), Iraq (1986) and Libya (1988). Over the next ten years 220,000 workers were sent overseas as guest workers. By 1992 there were 320,000 Vietnamese guest workers overseas. Half were sent abroad in 1987-1989, which is after economic liberalisation and the 'open-door' policy began.

In 1989, only four years after Vietnam withdrew from the ILO, the director of the international relations department of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Tran Luc, acknowledged that through the export of workers "the state can earn foreign currency to pay her debts" and that "the Vietnamese working people have a duty to contribute 10-40% of their incomes in strong foreign currency to the Vietnamese government for the construction and defence of the Fatherland."

Exporting Labour is big business

There are about 40 state-run and private businesses which are licensed to "export labour." This includes businesses run by government departments and ministries at national and provincial levels.

Since Vietnamese policy-makers have argued that the labour export programme is an "efficient and long-term solution to the employment problem", both private and state-run labour exporting agencies are able to use money from the government's National Employment Fund to finance their business activities. One of these businesses is the Labour Centre of Vietnam Trade Unions (LACETU), established by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) with state funds in 1993. It operates as a semi-private profit-making enterprise and not a workers' organisation.

According to its advertising brochure LACETU is: "ready to supply technical workers for production establishments of various economic sectors and for foreign capitalists' enterprises or companies which are in want of such workers."

While the destinations have changed deductions continue to be made from workers' wages, and they are stripped of their rights once they are "exported" overseas. The only real change is the extent to which labour exports no longer used to reduce the national debt, but have become a profitable business activity for private firms and government departments throughout the country. ★

Notes

The author is Research Co-ordinator at the Asia Monitor Resource Center in Hong Kong. Sources for this article include:

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Gay rights vote splits bourgeois parties

Canada's federal government recently changed the Human Rights Act to end discrimination against lesbians and gay men. The debate discredited both the Liberal government and the conservative Reform party.

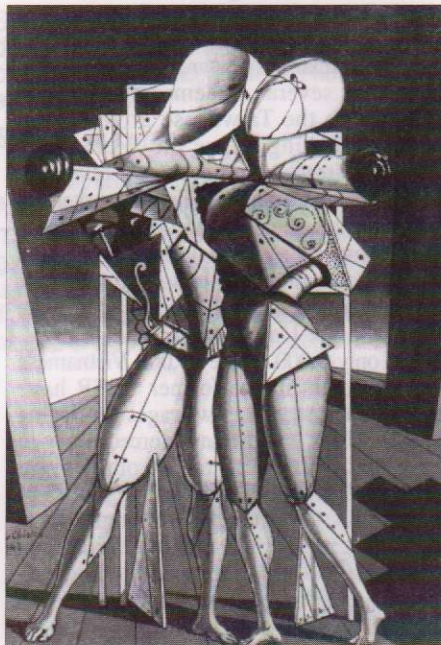
By Richard Banner

Over ten years of political activism has forced the Canadian state this year to legislate protection for lesbians and gay men from discrimination based on their sexual orientation. The legal change brings Canada into line with a small number of other liberal countries — the so-called "like-minded" countries — that grant a measure of protection to their lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens: the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand and, significantly, South Africa, the only one to ensure the protection in its constitution.

This latest change, introduced by the federal Liberal government in Ottawa, affects only the relatively small area of federal jurisdiction. It has a mainly symbolic value. In practice, federal courts had already ruled that they would read Canada's Human Rights Act as if it already included the protection. Eight of ten Canadian provinces and one of three territories already have similar laws covering their jurisdiction.

Canada's social democratic New Democratic Party has adopted policies supporting laws to prevent discrimination against lesbians and gays, and has changed human rights laws in several provinces. In Ontario, however, the recently defeated NDP government fumbled badly when it let members representing more conservative ridings (electoral districts) divide over a bill to extend rights to same-sex couples.

For more than ten years, ministers of justice in the successive Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments have



promised to place homosexuality within the Human Rights Act, but mostly avoided taking any concrete steps. Former Conservative Party Prime Minister Kim Campbell, who represented an electoral riding that includes an urban "gay ghetto", did present human rights amendments to Parliament in 1993, but never took the bill to a vote. She faced strong opposition from a "Family Caucus:" socially conservative rural and religious MPs within her own party, reacting against a perceived threat to "traditional values." Ironically, equally strong opposition came from lesbian and gay lobbyists who objected to qualifications built into the bill as a form of compromise with the conservatives.

The Liberal Party defeated Campbell's Conservative Party in 1993 with a campaign that included a pledge to protect lesbians and gay men from discrimination. Once in power, of course, the Liberals seemed willing to let the issue die without action. But queer activists mounted a political lobbying campaign to pressure the government to keep its

promise, including petitions and a mail-in postcard campaign. Liberal caucus members representing queer ridings faced intense local pressure. Even the government's independent human rights commissioner publicly criticized the government's inaction, and liberal media questioned the government's credibility over the issue. The government finally introduced a bill just days before parliament's summer break, and used procedural rules to limit debate. To avoid a public split in the Liberal caucus, MPs were allowed to vote "according to their conscience." Forty of 176 Liberal MPs voted against the bill, out of a Parliament of 195.

The government was saved from an embarrassing media spectacle only by the antics of the right-wing Reform Party, which is strongest in western Canada. One Reformer quoted discredited medical studies that blamed AIDS on homosexuals and another said that businesses should have the right to fire "gays or blacks" or send them to the back room if customers in the front did not like to deal with them. But even the Reform Party felt obliged to present a more acceptable public face. Two Alberta MPs were temporarily suspended for their anti-gay comments. All but one of the 52 Reform Party MPs voted against the human rights amendments. But party leaders insisted that this was only because Reform did not support "special protection" for any group, and that the Human Rights Act already offered homosexuals sufficient protection against discrimination. Shortly after the vote, there was an unsuccessful move at the Reform Party's national convention to de-emphasize "family values" and focus on economic measures. Instead, the convention, which was intended to build party unity and position Reform as a potential new government, adopted resolutions specifically placing the party against equal rights for lesbians and gay men.

Queer rights: the bourgeois dilemma

The Canadian public has now seen its bourgeois government and the main conservative opposition party forced to publicly acknowledge that queers should be protected from discrimination. The splits that emerged in both parties point to the inability of the bourgeois political parties to come to grips with the social changes that have become widely accepted in Canada — and to a lesser extent in the United States. (See p. 19)

In Canada and other countries, lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transsexuals, have been working for over 20 years for recognition of their human rights. Initially the fight focused on the right to be free from violence and police attacks. It gradually took on the right to be free of civil discrimination, to adequate health care, to employment

Liberal Canada?

Canada accepts lesbians and gay men as refugees when there is evidence that they would be persecuted in their home country for their sexuality. Immigration officials can, and sometimes do, recognize same-sex partnerships for the purposes of immigration. The Armed Forces accept lesbians and gay men into their ranks without official discrimination. The government gives same-sex partners some employment benefits, such as rights to leave, though not pension benefits. Public support for laws against discrimination has also grown steadily, with majority support for many years. Even formerly unpopular issues such as partnership benefits for people in same-sex relationships won 55 per cent support in a recent poll (with 49 per cent support for the right to legal marriage and 42 per cent support for the right to adoption). ★

rights. More recently, it has focused on the right to recognition of relationships as couples and families, the right to raise and to adopt children.

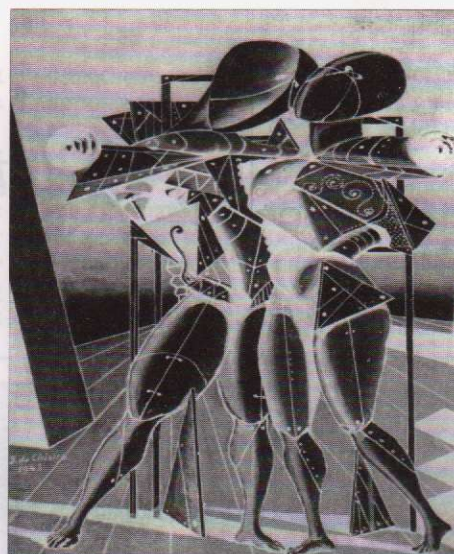
On many of these issues, queer activists have won significant victories, even while losing some important battles. Opinion polls identify majority support for protection against discrimination, and growing support on other issues. As the historical functions of the family are dissolving, marriage is seen as less important for many and divorce rates are high. A growing number of people now accept that a voluntary relationship should be as valid and socially meaningful as one sanctioned by state or church.

This change in public sentiment threatens conservative social values, notably among the right-wing religious organizations, and among rural and agrarian communities whose traditional economic base continues to change rapidly. The political parties representing these groups — in Canada especially the Reform Party — offer simple answers and easy targets to blame: the lesbians and gay men who most visibly challenge traditional values. In urban areas, they target other challengers of the “good old days”, such as women, immigrants and

rebellious young people.

Bourgeois political parties do not want to be perceived as lagging behind public opinion. They need electoral support to achieve their main policies: reducing the role of the state and facilitating the internationalization of capital. With their reactionary economic policies, they tend to attract the most socially conservative sectors of society and do not want to lose those allies.

Nowadays, however, those allies can threaten the main bourgeois parties' access to electoral power by giving them the appearance of socially conservative extremists. George Bush was unable to shake off such a label in the 1992 US presidential elections. (See “South of the border.”) Conservative ideologists face a more challenging dilemma. In dismantling the liberal state, with its social supports for the poor and unemployed, they are explicitly calling on the family, churches and community organizations to take over the state's role. But social evolution, including the queer rights movement, is changing the nature of the family. Their “traditional values” strategy is an empty, fictitious solution. ★



South of the border

While Canada is coming to a relatively liberal position on the rights of lesbians and gay men, sexual orientation is the subject of major political battles in the United States. State and local electors have been facing numerous plebiscites designed to prohibit governments from extending human rights protection to lesbians or gay men. The first — Amendment Two to Colorado's state constitution — was recently ruled unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court. Both presidential candidates have been opportunistically trying to appease religious right-wing voters without placing themselves too far from the mainstream.

After successfully courting the gay vote in his 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton has backed away from election promises to prohibit discrimination in the military, and now faces harsh criticism from the lesbian and gay community, as well as some mainstream media, for his comments that same-sex partnerships do not need formal recognition. Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole was ridiculed in the press for first accepting a \$1000 campaign donation from gay Republicans, then sending it back. The Christian fundamentalist right wing — with the support of Jewish and Muslim fundamentalists — has mounted a virulent attack on what it calls “the Gay Agenda”, accusing gay men not only of sexual depravity, but of abusing children, spreading disease and undermining the cultural values of respect for god, country, hard work and the family. These conservative religious elements, which seek and generally find a political home in the Republican Party, contributed to the election of Bill Clinton by dividing the Republicans between warring factions of social conservatives and moderates. Former President G. Bush refused to side with the moderates in 1992, and many voters said that they could not support the extremists in the Republican Party. ★

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Why did the Communists loose?

Last month David Mandel explained why Boris Yeltsin won Russia's Presidential election.

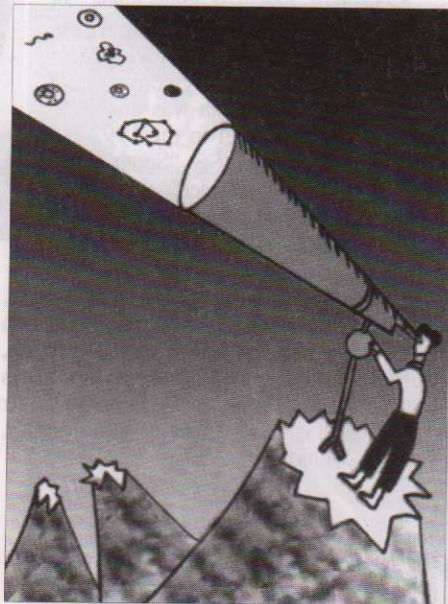
This month **Andrei Kolganov** and **Alexander Buzgalin** explain why Genady Zyuganov lost. The Communist Party candidate failed to mobilise the considerable unrest which exists in the "new Russia."

THE KPRF'S FIRST FAILURE CAN BE SEEN AS stemming from the "congenital" defects of this organisation. There was no reason to hope that the presidential elections of 1996 would feature a large incidence of protest voting against the regime. The stabilisation of the economic situation, though partial, weak and unsound based, was nevertheless a fact; the rate at which the crisis phenomena were unfolding had slowed dramatically. The regime had not allowed itself any crude political excesses during the run-up to the elections. What was involved would not be protest, but the choice of a political line. Here, Zyuganov was already doomed to defeat long before the elections. The crucial point came when he won the fight for the post of leader of the KPRF and began to a large extent to determine the party's political and ideological face.

Follow the leader

Why are we going back to the events of this time? For the simple reason that, once the KPRF had taken shape as a new political force, its public face in large measure began to be decided not by the image of the party leaders, but by the composition and moods of the ranks. But initially, the question of the make-up of this mass of rank and file members - of who among the defenders of the communist idea would stand beneath the banners of the new organisation - depended on the composition of the leadership and on the slogans which these leaders advanced.

The new KPRF retained the organisational and political dogmatism of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the economic sections of its program underwent a noticeable evolution; private property and the market were accepted. The Party also began using a good deal of great-power/patriotic rhetoric. This mixture was perfect for attracting to the banner of the KPRF the most steadfast - and most conservative, or more accurately, conformist - sections of the membership of the old party. For the new Communist Party, these people provided a substantial mass base. The fight to modernise the Communist Party was not lost: no such struggle ever took place. The leaders of the new KPRF effectively renounced the struggle to establish a



modern party, capable in the future of rallying the citizens of Russia.

With its tight internal ideological discipline, refusal to condemn Stalinism, and obvious antagonism to Khrushchev's "thaw" and Gorbachev's perestroika, the KPRF appeared to voters as a party that would fight for social justice using the same that had already once led to the imposing of a totalitarian bureaucratic regime. Some voters found this attractive, but many were frightened off.

Slaming the door

While winning a tactical victory, forming a strong opposition party and establishing the largest fraction in the State Duma, the leaders of the KPRF suffered a strategic defeat. They had blocked themselves off from any progress along the road might have led to their winning the confidence of the bulk of Russian society.

With its 500,000 members, the KPRF was the largest political party in Russia. But as the election campaign showed, the party's bureaucratism, together with its orientation toward "people of the past" and pragmatic-minded petty bureaucrats dissatisfied with Yeltsin, made it a weak organisation, incapable of devising any effective response to the propaganda and "dirty tricks" of the authorities. In circumstances where the mass media were monopolised by Yeltsin, the idea of carrying on agitation "from door to door" was not in itself a bad one, but the members of the KPRF were unable to implement it in practice. They had no idea of how to perform such work, and could not find a road to people's hearts - except for the hearts of people already inclined to support Zyuganov.

The experience of the elections showed that Zyuganov does not have anything even remotely resembling a "Lenin Guard".

The KPRF's strengths, including its massive size and the presence within its membership of tested, experienced cadres from the Soviet Communist Party, were turned into weaknesses. Disciplined rank and file "party warriors" turned out to be of use in the conditions of a multi-party system marked by struggle between various ideologies and interests. Meanwhile, the experienced cadres had experience only of bureaucratic kowtowing, not of political propaganda work.

The [un]Popular and patriotic bloc

A second failure was linked directly to the first. The KPRF chose a tactical line that was fundamentally unable to attract new voters. As a result, Zyuganov's supporters were limited mainly to the paternalist bureaucracy and to sections of workers who felt nostalgia for the strong USSR and "real socialism". From the political point of view it was this problem that was most important.

The KPRF did practically nothing to overcome this problem during the campaign for the 1995 State Duma elections, or during the presidential election campaign of 1996. The approach used in forming a popular-patriotic bloc was mistaken; the people were represented in it were all from the same conservative-Communist and nationalist groups. In order to broaden the electoral base of the bloc by drawing in vacillating groups of electors, it would have made sense to try to draw in another socialist force, more democratic, more modern, and more consistently socialist than the KPRF. Only in this way would it have been possible to attract the votes of people who would not vote for the KPRF, the Russian Communist Workers Party or the nationalists, and to establish a humanistic and democratic counterweight to the excessively rigid, dogmatic and nationalist KPRF, making the bloc as a whole acceptable to the majority of the electorate.

Dream ticket?

Alongside Zyuganov (and criticising him!) it was necessary to have a leader of the new generation - a consistent democrat and socialist without links either to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or to the nomenklatura, and without nostalgia for the past. It would have been even better if efforts

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had been made long before the elections to begin developing such a leader — a person who in his or her character, actions and life could not have been suspected of nostalgia for Stalinism and threatening repression, nor, on the other hand, of irresolution, spinelessness or “intelligentsia elitism”. Such a person, at the head of a bloc of the type described, could have attracted the votes of many of the waverers, while the KPRF’s nostalgic electorate would not have had anywhere else to turn.

It can be objected that no such leader, party or movement has appeared on the Russian political scene. That is quite true, and here we have one of the key problems of the left in Russia today. There is a democratic socialist tendency today; this was shown in the parliamentary elections of 1995, when even such semi-socialists with a democratic tinge as Svyatoslav Fyodorov’s Party of Workers’ Self-Management and a number of smaller blocs identifying themselves as social democratic received 5% of the total vote. Russia is home to a multitude of small political groups (even parties) and ideological clubs espousing democratic socialist ideas. This current also has supporters within the KPRF, though they do not present their ideas openly (within the KPRF this is quite impossible).

What would be required for these currents, tendencies and groups to form a large, influential organisation? No party in modern-day Russia rests solely on a politico-ideological base. Beneath them must lie particular social corporations, already-established institutional structures, or at least, major material and organisational resources. The KPRF, the Agrarian Party, Our Home is Russia, and the Liberal Democratic Party all demonstrate this principle in their own way.

In Russia today, modern democratic communist and socialist ideas are not strong enough to independently attract the material and organisational resources needed to establish an influential organisation. This has to be acknowledged quite definitely. Without these resources the mosaic of left groups, grouplets and associations of the intelligentsia has no chance of consolidating itself into anything durable and effective, capable of attracting the real political support of a significant part of the population. The only possibility is to rest on the organisational and technical support of the forces that would have an interest in the creation of a strong, independent left.

Labour Party?

One attempt of this type has been made. This was the labourist project, a plan to establish a left party resting on the most radical layer of activists of the trade union movement. But the organisational and political weakness of the left activists themselves, running up against the opposition of the trade union hierarchs and the passivity of the trade union ranks, prevented this plan from coming to fruition. Another possibility would have had the KPRF or organisations collaborating with it giving direct or indirect support to the left socialist current. There are

many ways in which this could occur... But the KPRF, despite its own best interests, does not want such an ally.

The reasons are clear enough: fears that the presence of such a party would tend to undermine the hegemony of the KPRF in the opposition movement. However, it is clear enough that a democratic socialist party would not be able to act as a real rival vying with the KPRF for political influence, since it

democratic, strong and constructive socialist opposition movement of the oppressed comes into being in Russia.

More than just votes

Zyuganov’s main error lay in reducing the political struggle to an attempt to draw over to his side a few more voters than his opponent. Even success in such an attempt would not represent real political victory,



would inevitably be smaller, organisationally weaker, and more unstable, while its supporters would not submit as readily to organisational mobilisation. So far, there is nothing to suggest that if such a democratic socialist party existed, a massive social movement would line up behind it.

Of course, if Russia possessed mass labour, trade union, environmental and other such movements, and if the leaders of the KPRF were fighting not for a place on the political scene, but for policy changes in the interests of the majority of the population, their choice might have been different. But this would require different objective conditions, and the KPRF itself would have to be a different party - more open, and oriented to the future instead of the past.

Lessons for the Future

Could communists and socialists win a national election in present-day Russia, given an optimal choice of campaign strategy and tactics? The answer has to be no, since there has not been and is not an organised mass movement of workers and other oppressed layers, seeking to take power into their hands and capable of doing so. Without this, a victory for the left and real changes in the country’s socio-economic, political and cultural life are impossible. In the absence of such an organised mass movement, power cannot be torn from the hands of the powerful clan-corporative structures that have already arisen in Russia. A great deal of patient, stubborn work remains before a genuinely

since Zyuganov was not backed by a massive, organised popular movement, capable of changing the present system of power. Instead of seeking electoral victory at any price, it would make more sense for the KPRF leaders to concern themselves with fostering the growth of such a movement, since this is the only thing able to guarantee that a political course different from that of Yeltsin can actually be implemented. Without such a movement, any electoral success is liable to turn into a bitter defeat.

Nevertheless, a correct choice of strategy and tactics, alternative structures and activities for the KPRF, and a different bloc with a different leader could have saved the KPRF and the left as a whole from suffering a moral as well as a political defeat. (Today, such a situation of defeat exists in Russia, and the victim is not so much the KPRF as Russian society. The defeat of Zyuganov may yet be followed by the sweeping away of the last fragments of leftism in Russia’s material and intellectual life - but more on this later). If the KPRF had not made grave errors, the defeat of the left candidate might have been very dubious, Yeltsin’s majority insignificant, and the likelihood that rightists would have been forced to compromise with the left correspondingly great.

But these are all speculations. As has been explained, we leftists in Russia find ourselves in a difficult and dangerous situation. Moreover, the present model of the KPRF threatens to have a strong negative effect as the political situation inevitably worsens.

Opposition or integration?

Will the opposition organise mass political campaigns and street protest actions? Will the KPRF and its allies use the levers provided by the parliament for exerting pressure on the president, or will they, on the contrary, seek a compromise in the interests of their self-preservation?

Despite the fact that the authorities are now whipping up a campaign of self-adulation and of disdain for all leftists, the forces of the opposition nevertheless remain very large. The possession by the KPRF of the largest fraction in the parliament and the 40% of votes given to Zyuganov, are not a joke. As the crisis grows more acute, it will be possible, despite the electoral defeat, to use these resources effectively to organise a new long-term campaign to resurrect the labour and mass democratic movement; to defend the interests of workers; and to avert the danger of authoritarianism and of a "witch-hunt".

For this, however, it will be essential for the KPRF to rethink its strategy and tactics, to analyse its mistakes, and to undertake a radical renewal of its model of organisation and activity. The experience of the past forces us to doubt the ability of the present KPRF leadership to conduct such a self-criticism.

Much more likely is the following: the defeat will be put down to manipulation of the results (though this was hardly the decisive factor) and to the shameless misuse by the regime of the mass media (this cannot of course be left out of account, but the question remains: why were the leftists unable to take effective counter-measures? Why did the supporters of the KPRF include so few journalists, writers and so on who were willing to risk their well-being for the sake of victory? Why were the media organs of the left so weak and limited in their influence? Questions, questions...).

In these circumstances, what is most likely is a diffusion and gradual "creeping" of various KPRF leaders and sympathisers, especially at the regional level, into the structures of power (if, of course, the Yeltsinists have the sense not to drive them away). Meanwhile, the KPRF's base-level organisations will continue dying off, especially if the Yeltsinists have the sense to smother them quietly, instead of bludgeoning them to death in public.

Stalinists or radicals?

Under these conditions, the most steadfast and active party organisations will be the most radical, rigid and old-fashioned bodies of the Stalinist type. The left-wing intelligentsia, which was mildly drawn to Zyuganov six months ago and became mildly frightened of him during the election period, is now seriously alarmed by the defeat and by the probable (though not inevitable) witch-hunt. These people will now calm down and to wait for someone else to prepare the conditions for a new "thaw".

What can democratic leftists do in these circumstances?

Above all else, they should not lower

their hands and cease serious day-to-day work. Throughout the years of "reform" we have maintained, and will continue to maintain, that the only left force that will have a chance of success in Russia will be a qualitatively new socialist movement, arising out of powerful mass democratic organisations of workers and citizens. This new socialist movement will grow on the basis of the radicalisation of these popular movements, transforming them from lotions for the ulcers of capitalism into weapons of organised and determined democratic struggle by workers against the power of corporate capital and of the corrupt bureaucracy. It is necessary to work long and hard for this goal.

This is even more important for the reason that the present defeat is not altogether tragic, or at least, not yet. With an organisation like the KPRF, and a leader like Zyuganov, 40% of the votes is not such a bad result. The socio-economic situation in Russia will not improve in the near future. The political situation is dangerous, and the threat of authoritarianism, of Lebed-style Bonapartism or of something in the same spirit, is dire. We already have a certain experience of work, and we know what lies ahead: new strikes and worker protests, new initiatives in the spreading of left-wing ideas, new political and theoretical debates, and new efforts to set one foot before the other in the process of creating a consistently democratic socialist movement in Russia.

And of course, the most important consideration of all. For leftists in Russia, the immediate future will be difficult. We are not afraid of this prospect. But in a time of tests and trials for all of us, solidarity, collaboration and internationalism are especially important. When we are united, we are invincible. ★

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Dutch soldiers' union liquidated Mission accomplished?

The Netherlands has finally abolished compulsory military service. And the country's unique Union of Conscripted Soldiers (VVDM) has dissolved itself. But has it really accomplished all its goals?

Ron Blom raised the following points at last month's "liquidation congress."

AT THE END OF THE SIXTIES AND BEGINNING of the seventies, one in three Dutch boys carried out obligatory military service. It was only a question of time before the anti-authoritarian trend in society would catch on in the military apparatus, one of the strongholds of "the establishment" which youth and "the movement" was revolting against. In other words, the whole concept of "socialisation of the armed forces" in this country is integrally linked to the radicalisation of youth.

Conservative as they are, the armed forces are not immune to change. Technological and other advances since the 1880s had effectively transformed the armed forces from an organization of "armed men" to an organization of "manned arms".

By the mid-60s, the officer core was already abandoning its role as "absolute ruler" in favour of a "co-ordinator" role. Nevertheless, the ideological climate in the army remained conservative. It was against this background that the Union of Conscripted Soldiers (Vereniging van Dienstplichtige Militairen. VVDM) was born in 1966. And 20 years later, military service has been abolished.

Cadre or militia army?

Debate in the anti-militarist movement has tended to contrast two models of armed forces — the conscript army (France, Germany and, until recently, the Netherlands) and the all-professional army (Britain, the USA, Canada). In fact, it makes more sense

to analyse armed forces on a cadre-militia continuum, depending on the relative weight of professional and conscripted soldiers.

In the midst of the seventies the Dutch parliament established the Mommersteeg committee, in order to evaluate the desirability of a volunteer-only army. The VVDM reacted by proposing the "civilianising" of Holland's armed forces.

Ultimately, the General Staff combined the advantages of an professional army (reliability) and compulsory military service (guaranteed recruitment, low costs). They started the transition to a semi-volunteer army. In key units, the percentage of conscripts was decreased gradually, and the proportion of professional soldiers in the lower ranks was increased, mainly through short term contracts. These "KKV" contracts proved attractive to a number of unemployed young men, and, increasingly, women.

In 1983-4 Deputy Defence Minister Hoekzema proposed that conscripts' length of military service and salary should vary, according to their function and education. These proposals (which were not implemented, for technical reasons) would have made certain groups of conscripts (those in better paid and technically qualified functions) quasi-volunteers.

Professional army

Military strategy in Western Europe has changed since the Communist bogey in the East disappeared. Military strategy has changed. Some of the countries that used to belong to the enemy Warsaw Pact, are now pushing to become member of NATO.

Belgium has already reduced the size of its armed forces, and suspended compulsory military service. France and Spain will probably follow, and even Germany is discussing such a move.

But this is not the disarmament we hoped for. In reality, efforts are being made to streamline existing armies, in order to operate faster and better in a new inter-

national context. This is the rationale behind the formation of the NATO Rapid Reaction Force, the "improvement" in the organisation of UN military operations, and the development of the Eurocorps). In Holland, we have seen the formation of the elite Luchtmobiele (air-mobile) Brigade.

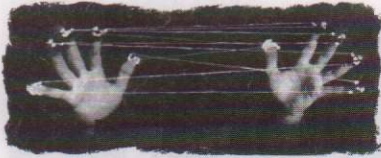
Meanwhile, the world has not become more stable. Only recently, a war took place on European territory, in the former Yugoslavia. Military reaction, in the form of quick intervention forces, demands a high grade of flexibility in the dispatching of troops. Military service is an obstacle here, because conscripts in most countries can refuse to be dispatched outside of Europe. A number of Dutch conscripts had already exercised this constitutional right during the Gulf War of 1991. Top generals expect that professional soldiers will show greater self-sacrifice.

Rights under threat?

It is still not clear whether the professionalisation of the army will include attacks on the rights which professional soldiers now enjoy as a result of the past struggles of the (conscript) soldiers movement. The media abroad focuses on our right to grow our hair long, but Dutch soldiers' main such right, of course, is the right to a (union) organization inside the military apparatus.

Among the professional military there is already a tendency towards of a more conservative climate of opinion than exists in Dutch society as a whole. It is hard to say what this will mean in the long run. This does not mean that the probability of a military coup is increasing. After all, compulsory military service did not prevent coups d'état in Allende's Chile (1973) or in NATO member states like Greece and Turkey.

The fact is that so long there is a class society, where different groups with a strong division in access to wealth and property, governments will need armed power of some kind. Their basic problem, however is that the army, which exists to protect the rich and



powerful, recruits the vast majority of its soldiers from the lower social classes. Armies need to be rigid and authoritarian to ensure that those soldiers will remain loyal and, if necessary, will kill and be prepared to be killed in the interests of the ruling class.

Dutch courage?

After the fall of Srebrenica ("defended" by Dutch UN troops), strategists began asking if the Dutch army wasn't "too civilised" to act in real combat situations. "Our boys" had apparently become so soft that they lacked "courage" and "honour." Retired general Loos argued that rules on soldiers' working-hours have become too generous. The First Army Corps introduced (then withdrew) stricter rules regarding uniform and personal appearance. The



hierarchy argued that "deviating Dutch standards" would encounter incomprehension and disapproval from our partners in international military interventions. So no more free choice of hair-style, no more chains, bracelets or ornaments.

Complicated transition

Professional soldiers with short BBT or FE contacts will be recruited to replace the conscripts. These BBT/FE-ers will soon constitute one third of the land forces.

Many BBT-ers complain of bad information given about what they can expect. Even Lieutenant-Colonel F. Matser, head of the Armed Forces Professional Personnel Selection Department admits that the BBT-ers need "more control and guidance." According to Matser, the new professional army has more obscene behaviour, minor crimes, drug and alcohol use and gambling than the old conscripts army. These problems concern a small minority, but affect the team spirit. For the moment, solutions are being sought in the appointment of more corporals and sergeants, and more supervision of soldiers outside their working hours. In short, more discipline.

To enhance the quality of the new professional soldier, the land forces are already now experimenting with military education in schools. Juveniles from 16 years on will be able to follow a special "green" education as a preparation for a career in the army. To enhance attractiveness of the military profession, the Ministry of Defense has joined hands with TV-producer John de Mol, to create a popular television series aimed at the youth. Most of the adventures of the Red Berets of "Charlie Company" will take place abroad. If a second Srebrenica makes it politically unpopular to deploy Dutch troops abroad, the Ministry of Defense will be able to counterattack through its editorial staff.

For twenty years we have fought for the socialisation of the armed forces. What is happening now sounds more like the militarisation of society.

"Civilianising" and power relations

According to the VVDM 1982 Action Programme, "military service is organised in

an unjust way. [But this] is a consequence of the way in which it is organised, not of the principle as such. The conduct of the VVDM [before 1982] has established that conscripts, in a very tangible way, introduce developments, that are taking place in civilian society into the army... The moment an army consisting of volunteers is created, this influence of society on the army would disappear. Volunteers are much more dependent on the military hierarchy, and will not speak out so quickly. A number of favourable developments that have taken place in the army in recent years would be turned back if we took the path [of professionalisation].

Because of the great isolation of volunteers from civilian society and their greater dependence on the military apparatus, there

is an obvious danger that they can be deployed more easily against strikes or extra-parliamentary actions here in the Netherlands.

Over the years, for a number of reasons, progressive organizations became less and less concerned with the threat of introduction of an army completely consisting of volunteers. And, as a result of the power relations in society and the armed forces, the conditions of compulsory military service became more and more unfair.

As a result, the VVDM almost had no choice but to concentrate our activities on the direct interests of conscripts. The possibility of a drastically shortened service period was not interesting to the defense staff. Nor could we find support for this idea in civil society, nor, indeed, even within the VVDM. As a result, we began to call for the total abolition of military service, as soon as possible, and for compensation for the few conscripts that would serve in the transitional period.

Military service has now been abolished. The VVDM has made itself superfluous. Some people might conclude that the first real soldiers union in the world has accomplished its goal. But have we?

The VVDM has certainly accomplished many things, including abolition of the duty to salute higher ranking officers at all times, free head-dress, and amelioration of labour conditions. But have we realised our goal, formulated at our founding conference in 1966, of "the creation of a more agreeable existence for the soldier"? Isn't this a legitimate goal for the new volunteers, with their BBT (short term) contracts? Or do we measure our success or failure in terms of "civilianising the army," the goal we adopted several years later, under the influence of the youth radicalisation?

Perhaps the VVDM has won a short-term victory, while failing to achieve our long-term goal, the civilianising of the army. Maybe this is a task which the other unions of military personnel will continue.

One thing that will make this difficult is the relatively short period of service, and therefore the high turnover of military personnel in the lower ranks.

One thing is certain. There is a limit to the concessions and reforms the generals can afford. What rulers and commanders expect from soldiers is, in the final analysis, contrary to the interests of those in the lowest ranks. This contradiction means that the ruling class and its generals must keep enforcing and extending discipline in the lower ranks. Conflicts inside the armed forces will continue. And it is as important as it ever was for soldiers to continue to ask that most subversive of questions: "Why?" ★

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Changing the labour movement

France's second-largest trade-union federation, the CFDT, has been in turmoil since General Secretary Nicole Notat broke with the other unions and supported the Juppe government in the nationwide public sector strikes last November and December. Sociologist **Pierre Cours-Salies**, an activist in the CFDT teachers' union SGEN, brings us up to date on the situation.

International Viewpoint: The CFDT leadership now portrays itself as the government's negotiating partner of choice.

P. C-S: Leaving aside our righteous fury at the leadership's destructive carryings-on, it's in a very bad position right now. Its record is catching up with it. It had a mandate from the rank and file "to defend Social Security while reforming it." This meant there had to be an open discussion. The CFDT leadership did just the opposite, announcing that "agreed 80%" with the Juppe Plan".

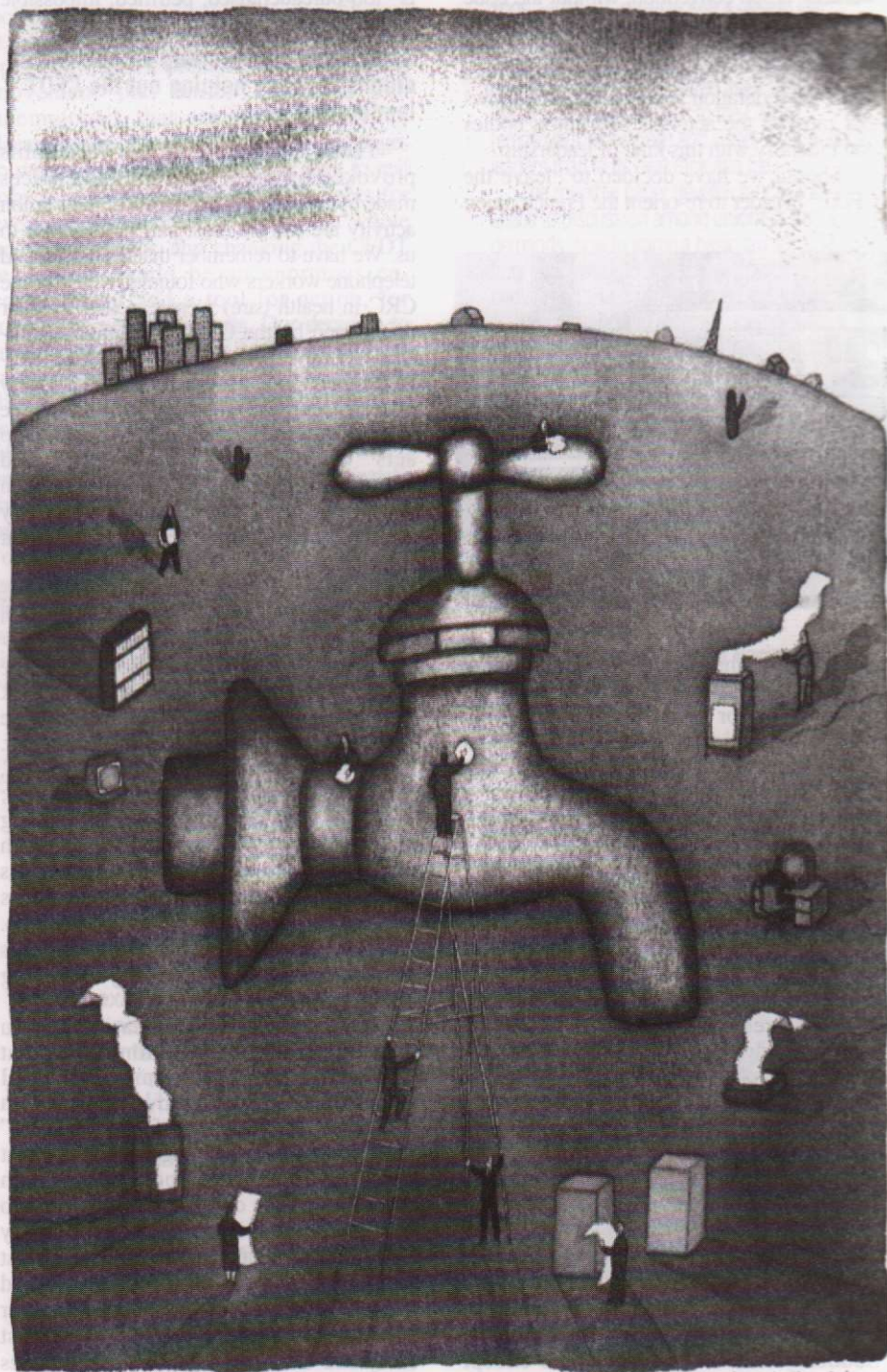
Negotiating about the work-week has not led to any concession by the bosses. On the contrary, the bosses are demanding "flexibility" and "annualisation" (variable shifts and the right to make workers work overtime without overtime pay in return for shorter hours another week—trans.); they are offering nothing in return, no shortening of the work-week and certainly no new hires.

The government, which sees that the deadline set for a settlement is approaching, is getting ready to impose a settlement through a law that would make it possible to break out of national contracts and negotiate company by company, even with worker "representatives" who don't even belong to a union. They're also pushing a three-year deregulation law similar to the one called for by the hard-liners among German employers and the most trigger-happy wing of the German Christian Democratic Party.

This will give the CFDT leadership another chance to lose more of the little bit of credibility it has left with the media and even in its own apparatus. It had gambled on this framework for "responsible" negotiations instead making the demands it should have made from November 1995 on: "Cutting the work-week and hiring a million unemployed will save Social Security, give new hope to labour and stimulate the economy."

• Many oppositionists have left the CFDT in frustration. Doesn't this give the leadership freer hands than before? Wasn't January the time to force a split, denouncing this leadership which had so obviously sold out?

In November-December 1995, with the



Françoise Kuis Johnson

union's statements on the one hand and the mobilisations on the other, how could activists feel that they belonged to the same union as Notat? The leadership was in a minority throughout the strikes. But it was able to stay in the saddle, for a whole series of reasons.

First of all, you have to understand, the sell-out wasn't experienced with the same in-

tensity in different regions and sectors. In the private sector the level of activity was uneven. The federations didn't put forward

French militants disagree on how best to build a current which will give a voice to those who were radicalised in the public sector strike of Nov.-Dec. 1996. See also the article by Christophe Aguiton of SUD in IV#278 (June).

demands like a shorter work-week with new hires, or wage increases, or a change in status for temporary workers. In these sectors, in January, the most active people thought that it would take several months of discussion before people's rejection of the leadership's position turned into the determination to throw out the leadership.

The proof is that in April, at the steelworkers' union convention, without the issue of the federation leadership being raised, 60 percent voted for a categorical rejection of the federation's orientation. This doesn't get rid of the federation leadership, but it shows that most of the activists and union bodies don't identify with this kind of leadership.

Should we have decided to "leave the CFDT" in order to re-orient the French union



movement on the basis of bringing together forces coming almost exclusively from the public sector or civil service? The overwhelming majority of CFDT activists thought that we had to do something different. The idea was to join together everybody's efforts in order to demand a CFDT special convention. The leadership wouldn't have been able to resist a force demanding that the debates about orientation and activity be reopened, if the current organised for this battle had intervened publicly on a trade-union line and pushed the debate forward with actions and not just in the internal federation structures.

We couldn't pull it off, because people in a certain number of sectors left the CFDT. But in order to understand the situation now, we shouldn't hide the opposition's weaknesses. Its real strength is its actions; outside the CFDT it doesn't have much visibility. For years the press has not paid much attention to it, except during the March 1995 CFDT convention in Montpellier. In order not to fall into the trap of entrenched camps and "old-fashioned" polemics, it wanted to prove itself with trade-union proposals. Suddenly it is incomprehensible except where its activists are. Who else is familiar with its ideology or its positions?

The people who split, many of whom are long-time far-left activists, instead of using activists' impatience to attack the leadership, have in reality split the CFDT left. Some of them think that the best think to do is what you think right, on your own. They're convinced that the CFDT leadership is impossible to dislodge, too solidly

bureaucratised to be thrown out by a majority of trade-union forces. Some of them chose, using the label SUD [Solidarity, Unity, Democracy: first an independent union based among postal and telephone workers, and now other independent unions of for example ex-CFDT railway workers—trans.] in their own way, to turn their back on the old workers' movement, which they say is "too bureaucratised, petrified, impossible to change from the inside".

So you think that setting up new SUD unions is really helping out the CFDT leadership?

There is a difference between splits provoked by the leadership and choices made by activists who in terms of their union activity are for the most part pretty close to us. We have to remember that the postal and telephone workers who founded SUD (or the CRC in health care) were expelled by their unions and by the CFDT federation leadership in 1988-89. Today, after the November-December 1995 movement, things are very different. All the unemployed and all the workers have seen how the CFDT leadership acts "when push comes to shove", and activists in other unions have also seen where most of the CFDT union forces really are. Everyone is asking, "How can this Notat still be around?"

So on the one hand the federation leadership wants these people to leave; it's even proclaiming in the press, "Let the trouble-makers leave of their own free will." The political effect of these splits is to hold back the unity around of the CFDT left around the *Tous Ensemble* (All Together) newspaper. Many activists are saying, "Fix the CFDT, don't break it up." We feel the same way: why turn your back on the overwhelming majority of the CFDT instead of talking with everyone who wants to change its orientation, its rules of functioning and its leadership? This is what we've chosen to do. But for the moment the leadership has created a climate of suspicion by identifying us with splitters.

I ask the people who are leaving: Do you want to see the trade-union movement atomised? I have some memories, which I thought these comrades had learned from. In the 1970s, we had people from "vanguard" sects who were demanding for example that the Committee to Support the Chilean People's Struggle change its name. It has to be "the Chilean People's Revolutionary Struggle", they said, otherwise you've lost the real meaning. So there was a vote, and the left "disengaged". Three months later there was nothing left, and the Socialist Party and Communist Party were the ones doing solidarity with Chile.

"Disengage the left"? "More radical than thou"? Are we going to see this kind of "creativity" in the union movement? Do people want to build one more federation, or a new organisation "of a new type"?

As far as the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, French section of the Fourth International) is concerned, twenty years ago, we never tried this in the union move-

ment. In the social situation today, more than half of the wage workers in reality have no social rights: the six million people who work in small and medium companies, 80 percent of whom have no union at all, plus undoubtedly over two million people who are temporary workers and at the mercy of their employers. We also see that with the persistence of long-term unemployment, racist ideas are penetrating the poorest layers: this is something we had better think about. Are you going to make nice little unions for just us folks in the most protected sectors, and turn your back on solidarity and on the battles to reorient the whole of the union movement? Particularly when you see that the majority of CFDT activists rejects the leadership? Why not have the patience to work with all these forces in order to build a new leadership majority?

I don't think there's a single worker who thought in December 1995 that what you needed to win that battle was one more union federation.

Of course most of the people who are leaving don't want to create a federation, but they can't stand being in the CFDT any more. So what will they do if we manage to change the CFDT? They'll come back. So why fragment the forces whose impact could change the CFDT's orientation and leadership much more quickly?

So you're hostile to the projects of SUD and the Group of Ten [a new alliance of ten independent unions—trans.]?

They have to face the question: Do they want a new federation, yes or no? On the basis of what demands, what trade-union practice? If it's not a "vanguard" federation, then are they just going to lump together different sectoral demands? And perhaps invoke "a few overarching values"? How are they going to respond with this baggage to issues like the work-week, full employment, unemployment, financing Social Security?

If they develop solid reference points, do they want to build an organisation that will have some weight in the labour movement? With what positions? We know perfectly well that a call to unity can be used to divide: "I'm more pro-unity than you are, because unity is only possible with my slogans and my timetable."

We should be more realistic: the forces that can come together with the Group of Ten and ex-CFDTers aren't very homogeneous. Whoever the leaders may be, the social reality of their different organisations weighs on them. For example, the SNUI (tax department workers' union) refused to take part in the Social Movement Congress and in various actions because its members wouldn't understand "getting involved in too many different things". Of course the same union is involved in AC! (Act Together against Unemployment!); some of its leaders are even very active in it. But they didn't want to participate in an initiative proposed by AC! and other groups, for example, which would have had all the unions in the tax department call on their members not to help prosecute poor taxpayers for delays in paying

taxes. The big bureaucratic CGT and CFDT agreed, but not the SNUI, which decided that its rank and file didn't want to take up this kind of attitude towards the administration. Let's say that SUD's activists in similar circumstances would have backed the campaign, like the CFDT left. Overall, the Group of Ten shows that left people wanted to go further to the left than governments of the left do. That's something to be encouraged, while finding unitary frameworks for it. Then we should make it a model of recomposition for the whole union movement!

More broadly, can we re-orient the French union movement by creating a new union organisation based on civil servants, alongside of and in competition with the other federations? Whether you like it or not, that puts you in competition with the others, which will have divisive results. Beyond the CFDT, are we really taking note of the forces in the CGT that are carrying on discussions about the necessary transformation of relationships between the union apparatus and the rank and file?

• **That seems to be the case with SUD-Education, which came out of a split in the SGEN (CFDT teachers' union). Why didn't they join the FSU [a large independent teachers' union that came out of an earlier split in the FEN, until recently the largest teachers' union—trans.1]?**

A minority in the SGEN in Paris wanted to leave as early as 1990 or '91. They wanted a "left" union. The FSU is too "corporatist" for them. They decided to join the Group of Ten. When you see the range of unions that exists among teachers and the evolution of the FSU, why would anyone put together a new union, really not much different, and compete with the SGEN, which is still in opposition to the CFDT leadership? Why did they do it when during the SGEN Paris convention on May 21, 62 percent voted to take part in *Tous Ensemble*, four percent abstained, and 32 percent voted to "leave"?

Let's think about this in a broader context. To my mind, this splintering of activist forces reflects an immense disorientation. People are asking, What's the point of active unionism in a country like France? Many activists don't know any more what the point is: the period of decomposition since the late 1970s has gone on so long. Some people, thinking that they are coming up with new answers, instead of thinking above all about how to propose ways to unite people in action in order to recompose the whole of the union movement, are continuing the decomposition. A true recomposition of class-struggle unionism requires proposals for lasting unity in action.

• **Inside the CFDT, how much influence does the opposition have?**

In terms of numbers, not many people have left. Many more people have joined the opposition, including in regions and sectors where we had almost no one a year ago.

If you asked: "Do you approve of the leadership's actions since March 1995?"—

about 25 percent of the membership would say yes. "Do you think we need an immediate CFDT convention in order to change the leadership?"—35-40 percent would say yes. "Would you like a six-month discussion period in order to prepare an early convention (in early 1997 for example, since we can't wait for the regularly scheduled 1998 convention)?"—65-70 percent would agree.

The federation leadership cannot agree to poll the members, since it can be sure of losing. It is not getting results out of bargaining. No split will make it possible to build a union movement that unites employed and unemployed, that can fight against the disintegration of society, against the challenges to women's autonomy and to the right to real jobs at real wages, and for new rights for everyone. We have to re-orient the whole union movement, and changing the CFDT leadership would be an enormous encouragement and a tool for action, for mobilising people's efforts. Our decision to transform the CFDT is based on the assumption that the workers see perfectly well that there are two different currents in the federation; it would be unbearable to be confused with Notat's acts and statements, which are widely promoted by the media. Fortunately this is not happening: more and more often the media are mentioning the existence of an "opposition in the CFDT". We must intensify our independent initiatives and publications, in order to re-orient the CFDT and change the whole union movement. This puts us right in line with the needs expressed during the November-December 1995 movement. ★

• All Together now

Since January 1996 the CFDT in Struggle tendency has been putting out a 16-page, tabloid-format monthly, *Tous Ensemble (All Together)*. More than 60,000 copies of the first issue were sold, and 40,000 copies of later issues. This success bears witness to the earthquake that hit CFDT activists in November 1995, and their desire to find a vehicle for discussion as they confront a leadership that would like to stifle every critical voice and every idea that it hasn't first cleared itself. This leadership has closer ties to the CNPE (employers' federation) and center-right political leaders than to its own rank and file.

The monthly paper devotes much of its space to discussion among unionists about demands: how to frame a basic law for a 32-hour work-week, how to co-ordinate demanding a law with the indispensable role of negotiations, how to increase unemployment benefits, etc. It reports on the "negotiations" under way about the work-week, which basically are a sounding-board for employers' demands for "annualisation". A regular column points out the situation facing women workers.

At the same time, of course, articles from a variety of sources show how CFDT unions and leaders want to turn the CFDT around. It calls for a democratic debate, and proposes a new orientation.

Tous Ensemble
47 rue de Paradis, 75010 Paris, France
fax: +33.1/48000736

Transformation and regroupment

The collapse of Stalinism and the continuing capitalist crisis has contradictory effects. Myths and illusions connected to the restoration of capitalism in the post-Stalinist societies have dissipated, faced with the actually existing market economy. But reactions to the socio-economic crisis all too often take the form of reactionary tendencies of an ethnic, nationalist, racial or religious character. Hence the urgent need to rebuild a world-wide movement of anti-capitalist struggle, taking account of the recomposition of the workers' movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

Regroupments of forces determined to learn the lessons of the historical abomination that was Stalinism and to continue, against the winds and the tides, to fight against capitalism are being realised in a number of countries.

The organisations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the regroupment process. We consider this as an important step towards the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left on a world scale. At the international level, the Fourth International is an active participant in regroupment, bringing with it the advantages of a long tradition of combat against capitalism and Stalinism. ★

Price: £5/\$10/60FF plus 10% postage charge for orders of 1-4 copies. Order from your local agent, or directly from International Viewpoint, BP 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France



Paperless but not hopeless

On 23 August the police broke down the door of the St Bernard church in Paris, and used tear gas to expel several hundred anti-racists, and arrest some 270 African immigrants, including ten hunger strikers.

Jean Dupont

Most were legal residents of France for many years, before an administrative loophole or missed deadline stripped them of their legal status. Since many of them are the partners of legal residents, or parents of French citizens, they cannot be expelled from France as easily as more recent migrants.

The last thing most immigrants in this situation want is to draw attention to themselves, and begin a confrontation with the state. But this group reasoned that enough was enough, and that only exposing their kafkaesque situation, and appealing for a humanitarian solution, would force the state to regularise their situation and reform the absurd laws which continue to strip long-term residents of their legal status.

The mass media has tended to present these men and women as illegal immigrants, rather than the victims of illogical acts by the French state. As they tramped from one temporary home to another (from the St. Antoine Church, via the LCR Paris office, the SUD HQ, to the St. Bernard Church), gathering supporters as the weeks went on, the Catholic hierarchy washed its hands of them. And some "respectable" leaders of the 1980s anti-racist movement tried to split the movement from "the radicals," proposing themselves as intermediaries for a pre-selected group of "justified" applicants for residence status.

Manipulation?

Refusing to believe that African immigrants could organise themselves, the media looked everywhere for proof of the manipulation of the "paperless" (*sans papiers*) by naive Priests, and the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR).

In fact, the LCR was scrupulous in respecting and promoting the auto-organisation of the paperless protesters, and their genuine leadership of the solidarity movement. Despite occasional differences over tactics, and doubts over the possibility of "negotiations in good faith" to which the Africans hoped the government would agree.

This honest approach enabled the LCR to establish a relationship of trust with the African protesters, their supporters in 'the movement' and the numerous personalities who came forward to show their solidarity when the state threatened a "muscular solution."

There is another reason why the LCR was right. The direct testimony of the paperless themselves has exposed the true nature of the discriminatory laws which support the



growth of xenophobia. It has also provoked an unprecedented wave of solidarity, and the re-emergence of an anti-racist and immigrant rights milieu which goes beyond the traditional circles of far left militants.

The anti-racist movement in support of these paperless Africans has become another expression of revolt against the authoritarian and unpopular regime of President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppé.

Juppé the axe-man

Since the police intervention on 23 August, the state has continued its strategy of division and intimidation. They have let it be known that the "dossier will be regularised" by awarding residence permits to a number of those concerned. 40% is the magic figure — enough to demonstrate humanitarian concern, without surrendering to the mob.

But all this is just public relations anyway. Only 50 of the 270 applicants have been promised residence permits. Others have been imprisoned because of their "irregular" status. And the threat of expulsion from France still hangs over their heads.

Different factions of the right are competing to present themselves as the firmest opponents of immigrant rights. Some deputies support [yet another] reform of the electoral law, to allow the National Front back into parliament.

While the right hardens up, the left seems to be wallowing in its old mess. Socialist leader L. Jospin has resuscitated his party's scandalous "refusal of illegal immigration" and called for a hard line against asylum seekers who are refused refugee status. Rather than fighting against xenophobic tendencies in the electorate, Jospin panders and stimulates them. Whatever Jospin thinks the Socialist Party can win from this, the main result of his current "opposition" strategy will be a strengthening of the far right.

None of this is particularly new. Successive Socialist Party governments made their own contribution to France's restrictions on the rights of immigrants and refugees.

The endless discourse on the dangers of immigration has contaminated many people, particularly those who have seen their own



Actress Emmanuelle Béart was one of many personalities who stayed in the church until the very end. "I was flabbergasted... and outraged that these people, all of whom had lived legally, normally in France, with their families, for five, ten or more years... had maliciously been labelled as "secret immigrants. No-one is fooled. The motivation behind the government's actions are purely electoral! They have one eye on the 1998 elections, and all they are doing is accepting the logic of the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen

"I want to keep the picture of these men and women, and the lesson in dignity which they have given us." [EDJ, 29 August]

lives decline under the combined shocks of mass unemployment and worsening job security. The government's popularity actually increased to 49% during the stand-off at the church. Only 19% of voters, for the moment, want "less strict" immigration laws. Only 12% support the immediate granting of residence permits to all those involved in the occupation. Among workers, only 37% of those polled by *Le Monde* on August 26th said they sympathised with the demands of the paperless occupiers of the church.

Unemployment and prejudice

Unfortunately, some of those who defended the Africans for humanitarian reasons, tried to convince the government to regularise their situation by stressing the economic value of immigration, which would depress wages and make French goods more competitive. Lawyer Simon Foreman wrote, in *Le Monde*, that "men have the right to work... [even] for half the minimum wage." These voices were heard more often than those, like Laurent Joffrin, who wrote, in *Libération*, that "certain sectors of the economy are particularly hungry for 'black' [underground] workers. The solution would be to bring these sectors into the legal framework."

In the centre-left weekly *L'Événement de jeudi*, Jean-François Kahn complained that "the 'progressive' position looks a lot like the arguments of ultra-liberal economists and conservatives like Milton Friedman, or Gary Becker, one of Bob Dole's counsellors, who proposes a free market in labour migration, so as to reduce wages, and provoke the collapse of social security and minimum wage legislation. Faced with ideas like this, the working-class rejection of illegal immigration does have a certain sense."

The next step

Recent activities include the September 6th protest outside Air France's office on the Champs Élysées (Paris' poshest shopping street). Transport workers' unions called the demonstration to expose the company's (profitable) role in the deportation process.

"Air transport workers are concerned because the powers that be are not attacking the real problems — be it the North-South divide, or the role of those French employers, including Air France, which themselves exploit immigrant workers through the growing web of sub-contracted services," CGT representative P. Bonnefous told the LCR weekly *Rouge* on 12 September. "There have also been problems in the planes, when the police handcuff, or tape the deportees to their seats. There have been heated debates inside the planes with the other passengers — many of whom come from the same countries as the deportees. Cabin crew have reacted strongly — some have refused to work on flights of this type."

This and other local actions are building momentum for the national day of action on 28 September. This meeting will demand not only an end to the expulsions, but abolition of the laws which transform legal immigrants into undocumented, "paperless" ones. ★

European Marches against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion

Step forward for Euromarch

AT LEAST FIVE HUNDRED PEOPLE ARE EXPECTED TO participate in the preliminary European meetings on unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion. The provisional date and location is Brussels on January 17 and 18. The secretariat of the Marches (or the Belgian Delegation) must still make sure rooms in the European Parliament buildings are available).

This will be the occasion to extend the "programme" so far represented by the Florence Appeal which launched the campaign. In November and December thematic programmatic commissions will elaborate and circulate their propositions.

This will also be the appropriate moment for institutional partners to officially — publicly — confirm their support for the marches. It will also be the occasion where we launch an appropriate and effective publicity strategy.

Marching for jobs

The marches themselves will take place during April, May and June 1997. Local and national initiatives may take the form of press conferences, reunions, local gatherings, demonstrations, human chains, concerts, or "feeder" marches... Symbolic actions such as occupying vacant buildings and unemployment insurance agencies and sit-ins before ministries might be scheduled for the same day in different countries.

All together — in Amsterdam

A massive European demonstration against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion should be organised in Amsterdam on 28 June 1997, to coincide with the arrival of marchers. The objective is to gather more than thirty thousand people from different European countries. This demonstration can wind up with a concert or a super festival.

In October 1997 a meeting will be held to draw conclusions, prepare further European initiatives, and consolidate the network.

What kind of march?

In September, it will be necessary to draw up an inventory of the means and capacities of each country, so that we can choose what kind of march we want.

- The first proposal is to organise different marches, originating in the most distant cities of each country, and converging in Amsterdam. They will be met in the towns on the way, providing occasions for socialisation, communication, information, further mobilisation perhaps and social festivities. This was the method followed by the French AC! marchers in April and May 1994. This method demands three months of prior organisation and a significant influx of participants on the way to Amsterdam.

- The second proposal is just to organise a one month-long march in each country. The coherence of the project lies in the simultaneity of initiatives and common program propositions. This is a more

circuitous sort of march, convergence being assured by the Amsterdam demonstration body. During this month, publicity campaigns on a European scale would be organised in a programmed manner.

Intercommunication

Since the objective is exchange between the different organisations in different countries, the organisation of the marches must be conceived in such a way as to facilitate and encourage such exchanges. To this end, common materials will be produced, translated into several languages, and distributed at each event in the different countries.

The European secretariat has a file of signatory groups, together with a one-page description on the activities and history of each one. This list is available in our various working languages.

Groups of marchers will be transnational, so that at rest stops and local meetings we can hear the opinions of those of other countries. Publicity events and press conferences should be organised in a transnational manner so that participants and the public can readily appreciate the European aspect of the campaign.

Starting in October, language training sessions should be set up so that organisers and future marchers can communicate more easily.

It might be possible to organise sponsorship, say with a union, association, or municipality which can pay for food and transportation expenses, so that unemployed activists from one country can participate in a march in another country.

From January to June a monthly paper could be put out which will report, in several languages, the various initiatives, the viewpoints of the different organisations, historical background in each country and programmatic propositions. The Web page is almost ready.

- These marches will open new lines of communication between different European organisations concerned with the struggle against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion. The marches should result in the establishment of a durable European network of the participating organisations

- Information will be exchanged on different unemployment compensation systems at the European level as well as initiatives to combat social exclusion. The goal is to present a coherent, common program of demands which will include both structural solutions and emergency proposals. One of the long-term results of this campaign should be the publication in several languages of books concerning these propositions as well as books outlining the different systems currently in use in Europe. ★

Text prepared by Jean Desessard for discussion at the continental planning meeting held 21-22 September in Paris. As we went to press, 80 delegates were expected to attend. Subtitles by *International Viewpoint*

Change starts when you say "No!"

The defeat of the November 1995 referendum on EU membership was an important victory for progressive forces in Europe's most northerly country. **Anders Ekland** explains.

In the run-up to the referendum on Norwegian membership of the European Union (EU) on November 29th, 1995, the employers association told the public that EU-membership would generate 100,000 new jobs. This was a patently ridiculous piece of propaganda - underlying unemployment rates in the EU are much higher than in Norway. The employers association admitted as much — after the referendum was over.

Not only was being in good, but staying out was bad. Labour Party leader Torbjorn Jagland, warned that "if we do not join, I am seriously worried for the future". So far, there are few signs of crisis.

The majority of the ruling class and elites of Norway exaggerated the negative consequences of voting "No" and the positive consequences of voting "Yes" Their political credibility suffered as a result. There is now a larger majority against membership in the EU than before. If opinion polls are to be trusted, about 60% of Norwegians would vote "No" if there was a second referendum.

Since, on the surface, so little has changed since before the referendum, one might assume that the consequences of the referendum were relatively unimportant one way or the other, both for the ruling class and for ordinary Norwegians. This would be an error.

Why all the excitement?

On the surface the will of the Norwegian establishment to get into EU was irrational from an short term economic and political point of view. Their control over Norway's natural resources, especially oil and fish would be significantly reduced. They would open up their home markets to a greater degree of competition. Politically the establishment had to confront stubborn resistance from large sections of the population. Not only farmers, fishermen, but also workers, especially a large part of the lower salaried workers in the public sector, mainly women.

So why provoke a conflict. Well, how about because resistance from these same social groups is a day-to-day an obstacle for capital. It slows down restructuring, flexibilisation, and privatisation and limits the size of the cuts which the ruling class can impose in the public sector, and on the subsidies to rural and far-northern districts.

These "pressure groups" have successfully used Norway's proportional representation system to maximise parliamentary

resistance to any decisive attack by capital on the remnants of the social-democratic welfare state. The political parties of this resistance are the Socialist Left Party, the farmer-based "Center Party", the Christian Peoples Party, and the Red Electoral Alliance, which is present in Norway's larger cities. Together with the rural sections of the Labour Party, this conglomerate would always carry enough votes and/or political weight to block the capitalist offensive, and obstruct, to a certain degree, the drive for "increased competitiveness".

But if this offensive came "from Brussels" as EU demands and directives, it would be much more difficult to for ordinary people to fight back. The Labour Party government could then even play the game of protesting in Brussels, waging a "heroic" fight in the EU-system against the most hated directives, and thus legitimising the other 95% of reactionary legislation.

In other words, the Norwegian bourgeoisie applied for EU-membership because, once inside the club, it would be reinforced and supported in its attacks against its own working class and farmers.

Low-intensity conflict

The question of membership in the EU entered the political agenda in 1989. The capitalists and their politicians chose the strategy of drawn-out "low-intensity" conflict with anti-EU interests: the Norwegian working class, peasants and fishermen. Membership in the EEZ (European Economic Zone) was carried through the Stortinget (parliament) in October 1992.

This coup was successful mainly because important anti-EU forces like the (centre-left) Christian Peoples Party and the "No" faction in the Labour party were not opposed to membership in the EEZ.

In fact, joining the EEZ gave Norway virtual economic membership of the EU. The tactical plan of the ruling elites, especially the Labour Party was to let the EEZ undermine the economic and political base of the anti-EU forces, over a number of years. The requirements of EEZ membership, it was hoped, would accustom Norwegians to the flood of regulations and directives which are an integral part of the bosses' Europe. People would give up hope under the pressure of a stream of small attacks on their welfare. Or so it was hoped.

But as we all know, things turned out differently. The Norwegian bourgeoisie had planned to let the EEZ have its effects for five or six years before proposing EU membership, as the best way for Norway to have some influence over the decisions which, through the EEZ, were already dominating daily life.

The problem was that the much more acute crisis in Sweden and Finland made it imperative for the bourgeoisie in these

countries (who wanted membership for the same reasons as the Norwegian elite) to join the EU as quickly as possible. The time was coming for a concerted attack on the "Scandinavian model" welfare state, enlisting the enthusiastic support of the undemocratic, uncontrollable, neo-liberal bureaucracy in Brussels.

Bad timing

The timing of this attack was not at all ideal for the Norwegian bourgeoisie. But they were obviously obliged to show class solidarity with their Scandinavian counterparts. And, making virtue out of a necessity, the referenda were staged so as to create a "knock on" or domino effect. First to vote would be Finland, where anti-EU forces were weakest, followed by Sweden and then Norway. Those of us campaigning for "No" in all three countries wanted simultaneous referenda, or the reversed order: Norway first, so as to encourage the forces of progress in the neighbouring countries to "just say no."

Being outside an organisation like the EU is a fundamental advantage for working people here. Recent events in France have reminded us that the fundamental thing in politics is the strength of the popular forces confronting the offensive of capital. And it is clear that we fight at maximum advantage when we can put the responsibility for the attack we are facing squarely and directly on those directly opposite us: our own bourgeoisie and their politicians. These forces are much more vulnerable to our mobilisation and resistance, which takes place in a national framework, including, of course, national elections.

Norway's non-membership of the EU is still very much a potential political advantage for progressive forces. The government has not gained much popularity by declaring that it would "voluntarily" comply with the Maastricht convergence criteria, despite their clear anti-social costs. Non-membership means greater or less problems for the government in carrying through EU and EEZ directives. Because it is outside the club, the Norwegian Parliament can theoretically veto much of this unpopular legislation. If Norway were a member, it would have been much harder to mobilize because it would have seen almost hopeless. Resignation would have been even more widespread.

Parliament's reluctance to oppose these "voluntary" measures exposes the constraints of EEZ membership. The "soft" anti-EU forces are very uncomfortable. But the "hard" anti-EU forces are rewarded with numerous possibilities for political action. The fight for national sovereignty, against the European Union: undemocratic even by bourgeois standards, remains a fundamental part of revolutionary strategy. ★

Welcome to the Black Sheep Republic

Over 600 militants gathered in Amarante, Portugal in July for the annual camp organised by the European youth organisations of the Fourth International and a range of fraternal organisations. The main theme was "for a Europe of the peoples." Worker and student struggles, anti-racism, and the reactionary Schengen accords for European Union were at the centre of debate.



Everyday life was suspended for one short week, creating a setting for networking, reflection, and debate. A giant poster of Che Guevara in pink lipstick marked the disco tent, reflecting the increased visibility of the lesbian and gay contingent within our youth organisations, as well as the more holistic conception of revolution which has developed among revolutionary youth in the 13 years the Fourth International has organised this unique gathering.

higher than in 1992, the last time the camp was held in Portugal). And, while financial reasons prevented a larger number of Polish delegates, almost half the German delegation came from the former GDR. For the third year, and despite the distance, a small group of Greek comrades participated actively. Other participants came from Quebec, English Canada and the USA.

As in previous years, less than half of participants were members of the sponsoring organisations, which demonstrates the implantation of our youth organisations in the few areas of radicalisation which do exist. For 60% of the participants., this was the first International Youth camp.

Young women were 49% of participants this year, the highest proportion on record. And women co-presented all the workshops and forums, (except the ecology forum).

In previous years, some participants suspected that our selection of an all-women panel for the closing meeting was an attempt to compensate for women's under-representation in the rest of the camp. This year, it was clear that we were simply choosing the most appropriate speakers!

The day dedicated to the feminist struggle was the best prepared and best attended part of the camp, with considerable interest in the two women-only meetings, and the women-only cabaret-disco that evening.



Amarante, in Northern Portugal, was one of the first towns where the revolutionary left began to organise against the Salazar dictatorship. The local branch of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (PSR) was formed before the 1974 revolution. As a result of the PSR's solid local work, the town hall donated use of the municipal campsite, and co-sponsored a concert in the town attended by a large number of local young (and not so young) Portuguese.

With 604 participants, the Amarante camp was smaller than in previous years. This is partly due to its location in the South West corner of the continent (50 hours by bus from Denmark and Sweden!). But it also reflects the difficulties facing a number of youth organisations, and the lack of effective campaigns to build the camp.

On a more positive note, there were over 140 participants from Portugal itself (50%

Message to the Chiapas Inter-continental Meeting for Humanity

[...] "These are difficult times to struggle for utopia. Hard times for justice, liberty and dignity. And a hard mission for revolutionaries here in Europe, and everywhere else in the world where neo-liberalism shows it ever-more ferocious consequences. From this corner of Portugal, over 700 young revolutionaries, militants and friends of the Fourth International, send this fraternal greeting.

We want another reality. More human, and more just. This is what we fight for, and what we live for." [...] Signed: Jeune Garde Socialiste/Socialistische Jong Wacht (Belgium), Liberation (Britain), Socialistisk Arbejderparti (Denmark), Rebel - Zaragoza (Spanish State), Revolutionär Sozialistischer Bund (Germany), Bandiera Rossa (Italy), Jeunesse Socialiste Révolutionnaire (Luxemburg), Rebel (Netherlands), Anty-Nazi Front, Nurt Lewicy Rewolucyjney (Poland), Partido Socialista Revolucionario (Portugal), Ungosocialisterna (Sweden), Alternative Solidaire/Solidarität (Switzerland), Gauche Socialiste (Quebec-Canada)



One participant left the camp early, so as to participate in the Zapatista-sponsored intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism. He carried with him a statement of solidarity [to the left] which emerged from the intense discussion of Zapatismo and solidarity at the camp.

The representative of Italy's Party of Communist Reconstruction accepted our invitation to address the camp. He invited participants to support Rifondazione's campaign against unemployment.

To help concentrate debate in this extremely heterogeneous gathering, Daniel Bensaïd's keynote speech to last year's camp, *A socialism for our time* (IVJuly 1996, pp.

17-20) was distributed in English French, German, Castilian, Portuguese, Italian, Danish and Dutch.

The programme this year had something for everyone. French activists analysed the difficulties in linking the student mobilisation last November-December to the wider public sector strike. A Portuguese speaker in the media forum suggested that the mass media has replaced the Church as the main institution of socialisation to obedience and low expectations — "TV is the kingdom of the post-modern bishops!"

Participants from France and Italy described signs of growth of a new women's movement. They suggested that we are seeing the re-activation of veterans of the 70s feminist wave, and a feminist current among women in the 15-25 age group But the 25-40 age group seems absent!

Outside the structured meetings, the camp also facilitated informal networking between comrades in various countries concerned with the same area of work, be it anti-racist activity, student unionism or producing an "underground" high school newspaper. Those participating for the first time were sometimes surprised to discover that there is great diversity across Europe in the way the left approaches even "universal" issues like unemployment and racism. And while most Fourth International supporters are clearly in favour of the decriminalisation of personal drug use, attitudes concerning the recreational use of drugs vary. This is only natural. In a similar manner, most participants from other political traditions, like many of those from Eastern Germany, were less convinced of the central role of feminist struggle than those more closely integrated into the Fourth International.

As in previous years, lesbian and gay participants organised a range of activities to deepen our understanding of their struggle, and integrate it into the regular work of our organisations. "Veteran" participants noticed a growing presence and sophistication of the homosexual presence at the camp, though the occasional comrade at the bar needed to be confronted with the contradiction between his revolutionary rhetoric, and aspects of macho or heterosexist prejudice.

As the world's largest international meeting of revolutionary youth, the camp continues to prove its worth in the education of militants into a pluralist and internationalist anti-capitalist force. The improvement in the feminist dimension of the camp is proof that the year-round co-ordination between the sponsoring organisations can bring results, and that this very special event can continue to grow and adapt.★

For the address of the sponsoring organisation in your country, contact International Viewpoint. The 1996 camp cost about £80/200 DM

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book notes

Marx unbound

Arnaud Spire interviews Daniel Bensaïd

Reprinted from *L'Humanité*, the daily newspaper of the French Communist Party

Daniel Bensaïd, lecturer in philosophy at the University of Paris-VIII, has recently published two works, each of which invites us to take a fresh look at Marx's contribution to understanding our societies in the year 2000. His *Marx L'Intempestif (Untimely Marx)* takes a sledgehammer to the dogmatic mausoleum in which commentators have imprisoned the author of *Capital*. *La Discordance des Temps (Times out of Joint)* is a radical critique of the marketplace modernity of contemporary neo-liberalism.

Bensaïd invites us to replace a determinist conception of the world with a universe made up of various possibilities, governed by tendential laws. He proposes a revolution in our understanding of time itself.

Bensaïd has undertaken to help with the current efforts to deconstruct and reconstruct an entirely new Marx. He has set out to rethink Marx's thought, from which the movement for the emancipation of peoples is already unknowingly drawing sustenance at this close of the century. *Marx L'Intempestif* and *La Discordance des Temps* appeared almost simultaneously at the end of 1995. These books' originality - which has little to do with their choice of subject - makes it impossible to talk about a "return to Marx"; rather, they invite us to recognise the explosive possibilities of this thinker, freed at last from his chains.

• Given how urgent it is to solve the problems that the earth's peoples face in their search for development, some people say that those who laid claim to Marx in the past could lighten their loads now by dropping this theoretical baggage. What do you think?

I try to avoid confusing the time scales of political urgency with those of effective thought, which are slower. Since 1989 there have been major upheavals in the world. It seemed necessary to me to take stock of our baggage. Some charitable souls began by advising us to throw off this baggage in order to lighten our load; but I have never believed in starting from scratch in this way. For me, the issue is understanding which Marx we need today, and whether the way we read him is legitimate. A fundamental text like Marx's

work in all its abundance obviously lends itself to a multiplicity of interpretations. Our interpretation should be neither arbitrary nor founded on fantasy. It has to really confront the text, in order to shed light on those aspects of it that have long been put in the shade by the positivist influences of the Second International. This task places us in a long time scale, one of redefinition and reconstruction. The questions are posed to us by reality, whether we are discussing the national question or contemporary science or the metamorphosis of classes.



Working out responses means refusing to deck ourselves out in the neo-liberals' new ideological clothes.

• Do you think that the co-existence of many different interpretations of Marx has become a precondition for keeping his thought and militant activity alive in today's world?

Of course we have to talk to one another. But this does not mean that we have to accept anything that comes along in the name of political pluralism, which is one of the practical preconditions for democracy. We can criticise democracy as it functions today, in its parliamentary forms.

We can also imagine more direct forms of democracy, genuine citizens' democracy. Nonetheless, in order to formulate a project for a new society, we have to bring many diverse ideas together, if we want our project

to gain societal and political support. This has nothing to do with eclecticism. In my opinion a political organisation needs a minimum basis of agreement on the major issues of the epoch: international events, wars, revolutions, social questions.

This does not mean that we have to settle theoretical issues in the same way as political ones. Anyone can speak about class struggle in an organisation's congress, but the congress is not going to vote on a definition. There is thus a different sphere, whose rhythm of development does not call on ordinary decision-making procedures. On this level

there is room for a kind of theoretical pluralism. At the beginning of *La Discordance des Temps* I speak of "readings" of *Capital*. "Readings" in the plural. We cannot re-read Marx without thinking of the major controversies that have been grafted on to his legacy. Our way of looking at Marx has necessarily been enriched over the course of the century. To declare my allegiance: for me, Antonio Gramsci and Walter Benjamin are the ones who enabled me to unearth a Marx of which the orthodoxies have perhaps preserved too little.

I think it is still more important to situate oneself correctly within the overall logic of *Capital* in order to carry on discussions that have been blocked by one-sided readings. In Marx there is no theory of crises and no theory of classes. The question of productive labour still has to be examined more profoundly. Only when we have understood the overarching logic that binds together the three volumes of *Capital* is the problem of the relationship between value and price or the delimitation of classes illuminated in a completely different way. This is why in my opinion the unfinished chapter on classes is at the right place in volume 3, where it plays an inaugural role.

• Following Ernest Mandel, you emphasise the unprecedented role of time, as a measure of production and reproduction, and social relationship in Marx's work. Is the conception of time introduced by Marx really different from that of origin-development-and-end, of before-during-and-after, that each of us believes we can discover from experience?

Contrary to the myth that Marx saw a universal history coming to its end and sealing itself off, I maintain that the texts of 1845-46 - *The Holy Family*, *The German Ideology*, *The Theses on Feuerbach* - break explicitly and definitively with speculative philosophies of history like Kant's or Hegel's. But breaking with these conceptions leads to thinking differently about time. What Marx breaks with is the idea that history is a sort of linear movement by Mind as it becomes con-

scious of itself in a temporal framework. Therefore neither the sacred time of religion - the time of revelation and creation - nor the abstract time of physics exists in Marx's work; instead he constructs a time which is first and foremost a social relationship: not

just one time, but several, inter-linked temporalities.

There is a time of production, which is the time of exploitation; there is a time of circulation, which already gives rise to rhythmic discordance and possibilities of crisis; and there is a time of reproduction. So there is an organisation of time which is totally

immanent to the movement of capital itself.

Value is the time taken by socially necessary labour. But labour is not itself quantifiable. It is in a sense retro-determined by competition and price formation. There are in addition social relationships today that cannot be measured by labour time as capital determines it. How can domestic labour - which is still essentially female labour - be quantified; and everything that has to do with ecology, such as the renewal of energy flows and the damage done to forests and water? Marx realised that this measurement of all wealth in terms of socially necessary labour time would become an impoverished measurement. I believe that in many respects we have already reached this point.

Finally, the innovation concerns physicists' time, which was a necessary prop for the idea of causality. A causes B only if the time that links these two phenomena is homogeneous and measurable. Marx would have liked to find laws of the same kind as the laws of physics. But he realised that political economy behaved in bizarre, irregular, problematic ways. So he speaks about "tendential laws". He is in search of new, broadened forms of causality. Since then, with the development of modern physics - theories of psyches, systems theory, information theory - we have moved further in this direction.

• So Marx anticipated in the domain of history a concept of time, at once singular and plural, that seems since then to have been extended to nature? Classical physics invited us to discover a deterministic world and irreversible laws. Did Marx envisage a world made up of possibilities and governed by tendential laws?

We are speaking of a complex causality, pointing in different directions, which is different from the causality implied by classical

determinism. Of course the transformation of a system is determined by its own contradictions. And not everything is possible at every moment. But the result of this development is not predictable with hindsight. This is what physicists say today. Among several hypotheses we can determine which one is desirable and make it come true. Gramsci, who rejected any speculative teleology, already paid homage to this form of teleology, which is implied in millenarian heresies and which gives meaning to human effort. Even if he relegated it to footnotes, almost in order to jog his own memory, Marx elaborated certain categories or notions allowing us to think our own history in this way. Contrary to the causal determinism that is attributed to him, he thinks precisely about the discordance of the juridical, aesthetic and economic realms.

These different things do not all move to the same rhythms. There are already elements here of an idea of uneven development, of counterpoint, of non-synchronicity.

From this point of view, one can say that the order of the market does not correspond to the order of capital. I know that there is a debate over this. From the moment when capital takes charge not just of exchange but also directly of production, the film can no longer be rewound, and the idea of a market without capital, without competition, without unemployment *seems* to be a purely imaginary wish.

From the standpoint of economic rationality, and in the framework of a socialist transition, it would be absurd to socialise small-scale retail trade, for example, and even small enterprises. On the other hand, given for example the scandal over privatization of water, there is a need for a regulatory process in which the political level fully plays its role.

Fortunately history is not stingy with inventions. Unfortunately, the discussion is skewed by clichés whose force derives from what people see in front of their faces. Nonetheless we cannot evade the question of property, of where decisions are made. Today people talk about a "workplace of citizens". I think that the essence of the capitalist firm is in fact despotism: in the organization of production time and the division of labour, as well as in its forms of discipline. By contrast, everything about public services raises the issue of social property (as opposed to generalised property), property which is capable of orienting the economy politically. There are also of course issues like the tax sy-

stem, or the way of posing the question of housing and [working-class] suburbs in relation to real estate interests, but above all there is the need to socialise certain means of production and communication: even if this is insufficient. All this leads me to say that, even if capitalism is not doing so well, it continues to be the really existing social order, and we are far from figuring out how getting around it could really lead to abolishing it. In the current situation, everything that limits exploitation, and everything that defines a job as an inalienable right, brings us a step further in this direction.

• Isn't it this thinking about time and capital which leads you to deepen the connection between class struggle and other modes of social conflict?

The idea that struggle constitutes classes is not new. The same idea can be found in Althusser's work. Social classes exist only in their conflictual relationships with one another. In this respect, the innovation contributed by Marx is often poorly understood. The French academic tradition in sociology, from Auguste Comte to Emile Durkheim, gets

in the way. In this tradition of sociology, thought is meant to be classificatory. Social categories are lined up in relation to one another. I do not despise this empirical type of sociology: it is useful. But Marx's approach is not primarily sociological. It consists in grasping in motion an antagonistic relationship between capital and labour: first in production; then in circulation, between the purchase and sale of labour-power; and then in reproduction. The way in which the pre-conditions for the reproduction of labour-power intermesh makes the whole process conflictual. Today we have to think about the plurality of conflicts without letting them play themselves out as completely disparate conflicts. There are conflicts between states and nations, and conflictual relationships between the sexes, among communities or religions: but all this, in my opinion, is intelligible in the light of its class underpinnings.

I believe that if we separate national questions from class relationships they very quickly become regressive, particularly if they are not accompanied by forms of association, by the will to stay in dialogue or in relationship with the other. In this respect the nation has had the function of overcoming particularisms. It was a step forward toward openness and universality. There is still undeniably something left of this. But this must not lead us to blow the republican discourse out of proportion. This discourse by itself is not enough after the failure of the Maastricht agreement to make possible a new conception of how to build Europe. I have been convinced for a long time that any Europe formed by stuffing it into a monetary corset in a time of recession can only end in collapse.



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The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: an overview

by Catherine Samary

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• **People's mentalities are usually more conservative than the reality on which they rest. The transformation of society will develop them further. But in the meantime aren't they an obstacle to this transformation?**

Some people have presented the events of May 1968 as a procession or a cultural revolution. I tend to think that the clearest result of these events was to break the vicious circle in which revolutionaries had tended until then to enclose the struggle against backward mentalities. Marx put the emphasis on the ambiguity of progress: progress on the one hand, regression on the other. This was true on the issues of opposition to hierarchy, of wages for housework, of consistent ecological thought. When legal trade-union structures became established in workplaces, societal issues fell to a certain extent outside their range of vision. This is a social space that has to be re-conquered.

I am suspicious of great authoritarian utopians, of visions of the heavenly city. The young Marx fought against chimerical utopias. He counterpoised them to what some have called the strategic utopia: thought that pushes forward, exploratory thinking, enthusiasm for new possibilities. From this point of view I think there is an imaginative dimension to any subversive attitude. I think as well of Walter Benjamin's secular messianism. I also keep in mind the refurbished utopia of Ernst Bloch's principle "*Hope*", which became a point of resistance to the Stalinist bureaucratic order and a riposte to the starvation of the socialist imagination.

• **In the prologue to *Marx L'Intempestif*, after having said what Marx's theory is not, you define it as "a daring ferryman of the possible". What do you mean?**

I think that the time has come to reawaken in a non-arbitrary way elements that were left unfinished on the drawing board, unexplored by Marx, often pushed aside by the formation of institutionalised Marxisms or established orthodoxies. The situation seems entirely propitious to me for giving new life to questions that are there in Marx's works, even now while the reality of capital is stronger, more global and more planetary than it has ever been. I propose a heterodox reading, which tries to project Marx's thought forward onto current issues raised for us by history and time, conflict or science. I make no claim to reconstitute a doctrine: Marx has suffered enough from doctrinaire thought. I think it is time to free up the elements and material for a critical reconstruction. This requires a new attentiveness to time. This is undoubtedly the point in Marx's work that has been most underestimated. His historical thinking brings not only an attentiveness to time as the beat, rhythm, vibration of a social relationship, but also in addition thinking about the interconnection of non-homogeneous temporalities. Besides the time of theory and that of political urgency, there is also the time of scientific thought and discovery; more generally, the time of process and event. We should listen to these times that join and creak together. Our epoch - as Derrida wrote citing Shakespeare - is truly "out of joint". ★

Russia twenty years after (includes *Thirty years after the Russian revolution*)

Victor Serge

Victor Serge is probably best known as a revolutionary novelist. But he was also a revolutionary historian. From 1919 to 1936 Serge lived the Russian revolution, the Left Opposition, and the Stalinist gulag.

Serge documented his experiences in both fiction and histories, sometimes blurring the line between the two. In his autobiography, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, he confessed that his fiction sought to communicate the inner truth of those tumultuous political struggles in a way which historical articles could not. In a similar way, this collection of historical articles bears the stamp of his artistic prose. This is what makes his work so powerful, and, in a way, so Russian.

Reprinted here are two of his most valuable, and previously neglected works. *Russia twenty years after* was first published in 1937, and serves as a companion volume to Trotsky's *The Revolution betrayed*, which Serge was translating into French at the same time. Serge's piece is both a social-scientific survey, and a passionate polemic against Stalin's embezzlement of the revolution's promise. He sums up the crash industrialisation of the first five year plan in two phrases. "Build, build, build, export, shoot, build" and "industrialisation is directed like a march through conquered territory."

Serge devotes six chapters to those who struggled and resisted Stalin's crushing of the revolution. As he told Trotsky in May 1936, "this is part... of a practical discovery of what worker's democracy means... providing that we are not in anyway the kind of people who build an enormous prison for anyone who disagrees with us."

Serge develops these same ideas in the second piece in this collection, *Russia thirty years after*, which first appeared in 1947 in a far-left French publication with a tiny circulation. The author died an exile's lonely death in Mexico ten days after publication. This is its first publication in English. Serge struggles to go beyond left orthodoxy in understanding the new world order after the war. No shibboleth was too sacred to leave unscrutinized, even the revolution itself. How

to salvage revolutionary Marxism from the wreckage of Stalinism? How to draw out its essential humanism, and its fundamental optimism, despite the twin defeats of fascism and Stalinism? [AN]

Biographical note: Victor Serge (1890-1947), historian, translator and novelist, was politically active in seven countries, participated in three revolutions, and spent more than ten years in various captivities. His parents were Russian anarchists, who had found refuge in Belgium after being implicated in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. Serge himself died in exile in Mexico. ★

New edition prepared and introduced by Susan Weissman. Original translation from the French by Max Shactman. Humanities Press, 1996, 400 pp. \$19.95 (in USA): ISSN 0-391-03885-9 (paperback)



The war of gods Religion and politics in Latin America

Michel Löwy
Verso, 1996

Löwy traces the intimate relationship between religion, politics and social issues in Latin America over the last three decades, as liberation theology has re-interpreted the vocation of the Catholic Church and as Protestantism has made inroads on traditional Catholic strongholds.

In the 1960s liberation theology addressed itself to the problems of a continent racked by poverty and oppression. Comprising a network of localised communities and pastoral organisations, it soon became something much more than a doctrinal current. Liberationist Christianity defined itself in a multitude of social struggles, particularly in Brazil and Central America. Many of the most momentous events in the continent's recent history — the Nicaraguan revolution, the development of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), the tortuous ascent of President Aristide in Haiti and the uprising in Chiapas, Mexico — have born witness to the influence of a distinctive liberationist Christianity.

Löwy, a regular contributor to *International Viewpoint*, proposes a critical yet sympathetic interpretation of liberation theology, and analyses the rival religious projects in Latin America. [AN] ★

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Dealing with programs like Total Quality Management and reengineering is one of the biggest challenges unions face in the 1990s. So are other parts of management's "lean and mean" strategy: contracting out, job cuts, 10- or 12-hour work schedules and speedup. Management wants unions to "participate" in programs that spell the loss of good jobs, and speedup for those that remain.

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- ✓ quality programs and public employees
- ✓ flexibility: overtime, part-time, 10- and 12-hour schedules

Instructors include Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter, authors of **Working Smart: A Union Guide to Participation Programs and Reengineering**. Mike and Jane have organized workshops for international and local unions across the U.S. and Canada.



"**Labor Notes** schools are the only source of education and training on cooperation programs from and rank-and-file point of view. I attended last year's school and this time our executive board is sending a delegate."

•Paul McLennan, ATU Local 732

Open to all unionists and labor educators, this four-day intensive school will run from 2 p.m. Thursday, November 21 through 12:30 p.m. Sunday, November 24. Registration of \$325 includes training materials and lunches. Scholarships are available. To register, or for more information, contact Leah Samuel at (1-313) 842-6262.

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- preparations for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) are leading to the dismantling of public services and social security and rising unemployment in almost every EU member state.

- the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) has begun: the fifteen member states are negotiating to revise the Maastricht Treaty, the treaty that has propelled the European Union into its current credibility crisis. According to plan, these negotiations are supposed to end with the signing of a new treaty by the heads of government during their June 1997 Amsterdam summit.

Together the EMU and IGC will largely determine the character of the European Union and thus the daily lives of Europe's citizens. But discussion of these developments is going on mainly among politicians.

For the moment there is no broad debate under way about the threats posed by European integration, like the plans for an EU defense bloc, with the "Europeanisation" of the nuclear arsenals of France and the United Kingdom. Our Europe must be a Europe that carries out a strong social and environmental policy, creates jobs, eliminates the democratic deficit, offers equal opportunities to women and men, safeguards the rule of law, is hospitable to refugees, is open to the East and in solidarity with the South, disarms in order to contribute to peace, and promotes sustainable development both inside and outside Europe.

Parallel to the June 1997 Amsterdam Summit, there will be an alternative conference, demonstrations and other activities. We invite all progressive parties, groups, NGO's and others to take part in this Summit for a Different Europe.

Get in touch!

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