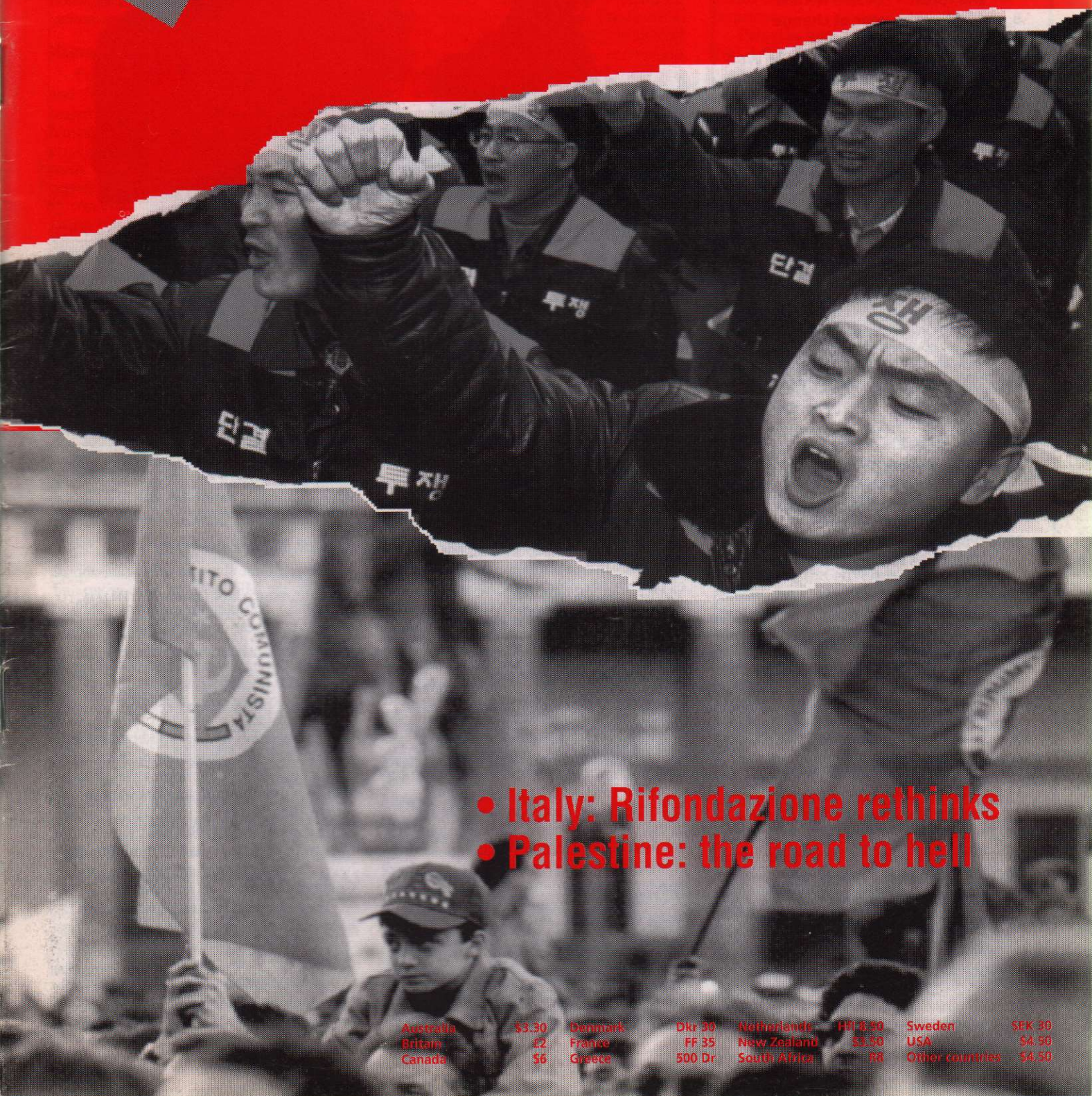


international
VIEWPOINT
February 1997 • issue 285

Peru • Colombia • Korea The resurrection of insurrection



- Italy: Rifondazione rethinks
- Palestine: the road to hell

Australia	\$3.50	Denmark	Dkr 30	Netherlands	Hfl 6.50	Sweden	SEK 30
Britain	£2	France	FF 35	New Zealand	\$3.50	USA	\$4.50
Canada	\$6	Greece	300 Dr	South Africa	R8	Other countries	\$4.50

contents

the event

- 2 **Peru: Guerrillas take the initiative**
• Jean Dupont, Ernesto Herrera and
Balasingham Skanthakumar
- 4 **"Our action is weakening
Fujimori"** • interview with MRTA
representative Izaac Velazco

americas

- 7 **Colombia: guerrillas come out of
the forest** • Eduardo Herrera
- 8 **Mexico: the year of change**
• Braulio Moro
- 10 **Brazil: Electoral warning for Wor-
kers Party** • interview with Raul
Pont, Mayor of Porto Alegre
- 12 **Brazil: our party should be
different** • Joaquim Soriano & Carlos
Henrique Arabe
- 13 **USA: Profits up, concessions
demanded!** • Dianne Feeley
- 14 **USA: Reforming the Teamsters**
• Dianne Feeley

asia

- 17 **South Korea in the streets** • Jean
Dupont
- 19 **Sri Lanka: enough is enough!**
• interview with NSSP leader
Vickramabahu Karunaratne
- 22 **China: tries to isolate dissidents**
• Zhang Kai

middle east

- 23 **Israel: national unity govern-
ment?** • Tikva Honig-Parnass
- 24 **Palestine: the road to hell** • Tikva
Honig-Parnass
- 25 **"Palestinian State" is a slogan
which has lost its meaning** •
Meron Benevisti

europa

- 26 **Russia: betrayal remembered**
- 27 **Italy: The new Communist project**
• Livio Maitan
- 32 **Belgium: a most uncommon crisis**
• Alain Tondeur

regular features

- 34 **book notes** • Sophie Massouri
reviews *The Pink and the Black: a
history of homosexuals in France
since 1968*, by Frederic Martel
- 34 **NetWorking** • our guide to
Internet action and hot addresses
- 36 **well read** • a very incomplete
review of the radical media



"Audacity is the watchword of a revolutionary movement," Che Guevara said. Peru's Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas have been supremely audacious. They have planned and executed the Japanese embassy occupation brilliantly, even if the odds are stacked against them achieving their ends.

Special report by J. Dupont, E. Herrera and B. Skanthakumar

The MRTA usually operate hundreds of kilometres from Peru in the forested regions of Chanchamayo province. Their occasional forays into Lima and other cities have been for high profile actions like kidnappings and bank robberies.

The MRTA has always been a second-division player in Peru's civil war, which has mainly taken place between the regime and the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) organisation. Compared to Sendero, however, the MRTA has much more flexible tactics. The group has carried out a number of audacious acts, including the most elaborate prison escape in Peruvian history. In the 1980s they dug a 330 meter long tunnel into Canto Grande maximum security prison. Using miner comrades, they solved problems of ventilation and bracing, and used a theodolite compass to ingeniously come out at the right point in the prison, rescuing all 47 comrades, with no one killed.²

The MRTA has also tried to establish an "Americas Battalion," bringing together Colombian, Ecuadorian, Chilean and Bolivian organisations. Unlike Sendero

Luminoso and Colombia's FARC guerrillas, the MRTA has no links with the drugs mafia.

The MRTA went on the defensive in 1992, after the capture of their founder-leader Victor Polay Campos (Commandante Rolando). Some members took advantage of an amnesty law introduced by President Fujimori. In 1993 the group's two main areas of operations, the San Martin jungle in the north-east, and the Junin region of Peru were taken over by the army. Then Jaime Castio, the Chilean-born "number three" of the organisation, and one of its military leaders was captured. The President's office proudly declared on television that the MRTA had been definitively defeated.

Shaken, but not dissolved

Despite these strategic and organisational setbacks, the MRTA began to re-group and re-organise, and prepare a strategy enabling them to re-appear on the national scene. On 17 December 1996, they occupied the residence of the Japanese ambassador in Lima, taking 500 hostages, including President Fujimori's mother, sister and brother.

The objective was to create a new strategic situation, characterised by a general amnesty, and the legalisation of the MRTA. This would be a "Colombian-style" victory, similar to the attempts made by that country's April 19th Movement (M-19), Popular Liberation Army and Socialist Renovation Current (a split from the ELN), all of which have created a place for themselves within Colombia's institutional framework.

Past military successes of the MRTA have not been reported by the Peruvian press or acknowledged by the government. Over the past three years, the MRTA has destroyed two military barracks, and four army helicopters. This latest MRTA action reflects a revised strategy, of focusing on a specific and

Peruvian guerillas take the initiative



narrow demand, the freedom of 400 MRTA members held in Peruvian jails in return for the freedom of 73 hostages (from 500 initially captured). Commando leader Nestor Cerpa draws parallels between the fears and trauma of the families of the hostages and that of families of political prisoners languishing in Peruvian jails. The Embassy commando have certainly treated their hostages more humanely than the prison authorities do MRTA militants.

Human rights

Peru's outrageous human rights abuses and the unbearable living conditions of the majority of Peruvians violate any imaginable human rights standards, and reflect the hypocrisy of western governments which normally turn a blind eye to the abuses of pro-capitalist regimes like Fujimori's.

An estimated 54% of the Peruvian population are Indian, and 34% are of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry, Peru's governing elite are mostly white. This privileged segment of Peruvian society demands fierce repression of any who challenge their controlling status. As a result, widespread political dissent has been kept in check through institutionalised state terror.

In 1991 Alberto Fujimori was elected to the Presidency, defeating the novelist and candidate of the right, Mario Vargas Llosa. But far from following a social democratic programme, Fujimori embraced his rival's programme of economic liberalisation and privatisation and made Peruvians swallow the bitter medicine of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In return, both organisations resumed loans and credit to Peru and encouraged foreign investment.

Fujimori has used his Japanese immigrant roots to portray himself as an outsider in politics and not beholden to the traditional political system and the rich white elite it has served so well. He has admonished the poor to work harder, be more self-reliant, save more and develop entrepreneurial skills and rely less on the state while making the free market their friend. Outside Peru he has used his ethnic roots to attract Japanese investments and as 'proof' that he has the cultural attributes and work ethic to transform the country into a Latin American tiger economy.

Fujishock

In 1992, Fujimori dissolved the congress and court system, and radically revised the Constitution. The near dictatorial powers assumed by the president following this "autogolpe" (self-coup) were limited only by increased authority of his military supporters.

The government removed basic labour standards, and introduced large scale redundancies by halving the public sector payroll.

It privatised most state owned assets, reduced tariffs for imports and removed foreign exchange restrictions.

"Fujishock" policies tested the claims of the neo-liberal right and were found wanting not only on social criteria but even on crude economic indicators. Eighty percent of Peru's workforce is jobless or under-employed, and millions have little or no access to medical care. Until the "Fujishock", half of Peru's 22 million people lived in poverty. The figure is now closer to 70%. The poverty factor was singled out by MRTA embassy commando leader Nestor Cerpa, "The MRTA entered this country's political life to fight a system that deprives the majority of Peruvians of their most vital needs. The situation has not changed at any time under Alberto Fujimori's administration. In fact it has worsened, with a dramatic rise in the number of poor in Peru."

The opening of the internal market to trans-nationals has driven many companies out of business. Peru's currency, the Sol, is trading at an artificially high level: good for importers of luxury goods but bad for exporters. Banks have pegged interest rates high attracting foreign capital but making it expensive for local capitalists to borrow for investment. The only alternative for Peruvian capital is to play second fiddle to foreign trans-nationals by entering into joint-venture schemes as junior partners.

The Peruvian economy grew in the early 1990s not because of Fujishock which, with its deflationary mechanisms, threatens a recession, but because it had become a desirable destination for portfolio investment capital drawn by the high interest rate and the fortunes to be made on the stock market through the purchase of grossly under-valued public assets.

Wealth is concentrated in few, mainly foreign hands. Fujimori, denounces the hostage taking by the MRTA, while holding the entire country hostage to the whims of finance capital: a notoriously nervous and fickle gunman.

The Fujimori administration rests on two pillars: the international financial institutions, and the military. The president's hand-picked loyalists in the armed forces hierarchy are intensely and personally loyal, with *carte blanche* to pursue their counter insurgency campaign, without fear of punishment for abuses and excesses.

Rivers of blood

Amnesty International (AI) estimates that the Peruvian Government committed 53% of all extra-judicial assassinations between 1980 to 1992, and Shining Path committed 45%. Amnesty considers the MRTA responsible for only 1% of Peru's extra-judicial assassinations during this period.

An Amnesty International Report

covering the period 1980-1995, documents thousands of "disappearances", extra-judicial executions and torture by members of the armed forces and the police. Even the United Nations Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) recently reported that "there exists a widespread practice of torture during the interrogation phase in terrorism related cases, and impunity is enjoyed by the perpetrators."

Peruvian human rights groups say that 700-1,000 innocent people have been charged and convicted since 1992. Declarations of sympathy with the guerrillas have resulted in prison sentences of up to 20 years. Lawyer Ronald Gamarra of the Lima-based Institute of Legal Defence estimates that one in three of those arrested for terrorism are innocent, including hundreds detained on false or coerced testimony.

According to Amnesty International, thousands of prisoners charged with terrorist-related offences have been "denied the fundamental right to a fair trial." Civilians have been "tried in military courts which are neither competent, impartial nor independent..." Military tribunals have a conviction rate of 97%. Since 1992, the international human rights group has adopted 86 prisoners of conscience who "have all been falsely accused of terrorism-related offences." Amnesty has also documented an additional 1,000 "possible prisoners of conscience."

The vast majority of human rights abuses "have never been effectively investigated," according to the Amnesty International report. "The perpetrators have not been brought to justice, and the victims and their relatives have received no compensation."

In 1995 the government passed two amnesty laws which according to Amnesty International "effectively closed all unresolved cases of human rights violations committed by the military, the police and other authorities, between May 1990 and mid-June 1995... (and) rendered void the few prison sentences handed down... to members of the Armed Forces and National Police."

The people are tired

The tactics of Sendero (which operated on the basis that "if you are not for us, you are against us") backfired against them. They murdered many progressive activists, from feminist leaders to Trotskyist militants. They would not tolerate any opposition or debate as to their ideas and strategies. The capture of their leader Guzman in 1992 has weakened and split them but they have not gone away. Their struggle and the military campaign against them consumed the lives of 35,000 people.

Revulsion at this waste, and growing

disdain for armed struggle, increased popular support for Fujimori's authoritarian efforts to curb Sendero, and was a major factor in his re-election victory of 1995. Another reason being his blow against hyper-inflation, which fell from 7,659% in 1990 to 139% in 1991 and a historic low of 10% in 1995.

Unfortunately for the MRTA, in the popular imagination, even in the barrios of Lima, they are often seen as little better than Sendero Luminoso. There is little popular support and sympathy for them in a country weary of violence and which longs to believe in the Fujimori promise of prosperity for all.

The Peruvian electorate are representative of a continental trend. Even with deeply unpopular austerity measures, they prefer the reality of economic stability associated with low inflation to vague promises from the Left. In Brazil, this was one obvious lesson of the defeat of the Workers Party (PT) by Collor de Mello and Fernando Henrique Cardoso. (the other continental lesson is the short lived effects of those anti-inflation measures.)

The MRTA as a legal party may have better prospects, but that path is fraught with dangers too. The group could go the way of the Colombian M-19, a left wing guerrilla movement later co-opted into supporting the neo-liberal economic programme. Or the URNG in Guatemala, which recently signed a peace accord with the government, which included a clause guaranteeing immunity from prosecution of the army personnel responsible for tens of thousands of 'disappearances' and the genocide of entire indigenous village communities.

Peru's traditional 'left', the populist APRA and the United Left (IU) fared badly in the 1995 elections and are seen as part of the discredited political establishment. They have the opportunity to rebuild their support in the months ahead by leading the anti-privatisation campaign which the left wing daily *La República* is spearheading, combined with assaults against the authoritarianism and corruption of the present government.

The events of the last six weeks may be the stimulus to a reawakening of the popular movements. But this depends on future events, and the practical interventions of the radical left.

The fires still burn

Latin America's revolutionary and guerrilla struggles are an essential part of the programmatic and cultural inheritance of the continent's radical left. The lessons, good and bad, of the armed struggle experience have had a significant influence on the development of numerous social and political movements across the region.

The form these struggles have taken is a result of the conditions of exclusion and violence which accompany the capitalist system in this part of the world. Forms of exclusion and violence which have shaped the political and social dynamics of these societies, the

interview with Tupac Amaru representative

Our action is weakening

Interview With Isaac Velazco, European Representative Of The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA)

Viewpoint: Why did the MRTA choose the Japanese ambassador's residence as the target of its action?

Velazco: Japan today is a major economic power, which has the luxury to be able to afford to purchase parts of Wall Street. Many major U.S. corporations are made up largely of Japanese capital. So Japan will play an increasingly important role in Latin America. And Japan regards President Fujimori as its primary supporting figure.

Today there is a conflict of interests in Peru between the U.S. and Japan. Japan, in order to strengthen its position there, has financed the dirty war. The Japanese government was even partially to blame for the fact that two of its own citizens, who worked for an aid agency, were murdered by a paramilitary group. Japan is deeply involved in supporting this murderous regime. That's why the MRTA decided to attack this location — a place which would deeply hurt the dictatorship.

Will this occupation help Fujimori to consolidate his base, under the motto of "joining ranks", or will it lead to splits within the government?

The Fujimori government has its back against the wall. All those who collaborate with the government — businessmen, politicians, and military figures — know very well that their integrity is in danger. If one day they, too, should become prisoners of war of the MRTA, the government won't do anything to help them. This is unprecedented in Latin American history. Comrades of the FSLN in Nicaragua captured politicians and businessmen with ties to the Somoza regime on three occasions. Each incident ended with their demands fulfilled. But Fujimori has a complete disregard for human life, even for the lives of his partners. Businessmen who support the government ought to think about that.

What about the relationship between the military and the Fujimori regime?

The support which they have given to one another in the past has only served to act as a cover for state terrorism and corruption. The government and high-ranking military officials are very corrupt. They have usually been granted immunity from prosecution by the Fujimori regime. But there is a struggle

for drug profits taking place between the military and the intelligence agency. Sometimes they work against each other. That's why the transport of 170kg cocaine in the President's plane was publicised recently, as was the "discovery" of navy ships being used to transport coca paste. Nevertheless, all of this goes unpunished. And the government never talks about the dirty war, the torture, the violations of human rights, the murder of elderly persons, women, and children.

Why did the MRTA take up armed struggle?

In the late 1970s, there were 60 or 70 leftist organisations in Peru. Two tendencies developed. One sought solutions to the nation's problems through the democratic process. The other felt that the path of political dialogue was blocked and the time was right to resort to other means. This development continued into the 1980s, and the MRTA became an important crystallisation point for many armed organisations.

How many activists did you have?

During the First Conference of the MRTA as a political-military organisation, which was still legal at that time, 300 activists took part. Of course the total membership was much higher than that. Following this conference, the organisation took its work underground and the first units were formed to carry out armed propaganda actions. For example, they occupied radio stations, attacked arms depots, confiscated trucks full of food and distributed these goods in poor neighbourhoods, in addition to a series of actions designed to provide funds for the organisation.

The first military clashes were in the south of the country in 1984. The military surrounded one MRTA unit which was in the area to help establish a rural guerrilla. Following a long battle, 12 of our activists were arrested and many weapons were confiscated. Another unit was able to break through the military's lines and link up with MRTA forces elsewhere in the country. The deployment of the Peruvian military was marked by massive attacks on the civilian population.

For security reasons, I cannot say how strong we are today. But our forces are present throughout the country. The MRTA is present at many levels and is organised in various fields. There are rural units, special units, commandos, and militias.

In accordance with our outlook, our members are active in a variety of fields, such as propaganda, union organising, social movements, and the guerrilla. We've always said that it isn't the MRTA that's going to make a revolution in Peru, but the Peruvian

Fujimori

people, through their numerous social and political organisations.

The government, and President Fujimori in particular, had declared a total victory over the guerrillas...

Two factors played a role in this. First of all, the leader of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), Abimael Guzman, signed a peace agreement with the government.

Secondly, there was tactical retreat by the MRTA. As a result of several military offensives by the Peruvian military, the repression against the population, and the neo-liberal policies of the government, out social base was narrowed.

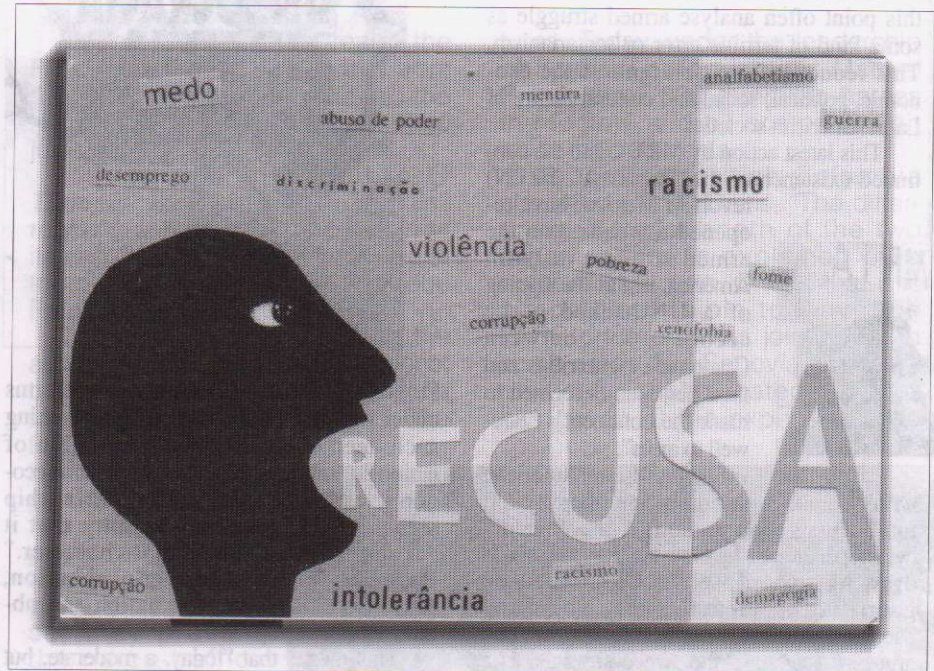
We decided to concentrate our political and military structures in the rural areas of central Peru, in the central forests. In the rest of the country we only had commando and militia structures, which carried out intensive political and organisational work in city neighbourhoods, with farmers, and with workers.

The government lied to itself and even made itself believe that the guerrilla, in particular the MRTA, had been defeated. Now the government is faced with a new situation.

We have continued our political work over the past few years and given political-military training to a new generation of fighters and cadre. We were never as weak as the government supposed. The number of actions carried out by the MRTA across the country, which dealt heavy blows to the army, are evidence of this. The government has tried to cover all this up, but they have failed. The people know that the government has not defeated the guerrilla and they know that the government's neo-liberal policies are making poverty worse.

Two months ago, there were three days of riots in downtown Lima, when the police tried to force vendors off the streets. Hundreds of people and police were injured. Have protests against the government increased?

Yes. Since the end of 1995, the people are slowly rebuilding their organisational and mobilisational capacities. There are more riots, where the people defend their right to existence. But the repression has changed as well. Before, police and soldiers were everywhere in Lima. Today, you don't see as many. They have been replaced by secret police and plain-clothes forces. A German friend of mine recently had his briefcase stolen on the street in Lima. Within seconds, at least 20 plain-clothes police officers were



on the scene and brutally beat up the thief.

Sendero Luminoso has reorganised, and seems to have altered its line...

The peace deal with the government signed by a large part of the group led to deep divisions within Sendero. The faction which wished to continue the armed struggle has carried out armed propaganda and has taken to interacting with the people in a way they used to criticise the MRTA for doing.

But despite some corrections in its political methods, Sendero is still the same. For example, in March of this year, labour activist Pascual Arozda was murdered. They have continued to attack all those who stand in their way or don't share their views.

How is the relationship between Sendero and the MRTA?

Sendero is a very domineering force. They claim to be the sole possessors of the truth and the only standard bearers of revolution. That's why they have never accepted the existence of other revolutionary organisations in Peru. At the best moments, they have described us as "armed reformists" and "traitors". At other times, Sendero has described us as their "main enemy" and murdered many MRTA activists. They have even ambushed our units. These are crimes which cannot be justified in any way; they contradict the values of revolutionaries.

How do you see the MRTA's future?

We try to put Peruvian reality ahead of any pre-defined ideology. We hope to build socialism... That's not to say we're going to build a socialism styled and modeled after

the eastern European countries, a model which failed in practice... We don't want state centralism or the bureaucratization of Peruvian society. Life has taught us that is not the way. We should have a democratic, very participatory society, not an electoral democracy every five years, but a democracy where men and women get involved in their workplace, their community, their neighborhood and decide their own destiny. We want it to be a participatory democracy with the people as actors. It has to be that way.

The MRTA arose as a movement. Many social sectors are represented within the MRTA: men and women from the cities and rural areas, intellectuals, religious people, indeed the whole society. Of course, to transform society we must tear down the old state and build a new one. That means we must seize power. But seize power for whom? For what? And to what end? That is the central question. The answer is: Power must be in the hands of the workers in the cities and the countryside. There must be a participatory democracy. Mechanisms for people's power must be advanced. And we have been doing that for years. ★

Source: Interviewed by Dario Azzellini for *Junge Welt*. This interview was first published on December 30, 1996. Translation by Arm The Spirit.

Isaac Velazco has been active in the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru since 1984. In February 1988 he was arrested and tortured. Had he not been able to escape, he most likely would have died in prison. When statements by an informer led to a raid on his family's home in 1993, the MRTA decided to send Velazco to Germany. In November 1994, he was granted political asylum. Following a decision by the National Leadership of the MRTA, Isaac Velazco was chosen to act as the European Representative of the MRTA.

<< p.4 resurrection of insurrection

collective memory and imagination, and the demands, methods and results of struggles.

Left intellectuals who fail to understand this point often analyse armed struggle as some kind of terrible error or sectarianism. This reductionist vision ignores the economic, political, social and cultural reality of Latin American societies.

This latest action by MRTA, and the continued existence of the "Zapatista" (EZLN) revolt in Mexico¹ have reopened the debate on the armed struggle in Latin America, just as the signing of a UN-backed peace accord between Guatemala's guerrillas and their persecutors seemed to mark the continent's "farewell to arms".



Influential Latin American writer Jorge Castañeda is one of many left intellectuals who argue that the guerrilla cycle opened by Che Guevara 30 years ago is drawing to a close. El Che called on guerrillas to create "one, two, many Vietnams". Not only did this not happen, but, argues Castañeda, "the armed struggle, as a way to conquer power and transform society, is finished. Today, Che Guevara is a symbol, but not a military leader to be followed."

Castañeda also argues that most organisations which are in favour of armed struggle are no longer revolutionary. "Their programmes are radical compared to the obsession with the free market which is doing so much damage in the region. But the substance of the leftist platform in Latin America differs little from President Kennedy's 'Alliance for Progress'² of the early 1960s.⁴

Castañeda is mistaken. Clearly, revolution is no longer an immediate prospect, as it seemed to be in the 1960s. Nor, in today's specific conditions, is it realistic to implement a strategy of taking power through armed struggle. Nevertheless, the goal of taking power, and the dream of revolution, are still very present, and very relevant.

According to João Machado, a leader of Brazil's Workers Party,⁵ it is ridiculous to compare the demands of the radical left to the "modernist" pro-imperialist "Alliance for



Progress." The neo-liberal counter-reforms under way in Latin America are provoking such deep inequality and liquidation of national sovereignty that the struggle for economic reform, social justice, citizenship rights and national sovereignty that it "acquires an anti-capitalist character." Because, in this age of globalisation, capitalism "dissolves the nation and obliterates citizenship."

This means that "today, a moderate, but consistent progressive persona can only be a radical. The scenario is simplifying. On one side are the capitalists and the assorted post-modernists. And on the other side are those who still have a sense of solidarity and dignity."

In his obituary for the very strategy of armed struggle, Castañeda repeats the argument of so many "radical democrats" and post-Stalinist realists, according to which "redistributive, reformist changes can be made by following the institutional procedures." Hello? Is this possible in countries where the legal space is blocked, and popular struggles are savagely repressed? In Bolivia, where each strike ends in hundreds of arrests, and a few deaths? In Mexico and Peru, where the elections are a farce? In Guatemala, where more than 60% of the population abstains in the elections? In Colombia, where more than 30,000 militants of the opposition have been assassinated in recent years? Or even in Brazil, where the left has certainly won some important victories, and runs a number of progressive municipal councils, but where, at the same time, the Movement of Landless peasants (MST) is obliged to occupy plantations and farms, and carry weapons to protect themselves against the police, transforming the agrarian struggle into a low intensity civil war?

Who are the guerrillas?

In the 1960s and 1970s guerrilla volunteers came from the liberal professions, or the student milieu, or the most radical, "class struggle" sector of the manual workers' movement. Not any more. The rank-and-file of today's guerrilla movements is overwhelmingly made up of those at the very bottom of society, people without work or housing of any kind. Look at the EZLN in Mexico, or

the FARC and ELN in Colombia. And look at the guerrillas in Peru.

"Structural adjustment" plans, dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have created hunger and misery, but also the conditions for a new development of the popular movement of rebellion against an unacceptable social reality.

The actors in this rebellion are the social groups most affected by "capitalist modernisation": the Indians, landless peasants, and the shanty-town dwellers of the urban desert. The people who live at the margin of the market economy.

Neo-liberal restructuring has fragmented Latin America's trade unions. In most countries, the legal left is just ornamentation. At times like these, the MRTA (and Sendero Luminoso) recruit in the poorer districts of the cities, and among peasants who have been chased off their land, or coca farmers who have been ruined by the narco-mafia or the regime's anti-drugs units.

Peru is a country suffocating in political violence. The last eight years have seen more than 25,000 politically-motivated violent deaths. Most of the guerrillas inside the Japanese Embassy compound are boys and girls, aged from 16 to 22. Beyond ideology, beyond programme, they are reclaiming their dignity. In a country where 300,000 young people arrive on the labour market every year, without the slightest hope of finding real work.

Most of Latin America's historic guerrilla currents have recently integrated themselves into the mainstream political system. Their programme and strategy hardly differ from that of the reformist left which never picked up a gun.

But the experience of armed struggle is clearly not disappearing. The brutality of neo-liberalism has left some people no other choice. Latin America is still producing Che Guevaras. We are witness to the resurrection of insurrection. ★

Sources: Who Are The Peruvian Terrorists? by Chris Gaal, Amnesty International, and press reports.

1. The MRTA is the product of a fusion between the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) formed in the 1960s by Luis de la Puente Uceda, and a "Marxist Leninist" split from "Velazquista" General Leonidas Rodriguez' Socialist Revolutionary Party. The new movement grew quickly under Alan Garcia's APRA government (1985-90).

2. Freeing jailed comrades is a high priority for the MRTA, since guerrilla prisoners are often tortured, sexually abused, kept in isolated dark and unsanitary conditions, receive no medical care, and suffer from serious illnesses.)

3. As well as the recent re-appearance of Manuel Rodriguez' Patriotic Front in Chile, and the continuing epic struggle of Colombia's guerrillas

4. US President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress was formally launched in August 1961. It advocated Land reform, diversification of agriculture and rural co-operatives. It was conceived as a "revolution from above" to stifle the "revolution from below", without changing property relations and the dominant role of US private capital in Latin America. The Alliance died a natural death in 1963 when its functions were taken over by the Inter-American Development Bank. Che Guevara made a very eloquent attack on the Alliance at a UNCTAD conference in Geneva.

5. Member of the national leadership of the Workers Party (PT) and of Socialist Democracy, the PT current associated with the Fourth International. Quotes taken from the November 1996 issue of Mas alla de lo posible magazine.

Peruvian guerillas on the Internet

The first two sites are excellent sources of Peru information

Voz Rebelde (MRTA newspaper)
<http://www.cybercity.dk/users/ccc17427/>

Arm the Spirit (solidarity group)
<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~ats/mrta.htm>

Shining Path(Sendero Luminoso)
<http://www.calyx.com/~peruweb/csrp.htm>

Colombia

The guerillas come out of the forest

• Ernesto Herrera

All of a sudden, the media has realised that Colombia's left-wing guerrilla movements are not dead. While they are by no means in a position to take power, the guerrilla forces of both the FARC and UC-ELN groups have recently demonstrated their military power, and their ability to widen their support among the poor. Tactics have included occupying urban districts, creating "liberated zones" in the countryside, harassing oil companies that refuse to pay revolutionary taxes, and even armed incursions into the capital, Bogota.

In the last months of 1996, 150 soldiers and rightist paramilitary forces were killed by fighters of the two groups, according to official figures. The real total is probably higher. Independent sources estimate that three people die in combat or massacres every day, even in "quiet" periods. Guerrilla deaths are hard to count, while the armed forces and paramilitary units consistently under-report their own casualties.

Six years after the death of leader Luis Alberto Morantes ("Jacobo Arenas") and three years after their historic 1993 conference, the FARC continues to implement its new strategy of creating "rings of pressure" around the towns and Bogota itself. The idea is to go beyond the "strategic equilibrium" of recent years towards what the group calls "a scenario of generalised insurrection".

The guerrillas aren't trying to take Bogota, with its six million inhabitants. Not yet. But they have demonstrated operational capacity in the field, which enables them to cut the country's main communications networks for a period of several hours or more. The last time they did so, "official" Colombia was effectively split into two disconnected halves.

For most of its 40 years of existence, the FARC has given priority to the struggle in the country's rural zones.

In 1962, the Colombian army threw 46,000 soldiers into what it thought would be an intensive, but short campaign to exterminate the rebels, who probably numbered no more than 50 at the time. Thirty years later, they were still trying.

During the past five years, the FARC has doubled its forces from 5,000 to 10,000, and doubled the number of military fronts from 47 to just over 100.

In a communiqué sent to *El Tiempo* newspaper, the FARC recently announced the creation of its first "liberated zone", in the districts of Guaviare, Meta, Caqueta, Putmayo and Amazonas.

The guerrilla don't just face the army. In the coca-growing regions, they compete with the narco-Mafia for support from the peasants. The FARC strategy has been to offer the peasants credit at fair rates, and provide guaranteed prices for their produce. By doing so, they prevent the narco-traffickers from keeping the lion's share of the wealth so generated for themselves. According to sociologist Alfredo Molano, there are many regions of Colombia where "the guerrillas are the judges, and the authorities."

According to Colombia's military intelligence service, the rising light in the FARC is Jorge Briceno, "the wise one". The son of a rank-and-file guerrilla fighter, Briceno currently directs FARC operations on its key eastern front. His base is in the Sunsapaz region, with its back to the eastern Andes range, and Bogota at its feet.

Oiling the wheels of revolution

On September 20, 1996, Colombia's second most important guerrilla organisation, the UC-ELN, imposed a total ban on transport, and a widespread shutdown of commercial activity. In the Cesar district, 500 km. north-west of Bogota, they ambushed a convoy of 16 lorries, escaping with an estimated 31,600 kilos of explosives. Simultaneous actions took place in Tolima, Bolivar and Antioquia.

In 1982, the UC-ELN had 230 fighters, divided between three rural fronts and five urban struc-

tures. Today, under the leadership of Spanish-born ex-priest Manuel Perez, the 5,000 guerrillas harass the regime and oil companies on more than 20 fronts.

According to Irish Colombia specialist Daniel Davis, "The difference in the strength of the two organisations is explained by a number of factors. One is that it is almost impossible to leave the FARC once one has joined up. In some areas, like Segovia, the more politically sophisticated UC-ELN has grown at the expense of the



FARC. The UC-ELN has a position of trying to provide alternatives to coca production for the peasants, and criticises what it claims is the FARC attitude of "drugs only kill rich imperialists" complacency in the face of drug abuse in the first world."

UC-ELN policy is to impose its own taxes on the multinationals that operate in the areas it controls. Shell and Oxy have pulled out of the Tenal and Bajo Caranal regions. The other large companies present in the region are, presumably, paying. The strategy, which seems to be paying off, is to maximise the politico-military pressure on the government, while assuring the movement a larger income than it could hope to win from "traditional" activities. ★

* The author is a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party (PST), Uruguayan section of the Fourth International. He contributes regularly to the party's bi-monthly *Correspondencia*. Sources for this article: *Semana* (Colombia), *Pagina 12* (Argentina), *Brecha* (Uruguay).

Biggest challenge yet for "civil" Zapatistas

The year of change

In November, Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party rejected reforms of the country's notoriously corrupt and undemocratic electoral system. But they sweetened the pill with \$300 million in state funding for this year's parliamentary elections. Once again, complains **Braulio Moro**, the "loyal opposition" has sacrificed democracy and justice, for a few crumbs of the cake.

When Ernesto Zedillo became president in December 1994, many commentators applauded his promises of "definitive electoral reform." Electoral fraud has been a central tactic of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has ruled Mexico's virtual one-party state for more than 60 years. Zedillo, it was claimed, represented a new period in which the PRI would accept reform, or, more exactly, transform itself.

On January 16, 1995, all four parties represented in parliament; the PRI plus the right-wing National Action Party (PAN) and the left-wing Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the Workers' Party (PT) signed the "Commitments to a National Political Agreement" — a document that sought to establish suitable conditions for putting Zedillo's reforms into effect.

From the day the document was signed, negotiations in Mexico's top political circles have oscillated between tensions, threats and counter-threats. Shut away in the Interior Ministry meeting rooms, far from the fire

raging in Mexican society, the authors of the "Commitments" document slowly constructed their "reform" proposal.

Twelve months later, Zedillo was the "witness of honour" when the electoral reform pact was signed by representatives of all four parliamentary parties in August 1996. With such unanimous support the politicians sat back and waited. All that remained was for Congress to make the necessary modifications to the constitution.

But then the PRI scored disastrous results in the local, state and gubernatorial elections held in 25 of the country's 31 states. The latest round of elections, which took place November 10 in the states of Mexico, Hidalgo and Coahuila, confirmed the ruling party's setbacks. For the first time since the 1917 Mexican revolution, almost half the population is governed, at the municipal or state level, by opposition parties.

The PAN now governs more than 34 million Mexicans, from a total population of 93 million. The PRD runs towns and cities with nine million inhabitants. The PRI now controls only four of the country's largest cities, including the capital, Mexico City.

The right-wing PAN made the biggest gains, in elections in which the population expressed its discontent with a corrupt, crisis-ridden regime. This is not cause for optimism.

The PRD's score has improved, mainly as a result of changes in its leadership bodies in early 1996.² The new party leadership has focused all efforts on electoral campaigns. With more elections scheduled during 1997, the PRD wants to present itself as a party ready to assume "institutional responsibilities", capable of negotiation and, as the PRD president himself says, "willing to seek

consensus."³

More votes were cast for the opposition than the PRI. But the most significant aspect of last year's local elections was the record abstentionism, beating Mexico's traditionally high rate of non-participation. In the State of Mexico, adjacent to the capital, only about 30% of registered voters actually cast ballots. Not that any of the parliamentary parties seemed particularly concerned.

Anti-civic legislation

Zedillo's reform, approved by the parliamentary opposition, is an anti-civic law. It is designed only to normalise the relationship between the political forces currently represented in Congress.

It blocks all possibilities of participation for those sectors of "civil society" that do not identify with one or the other of the four parliamentary parties. Key democratic demands, such as the right to present independent or coalition candidacies and allowing referendums and plebiscites on key issues were effectively ignored.

From consensus to crisis

Last autumn's disastrous election results were not the only factor that undercut the euphoria which took hold of the political elite after the opposition signed the reform pact in August.

On November 14, Congress passed a new law on state financing of political parties. Not surprisingly, the ruling PRI claimed the lion's share of the \$300 million allocated for the eight month electoral campaign. A monstrous sum, given the seriousness of the economic crisis, and the conditions of absolute misery in which more than 40 million Mexicans live.

Analysis with attitude — and half price for those under 26

International Viewpoint: the Fourth International's hard-hitting monthly magazine

YOUR NAME

ADDRESS

CITY CODE

COUNTRY E-MAIL/Ⓢ

One year subscription(11 issues)

	regular	youth
Belgium	BEF 2000 <input type="checkbox"/>	BEF 1000 <input type="checkbox"/>
Britain/Ireland	£25 <input type="checkbox"/>	£13 <input type="checkbox"/>
Denmark	DKK 380 <input type="checkbox"/>	DKK200 <input type="checkbox"/>
Germany	DM 110 <input type="checkbox"/>	DM 55 <input type="checkbox"/>
Greece	6000 dr <input type="checkbox"/>	3000 dr <input type="checkbox"/>
Holland	f95 <input type="checkbox"/>	f50 <input type="checkbox"/>
Spain	6000 pts <input type="checkbox"/>	3000 pts <input type="checkbox"/>
Sweden	SEK 400 <input type="checkbox"/>	SEK 200 <input type="checkbox"/>
Australia/NZ	\$ 33 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 17 <input type="checkbox"/>
Canada	C\$ 80 <input type="checkbox"/>	C\$ 40 <input type="checkbox"/>
USA	US\$ 70 <input type="checkbox"/>	US\$ 35 <input type="checkbox"/>
Rest of world	US\$ 70 <input type="checkbox"/>	US\$ 35 <input type="checkbox"/>

Send no cash with order. We will invoice you.

Ⓢ PECCI, PO Box 85, 75522 Paris, cedex 11 France

e-mail 100666.1443@compuserve.com fax 331/43792961

A monthly analytical review published under the auspices of the Fourth International. Published by Presse-Editions-Communications Internationale, Ⓢ PECCI, BP 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France. e-mail <100666.1443@compuserve.com>, fax (+33) 1/43792961. Ⓢ (+33) 1/43792960, Directeur de publication: Jean Malewski. Commission paritaire n° 64324. Printed in Greece by Gorgoyianis-Feretos, Dervenion 30, 106 81, Athens (tel.3600646). Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors. ISSN: 1294 2925



Government financing of political parties, first introduced in the 1970s, plays two roles. First, it maintains the Mexican state in the role of King Midas. Except that instead of turning everything it touches into gold, the PRI state-party uses its gold to corrupt and rot all potentially independent organisations, and the individuals who lead them. All the major parties, without exception, have taken government money, and find themselves implicated in the vicious circle of corruption that props up the state. Allocating \$300 million for the 1997 elections is a confirmation of the general strategy. The PRI, and the others, are setting out on an obscene "campaign" of buying votes, prevarication and false promises.

In this context, the PRI machine in the federal congress found itself at loggerheads with all three opposition parties on the day Zedillo's "definitive electoral reform" was submitted to a vote. Aware of the difficulties ahead, PRI deputies rejected almost everything in the new law that could have made Mexico's elections just a little bit fair, and a little bit democratic. They were particularly ruthless in eliminating any liberalisation of the regulations discouraging coalitions, and all new penal measures against electoral fraud.

And so concluded the great electoral reform. The institutional consensus so carefully nurtured by the political elite ended in a moment of pure deception.

Of course, to the extent that all this was a deal decided at the highest political circles, the rest of society was not very surprised. No-one expects the opposition to call on the population to rise up in defence of its civic rights. For the right-wing PAN and the left-

wing PRD, the population is an electoral force, but not a political one. Neither has the slightest desire to mobilise society as part of an effort for a fairer electoral system.

While PRI deputies rejected amendment after amendment to the electoral reform bill, PAN and PRD legislators assured the media that the ruling party was acting "against the will of the President". The next day, Zedillo clarified the issue for them. "Yesterday's reform was definitive. No further reform proposals will be presented to congress during my term of office."⁵

The 1997 elections

Local elections will be held later this year in 11 states, and Mexico City. National elections will also be held for the Chamber of Deputies and one quarter of seats in the Senate. Given the depth of the economic and political crisis, these elections will be more important than the presidential elections, slated for the year 2000.

Mexico City will elect its mayor for the first time. Until now, the head of the capital city had been appointed by the president. The city is a bastion of the opposition, but the PRI has always controlled local government, under anti-democratic legislation regulating the capital's status.

Everything suggests the PRI will be the biggest loser of any even half-fair election. It's no surprise that several of the ruling party's more opportunist politicians have already found refuge in one of the other parties, particularly the PRD.

The barriers to forming electoral coalitions that PRI deputies approved in November were aimed at preventing the formation of a PRD-PAN slate in Mexico

City. While the PRD has an important presence in the capital, none of the party's leaders is in a strong position as the campaign starts. Given their good results in the 1994 parliamentary election, the PAN is the clear favourite. Though the party will have some talking to do to justify their role as PRI concubine during the rule of the now-discredited former president Salinas.

The most probable result is that no party will win an absolute majority in Mexico City or in the country as a whole. Each party will be manoeuvring carefully, with one eye on each of the other parties. Each party will present itself as an essential factor for the "governability" of the country. None of the parties wants to see the situation "get out of hand" after the results are announced.

The Zapatista rebels have still not made a clear statement defining their approach towards the elections. "The government thinks the political system in this country has a strong enough stomach to digest us without much discomfort, as if we were a political force that didn't merit the slightest concession," says Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos. But, rather than "going with the political elite and becoming professional politicians," he promises that the Zapatistas will "turn the other way, towards the people, who expect us to make new proposals."⁶

Marcos has realised something very important. Much of civil society is not linked to any of the parties. Its participants remain spectators in the political game plan designed by the PRI and the parliamentary opposition. A significant minority identifies with the Zapatistas' political positions, and would be more than happy to knock down the whole rotten scaffold of the current party system.

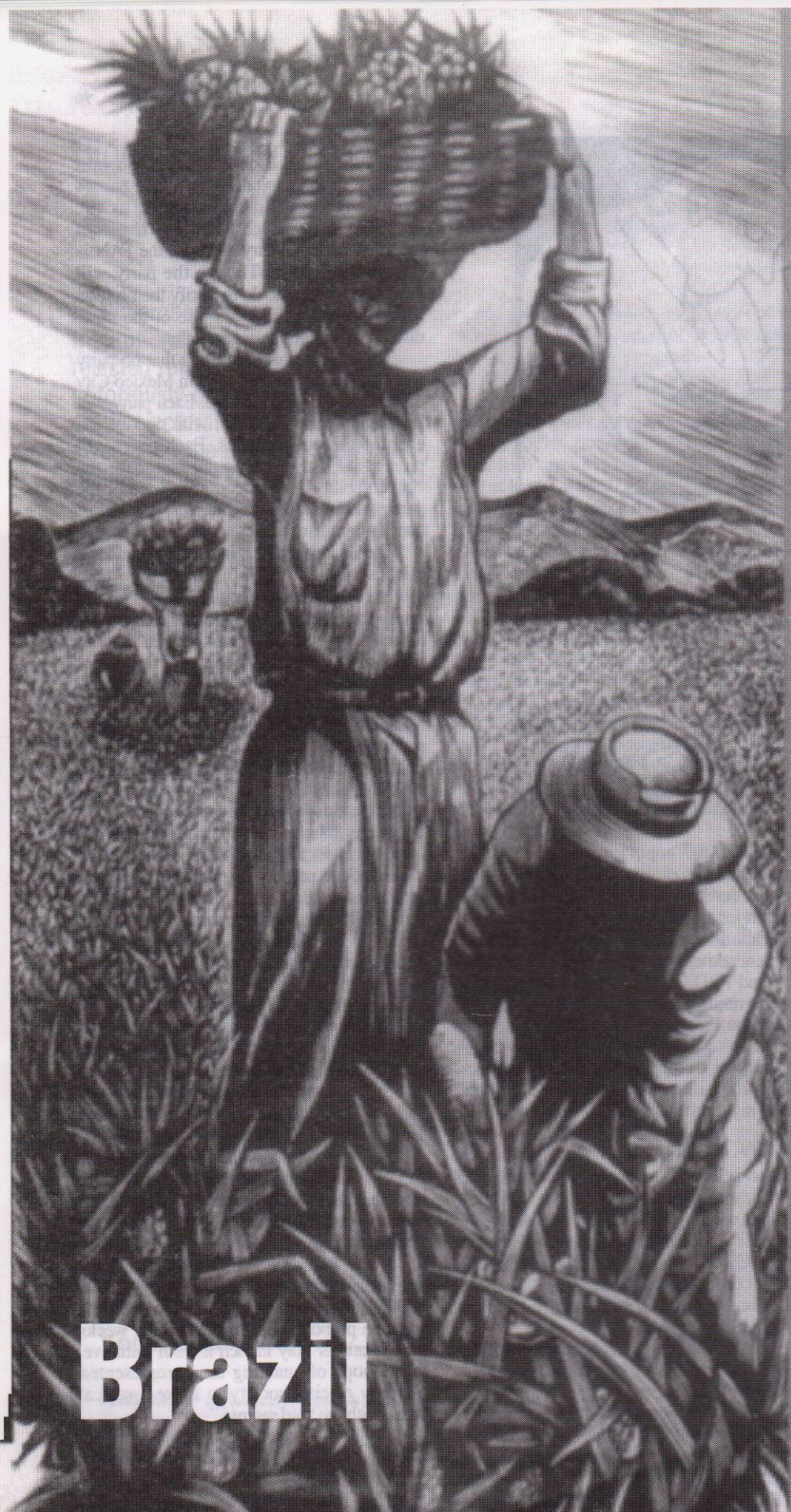
The Zapatista project for the 1997 elections is difficult, and risky. But the same could be said about their three-year public existence, ever since they burst onto the scene on the day the North American Free Trade Agreement took effect.

The trajectory, and the statements of the EZLN make it impossible for them to enter into the back-room games so popular in Mexican political circles.

In 1994, the Zapatistas indirectly called for a vote for some PRD candidates. They are unlikely to follow the same strategy in 1997. But so far, Marcos has not made a concrete proposal. But in the coming weeks the Zapatistas may launch a fresh initiative, in the hope of enabling the unrepresented majority of civil society to make a radical break with the "old regime." ★

Notes

- 1) The largest state, surrounding Mexico City. The 1995 census records 11.7 million inhabitants — 13% of the total population. The State of Mexico produces more than 12% of Mexico's GDP.
- 2) Manuel Lopez Obrador replaced Porfirio Muñoz Ledo as PRD president.
- 3) *Proceso* #1043, 27 October 1996.
- 4) Expression used by Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, former PRD president.
- 5) *Reforma*, 16 November 1996.
- 6) *La Jornada*, 26 November 1996.



Brazil

Raul Pont is a leading member of Socialist Democracy, the current within Brazil's Workers Party (PT) identified with the Fourth International.

In October 1996 he was elected Mayor of the southern city Porto Alegre.

International Viewpoint: You are the third consecutive PT Mayor' of Porto Alegre. That's quite a record

Raul Pont: We have made two main promises to the population. Firstly, to increase popular participation, strengthen the participative budget process,² and consolidate the municipality's "democratic space". To do this, respect for the decisions made by these popular organs is fundamentally important. When we took office on January 1st, our budget had already been fixed by the community, during the previous year. We will respect this budget rigorously.

Our second commitment is to do, during our mandate, the things we promised during the election campaign. We said that Porto Alegre should become the practical opposition to the neo-liberal hegemony in this country. We said that it was perfectly possible to run a large city under a balanced budget, without new debts or job cuts, with the town hall playing an active role, in co-operation with the state. This means taking measures which range from fighting unemployment to defending public sector enterprises. Like the telecommunications utility CRT, which state governor Britto, an ally of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, wants to privatise.

• Your victory must have helped the party in the rest of the state.

The example of Porto Alegre is increasingly important in the rest of Rio Grande do Sul state, where the PT had excellent results in these last elections. We now control 25 town halls, and in 18 others a PT vice-mayor works in coalition with the PDT and PSB. Coalitions in which opposition to President Cardoso is a central element. We have consolidated the PT and the Popular Front as *the* pole of opposition to Governor Britto and President Cardoso. This will prove important as we approach the 1998 elections for state governors and a new president.

Results best wherever left dominated campaign • "disaster" in São Paulo

Electoral warning for Workers Party

• The national vote for the PT was very uneven. Why?

Our success in Porto Alegre is the result of a process of maturity, internal unity, and harmonious relations between the administration and the executive team in the town hall, and between this team and the party. The rest of the PT should look at our experience here.

To guarantee this cohesion, we have always reflected the proportional importance [of the various currents of the PT, in the functioning of the party]. We respect our diversity. PT comrades here respect and tolerate each other, because together they have built a leading body which has real legitimacy.

It is the municipal leadership of the PT which has built the party down here. We could not have done so without a recognised, collective leadership, united on a common programme. In almost all the towns where the PT has had political and electoral problems, the opposite has been true: a lack of maturity in the leadership, a lack of political and programmatic cohesion, personal ambitions,³ and internal confrontations between the elected representatives, the candidates, and the organs of the party.

Our electoral and institutional advance has not been accompanied by advances in our programmatic cohesion and our ideological identity. And this is essential for the long-term development of the party.

The biggest challenge to our election campaign was to explain how and why our policies here in Porto Alegre would be different from those applied in Espírito Santo state, [where the PT governor has followed neo-liberal policies, and sacked large numbers of public sector workers]. Policies which look just like those implemented by our local Governor Britto!

If this situation continues, it will create insurmountable obstacles for the construction of the PT as a strategic alternative for Brazilian society. This degeneration contradicts everything we have fought for so many years. It destroys our credibility, and could eventually lead the public to consider us as no different from the other parties.

• Some people say the only way to widen the audience is to widen the party's coalition strategy. Surely this threatens to weaken PT ideas.

Exactly. The strategy is absurd. It is surrender: the ideological and political defeat of the sectors which put forward such suggestions. Look at São Paulo. Even if we could win the votes of everyone who voted for the PSDB and PMDB, [centre parties] which in reality stand for neo-liberal policies, we would still not be sure to win a second-round run-off [against a rightist candidate]. That isn't the way to go. An electoral victory that way would mean abandoning our project. The real challenge is to win the support of all those people who have illusions in [right populist outgoing mayor] Maluf.⁴

Millions of exploited workers voted for Maluf's hand-picked successor. Unemployed

people, marginalised people. If we do not fight the political battle, if we start thinking that the only solution is to widen and widen our alliances to the point where we link up with our adversaries, then we will destroy the PT. We will neuter our project, and our victories will not be solid ones. And we will have abandoned the only thing which can give us a stable improved position: the conquest of the trade union and popular movement.

The PT could win its way into the second round of elections in all the cities of Brazil, if only we knew how to listen to popular struggles against unemployment and inequality. Struggles for a fair minimum wage, housing, free public health care, and the rights of real citizens. That is why the people of Porto Alegre voted for the PT.

The party will never progress in São Paulo if it continues identifying itself with the moderate camp. For example, Luiza Erundina, PT candidate for mayor of São Paulo launched her campaign with the slogan "The PT which says 'Yes!'"

The situation in the São Paulo region is very alarming. We are losing votes, elected representatives and town halls. This should trigger the alarm bells. What is going wrong here? It's time for serious self-criticism.

For me, the problem is our weakness, rather than the strength of our opponents.

If Maluf has support in São Paulo today, it is precisely because we decided not to challenge him for his social base. In Porto Alegre we won because we are a party of the popular classes. Because this is what we are and what we remain, we can attempt to win other sectors of the population too, without losing our sense of direction.

• What is to be done inside the PT?

The other problem in São Paulo is the disgraceful political sectarianism. How can those who are completely intolerant in their own party respect democracy in the municipal council, and in their dealings with the population? And if the local leadership cannot win members' confidence, and unite people behind a coherent programme, then in the medium term the party will begin to disintegrate.

The party must have the ability to be the catalyst that brings out the demands that reflect popular interest and struggles. We must be capable of mobilising our own militants. And the party needs to build its financial independence from the elected bodies, which is not the case in some areas.

If we want the PT to remain true to its origins, and to its alternative, anti-capitalist project, then we must build up the PT. Not just as a political reference, but as an organisation, a structure which corresponds to the project which the party has set for itself. If the PT does not consolidate its organisational and material structure, if it does not start worrying about the training of full-timers and local office-holders, if local power-centres, well-connected mayors and deputies can make all the decisions, we won't be a party any more, just a well-informed network, dependent on its elected representatives.

Can you give an example?

Now that we have participated in more than ten elections, we have stopped criticising the Brazilian system of representative democracy. We don't debate this any more, and we don't campaign about it. This demonstrates the extent to which we have abandoned our strategic concepts.

If we want to build another society, and another state, then we should struggle and argue for these "utopian" values, even inside the institutions of that state, as they are today.

We should start by taking control of the salaries of our deputies, and considering that their mandate is a mandate entrusted to them by the party. This could mean creating more direct forms of democracy, where the voters and the party can control their elected representatives. At the moment, Brazilian deputies are like feudal landlords. They "own" a certain number of votes. They are accountable to no-one. This has nothing in common with the higher parliamentary form we want to create. If we don't educate our members about this problem now, we will never do it.

In Porto Alegre we have developed some elements of direct, participatory democracy, which go in this direction. Citizens who take part in the participatory budget process take possession of information, and begin to demystify the state. They take possession of "politics". They begin to have a critical analysis of traditional representative democracy. They begin to see that, although it is better than a dictatorship, the current system is not the kind of democracy which we want. It isn't the kind of democracy which permits the citizen and the worker to take the place of the legislator. And that is the essence of a future, socialist society. The citizen must control the legislative process, and the budget, as directly as possible. Indeed, the level of direct control is the best "thermometer" for measuring the strength of the democracy of a society. ★

Notes

Source: *Em Tempo* 11/1996

1. In Porto Alegre and many other places, the PT fought the elections as part of a "Popular Front" with the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) and other left forces.

2. For more information on the participative budget system, see "The PT in local government: direct democracy?" by Thomas Coutrot, *International Viewpoint* #282 (November 1996) p.26.

3. In Diadema, one of the larger working-class suburbs of São Paulo, managed by the PT since 1988, the PT candidate (who had manipulated the internal selection procedure to become candidate), distanced himself from the outgoing PT team in the town hall, and refused their support. He was beaten by a social-democratic candidate, himself a former member of the PT. The party's national leadership was reluctant to condemn this behaviour, since the candidate concerned was one of the most faithful supporters of the majority current in the PT leadership.

4. Maluf, appointed as governor of São Paulo under the military dictatorship, was elected as mayor in 1992, defeating Luiza Erundina, PT mayor in 1988-92. Brazil's constitution prevented Maluf from standing again in 1996. His hand-picked successor, Pitta, beat Luiza Erundina in the second round.

Our party should be different

Last year's municipal and state election results were a mixed bag for the Workers Party (PT).

Joaquim Soriano and Carlos Henrique Arabe explain why.

Last November the PT fought second-round contests in eleven important mayoral elections. We won in Belem and Caixas. Elsewhere we lost by 3-7%¹ Except in São Paulo, where the right-wing candidate won by 20%.

The PT won 3.15 million votes in these 11 run-offs, attracting more city-dwellers' votes than any other party. Paulo Maluf's Brazilian Peoples Party (PPB) won 4.65 m. votes, 3.17 m. just in São Paulo. The Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) of President Cardoso was third, with 2.8 m. votes.

Despite a good score in Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte, the party did not make it into the second round. In São Paulo, the PT candidate spent her whole campaign distancing herself from the PT (see p. 9) and trying to build an alliance with President Cardoso's party.²

In other words, in Brazil's three largest cities, the ones with most influence on national political behaviour, the PT was in a bad position from the start.

The victories

We won the southern city of Porto Alegre in the first round (see page 9). This helped the PT win the nearby city of Caixas in a second round campaign centred on the record of the federal government and the state governor, a former leader of the parliamentary group of President Cardoso's party.

In Belem, capital of the northern state of Pará, the PT maintained its lead from the first round. PT candidate Emilson Rodrigues' victory was the result of a long involvement of the left of the PT in the local social movements, and a local tradition of opposition to the dominant classes and their political representatives. Former PT leader Lula da Silva won the municipal elections here back in 1994.

Gains and losses

Even where the PT lost, some local campaigns nevertheless strengthened the party. In São Paulo, the opposite is true. The resounding defeat of a right-wing PT candidate is the culmination of a series of political and organisational defeats for the party. There will be no solution to the crisis in the local party until they re-think their strategy for building the party, and end their exclusive

orientation to electoral politics.

In some towns, our defeat was mainly due to the lack of local PT structures, weak leadership, and the lack of real national co-ordination of these election campaigns. An obsession with maximising our vote distracts the party from the main task of nurturing a social and political bloc which can accumulate force and experience though its daily struggle with the ruling classes, and win hegemony, in the struggle for power.

In many cities,³ the mere presence of the PT in the second round was a victory. The narrow margin which separated us from final victory proves the potential for the party in these regions.

Unfortunately, in many areas where the PT lacked the force to attract new voters, and present the party as a global alternative, support from sections of the right wing had a dangerously large influence. This support does not represent a genuine coalition, where the partners make commitments to a common programme. The essential dynamic in these elections was the deep division of the ruling class in the regions mentioned.

The National Executive

When they were asked to intervene in a local campaign (as in São Paulo) the PT's National Executive either evaded taking any responsibility, or supported mistaken local strategies. Particularly where the local party is dominated by supporters of the majority current in the National Executive.

We aren't saying that if only we had a leadership with real political capacities, and which could unite the party, we could solve *all* our problems. Nevertheless, the PT's factionalised National Executive clearly had limited ability to organise a united campaign, and resist the attacks on the party.

The current leadership has permitted the formation of completely perverse electoral alliances, where the PT has effectively abandoned the struggle, and accepted the post of deputy-mayor to representatives of the PSDB, PMDB or PFL.

Between the two rounds

The first round demonstrated the potential for an opposition to neo-liberalism in Brazil. The second round *should* have encouraged and continued this spirit of resistance. Our limited success shows that we failed to respond to the opposition potential of large sections of the population.

Little campaigns on local issues, or downplaying the PT's opposition to neo-liberalism, reduce the potential for polarisation and politicisation to the absolute minimum. Publicity stunts, and the transformation of the local party into an electoral machine mean rocketing campaign costs. Our electoral practices are becoming more

and more like those of the other parties.

These elections have shown, once again, that such a strategy cannot work for the PT. For us, it is the road to failure.

Alliances

Between the first and second rounds, the old arguments in favour of a centre-left alliance (with President Cardoso's PSDB⁴) emerged. The results, particularly in São Paulo, speak for themselves.

Some PT members think that increasing the list of personalities and party leaders associated with a campaign is the same as increasing the number of votes for the candidate concerned. Under the influence of this illusion, the PT candidate in São Paulo was willing to pay almost any price, including renouncing the PT identity of the campaign.

The real issue, of course, is our party's capacity to reach out and attract the supporters of the other parties, not their leaders. The key to this is mobilising our own militants, and maximising the social and political polarisation during the campaign.

Not detaching oneself from the party, and adopting the programme of those who lost in the first round, in the hope of attracting their voters in round two. This demobilises our own supporters, without winning new voters! Those who argue for a centre-left coalition pay lip-service to the struggle against neo-liberalism. But their real strategy is to make "constructive" criticism, in the hope of contributing to a correction of the worse excesses of the government's policies.

How can we oppose neo-liberalism in an alliance with the main instrument by which those policies are implemented, President Cardoso's own party?

For us, opposing neo-liberalism means blocking the political instrument of neo-liberal strategy, the PSDB. Opposing neo-liberalism means building an alternative, which keeps on its agenda the socialist perspective, and the political participation of the working people. It's a long process, and each step we take should be coherent with our long term goals. ★

Notes

1. 3% in Campo Grande, Maceio, Natal, Ribeirao Preto, Santos and Pelotas, and 7% in Aracaju and Florianopolis.

2. Replacing the PT red flag with the blue and yellow campaign colours used in the first round by PSDB candidate José Serra, and including pictures of State Governor Covas (PSDB) and even President Cardoso in her TV publicity. The dissolution of the PT identity of her campaign was such that, after the results were announced, she blamed the weakness of the PSDB campaign as the main reason for her failure!

3. Natal, Maceio, Aracaju, Florianopolis, Campo Grande and Pelotas.

4. The PT was in favour of such an alliance, until the 8th National Meeting in 1993 reversed it, and Lula da Silva was selected as the party's candidate for the presidential elections.



US labor— review of 1996

Profits Up, Concessions Demanded

The new "activist" leadership of the AFL-CIO trade union confederation, elected in November 1995, has been a disappointment.

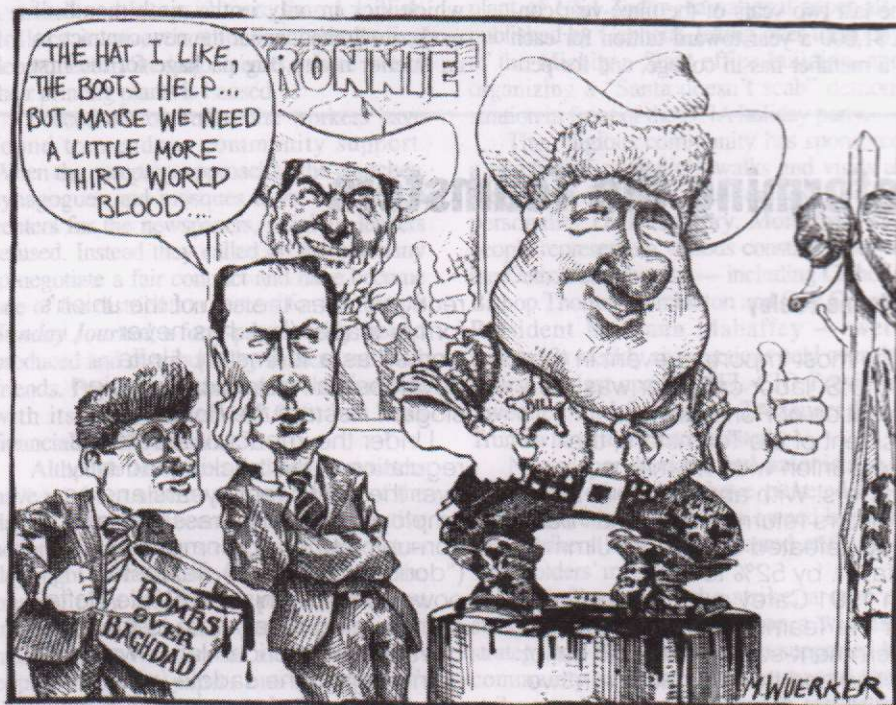
Dianne Feeley* reviews 1996, a year of promises more easily made than kept.

In his victory speech, John Sweeney, the new AFL-CIO President, promised to double the resources allocated to organizing the unorganized 90% of the workforce. While never a rebel, Sweeney was nonetheless president of the fast growing Service Employees International Union (SEIU). SEIU has organized low-wage workers, who are overwhelmingly women and people of color, utilizing unconventional and militant tactics in order to win union recognition.¹

A year later, it seems that promises were more easily made than kept. While the new officers have been more visible at rallies and on the picket lines than their predecessors, they certainly aren't prepared for a head-on confrontation with corporate America. Last year workers won, at best, small benefits and managed to preserve their union in the face of outright union busting. But often the unions ended up compromising over work rules and future security for themselves and the new generation of workers. The union leadership didn't raise the fundamental issue of job creation. Although the Canadian Auto Workers, just across the border, provided an alternative model in their negotiations with Ford, Chrysler and General Motors.

Auto Workers Face Outsourcing

One strike stands out as illustrating



labor's potential in a world of lean production and just-in-time delivery. Three thousand autoworkers, represented by the United Auto Workers (UAW), in two auto break plants in Dayton, Ohio struck General Motors last March. The seventeen-day strike crippled the auto giant's North American operations, idling more than 178,000 workers. While technically over health and safety issues — which are strikeable issues under the local contract — it was really about outsourcing (subcontracting work to non-unionized, low wage companies)

Dayton was the eighth strike against GM since 1994, and like the earlier ones, the settlement required GM to hire more workers.² Clearly the union had a powerful weapon in its hands. The strike was national news and the power of the workers to shut down production stood in stark contrast to other, more isolated labor actions.

GM didn't settle after a few days—its previous strategy—but prolonged the strike and challenged the right of workers laid off due to the strike from receiving unemployment benefits. (These benefits are paid by individual states from funds each employer contributes. The states ultimately denied GM's challenge, but GM's action held up payment.) GM, sitting on \$12 billion in cash and a 30-day inventory of its hot selling minivans and trucks, wanted to teach workers and their union leadership that it was not going to put up with such strikes. The strike ended up costing GM \$900 million.

Outsourcing is a matter of principle for GM and other multinationals because it is a mechanism whereby work from union shops is transferred to non-union ones, thus cutting labor costs significantly. That is, "lean and mean" production is based on a two- or three-tiered production system, with the lower tier being the parts supplier industry. (Although parts plants were once a union bastion, today only one out of every ten parts workers is a union member.)

Power in the union?

Two of the most important strikes settled in 1996 were defeats for the workers concerned

- Bridgestone-Firestone steel-workers settled a 27-month strike in November. While preserving their union and winning a forty cents an hour wage increase, they agreed to twelve-hour work shifts and continuous plant operation. Although the tire company backed down from its demands to make employees pay part of their health benefits and to base wage increases on productivity, Bridgestone-Firestone was able to enforce enough changes to increase productivity.

- A 99-day strike at weapons maker McDonnell Douglass ended with workers giving up their demand for guaranteed job security. They also agreed to give up a number of job classifications and work in teams. The company agreed to announce its intentions to outsource work (giving the union sixty days to submit a bid to do the work more cheaply), to pay workers who lose their jobs due to outsourcing their regular wage for up to six months and retrain them for a new job. Since the majority of the work force at McDonnell Douglass is close to retirement age, a significant sweetener was the company offer to increase their spending on the company pension plan by 24%. ★ [DF]

* Dianne Feeley is an editor of *Against the Current* and a member of the revolutionary socialist group, Solidarity, in Detroit. She was arrested during the newspaper strike at the Port Huron action against *USA Today*.

The UAW leadership seem to have gotten GM's message. It placed no emphasis at its 1996 bargaining convention on an aggressive campaign against outsourcing. In exchange for a continuation of concession-era bargaining, the union won a few benefits (a \$2,000 signing bonus, 3% wage increases for the last two years of the three-year contract, \$1,000 a year toward tuition for each child a member has in college, and for pen-

sioners, a lump sum inflation protection based on cost-of-living increases). The pattern agreement, now signed by Chrysler, Ford and General Motors, continues a two-tier work force, with new hires beginning at 70% of full pay and taking three years to reach the standard. Health care benefits, which kick in only in the ninth month of work, are limited, under the new contract, to an inferior health care package for the first

two years.

Although the UAW went into negotiations declaring job security was its first priority, the pattern agreement reached contains loopholes wide enough to allow the companies to do as they will. But the biggest problem has always been whatever the agreement, the companies don't abide by it and the UAW doesn't insist.

In fact outsourcing language in the con-

Reforming the Teamsters

by Dianne Feeley

The most important event in the 1996 U.S. labor calendar was the re-election of Ron Carey as president of the Teamsters, the largest union with 1.4 million members. With about 35% of the Teamsters returning their mail ballot, Carey defeated challenger Jimmy Hoffa, Jr. by 52% to 48%.

In 1991 Carey swept into office after the Teamsters agreed to a government-supervised mail ballot election and the old guard ran two candidates. Elected on a platform that combined cleaning out the Mafia-domination and corruption of the union with encouraging membership participation, Carey began by lowering his salary \$50,000 and selling off the union's jets and limousines. He established the policy that no national Teamster officer could receive more than one salary. In 1994 he abolished the four Teamster regional conferences, a mechanism whereby officers received multiple salaries and pensions. Carey has put 67 locals into receivership, kicking out corrupt leaders and giving locals a chance to rebuild an alternative leadership.

Carey established an organizing campaign to reach out to as yet unorganized workers, opposed NAFTA and helped local Teamsters launch community outreach and corporate campaigns, providing more muscle in strikes and negotiations. He took Teamsters out on strike in order to secure contracts with three national employer groups (freight, carhaul and United Parcel Service).

So why did Carey win by such a small percentage? Because the powerful group of officers who he attacked still retain their office at a local level. They used their resources to try to make a comeback, and spent \$2 for every dollar of the Carey campaign. They put up a unity candidate, Jimmy Hoffa, Jr. who has an instant name

recognition as the son of the union's former leader (but has never worked as a Teamster). Hoffa developed a nostalgic campaign slogan: *Restore the Power*.

Under the impact of federal deregulation of the trucking industry over the past twenty years and as employers have aggressively set up non-union trucking companies ("double-breasting"), Teamster power has diminished. While Hoffa campaigned for a return to the glory days when American labor was riding high in the saddle (never mind the level of corruption), the reality is that those days are long gone, no matter who is president.

As Gillian First, a Teamster from Minneapolis and member of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) stated, "Most members want the same thing: a tough union leadership that will fight the greedy corporations. People voted for Hoffa thinking he'd do that." And Carey pointed out that the opposition was forced to adopt the reforms he had initiated.



Hoffa did well in the Midwest—with his father's old base (Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City), and where there is still a large concentration of powerful old guard leaders. Carey won decisively in the East, South and Canada, and narrowly in the West. Carey's slate will probably win all but five or six positions on the



Exec-
utive Board.

The twenty-year old reform movement, TDU, supported the Carey slate in both the 1991 and 1996 campaigns. Following Carey's first victory, TDU saw some of its demands for democratic reforms implemented.

It described the Teamsters under Carey's leadership as a sandwich, with a responsible and democratic leadership at the highest level and a rank-and-file movement operating at the bottom—but with a corrupt and undemocratic middle. Although progress has been uneven, over the last few years TDU has been able to win more local elections and build a political culture at the grassroots.

Hoffa may have lost the election, but he and the old guard aren't planning on just walking away. They have sent aside \$100,000 to finance a leader offensive to challenge the election in court.

As Ken Paff, national TDU organizer, pointed out, "The Hoffa campaign's aim is to undermine the Teamsters' new democratic system. They're trying to create a phony news story that will linger on. They want to cast doubt on an election process that was probably the most legitimate in union history."

The media—from the **New York Times** to **Labor Notes**—saw the election as a rank-and-file Teamster referendum on the reform agenda. The reformers won and so the reforms will continue.

But the Teamsters still have a big battle ahead. The first battle may be around the United Parcel Service contract, which expires this summer. Half the UPS Teamsters are part-timers who have second-tier wages and can't get full-time jobs. ★

tract establishes a procedure whereby if management wants to move production to an outside supplier, it must provide the local union with access to information about costs and additional time to prepare a competitive bid. That is, the local union is given the opportunity to match—or undercut—the supplier's bid!

Another disturbing aspect of the pattern contract is that it allows the companies to pay lower wages when they buy a formerly non-union business. In these cases, the company are to pay the new UAW members the "prevailing" wage in that industry or geographic area. So the UAW leadership has made a deal with management — if you bring these workers into our union, we'll accept them at a lower wage.

The UAW leadership has accepted the Big Three's terms, even if they still argue over some details. The terms include a tiered industry, even in its unionized section, and the union's continued cooperation with management.

Taking on Labor in A Union Town

In July 1995 the more than 2,000 workers at the Detroit Newspaper Agency (DNA)—which publishes the *Detroit Free Press* (owned by Knight-Ridder) and *Detroit News* (owned by virulently anti-union Gannett)—went out on strike. A Joint Operating Agreement (JOA), hammered out in 1989, allowed the "competitive" dailies to share certain expenses and even joint editions on Sundays and holidays. At the time both papers claimed they were losing money.

So the unions had agreed to concessions in 1989 and 1992, with the promise of a better contract once the DNA was on its financial feet. Since the JOA went into effect the typographical union lost more than half of its members, the drivers and distribution managers lost 300 members and the mail-handlers 65. But as contract negotiations opened for the 1995 contract, the DNA was clearing \$1 million a week.

The DNA submitted its contract proposals in a take-it-or-leave-it manner, insisting on unlimited subcontracting of maintenance work; eliminating jobs, overtime shifts and work jurisdiction rules; outsourcing; as well as introducing merit pay for reporters — a system designed to weed out independent-minded journalists.

A year and a half into the strike the company has lost \$300 million. According to independent auditors the papers' readership and advertisers are down by 30-40%. However both Knight-Ridder and Gannett are able to sustain the losses because they have other newspapers and television stations. Clearly corporate management from its national headquarters is dictating strike strategy.

Evidence has been uncovered that the DNA began planning for a strike five years ago, when it filed with the Justice Department a secret amendment to the Joint Operating Agreement, which would allow the DNA to publish joint editions during a strike. Management never seriously bargained with the unions, who represent the

reporters, photographers, graphic artists, press people, handlers, truck drivers and delimiters. Instead they hired Vance Guards — a strikebreaking/security firm — and brought in "replacement" workers. The DNA notified suburban police four months before the workers walked out that it was "preparing for a strike" and has paid more than a million dollars in overtime pay to the police department in Sterling Heights, where one of their printing plants is housed.

Forced out on strike, the workers have found tremendous community support. When the company approached the churches, synagogues and mosques to be distribution centers for the newspapers, religious leaders refused. Instead they called on the company to negotiate a fair contract and have become one of the distribution centers for the *Detroit Sunday Journal*, a forty-page weekly tabloid produced and distributed by strikers and their friends. For the past six months the *Journal*, with its press run of 165,000, has been financially self-sustaining.

Although the strikers and their supporters have not been able to stop production of the dailies, there have been a number of creative actions. Early in the strike there were Saturday night mobilizations of up to 5,000 at the printing plant (the Sunday paper is the most important of the week). One Saturday night management went so far as to hire a helicopter to fly the papers out—a very inefficient and expensive method. These actions delayed delivery trucks papers were delivered hours late. But these mobilizations were suspended by the union leadership in an attempt to prevent the DNA from obtaining a court injunction that would slap the unions with heavy fines.

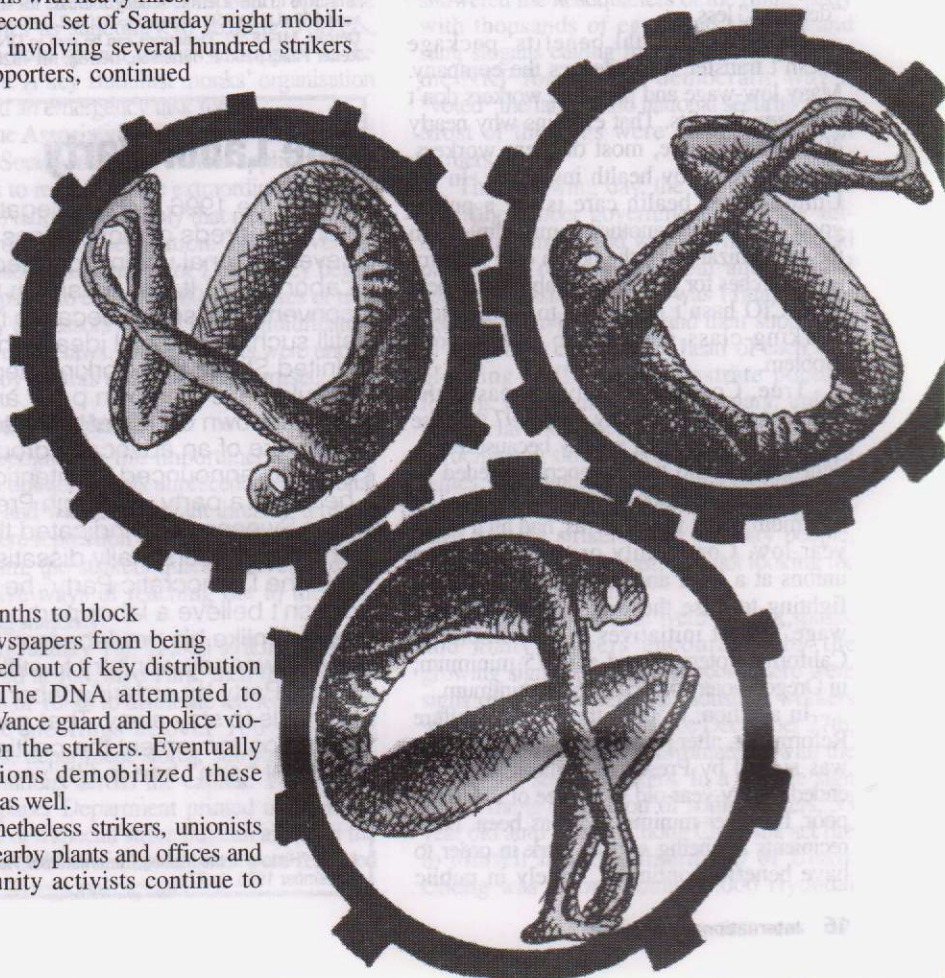
A second set of Saturday night mobilizations, involving several hundred strikers and supporters, continued

walk picket lines and organize "walk throughs" at stores that still advertise in the papers. Other actions include singing Christmas carols at the homes of company executives and well-known scab reporters, the occupation of suburban news bureaus, blocking of the driveway at the Port Huron plant of *USA Today* (a national paper also published by Gannett), taking over the lobby of the Michigan State office building, and organizing a "Santa doesn't scab" demonstration in front of the DNA holiday party.

The religious community has sponsored a number of candlelight walks and vigils as well as a 24-hour hunger fast led by personality Dick Gregory. More than 250 people representing various constituencies of the Detroit community — including Catholic Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and City Council President Maryann Mahaffey — were arrested in weekly sit-in actions held over the course of last spring. AFL-CIO President Sweeney and Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka have also been arrested.

Newspaper workers and unionists in a number of other cities have picketed *USA Today* and other newspapers owned by Gannett. Strikers have also appeared at Gannett shareholders' meetings.

In the course of the strike, a core of strikers who want to develop a winning strategy has emerged and been supported by community activists. For the second time strike activists have succeeded in getting the presidents of the six striking locals to lobby



for months to block the newspapers from being delivered out of key distribution sites. The DNA attempted to blame Vance guard and police violence on the strikers. Eventually the unions demobilized these actions as well.

Nonetheless strikers, unionists from nearby plants and offices and community activists continue to



AFL-CIO President John Sweeney for a national mobilization of labor in Detroit. The event would be called Solidarity Day III (previous marches were held in Washington in 1981 and 1991). Sweeney and the AFL-CIO Executive Council turned down an earlier proposal, in part because of the federation's involvement in the 1996 elections, where it [mis]spent \$35 million "educating" its members to re-elect Clinton and a Democratic Congress.

Unions Have Their Head in the Sand

Unlike most industrialized countries, in the United States unions generally do not fight to improve the living standards of working people as a whole. While this reality is rooted in the determination of the U.S. ruling class to oppose unionism, the unions themselves have not continued to wage the battle. Instead, unions individually bargain various benefits for their own members. This reinforces the individualism of the society where if one is "smart," one has a good job with decent benefits and if one is "stupid" or "lazy" one has less because presumably one "deserves" less.

These individual benefits' package doesn't transfer if one leaves the company. Many low-wage and part-time workers don't have *any* benefits. That explains why nearly 40 million people, most of them workers, aren't covered by health insurance. In the United States health care is not a public good, but simply another commodity. With the reorganization of the health care industry as it searches for greater profitability, the new AFL-CIO hasn't been able to formulate a working-class solution to this serious problem.

True, Congress finally increased the minimum wage, which by July 1997 will rise to \$5.15 an hour. But mainly because President Clinton and the Democrats needed an "issue" to clobber the Republicans with. The minimum wage, in real terms, had hit a forty-year low. Community organizations and unions at a local and state basis have been fighting to raise the wage through "living wage" ballot initiatives. For example, in California voters passed a \$5.75 minimum; in Oregon voters passed a \$6.50 minimum.

In addition, in 1996 the federal Welfare Reform Act, after passing the U.S. Congress, was signed by President Clinton. This act ended a sixty-year-old guarantee of aid to the poor, however minimal that has been. Now recipients are being sent to work in order to have benefits continued, largely in public

sector jobs previously held by union workers.

This direct replacement of union labor with non-unionised "workfare" at substandard wages occurred because unions did not strongly oppose its implementation. Many workers have accepted the propaganda that people on welfare—overwhelmingly women and their children—are too lazy to work.

Union education programs could have confronted the stereotypes working people have. Unions could have attempted to examine the myths that working people have about who is on welfare and how much welfare costs. Unions could also point out that driving one million welfare recipients into the low-wage work force will result in decreasing the average wage for the lowest one-third of the workfare by nearly 12% (Economic Policy Institute statistics). Unions could educate working people about how "workfare" is just another name for the sub-minimum wage and show how it is part of the overall attack on workers' wages and benefits.

Unfortunately, the new national AFL-CIO leadership has been largely absent from these debates on social policy. ★

Notes

1. Richard Trumka, president of the United Mine Workers, was elected secretary-treasurer and AFSCME vice president Linda Chavez-Thompson won the newly created position of executive vice president. This was the first time the AFL-CIO ever had a contested election.
2. (See "Biggest General Motors Strike in 25 Years," *International Viewpoint*, April 1996, 30)
3. To obtain a copy of the call for a national labor action, write to the Appeal Committee, c/o Newspaper Guild of Detroit, 3300 Book Bldg., Detroit, MI 48226. To urge AFL-CIO President Sweeney to call for the action, fax 202-508-6946 or e-mail 71112.53@compuserve.com and send a copy to the Newspaper Guild of Detroit. To subscribe to the *Detroit Sunday Journal* for six months send \$30 (USA)/\$50 (abroad) to 3100 E. Jefferson, Detroit, MI 48207. Donations can be sent to DN Striker Relief Fund, 3100 E. Jefferson, Detroit, MI 48207.]

The Labor Party

In June 1996 1,400 delegates from hundreds of local unions and seven national unions founded a Labor Party.¹ It isn't a party in the conventional sense because it is still such an unusual idea in the United States that working people should have their own party and run their own candidates. Instead it is more of an advocacy group, that has announced its intention to *become* a party. Although President Sweeney has indicated that while he is "personally dissatisfied with the Democratic Party" he doesn't believe a labor party could work. Unlike his predecessor, however, Sweeney won't try to stifle the Labor Party by ordering labor councils to stay away. That gives the union movement the political space it hasn't had in fifty years. ★ [DF]

1. See "History in the Making," *International Viewpoint*, September 1996, (p.27).

South Korea

On December 27th, 350,000 manual workers put down their tools in South Korea's biggest ever labour protest. In the next four weeks, the protest over unjust labour laws spread to white collar workers, many in sectors that had never gone on strike. The outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions has established itself as the leading labour organisation, and the leading force for democracy, in a country that will never be the same again.

Jean Dupont

Hardest hit by the protests was the automobile industry, which saw four major plants - Hyundai, Kia, Ssangyong and Asia - shut down completely. So was the world's largest shipyard, Hyundai Heavy Industries, and South Korea's second-largest shipyard, Daewoo Shipbuilding and Heavy Machinery Ltd. South Korea is the world's sixth-largest car maker with a daily production capacity of 10,000, of which 4,000 are destined for overseas markets. The country gets about a third of the world's commercial shipbuilding orders. Strikes in these key companies have a knock-on effect to production across South Korea's export-led economy.

Most of the strikers work, directly or indirectly, for Daewoo, Hyundai, LG or Samsung, the four chaebols (conglomerates), which control one third of economic output, and half of export sales. Hyundai, for example, makes ships, cars and building equipment, runs department stores, and sells insurance policies.

The strike came at a time when export-led growth is slowing down. The top capitalists and politicians are frantically talking about deep reform of the country's industrial, social and cultural fabric to "re-invent" the economy. Economists were already predicting a record \$20 billion trade deficit in 1996, and by the day the strike started, stock market prices had plunged to their lowest level in three years. The strike itself has reduced production by an estimated \$2bn.

At the centre of the dispute was a reform of the paternalistic labour code, giving businesses greater freedom to lay off workers and reschedule work hours. The chaebols were demanding this flexibility so that they can concentrate on their core activities, and sell or close down less profitable divisions. The new legislation also made it easier for employers to "claw back" some of the high wage increases¹ which have been won since in-

in the streets



dependent trade unions imposed themselves in the mid-80s.

Round one

The strike erupted as soon as workers discovered that the government had secretly introduced the new legislation, without a parliamentary debate. The illegal but tolerated Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) quickly emerged as the main force organising local strike action, co-ordinating at the regional and national level, and speaking to government and the media on behalf of the strikers. Formed only two years ago, the KCTU controls most of the more militant unions at automobile, shipyard and other major export plants.

The old (and new) labour codes formally prevent the union from organising wherever the government-sanctioned Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) is present. But independent unions have blossomed since the democratisation of the 1980s, and the government-sanctioned FKTU only really represents poorly-organised workers in smaller enterprises. The participation of so many FKTU workers in the general strike despite their union's initially hesitant position is one of the striking aspects of the conflict, with implications for the future of the labour movement in the coming years.

Round two

After a pause for the end-of-year holidays, KCTU President Kwon Young-gil launched the "second wave of general strike" on January 6th. Metal, auto and construction workers' unions, the Hyundai Federation of Trade Unions, and professional and white collar workers' unions launched an indefinite stoppage. Many of the white collar unions, representing insurance and financial companies, had not taken any action in the first wave. At least 150 KCTU unions, and 191,000² workers took part in the second wave of the strike. As well as workplace activities, many attended the regular public rallies held in the country's 19 major cities.

Broadcasting workers at both major media networks walked out. And hospital workers at the country's 24 major hospitals resumed their strike following a brief return to work over the holidays.³

The key demands of the "second wave" were the repeal of the anti-worker labour laws and the National Security Planning

Agency Act, an apology from President, Kim Young-sam, and the resignations of the entire cabinet of Prime Minister Lee Soo-sung, and of Lee Hong-koo, Chairman of the ruling New Korea Party.

Growing social support

During the second wave of the strike, militants across the country observed a growing interest, and sympathy of the population and other social organisations. In Seoul, workers were joined by many ordinary citizens, non-union workers, and students in their regular four kilometre march from downtown Jongmyo park to Myongdong Catholic Cathedral, where the KCTU has set up its strike headquarters, to avoid police repression.

The National Council of Churches set up a pan-Christian task force for the re-amendment of the labour laws. A national body of Catholic priests decided to place strike posters in each church compound, open the churches as sanctuary to striking workers, and to hold special masses in support of the strikers. A key Buddhist monks' organisation formed an emergency task force.

The Association of Lawyers for a Democratic Society made an official application for access to records of the extraordinary session of the National Assembly that rushed through the problematic legislation. The University Professors Association for Democracy began a campaign to collect 2,000 signatures of university professors calling for the nullification of the errant laws. Similar efforts were undertaken by doctors and performing artists.

Outreach tactics

Recognising the importance of winning public opinion in this unprecedented national crisis, and with the constant threat of a return to severe repression of democracy and labour activism, the strikers quickly developed innovative ways of reaching out to the non-striking majority.

On January 7th, 15,000 striking workers gathered at Jongmyo Park, then dispersed in groups of 10-20 to distribute leaflets and hold public meetings at over 100 shopping centres, department stores, subway and railway stations across the capital. The KCTU Newspaper Department printed one million copies of a special strike bulletin aimed at the general public. Similar actions were repeated in the 20 regional capitals.

On January 8th, striking unionists held a "special day with ordinary people". Unionists at automobile service companies offered free servicing at 27 temporary check-up points across the country. Members of the KCTU Provincial Council in Chullabuk-do visited various rural villages hit by the recent heavy snowfall to assist in the recovery work. And other unionists, mainly in the special industrial estates, zones, and complexes, will conduct a clean-up campaign in the nearby environmentally distressed areas. Meanwhile, white collar unionists held their own mass meeting in downtown Seoul. The idea was to mark the full entry of white collar workers into the general strike.

Thursday 9th January was designated as a day of protest against the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) of President Kim Young-sam. Strikers held protest rallies in front of NKP branch offices throughout the country.

Over 1,000 broadcasting workers showered the headquarters of the ruling party with thousands of eggs, and shouted and sang slogans calling for the impeachment of the NKP for the anti-democratic way it "voted" the labour and national security laws. Most of the eggs were donated by local farmers.

The following day, the theme of protest was "the robber government," and the authoritarian, underhand way in which they had passed the repressive labour and national security legislation. As it was Friday, it was decided to invite strikers and their supporters to bring their cars into the heart of each city, blocking traffic to demonstrate popular feeling. On Saturday, 11th January, unions and social movements called on citizens to participate in simultaneous local and regional rallies. On Sunday, KCTU unions organised "strolls" and picnics, to re-enforce the message that the strikers were ordinary people, and that this side, at least, was not looking for violent confrontation.

While many people were in high spirits, and many strikers encouraged by the growing signs of popular support, there were signs of strain among the industrial workers who had been on strike since December 27th, facing regular violent confrontations with the police and strike breakers. In a terrible sign of the rising frustration of some strikers, 33 year old auto worker Chong Chae-sok set fire to himself in the southern city of Ulsan. Chong was among some 20,000 Hyundai

★ South Korea

workers who clashed with teargas-spraying riot police on a January 11th march towards the Ulsan City Hall.

Remaining firm

As they maximised their outreach efforts, KCTU leaders stressed that militants should expect that the Korean government would reject the workers' demands and suppress the movement by force. Sure enough, on January 7th, 217 unionists were summoned for questioning by the public prosecutors. Arrest warrants were later issued for 20 top leaders of the KCTU. Despite growing threats from the government, striker militancy remained strong, and public support continued to grow. "Our protest strikes will continue until President Kim Young-sam accepts our demands and apologises to 12 million workers," said KCTU President Kwon Young-gil, who took refuge in Myongdong Cathedral after a warrant was issued for his arrest.

The first signs of hesitation in the ruling class began to appear. Senior government officials held a series of emergency meetings to find a solution to the two week old walk-out. But the overall picture was of total state determination to defeat the strike. Public prosecutors backed by riot police occupied and searched the offices of the KCTU, the Korean Federation Automobile Workers Unions, the Korean Federation of Professional and Technicians Unions, and the Korean Council of Hospital Unions.

Crackdown scenarios

That weekend the KCTU leadership held an urgent strategic meeting. It would be more difficult to bring workers into the streets for demonstrations and protest rallies on weekends, they argued. Most strikes in Korea are sit-down strikes where workers come to their workplace for union meetings, and go from there to mass street rallies and other activities.

Some workers returned to work on Monday to find the factory ground under police control, while the government repeated its threats to use massive force against remaining strikers. This generated two kinds of reaction; subdued resentment and defeatism, combined with angry, volatile outbursts.

Organisers realised that there would be no continuation of the well disciplined and peaceful rallies of the first three weeks of struggle, with 200,000 workers and their supporters weaving through the streets of the country's major cities every day.

The KCTU strategy team decided that the government could win if it used troops to break up all demonstrations and enforce a return to work in key sectors. It was unlikely that the police would raid the cathedral compound where top union leaders were camping. But it might be necessary for the confederation's leadership to go underground. This, or massive arrests at the Cathedral, would leave the union without stable leadership for a considerable time. In the climate of repression, many workers would return to work. And the Federation of Korean Trade Unions would quickly run down its own



half-hearted protests, once the pressure of the rank-and-file declined.

After their meeting, the KCTU leadership issued a public statement which, with hindsight, seems to reveal the ambiguity in the leadership's position, and the recognition that they would soon be asking members to justify something less than the full repeal of the unpopular legislation. "The KCTU leadership has been forged by more than ten years of struggle to build an independent representative trade union movement, and can be expected to undertake all possible effort to maintain the peaceful nature of the general

Message from the KCTU

Question: How can you support this genuine workers' strike in achieving victory ?

Answer: By protesting to the Korean government!

- KCTU hopes that workers or any overseas supporters of our struggle organise protest rallies in front of Korean embassies in their countries.
- We urge you to send protest letters to the Kim Young-sam government. Fax no: 822- 855-1913

Encourage Korean workers in their struggle to act bravely and fight for their livelihood!

Most of the workers involved in the general strike action gave up their year-end annual bonus and salary for the cause of workers' rights. It is a very difficult time for them and their families. We appeal to all concerned groups and supporters to make donations to the strikers of KCTU so that they may continue the strike. Every little will help!

If you send a donation, please inform Yoon Young-mo at the International Department of KCTU. Send donations to the strikers to: Kim In Soog (KCTU). Korean (Foreign) Exchange Bank. Account number: 141-05-1003-7
Fax: 001-822-765-2011
E-mail: kctuint@chollian.dacom.co.kr

strike, so as to induce the government to make a sincere commitment to reopen the process of discussion on genuine reform of the labour law."

Endgame

While they felt they could not win in an escalation of the conflict, KCTU leaders still hoped that if they could maintain the general strike for another week, they would force the government to come to the discussion table, and agree to reopen the parliamentary debate. This would allow the re-amendment of the unpopular labour law by the parliamentary opposition, or even the constitutional court.

Korean radicals are still arguing about what actually happened on Wednesday 15th January, the first day of what unions hoped would be phase three of the general strike. Government threats to use troops to arrest strikers, and assure "essential services" frightened many strikers into returning to work. Shop stewards and local organisers seem to have been surprised by the shift in worker behaviour.

In a sure sign that they were willing to unleash massive repression, the government said that "Communist North Korea may take advantage of the situation to start a revolution in the South."⁴ In a country where "visiting" the North Korean press agency's Internet site can bring years of imprisonment, this was a clear threat to use national security legislation to smash the strike, and presumably roll back a few democratic rights in the process.

But the news that day was not uniformly bad. After virtually ignoring the strike for a week, FKTU-affiliated unions representing 700,000 workers in 16 industries announced their own 39-hour strike.⁵

Back to work

On Saturday 18th January, KCTU President Kwon Young-gil announced a dramatic change in tactics. The all-out strike was to be replaced with one-day walkouts every Wednesday, and mass rallies on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Kwon and the other six "wanted" union leaders would continue their sit-down protest in Seoul Cathedral. On February 18th, strikes would resume if the labour law was not repealed.

Union leaders justified this sudden change in tactics by a "new turn in the political situation." After 23 days of struggle, workers were tired, Kwon told journalists. While public support for the strikers' demands was expanding rapidly, to opposition parties, academic, religious circles, and ordinary citizens, the "front-line organisation of strikers" was "beginning to reveal the limits of persistence" common to long strikes of this intensity.

Other KCTU leaders said that the influences of "hard-liners" in the government camp seemed to be shrinking. "Even in the ruling party, the logic of revision of the law is rising." In these "relatively moderate" circumstances, union leaders hoped their decision to suspend the general strike would "maintain pressure on the government, and at the same time block the possibility of public censure" of the strikers.

Many strikers, especially in the most militant workplaces, and a large number of shop stewards were confused and bitter about this sudden reduction in strike activity, especially since the combination of radical strike tactics combined with innovative outreach to the non-striking population seemed to be winning support for labour demands among a majority of Koreans.

Partial victory, or total defeat?

Top KCTU leaders were under extreme pressure to negotiate ever since the strike started. None wanted to share the responsibility for a severe crackdown which would reverse the democratic gains of recent years. They seem to have attached a lot of hope to signs of division within the ruling elite. The problem, as Kwon Young-gil admits, is that now that the strikers have suspended their action, "now it is the turn of the President and the ruling party to make their play."

President Kim Young-sam might make a few minor amendments, but there is no indication that he has any intention of reversing the new legislation. Indeed, his behaviour from the beginning suggests that he wanted a showdown with the unions. Employers would probably be willing to accept an amendment making it possible for the KCTU to organise alongside the discredited FKTU. After all, this would be simply recognising the reality of trade union membership today. Alternatively, the government may demonstrate their "social concern" by improving South Korea's virtually non-existent unemployment benefit system. With official unemployment at 2.2%, this could be an acceptable price for soothing the sullen anger of so many workers. It would even make it easier for employers to implement the new legislation without provoking local disputes.

One thing is sure. Now the strikers are back at work, it will be much more difficult to call them out again if union leaders and the parliamentary opposition are unable to win concessions from the government. ★

Notes

1. 15% a year measured in Korean won, about 10% in real terms.
2. from a total of 160 KCTU-affiliated federations, with 200,000 members.
3. Health unions made special arrangements to staff all intensive care, emergency, and urgent surgery units, so as to minimise inconvenience and avoid any crisis in medical delivery. This was the system they had followed in South Korea's first ever health service strike, earlier in 1996. They understood from that experience that such emergency cover arrangements alleviate the public's concern and anxiety about the possible chaos that a hospital strike could provoke. The size and popularity of the current general strike has almost certainly lifted any remaining taboos attached to industrial action by health workers.
4. Including chemical, metal and auto workers, banking staff and taxi drivers. About 50,000 unionised banking personnel participated in their first nation-wide strike since the modern banking system was introduced to Korea about 100 years ago.
5. *The Economist*, 18 January 1997.

For more information

Korean General Strike page
<http://kpd.sing-kr.org/strike/index-e.html>

Korean Confederation of Trade Unions
<http://kpd.sing-kr.org/kctu/index.html>

Korean Central News Agency (North Korea's one and only news agency)
<http://www.kcna.co.jp/>

War in the north • repression in the south "Enough is enough!"

Vickramabahu Karunaratne has a message the Sri Lankan government would rather not hear: withdraw all troops from the Tamil homelands, respect human and civic rights in the rest of the country, and refuse IMF-inspired economic reforms.

Such arguments are common enough in émigré circles in London. But Karunaratne is a leader of the Nava Sama Samaja Party, which fights for these policies inside Sri Lanka.



International Viewpoint: What is the effect of IMF policies in Sri Lanka?

Karunaratne: These policies, introduced by the previous, right-wing government, have been a disaster for the workers, and most of all for the rural peasants. There is impoverishment in all rural areas. Indeed the breakdown of the rural sectors is one reason behind the growing force of the Tamil liberation struggle. In the south of the country, rural impoverishment contributes to the growth of the radical Sinhala JVP party.

The peasants are being robbed of their livelihood, access to water, and land. Their existence itself is threatened. Tamil peasants are increasingly marginalised. They are becoming a kind of human dust, without rights whatsoever. The issue is no longer agrarian reform, but a revolution of the outsiders, of people who are no longer considered human, by a system which has proved its inhumanity.

There are persistent campaigns to encourage peasants to give up paddy production. The IMF say it is unprofitable, and that peasants should be re-oriented towards export production. To attract investment, the IMF argues, Sri Lanka must ensure that land becomes a marketable commodity. In other words, peasants must be encouraged to sell or rent their land, and become waged agricultural workers on export-oriented plantations. Gherkins and tobacco are among the new products being introduced.

The government claimed that this transformation of agriculture would make life easier for peasants. Instead it is making them into slaves. Entire families work constantly, just to pay their ever-increasing debt to their multinational landlords.

Several multinationals even demand that the state allow them to carry out police functions in the areas round their plantations. Nestlé is one of the main culprits, taking over resources, and making peasants totally

dependent on the company for accommodation and livelihood.

And the fishing communities?

Large private companies, mainly Korean and Japanese, are threatening the livelihood of small scale fishers. Big boats are now allowed much closer to the coasts. These modern vessels, equipped with the latest technology, have entered into direct competition with smaller, local boats. As a result, those fishers who can't go more than five or six miles (8-10 km) out don't find any fish any more. They are totally pauperised.

This is an ecological, as well as a social disaster. Some of this "sophisticated" technology destroys entire fish crops. Several varieties of fish have vanished completely. As we speak, over-fishing in Sri Lankan waters is destroying further varieties, which used to be in abundance. This technology is also destroying our undersea vegetation, with unforeseeable, but potentially disastrous consequences.

The same is happening inland, as multinationals take over the shrimp farming industry. Salt water and chemicals from unsupervised inland shrimp farms are destroying the surrounding vegetation. The local population is finding it harder and harder to make a living as a result.

Several fishermen's groups have joined our campaign against privatisation.

How are the peasants reacting?

Pauperisation is obviously leading to resentment. We have already witnessed large scale protests against the multinational take over of agriculture. Indian campaigns against Nestlé and other companies are crossing over, and being adapted to the Sri Lankan experience with some signs of success. Several peasant-organised NGOs have even joined the NSSP-sponsored campaign against privatisation.

★ Sri Lanka

If the peasants lose their human rights, they lose the very right to exist. Fortunately, mass movements were very strong in the countryside during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and provided a significant part of the support for the PA election campaign. Since she depends on the organised peasants to remain in power, Chandrika cannot reverse all the gains which peasants have won over the years. But there are signs that we are slipping back to the bad old days, when peasant resistance led to "disappearances." There have recently been some worrying examples of peasant protests meeting with state violence. NGOs in the rural areas increasingly protest against police use of emergency powers. Civic groups find themselves unable to organise even peaceful protest marches against the encroachment of the multinationals.

On 11 August 1996 our party, the NSSP, participated in a combined campaign in the North-Central province, an important farming area near the Tamil-speaking zone. As well as supporters of the NSSP Campaign against Privatisation, IMF and WB Policies and the War in the North, there were many people from peasants organisations, and local groups dedicated to the protection of the natural resources of the region. And, of course, local electricity and bank workers, very concerned about privatisation. We set up a picket in the centre of the provincial capital. The police came to stop us, invoking the emergency regulations to say we could not hold a static picket, and we could not march! We resisted, and we forced them to retreat. But things could have turned nasty.

And in the cities?

In the urban areas, privatisation is causing untold suffering. Large numbers of workers have been made redundant. In most cases, their meagre compensation payments evaporate in a few months, because of inflation. For those still in work, the ferocious post-privatisation management is increasing the rate of exploitation by curtailing trade union and civic rights in the workplace.

Privatisation is generating a new national question in the central part of the island. Companies taking over privatised plantations claim that the workers there have no right over the land. As a result, unemployed youth are now thrown off the plantations, which did not happen before. There is a growing mass of landless, jobless, desperate Tamil ex-plantation workers, with no outlet but struggle against the system.

This explains the militant strikes in the first half of 1996

Exactly. Even those government ministers with a trade union base were forced to acknowledge the justice of many strikers' claims.

The electricity workers' strike was particularly important. There was a virtual nation-wide blackout for almost a week. The government responded by playing the Sinhala chauvinist card. President Chandrika appealed to the mostly Sinhala strikers not to

damage the war effort and the struggle to regain control over the north west of the island. They totally ignored her. The government then sent its chauvinist *goondas* (thugs) into the streets, to try and agitate against the strikers. But again, there was no reaction from the mass of Sinhala-speaking workers. So Chandrika had to call in the police.

The government not only arrested trade union leaders, but took family members, including children and old women in to custody. They tried to force the strikers back to work, literally at gun point.

The Telecom sector strike also met with state violence. Unknown gunmen attacked one union leader at home. And many bank workers were arrested while preparing their token strike in solidarity with the electricity workers.

All this shows the real antagonism among the workers towards privatisation and cutbacks in welfare and subsidies. People can see that it is the World Bank which is making the rules in Sri Lanka.

Your own party has suffered several repressive measures

The government is repressing not only the Tamils in the North-East, but the working class and peasant masses in the south. Our party is leading a dynamic campaign against privatisation, against cuts provoked by compliance with IMF and WB programmes, and against the repression in the North. So it is no surprise that the government sent police to attack our May Day demonstration, and even raided our party offices. This second attack on the NSSP came during the electricity strike, which we had vocally supported. We say openly and loudly that the armed forces should withdraw from the Tamil homelands, and that a devolution package acceptable to the Tamils must be implemented. The Sri Lankan government cannot tolerate anti-IMF agitation, or pro-Tamil statements by organisations in the Sinhala-speaking south of the country.

The government wants to repress progressive campaigns in the south. But because of the strength of the mass movement, which brought Chandrika to power, she is unable to use the police as she wishes. For example, the government is now trying to wriggle out of its role in the violent repression of last year's NSSP May Day meeting, blaming everything on police officers.

But the Peoples Alliance came to power as a left wing alternative

The Peoples Alliance came to power thanks to the help of opportunist working class leaders in the industrial and plantation sectors. In their electoral programme, they promised to break with the previous administration's subservient policies towards the IMF and WB. They pledged to withdraw the army from the North, and implement a substantial devolution package. They talked of constitutional changes, of an end to Sri Lanka's dictatorial executive presidency

system, of a workers charter, and of defence of human and civic rights.

Having come to power on the basis of these slogans, President Chandrika and her ministers "suddenly realised" that they actually had no alternative economic policies to those dictated to the previous government by the WB. She is completely dependent on her IMF and WB advisers. Her government has reversed its promises, and continues with the reactionary policies of the previous government. She is allowing the Americans and other imperialists to dictate her policies. It is they who demand that the backbone of the Tamil liberation struggle be broken before any kind of devolution is introduced.

As a result, Chandrika's Tamil policies are unacceptable, even to the most moderate Tamil parties in the south, like the EPDP, which supports the government, and even participates in the war in the North with its own armed band. One EPDP leader now complains that they have lost confidence in Chandrika, and that his only options are to join the Tamil Tigers or commit suicide. This shows how isolated the president has become.

She has reversed a number of popular social policies. As a result, there have been strikes in the plantations, banks, railways and in the telecommunication sector. As well as demonstrations and protest in most of the sectors which are being pushed towards privatisation. She has also provoked unrest in the private sector, because of delays in introducing the labour charter which was one of the PA electoral promises.

What role does the NSSP play in the resistance movement?

Unless properly organised, and with political leadership, the current of resistance will not be able to stand firm. The police will be able to disband meetings and prevent strikes. Following our successful defence of our own May Day rally, the NSSP increasingly receives requests to participate in meetings across the country. Partly because of our prestige and partly because of our organisational strength. People believe that our party can break through the police lines when necessary — as we did on May Day. People perceive the NSSP as a party which is willing to stand up against repression. And they think we sometimes have the capacity to make the government retreat. Because of this hard-won reputation, almost all sections which enter into struggle are keen to work with us.

In the near future, we have an idea of the kind of common programme which can win the widest effective support. We remain committed to the coming together of trade unions, political groups, intellectuals, NGOs, peasant groups and youth organisations in a unified campaign against IMF and WB-inspired policies, and against the racist war in the North, which is, in the final analysis, dictated by imperialism.

We have been able to bring together in this campaign almost all the trade unions in sections affected by privatisation, peasants,

fishermen, political groupings of the far left, including the Militant (CWI) group, and other groups prepared to struggle against the government.

We have appealed to the left of the Peoples Alliance, those who protest from within, to join us. They say they will participate on a case by case basis, but cannot join a campaign which is against the war in north. In effect, they are willing to campaign against the effects of IMF and WB policies in the south, but not the genocidal war in the north. Fortunately, some trade unions, youth groups and NGOs close to these PA affiliates have broken away and joined our campaign.

We have also appealed to the youth organisation of the JVP. After all, this groups was responsible for the 1971 and 1981-2 insurrections in the south, and claims to be Marxist. They have not agreed completely. They don't want a unified campaign, but they have organised joint protest meetings on a party-to-party basis, against both privatisation and the war in the north. On the campuses, their stronghold, they have organised meetings on similar lines to our own, and have often invited us to participate. But they are not prepared to join the trade unions and other groups in a new mass protest movement. They are more interested in classic "political" campaigns, always with an eye on the next elections.

What about the national and religious minorities?

Since all the Tamil parties in the south one way or another support the government, they can hardly come into a campaign which is not only against the IMF agreements, but calls the war in the north a genocide. Nevertheless, some affiliated organisations of these Tamil parties have joined the campaign.

So has the Muslim United Liberation Front. They recently invited us to participate in the protests they organised, together with Hindu religious groups, after the government made sectarian cuts in the entitlement of Hindu and Muslim citizens to take time off work for their religious festivals.

In this manner, even the normally conservative religious organisations of the minority faiths have been drawn into a radical, unified campaign grouping all sectors affected by world bank policies, government authoritarianism and the genocidal war against the Tamils.

Genocide is a strong word

A strong word which describes the situation. We recognise that this is a genocidal war against the Tamil minority, and call for the unconditional withdrawal of the Sinhala army from the Tamil areas, and the granting of whatever level of autonomy is acceptable



to the Tamil people..

The PA won the last election on the basis of promises to call a constituent assembly, in order to amend the constitution, and permit a real autonomous status for the Tamil regions. After coming to power, for many months Chandrika didn't come out with any proposal, or make any noises about the constituent assembly. And instead of withdrawing the troops, she sent them into Jaffna, the main town held by Tamil rebels.

This was a doubly irresponsible policy. Not only did it fly in the face of the wishes of the people who voted for the PA in the hope of a just settlement of the Tamil question, but it came at a time when, in the face of massive pressure from their base, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the main rebel group, agreed to meet the Sri Lankan government for talks. When the day came, Chandrika had no proposal to put to them. This is why we say that she is entirely responsible for the return to a bloody confrontation again.

The conflict has escalated into a total war against the Tamil people. Chandrika says it is a war against the LTTE, but she has ordered troops to destroy several Tamil cities, including Jaffna, the largest city in the North, with a pre-war population of about 500,000. A large area of the north is populated by displaced persons and soldiers. And 30-40% of Sri Lankan Tamils have left the country. There are almost half a million refugees in Europe alone. Only the poor are left behind. Refugees, even within the Tamil homeland.

No way is this a war against, or to put pressure on the LTTE. It has become, and is seen by everyone in Sri Lanka, as a genocidal war against the Tamil people. Not even the Tamils who support the government

could approve the destruction of their cultural centres, their national identity, and their beloved city of Jaffna.

What role does the NSSP see for international solidarity?

This is particularly important in the imperialist countries, where it is possible to press the government not to support repression and destruction in countries like Sri Lanka. As I have said, there are three key demands: stop the war in the north; stop the repression in the south; and stop the economic policies, which are destroying the living standards of the workers and peasants.

Surely activities along these lines can be organised in the main cities of Europe and North America, where there are large communities of Sri Lankan émigrés, mainly Tamils but also some Sinhalese. A sustained solidarity movement on these three points can mobilise these people.

What kind of group are the Tamil Tigers?

The western media always talk about LTTE terrorism. But terror is only a method — of struggle or of repression. Where there is unbridled terror from the oppressor, there will be terror from the oppressed. So terror is not the defining criteria for judging a political party.

The LTTE is a Tamil nationalist party, based mainly on the poorer peasants and fishermen, with support from some radical parts of the Tamil bourgeoisie. In New York and London, those who speak for the LTTE are professionals and businessmen. Under their influence, the LTTE could become a national bourgeois party.

The Tigers' programme is one of national independence, in a struggle relying almost exclusively on their own resources. They are intolerant of other tendencies. They don't even like independent workers organisations. Our party, the NSSP, is not tolerated in the areas under their control. They want hegemony.

For some time, they had big illusions, thinking that western imperialism, would force the Sri Lankan government to grant them some form of autonomy.

But now they realise that American imperialism and the others are virtually conducting the war against the Tamils. The Sri Lankan army is equipped, trained and has some key personnel supplied by the imperialist powers.

How is your relationship with the LTTE?

Before, they considered us to be a hostile organisation. They were not prepared to listen to us, and did not accept our presence among Tamils in the north east. But now, under heavy repression, and having realised that their enemy has the solid backing of the imperialists, they are increasingly willing to

accept that the working class, locally and internationally, is the only class which can be relied on in the independence struggle.

Circumstances have forced them to accept the need for some kind of solidarity campaigns going beyond their own community. In other words, reaching out to sections of the working class, inside and outside Sri Lanka.

For example, pro-LTTE or pro-independence groups in Britain and Australia have invited our party to participate in public meetings in to discuss the Tamil liberation struggle and the right of self-determination. They have also invited representatives of working class parties and radical organisations — the Cubans, the Sandinistas, the El Salvadoran FMLN, and some South African trade union groups. The NSSP is the only Sri Lankan party invited to these discussions.



At these meetings, we have argued that the Tamil liberation struggle can only be successful to extent that it joins hands with the working class in Sri Lanka and internationally. I think this argument is winning sympathy among the Tamil parties in general and even inside the LTTE. The discussion has clearly penetrated the organisation, with the obvious repercussions in the wider Tamil liberation movement. This has created a different environment.

Who or what can stop the war?

The first thing to recognise is that the imperialists are absolutely determined to break the backbone of the liberation struggle, and then, by continued confrontation, force the liberation movement to accept a minimal compromise. This is what they have done in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and what they are doing now in the Middle East.

Chandrika's derisory "devolution package" is a response to the demands of imperialism. None of the "moderate" Tamil parties accept it, because it offers absolutely no devolution. But, with some modifications, maybe they will be forced to embrace it.

There is another reason which Chandrika has difficulty containing the Tamil national liberation struggle and, at the same time, producing an acceptable devolution package. She has called up militaristic forces, and has now become a prisoner of them. The chauvinists within the government, and among her supporters, are pressing her to continue the military offensive. These elements have the upper hand in the government. They may even, one day, decide to go beyond what Chandrika is willing to accept, in the search for a "military solution". ★

Bahu Karunarathne was interviewed for *International Viewpoint* by Peter Lindgren of the Swedish weekly *Internationelen*.

October Review:

China tries to isolate dissidents

A new wave of repression has hit pro-democracy and human rights activists. **Zhang Kai** explains why, in the face of growing social unrest, the regime is determined to isolate dissidents from the population.

Not only are dissidents put behind bars for their exercise of the freedom of speech and association, they are also tortured physically and mentally. Many are barred from proper medical treatment and from meeting with their family.

Correspondance-course "sedition"

Wang Dan was charged with having said that "given the sealing of news from the people by the government, freedom of speech is reduced to empty words in the Constitution", that "the disoriented party under the leadership of the government and party leaders will not abandon any vested interest; to ensure its power is not restrained, it will go so far as to sacrifice the future of the country". These words were used as evidence of Wang Dan's slanderous smearing of government leaders.



Wang Dan was also accused of conspiracy with dissidents in the United States. The "evidence" was his "setting up of a self-study programme by which he promoted China's democratisation". This referred to a correspondence course on Western Civilization offered by the University of Berkeley.

The other charge was that he set up "a mutual aid scheme... funding was provided to the families of jailed dissidents." This was supposedly evidence of his "networking with reactionary forces". Wang Dan's mother said that he was simply trying to help send the children of jailed dissidents to school. The amount concerned was only 10-20 Yuan (US \$1-2) for each child.

Wang Dan's took just 3 hours, during which he had 30 minutes to plead not guilty, and his mother, acting as his defence, had only a dozen minutes. The hearing of his appeal took only 10 minutes.

A context of unrest

This latest wave of repression took place in a context of general unrest. The following reports were

all published in Hong Kong's *Ming Pao* newspaper on November 8:

- In Hunan Province in September, tens of thousands of peasants from five townships petitioned the township governments, requesting reduction of heavy tariffs. 8,000 peasants clashed with officials, and the police fired tear gas on peasants who destroyed the furniture in the township government office.
- Tens of thousands of electronics workers in Beijing participated in mass strikes on National Day, October 1st.. They asked the municipal authorities to come up with concrete proposals for the reform of state enterprises. It was reported that work stoppage has been serious in state enterprises, and discontent among workers from state enterprises has been surfacing, and it was not unusual to see workers besieging party or government offices on petition, especially in the North Eastern provinces where state enterprises are more predominant.
- A scholar working in the Party Cadre College pointed out that the "Resolution on the building of spiritual civilization" adopted by the 6th plenary meeting of the 14th Central Committee has evaded the main contradiction in society today, namely the problem of economics, with the reform of state enterprises lying at the heart of the problem. As for the question of the building of spiritual civilization, the main contradiction is the concern of the masses for graft and corruption on the part of party and government officials, with subsequent lack of confidence in the party and the government.



In this context of massive unrest, high-handed repression is still a necessary measure of containment for the Chinese authorities. The potential of the handful of dissidents linking up with mass discontent is much too frightening ★

Source: *October Review* Vol.23 Issue 5/6 1996

✉ GPO Box 10144, Hong Kong e-mail <or@iohk.com>

Inside Israel

National unity government?

Israel faces two deep political conflicts: the Oslo "peace" process, and privatisation.

The leadership of the right-wing bloc in the Knesset is calling for a national unity government. Prime Minister Netanyahu, and some Labour leaders, may privately agree with them.

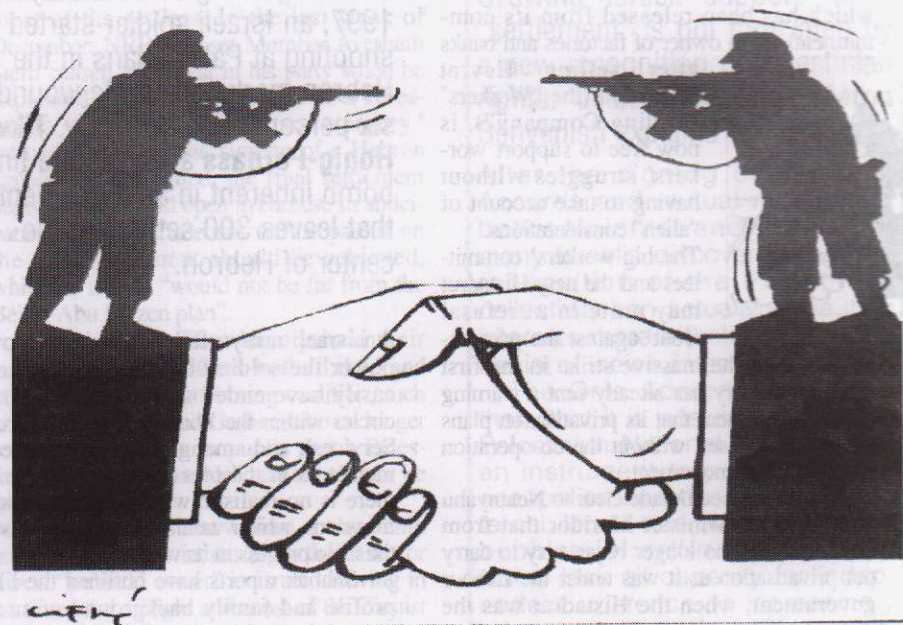
Tikva Honig-Parnass

The first policy of such a government would be to continue the settlement policies of the previous Labour-Meretz government. According to the Likud mayor of Maaleh Adumim (a large settlement between Jerusalem and Jericho), "A national unity government with Labour would promote construction activity in Yesha [West Bank], which is now completely frozen... [Likud Foreign Minister] David Levy is not a big supporter of the settlements. But it might be possible to come to an agreement with [Labour Leader Shimon] Peres on continuing construction." Bringing the Labour Party into the government would "neutralise the pressures emanating from the Americans, the Palestinians and the current opposition of the Left to the policy of strengthening the settlements".

Netanyahu needs the help of the Labour Party to strengthen his position against the sharp criticism against him emanating from the extreme Right and from members of the Likud for not fulfilling his electoral promises not to continue the Oslo policies of the previous Labour government. When Netanyahu was invited to address a convention of the far Right Moledet Party (which supports the 'transfer' of the Palestinian-Arabs out of their homeland), he was met with jeers and cat-calls: 'liar', 'hypocrite', and 'architect of the Munich Accords'. Similarly, in a demonstration of 'Women in Green' against the proposed Hebron agreement, a number of women held signs accusing Netanyahu of treason.

Criticism from the Right is likely to intensify, as the negotiations with the Palestinian Authority progress. Militant anti-Oslo Knesset members from Likud and the NRP met last month to discuss re-establishing a "Land of Israel Front", which would include all the members of the governing coalition who oppose the Oslo Accords.

On 30 December, the Moledet faction in the Knesset submitted a no-confidence motion concerning the proposed agreement on re-deployment in Hebron. Four cabinet ministers were absent during the vote (Ariel Sharon (Likud), Rafael Eitan (Tsomet), Yitzhak Levy (NRP) and Zevulun Hammer



(NRP)). They were joined by another 14 Knesset members from the governing coalition, including members of the Likud.

Later that day, the government and the coalition received another blow when the Knesset plenary refused to eliminate a subsidy for working women, as proposed in the 1997 budget. Representatives of the Russian immigrants' party, Yisrael B'Aliya, the NRP, the Third Way, and David Levy's Geshet faction voted against the government.

"We can't go on this way," Netanyahu thundered. "This isn't a coalition. I am not able to get anything passed in the Knesset with this coalition. If this situation continues and we lose more important votes, I will be obliged to re-think the composition of the government' Is Labour waiting in the wings?"

Beginning of workers' struggle against privatisation?

At the end of December, Israel witnessed a tremendous display of strength by the Histadrut (General Federation of Workers) and the country's largest workers' committees. On the morning of December 29, the head of the Trade Union Department of the Histadrut (considered the no.2 leader of the Federation) was arrested for violating an order of the labour court concerning a dock workers' strike a few days earlier. Such an arrest of a top leader of the Histadrut was unprecedented. On the spot, Labour MK Amir Peretz, who is the Histadrut Chairperson, ordered — by mobile phone — a strike of the entire public and state sector, including air and seaports, telephone services, hospitals

and governmental offices. Within 40 minutes, the strike had taken hold all over the country.

The rage and frustration of the working public, as well as the potential for genuine leadership exhibited by Peretz, would not have been enough to guarantee the success of the strike without the support of the major workers' committees, representing workers in key, relatively well paid sectors like the National Electric Company, the military industries, the aircraft industry, sea and airport authority employees of the water company, Bank Le'umi, the telephone company, and the General Sick Fund. When the heads of these workers' committees joined the Histadrut Strike Team, the result was a general strike.

One of the main motivations for the strike was a series of votes in the Knesset concerning cuts in social spending in the proposed 1997 budget. For example, the Prime Minister refused Histadrut leader Peretz' suggestion to delay the vote on the reduction of the compensatory subsidy for working women. The prime minister hoped that he would force the Histadrut to reconsider, in the light of the balance of power between them. He failed.

What most concerns the larger workers' committees is the threat of privatisation. They are deeply anxious about the attack on collective bargaining agreements and their replacement by 'individual contracts', which could destroy the existing norms of work relations in Israel and bring about the full "privatisation" of the labour market.

1996 saw the success of Peretz' efforts to build a spiral of dialogue and co-operation

with the big, powerful workers' committees, which had not existed for at least a decade.

But this is a complex process. The Histadrut is now dependent on the tremendous power embodied in these workers' committees, which are capable of paralysing whole sectors of the economy. But it is also possible that the big workers' committees have decided that the new Histadrut — which has been released from its commitments as an owner of factories and banks after selling Hevrat Ha'ovdim (the "Workers' Holding Company"), is now free to support workers' struggles without having to take account of "alien" considerations.



The big workers' committees and the new Histadrut may unite in a 'refusal front' against the privatisation plans.

The massive strike in the first week of January has already sent a warning to the government that its privatisation plans cannot be realised without the co-operation of the workers movement.

And it has been made clear to Netanyahu and Treasury Minister Meridor that from now on it will no longer be as easy to carry out privatisation as it was under the Labour government, when the Histadrut was the biggest privatiser in the country, and when the Labour government and the Histadrut leadership were able to manipulate the workers into maintaining that 'industrial quiet' so necessary for the smooth implementation of privatisation.

A national unity government with the participation of those Labour representatives who support privatisation and the free market would help Likud's to weaken the participation of the workers' committees in the privatisation process. Unfortunately, there is enough common ground between the Labour Party and the Likud, in the social and economic spheres, and with regard to Oslo, to provide the basis for such a government. ★

Notes
Source: *News From Within*, January 1997
1. *Ha'aretz*, 1 January 1997

News From Within is published by The Alternative Information Center Jerusalem-Bethlehem, PO Box 31417, Jerusalem
E-Mail: aicmail@trendline.co.il • <http://www.aic.org> •
©: +972-2-241159 and 740585 • Fax: 253151



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

- ◆ 48 bed conference centre with six channel interpretation system, library and television room, ten minutes from the centre of Amsterdam and 2 minutes from a park
- ◆ Contact Robert Went or Peter Drucker to discuss holding your event at the IIRE

© (+31) 20/671 7263 fax 673 2106 P.O. Box 53290, 1007 RG Amsterdam, Netherlands. e-mail <iire@antenna.nl>

Hebron is not the main problem

The road to hell

A new wave of... has put pre-democracy and human rights

On the morning of 1 January 1997, an Israeli soldier started shooting at Palestinians in the Hebron marketplace. He wounded six persons, one seriously. **Tikva Honig-Parnass** analyses the time-bomb inherent in an agreement that leaves 300 settlers in the center of Hebron.

An Israeli army officer managed to overpower the soldier, but the incident could easily have ended as a massacre. Broad circles within the Shabak (General Security Services), and among senior political commentators in the press, are well-aware that there is no realistic way to prevent such a massacre, which would be liable to destroy the Oslo process in its wake.

Shabak reports have outlined the likely profile and family background of such a potential murderer: a religious youth with Messianic tendencies who sees the Oslo process as a national disaster. According to sociologist Nissan Reuven, there is a large periphery of Israelis who believe that "the State is a divine event and see the assassination of Rabin as a miracle".¹

The factory which produces such fanatics is the extremist religious-Zionist camp, the right-wing yeshivot (institutes of higher religious studies) and Gush Emunim, the right-wing religious settlers' movement. The educators and spiritual leaders of this camp define the politicians who are implementing the Oslo Accords as "traitors, informers and persecutors". Some of them have even issued religious rulings encouraging soldiers to disobey orders to evacuate territory in the West Bank (including Hebron).

Many of the Israeli officers who serve on the West Bank are settlers who share the far Right ideology.

The real dispute: further redeployments

American mediator Dennis Ross is still attempting to bring about the signing of an agreement on Hebron. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, with the backing of Egypt, has recently stiffened his opposition to the new demands presented by Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu.

The current agreement being tendered for signing is almost identical with the agreement worked out by Labour leader Shimon Peres and Arafat last winter.

The real dispute is no longer Hebron, but the continued implementation of the Oslo Accords. Especially the Palestinian demand that Israel commit itself to specific dates for

the three further Israeli redeployments in the West Bank, as mandated by the Taba Interim Agreement. Egypt has pressured Arafat into delaying signing the Hebron agreement because it fears that, unless Israel is forced to explicitly re-commit itself, Netanyahu will postpone the implementation of the Oslo Accords as a whole.

The Taba Interim Agreement requires that Israel redeploy in the West Bank in four stages. The first stage was carried out a year ago, with the evacuation of six Palestinian cities² and the removal of the daily presence of Israeli troops from about 400 Palestinian villages.³

The three next phases of 'further redeployment' were supposed to have been implemented at six month intervals, starting on 7 September 1996. But Israel has frozen its implementation.

The Interim Agreement provides that the Israeli army must redeploy to "specified military locations" on the West Bank, to be determined at the time of the redeployment. But the amount of territory from which Israel is supposed to withdraw in each phase is not specified. And the term "specified military locations" is so vague that it could allow the Israeli army to remain in any West Bank site that it defines as "military".

Oslo loyalists on the Zionist Left claim that this is a malicious interpretation which violates the spirit of the agreements. But those who signed the agreements should have known that good intentions can never provide a secure basis for future claims. They are more likely to pave the road to hell.

"Do not pass go":

Netanyahu wants to move directly to final status talks. He is prepared to fix a date for the first additional redeployment, at the end of February. He knows that this phase is mainly symbolic: limited to a few small territories in Area C that will receive the status of Area B.

But Netanyahu is refusing to set a date for further redeployments, in order to avoid having to carry out more significant withdrawals before the commencement of the negotiations on the final settlement, in which Israel will be able to exert pressure for the acceptance of the Beilin-Abu Mazen plan.⁴

But how can Arafat be pressured into waiving the implementation of the Interim Agreements and agreeing to the immediate commencement of the final settlement negotiations? By conditioning any Israeli commitment to further redeployments on impossible commitments from Arafat.

For example, it has been decided that the Hebron agreement will be accompanied by an American letter containing two itemized lists of claims: one Israeli and one Palestinian.⁵ The Palestinians will be required

“Palestinian state” is a slogan which has lost its meaning

Growing Israeli support for a “settlement” is not motivated by a new recognition of Palestinian rights. Veteran *peacenik* Meron Benvenisti explains

After the signing of the Oslo Accords and mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO... many Israelis discovered that the recognition of the Palestinian collectivity can actually serve their interests more effectively than the denial of their existence.

The Oslo Accords convinced them that it is possible to turn the Palestinian National Authority into an instrument to perpetuate the occupation and the inequality. External, Israeli rule of the separated bubbles [of self-rule territories], which lack all capacity for independent existence, is increasingly seen as a ‘historic compromise’ which will solve the key problem of the Land of Israel. “What’s so dangerous about defining this as a Palestinian ‘state’?” Israelis are asking.

We can wear away at the Palestinian people by pomp and etiquette, by cultivating a bureaucratic officialdom for them, with five different military uniforms for their security services; and we can continue to pull the strings.

There are all kinds of states. Prime Minister Netanyahu talks of Andorra and Puerto Rico, Ariel Sharon speaks of cantons that resemble Swiss cheese, and Yossi Beilin refers to the village of Abu Dis as a new Palestinian capital, ‘Al-Quds’. They all intend some sort of ‘Transkei,’ a Palestinian bantustan, surrounded by Israel.

[...]Celebration of the demise of the ‘whole land of Israel’ ideology is premature. The new tone on the Right do not indicate that the Left has won, but only that the slogan ‘a Palestinian state’ has lost its meaning and its moral value. It no longer signifies the demand for a compromise on a basis of equality, but a sophisticated formula for discrimination devised by the victors in the conflict. It is easy to swear loyalty to slogans which have lost their meaning.” ★

Source: *Ha'aretz*, 26 December 1996, translated by the Alternative Information Center

- to extradite to Israel people involved in military activity against Israelis,
- to confiscate the weapons in the possession of the Islamic Jihad and Hamas,
- to ensure the dismantling of these groups’ ideological and organizational infrastructures, and
- to end all “incitement” (sic) against Israelis in the Palestinian media and in the mosques.

Netanyahu knows that Arafat will sooner or later realise that accepting these demands means political suicide. The Palestinian leader will thus have no choice but to agree to skip the interim phase and enter immediately into negotiations on the final settlement.

The national consensus: a ‘state minus, autonomy plus’

Netanyahu recently began hinting that he might accept ‘limited sovereignty’ for the Palestinian entity.⁶ His senior policy advisor and chief press officer, David Bar Ilan says Israel is likely to agree to the establishment of a Palestinian entity which will be “an autonomy plus or a state minus”.⁷ “What Netanyahu is talking about is limited sovereignty: whether you call it a state or not is not really important...” Bar Ilan added: “What is the ‘state minus’ [to which Netanyahu refers]? It would have 60% less than the powers of a sovereign state.”

Underlying all these assertions is Netanyahu’s acceptance of the Oslo Accords. As Bar Ilan put it: ‘Nobody has suggested *expanding* settlements. Within the existing municipal boundaries of every settlement, we can triple the population without *adding* one square inch to the settlements...’

The first sprouts of ‘moderation’ have even appeared in the National Religious Party (NRP) — which over the past decade has been

transformed into the ideological home of most of the settlers. In the last week of December, NRP Knesset Member Avraham Stern caused a tempest in his party when he expressed support for the idea of a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty.⁸ Immediately after the signing of a Hebron agreement, he argued, the final settlement negotiations should open in earnest. In anticipation, a broad consensus on the parties on the final settlement should be achieved, which he asserts “would not be far from the Beilin-Abu Mazon plan”.

Bar Ilan and Stern have joined their voices to those of others in the Likud and other parties in the governing coalition, such as The Third Way and Gesher, who no longer refrain from stating in public that a Palestinian state is “inevitable” and should not be considered “taboo”.

The joint document worked out by Beilin and Abu-Mazon is increasingly the basis for a new “political center” in Israel, drawing in portions of the Right and most of the Zionist Left.

David Ramati, a settler from Kiryat Arba and a Likud member, says he supports Beilin, “an avowed supporter of the settlement in Hebron, and that makes him our ally”.

Meanwhile Dr Yael Tamir, one of the leaders of Peace Now, says she will support the candidacy of Ehud Barak (who hardly represents the ‘dove’ camp) for the leadership of the Labor Party, because of the Beilin document, which finally convinced her of “the irreversibility of both the settlements and of the Oslo process... Thus, the area remaining for maneuver is small indeed. Between ‘autonomy plus’ and ‘state minus’ there is only one solution, with minor variations in nuance.” She must mean the Beilin-Abu Mazon plan.⁹ ★



Notes

1. *Ha'aretz*, 3 January 1997).
2. Area A (Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Kalkiliya, Bethlehem and Ramallah): in which the PA bears responsibility for both civil matters and internal security.
3. Area B: Israel retains responsibility for security matters.
4. *News From Within*, December 1996, p.4
5. *Ha'aretz*, 3 January 1997
6. *News From Within*, January 1997
7. *Jerusalem Post*, 20 December 1996
8. *Kol Ha'ir*, 27 December 1996
9. *Ha'aretz*, 26 December 1996).

Source: *News From Within*, January 1997. For subscription details see page 36.

Italy's Refounded Communist Party...
The new Communist Party...

Moscow conference discusses Trotsky's key work Betrayal remembered

Scholars and activists gathered in Moscow on 22-24 November to mark the 60th anniversary of the publication of *The Revolution Betrayed* by Leon Trotsky

The conference program consisted of more than 31 presentations, half by Russians. While most speakers agreed with Trotsky's general analysis, there were disagreements over aspects of it. Several speakers, including conference co-organiser Alexei Gusev, felt that the Soviet system was state capitalist. Other Russian participants argued that Trotsky knew that capitalism could no more be restored in the Soviet Union than feudalism could be restored in France but that Trotsky held out the threat of capitalist restoration as a means of mobilising a fighting spirit among militants for the necessary battles against the Stalinist blight. Some argued that the

isolation of the Soviet economy from the world market during the Stalin period was a necessary stage.

Boris Slavin, in his report, "Trotsky on the Material Prerequisites and Criteria for Socialism," argued that the market reforms of the period of the New Economic Policy, when the Soviet government allowed certain market mechanisms to take effect, should have been continued but with more state controls. It was the Stalin repression, Slavin maintained, that not only suppressed discussion, research and initiative, but led to the isolation of Soviet society from technological advances abroad. "We slept while the West developed the technological revolution," he said. All this led to the current breakdown: Soviet society, on its own, starting from such backwardness, could not catch up with and overtake the capitalist systems in labour productivity.

Slavin concluded, however, that Marx,

Lenin, and Trotsky were wrong in relying on the world revolution. "What world revolution?" Slavin asked. Instead, he insisted, the working class in any particular country should not overthrow capitalism until its level of labour productivity has exceeded that of the rest of the world, thereby giving it the capacity to isolate itself from the pressures of the world market and go it alone. In that way, socialism can be built in one country.

Mikhail Voyeikov, Professor of Economics at the Russian Academy of Sciences, disagreed. The most technologically advanced capitalist countries, he pointed out, depend totally on innumerable international economic links, and thus even such a technologically advanced society could not survive on its own. On the other hand, any society that could possibly survive on its own in our epoch — if one could be found today — would have to be one with a very primitive level of technology, such as that of the peoples of the remote rain forests. Thus, neither of Slavin's preconditions for socialism in one country are conceivable; the revolution is by nature international.

Slavin was also challenged by Nikolai Korolyev, former editor of the Moscow publishing house Science, which in 1990 published Trotsky's *The Stalin School of Falsification*. "The world revolution did not happen?," Korolyev asked Slavin. "The world revolution began in October 1917 and has continued and will continue until the full victory of the world socialist revolution in the entire world.... "Revolution is not a primitive one-moment act, that either happened or didn't. World socialist revolution, as Lenin and Trotsky (and Marx and Engels before them) understood, is an epoch that consists of a series of revolutionary advances and counterrevolutionary setbacks... "World socialist revolution consists of all currents of the revolutionary movement everywhere — working-class, peasantry, the national liberation movements... having decisive strength in various ways at various times. Only in the long run, with the unification of all these currents will the victory of the world revolution be possible." ★ [M V-D, JD]

Analysis with Attitude

There is only **one** magazine in the English language where

- the leaders of France's trade union left debate how best to articulate the new mood of resistance to public sector cuts and unemployment.
- Tahiti's NGO activists explain why they feel Greenpeace marginalised them during the campaign against French nuclear tests.
- Indian activists argue that we shouldn't ban imports on countries with deficient environmental and labour legislation.

Founded by Ernest Mandel, **International Viewpoint** is the world's largest international Marxist news and analysis magazine.

Correspondents in over 50 countries report on popular struggles, and the debates which are shaping the left of tomorrow. Direct from the front line in the fight against neo-liberalism.

This magazine is a window to radical alternatives worldwide.

For a free three month trial subscription, write or call our local sales agent!

Britain: Outlook International, PO Box 1009 London N4 2UU © (081) 800 7460

Canada: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 4955, Main P.O., Vancouver V6B 4A6

USA: International Viewpoint, PO Box 1824, New York, NY 10009

✉ BP 85, Paris cedex 11, 75522 France © +33 1/43792961

Fax: +33 1/43792961 E-mail: 100666.1443@compuserve.com

- Australia \$33 • Britain £25 • Canada \$80 • Denmark 380 DKK • Ireland £25 • South Africa R100 • Sweden 400 SEK • New Zealand \$35 • USA \$70 •



A word from the organizers...

A longer report by Marilyn Vogt-Downey, a New York representative of the International Committee for the Study of Trotsky's Legacy, which sponsored the conference, is available at the address below. The Committee's next conference, "Trotsky and the Russian Revolution", will be held in Moscow on October 10-12 1997. The Committee recently published a Russian-language collection of papers from its first conference in 1994. Work has begun on a Russian edition of *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, the minutes of the Dewey Commission.

Contacts

Russian Federation: 117218 Moscow, Ul. Krasikova, 27, Russian Academy of Sciences, Room 620, Professor M.I. Voyeikov; © (w) 095 332-4525; (h) 095 326-3497
USA: P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009; © +1 718-636-5446; e-mail: mvogt@igc.apc.org.
Britain: Terry Brotherstone © +44 01224 272466; fax 272203; e-mail <t.brotherstone@abdn.ac.uk>

Italy's Refounded Communists face difficult choices

The new Communist project



The Refounded Communist Party (Rifondazione comunista) can be proud of its first five years of existence. No-one writes it off as a bunch of nostalgics, clinging to the flag or the hammer and sickle logo any more.

Instead, the party has won the support of large, radicalised sectors of society. It has widened its electoral base. Without the Refounded Communist parliamentary group, the present government coalition would no longer be able to rule the country.

Livio Maitan reports from the party's December congress, and presents extracts from the main documents and speeches.

Italy's most important newspaper, *Corriere della sera*, recently commented that "Beyond all the praise of the various heresies, and the various orthodoxies, and all the party's institutional conservatism (which certainly benefits the party, in a touching, revivalist way), Communist Refoundation is also something quite new, and important... The grouping is essential for the survival of the government, but remains independent of the coalition.

Corriere della sera recognises the problems facing the party. "while they praise

Fidel Castro, and cry out that we must not lose our vision of the communist future, the programme and main area of activity of the party is filled with regular trade union demands... the party is struggling to win a dominant position on the left, and is basing itself, correctly, on the trade union field, much more than on the ideological confrontations about class antagonism and reformism.¹

Massimo D'Alema of the Democratic Left Party (PDS), which is part of the Prodi government, was rather more sarcastic. "I'm happy to watch Refounded Communists vote for Prodi on Friday, spend Sunday discussing the prospects of utopian communism as against barbarity, and then on Monday vote for Prodi again. Of course, all this risks to provoke a double identity.²

Ambitious task

The challenge for the Refounded Communists is how to combine Communist propaganda, in its authentic sense, with an anti-capitalist perspective, and an active presence in the social and political struggles at every level.

Party leader Fausto Bertinotti strives to realise this massive task, setting a high workload for the party, and keeping up a constant pressure, virtual blackmail, on the centre-left Prodi government. The goal is to score points against the government, defend the accumulated privileges and social gains of the working population, and win new concessions.

Rifondazione is still perceived as the political force which best expresses the in-

terests of the most powerless sections of society. But the party is engaged in a very dangerous activity, in as far as it supports the minority government with its votes, and recently even allowed the government to push a fairly severe financial law through the parliament.

The texts on the following pages reflect both the dynamic work Rifondazione is doing, and the dangers the party faces.

What kind of congress?

The Party leadership was well aware of these dangers when they opened the pre-congress debates. Rifondazione president Fausto Bertinotti, and veteran Communist leader Armando Cossutta succeeded in establishing a broad consensus around the majority draft resolution. But they failed to convince delegates that the success of this general line was so evident that the party would be better off reflecting on its strategic axes for the next period, and the long term communist goal, rather than discussing the details of the leadership's record over the last few years.

Many delegates felt that the Bertinotti-Cossutta project is long on lists of demands, and full of good intentions, but short on systematic ideas, and genuinely new thinking on the key strategic and ideological themes. And it was inevitable, at a moment when parliament was clearly divided in its views on the Prodi government's finance law, that the divergent views inside Rifondazione about the nature of the party's support for the government would come to the fore.

An alternative draft resolution was prepared by four members of the leadership,³

and signed by 24 members of the outgoing National Political Committee. They accused the majority text of.

- failing to recognise that the process of Communist refoundation has become bogged down. "The majority's statement that we must 'go back to Marx' is inadequate, since it is not accompanied by any 're-appropriation of the notion of revolutionary rupture' with capitalism.
- avoiding discussion on the nature of the party, and its organisation. "In reality, Rifondazione functions in a top-down manner."
- avoiding the crucial issue of the orientation of the party's trade union work. Italy's trade unions are divided politically, and Rifondazione members, including supporters of the majority, are present in a range of different union groupings.

The minority text also argued that the party should vote against any budget law which is conceived in the spirit of the Maastricht Treaty on European integration. By doing so, Rifondazione would place itself clearly in the opposition.

Mutual respect

While it was impossible for delegates to present amendments to the draft texts, the pre-conference debates, and the conference itself were marked by real mutual respect and democratic debate. The minorities did not descend into outrageous and over-simplified polemics, and the majority often accepted the good sense of particular minority proposals. Some minority interventions were warmly applauded.

In the end, the minority won 15.4% of delegate voices, scoring highest among delegates from the main cities, with the exception of Milan. Youth, and blue-collar members of the party have reacted more favourably to the minority text than the older and white-collar members.

Even Armando Cossutta recognised that this was a "respectable" score. Thanks to this result, the minority has doubled its position in the leadership bodies of the party. The radicals demonstrated that they were present in most parts of the country, both in the circles (local branches) and in the provincial and regional federations.

Trotskyists? Not quite

The mass media, which had followed the congress closely, usually described the minority as "Trotskyist". But, while three out of four of the original signatories are from Trotskyist backgrounds, the minority current is in fact a convergence between a Trotskyist core, a much larger group of former members of the Italian Communist Party, some leading members of the defunct Proletarian Democracy (Democrazia proletaria), and a group of young people, most of whom have only become politically active in the last few years. ★

1. *Corriere della sera*, 21 December 1996
 2. *Corriere della sera*, 20 December 1996
 3. Giovanni Bacchiardi (Florence), Marco Ferrando (Savona), Franco Crisolia (Milan) and Livio Maitan (Rome).

Majority text

"Social progress has been defended"

Karl Marx is a resource to be re-activated. Not just as a critical method of analysis, but also because the category "revolution" - the historical passage to a different social and political order is more highly developed in Marx's thought than elsewhere (...)

With this latest budget law [Rifondazione voted in favour] old age pensions and public health care have been protected. Italy has escaped the embrace of a right-wing government and, for the first time in a long time, we have sent to the country the message that re-balancing the budget can be done without attacking the welfare state, by putting an increased burden on the richer layers in society.

(...) Communist Refoundation should continue the renovation, and bring a new vigour to the stock of socialist ideas which has accompanied the history of the social classes, and the life of the country, be it in cultural and artistic production, or in the behaviour of the masses. (...)

The 1980s were a time of parallel political histories, parallel Marxisms. The point is not to justify any

experiences, but to analyse them all critically, historically, with an eye to the new cement we need to deal with the problems of democracy, self-government, liberation from wage labour and liberation of the individual, in this new historical phase of the class struggle. (...)

Reformism has suffered a mighty shock. It faces a structural crisis. Reformism - the progressive, evolutionary system through which, even in times of conflict, the fruits of economic growth could be re-directed to widen and deepen the concept of citizenship - has been swept away by capitalist modernisation. This crisis of reformism has not meant an end to the importance, and the possibility of partial victories. These objectives are still valid, as the resistance of various social realities touched by restructuring shows clearly.

Such partial goals tend to be in contradiction with the process of restructuring. This means that the partial objective does not represent an equilibrium which already exists, but a rupture with a new equilibrium which "they" are trying to impose on "us" (...) The task, then, is to link these objectives to an element of innovation in the social model of development, and the model of accumulation on the base of which the initiative of struggle is also organised (...)

The goal which we propose to this party is one of refoundation; and of a new relationship with society; based on a great process of openness and dialogue. The struggle against all forms of sectarianism and conservatism is a living element of the challenge we declare; a challenge for hegemony, and for the construction of the alternative. Our criticism of sectarianism is not a means of subjective struggle against a different political line than our own, or a way of selecting leading groups which can be considered worthy of our confidence. We recognise that sectarianism can mix itself into any political line, and any particular position in the party (...) ★



particular one of these

Minority text

"Our project is a social alternative!"

The Prodi government is in the process of achieving the integration of Italian capitalism into Maastricht Europe, and transforming the Second Republic [introduced after 1993, following the "clean hands" investigation that exposed the corruption of the old political establishment.] In this sense, this administration represents

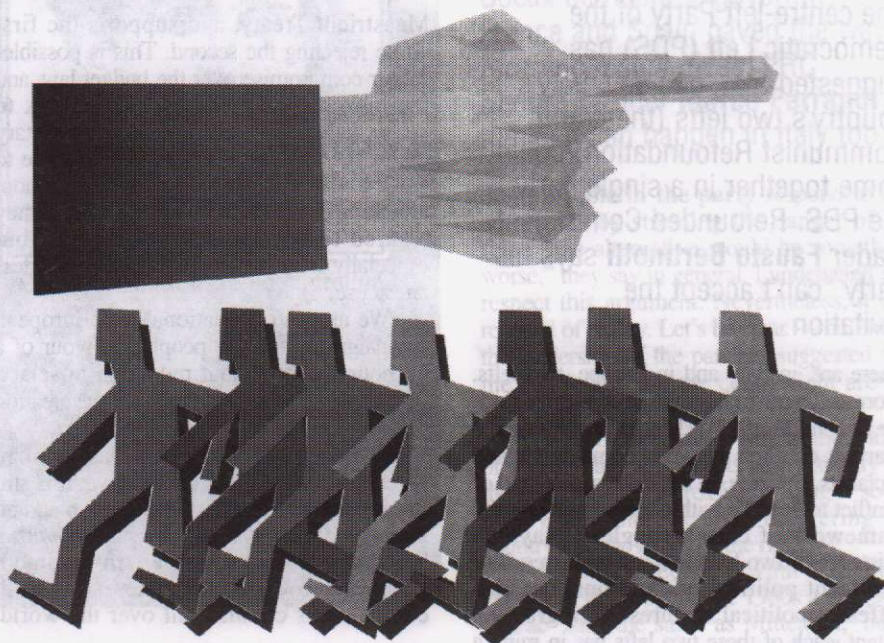
- The strategic choice of the overwhelming part of the Italian bourgeoisie which, under the pressure of the crisis and international competition, is convinced that only open collaboration with the PDS and the trade unions will make it possible to impose new sacrifices.
- The governmental "vocation" of the Party of the Democratic Left, which has become the political guarantor of social accord.

These last six months have proved that the Prodi government is going against the social interests which Communist Refoundation wishes to represent. Obviously, we must bear in mind the expectations which the workers had and have. But we should not make concessions to their illusions. Our participation in the majority would transform us into a simple instrument of pressure on the PDS and, to the extent that we would no longer be perceived as supporters of a global alternative, it would strip our criticism of the PDS' [cross-class] alliance policy of all credibility. We should put ourselves back in the opposition, and strive to create the most favourable conditions possible for winning the battle for hegemony in the working class and the popular sectors. We must deny the right a monopoly of opposition to this government!

All hypotheses suggesting that Communist Refoundation support for the Prodi government might lead the Olive Tree coalition to make concessions in our direction over electoral and institutional reform are absolute illusions (...)

Communist Refoundation has had some real successes. But this has not been accompanied by deeper social influence and roots, or by a greater ability to build mass movements.

We have tended to concentrate on exploiting our image, and this has encouraged passive behaviour. "Top-down" functioning has consolidated executive bodies and administrative structures over which



the National Political Committee and the federal committees have no real control. To take one example, the selection of our electoral candidates was done without the local leaderships, never mind the circles [branches] having any choice in the matter (...)

The crisis of reformism can be explained by the exhausting of the material conditions of the relative gains won. In today's world, resistance against the savage capitalist offensive should carry the stamp of the search for a new, alternative society.

The idea that the new society could develop alongside capitalism ("non-market transactions", "third sector") is an illusion, an utopia.

In a society dominated by capital, a non-market sector cannot exist for long. All that can be created is a precarious parking place, where workers who have been expelled from the process of production can be stocked. Or, of course, one of the many "private social initiatives" which have sprung up using a social camouflage to hide speculative interests and justify low-paid employment.

Of course, the labour which is expressed in this sector should be given its true recognition. And organised. But it is truer than ever that the defence of the accumulated social rights and benefits of the working population requires us to develop the capacity to have an influence the distribution of revenue.

Including the revenue of capital (...)

Unity, for us, means the unification of the working class, and the construction of the historic bloc [which will give that class hegemony in society]. All unity in action with other left and democratic forces should be conceived as something which enables us to widen the resistance against the class enemy, and sabotage the construction of the enemy's bloc. Supporting the Prodi government does not correspond to this approach (...)

"Going back to Marx" is not about renouncing the communist theory of Lenin Gramsci and the others, nor is it about renouncing the revolutionary ruptures of the twentieth century. Rather, it is all about re-launching Marx's political thought on the character of the proletarian revolution.

An thorough historical and political evaluation of the errors and the degeneration of Stalinism, and the tribulations of the East European countries is essential. We must approach this subject without any trace of "continuity" [with the previous positions of Italian communism].

All the errors, and all the degeneration cannot exhaust or negate the experience of communism in the twentieth century. Nor can they lead us to abandon the revolutionary perspective, and bury ourselves in the search for solutions to the problems of the current state power. ★

The General Secretary

Two lefts: "The struggle for hegemony"

The centre-left Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) has suggested that, one day, Italy's country's two lefts (them and Communist Refoundation) could come together in a single party — the PDS. Refounded Communist leader **Fausto Bertinotti** says his party "can't accept the invitation..."

There are, in Italy and in Europe, two lefts. More different today than at any time since the Second World War! Including during the sharpest conflicts between communists and socialists. Because, in those days, this kind of conflict took place within a common cultural framework of class struggle. Today, the existence of two lefts is not just the result of divergent political orientations, but also different political cultures. To a growing extent, each of these two lefts has in mind a different coalition of social forces which it hopes to unite behind its strategy. (...)

The critique of capitalist modernisation, the construction of a new mass political movement, and the rebirth, here and in the rest of Europe, of a new phase of social and democratic reform — the struggle for a new social model and a new model of development — these are the elements of an alternative kind of politics; opposed to the idea that we must adapt to the process of capitalist modernisation, and concentrate on developing the most dynamic elements of that system. The contest between these two lefts — neither of which is in the process of disappearing — has begun. A contest in the political sphere, and in the movements. A contest for hegemony. (...)

Europe is becoming more and more like North America (...) because this model better fits the process of capitalist modernisation, and offers some solutions to the crisis which has pushed the capitalists to search extreme forms of flexibility and adaptability (...)

A common European currency can be established on the basis of the orientations set out in the Maastricht Treaty, or on the basis of some other set of values. After all, the Maastricht Treaty doesn't include a section on the creation of a common currency. The two things are separate, and should remain so. Otherwise, we will face a deadly choice (...) accept the socially reactionary policies of the Maastricht Treaty or, in rejecting Maastricht, break away from the European locomotive, and suffer the negative consequences for our development.

The only way to overcome this dilemma is to prepare an economic and social alternative for the European Union as a whole. An alternative which separates economic unification from the policies contained in the

Maastricht Treaty, and supports the first while rejecting the second. This is possible! In our compromise over the budget law, and the introduction of an exceptional tax to enable Italy to meet the criteria for monetary union, we have proved that it is possible to work towards a common currency, without attacking the welfare state (an attack they wanted to impose all over Europe, but especially here in Italy, using Maastricht as an excuse...)

We argue for a national and European campaign to mobilise people in favour of a 35 hour week without reduction in salary. And we are certainly in favour of the creation of an all-European labour market (...)

The world-wide working class is more numerous than ever before. And yet it is still suppressed. This makes it essential to add an international dimension (...) starting with a broad campaign to win certain minimum rights for workers everywhere. After all, commodities circulate all over the world.

They must, it is essential for their very existence. We should exploit this necessity, by proposing a pact, which should become part of international law. Only merchandise with a certain social content should be allowed to circulate internationally. Only products which respect a basket of minimum values in terms of minimum wage, salary level, age of workers, and environmental conditions (...)

We are the first to recognise the need to reflect critically, as deeply as necessary, and however painful it may be, on the errors and the causes of the historic defeat... which pushed the new states born of revolution onto the long, tragic road followed by this century's post-revolutionary societies. But, at the same time, the truths of the October 1917 revolution, the truths of equality and liberation from capitalist exploitation remain, for us, the only truths which seem capable of giving sense to political activity, at the beginning of the third millennium. ★

The left opposition responds

"Social progress has been defended"

Livio Maitan disagrees with Fausto Bertinotti's views on European integration

The General Secretary has just sketched out an argument about Maastricht which we hadn't heard here before. He says that if we enter Maastricht Europe, defending the welfare state as we go, and imposing some new criteria for convergence [between the economies of EU member states], then Maastricht will no longer be what it is at the moment. In that case, he suggests, a single currency would be acceptable.

Convergence criteria don't represent the nature of the community which we want to create. According to the governments which signed the Maastricht Treaty, these criteria fix the conditions which make it possible to create a common currency with the strongest possible guarantees for the general equilibrium of the continental industrial, financial and commercial system. A system which is, and will remain, even in [Bertinotti's] scenario, organically capitalist.

Since we created this party, our opposition has been based on the view that the project of European union established in Maastricht is a project of the dominant classes. A

project conceived and tailored to help them face the challenge of increasingly supra-national competition.

As for the new [social] convergence criteria, [Bertinotti] only mentions unemployment. Yes, we could make propagandistic use of this concept. But it is difficult to define. Would we demand that member states may not let their unemployment rate exceed a certain level?

The Irish unemployed movement has suggested fixing the limit at 3%. Of course, setting the bar that low would mean that non of the West European countries would be "ready for Europe" for the indefinite future.

If, on the other hand, we said that 10% was to be the maximum permitted level of unemployment, then anything lower could be officially considered as "normal". This isn't a very convincing approach.

As for the common currency, the only plans existing at the moment are for a new currency designed to fit a unified, capitalist Europe. There are no other projects in the bag at the moment (...)

I'm not trying to root out the heretics. But surely everyone can see that the Italian government is an intra-class coalition. The Employers' Federation comes and goes, but the coalition nevertheless includes im-



Gramsci would have been proud

portant sectors of the ruling classes. Most of the prominent politicians in the coalition, including Prime Minister Prodi, are recycled leaders of the last, most decadent phase of the First Republic [which collapsed several years ago]. What incantation is supposed to transform this grouping into the engine of a radical transformation?

It is an illusion to suggest, as Lucio Magri and others do, that we could see some kind of New Deal, or something like the reforms introduced in France during the Popular Front years. In the current situation there are too many objective and subjective obstacles to such a course. Never mind the fact that neither the New Deal nor the Popular Front reforms were able to overcome the long wave of economic stagnation. Both ended in a rapid decline.

(...) We agree on the importance of the objective of reducing the working week, without wage cuts.

But we should remember that this is not one possible measure among many, but a fundamental choice. It should be linked to a radical change in macro-economic objectives, in which the relations of production and of property will no longer be untouchable (...)

On several occasions over the last half century, the workers move-

ment has put forward a strategy which has not been based on real analysis, but weakly-grounded hypotheses, or pious wishes.

Just after the second world war, there was talk in the movement about the likelihood of a long period of collaboration with the ruling classes, and the Christian Democratic party.

In the 1970s, there were arguments for a "historic compromise", based on the supposed existence of a current open to "national solidarity" within Christian Democracy. This period is now remembered as the beginning of the decline of the Italian Communist Party.

Looking at this motley party of ours is like looking at the accumulated history of the workers movement. Too many of the elements which have weighed us down in the past.

But also the most productive elements in our history; a real attachment to our heritage of ideas; commitment to the cause without hope of personal gain, a natural spirit of sacrifice, and a legitimate party patriotism.

Without forgetting the most important, hope. Without hope there can be no great mass movement, and no leap forward in the consciousness of the social classes and political forces. ★

History repeats?

Don't let the right in!

Social democratic government in France and Spain paved the way for the conservatives. PRC Minority leader **Marco Ferrandi** thinks it can happen in Italy too.

Some people in the party respond to our arguments by stressing the danger of the right: "the alternative would be something worse," they say in general. I understand and respect this argument. Nevertheless, it is a reversal of reality. Let's be clear — no-one in the leadership of the party has suggested that the centre-left and the centre-right are the same thing.

The problem comes when, in the middle of a crisis, the left accepts responsibility for the government's increasingly "tough" social policy, and thereby risks delivering the country into the hands of the right.

Isn't this precisely what happened elsewhere in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s? Chirac¹ isn't the same as Mitterand,² but it was Mitterand who opened the door for Chirac! Aznar³ is not the same as Gonzales,⁴ but it was Gonzales who prepared the way for Aznar.

This is what we are worried about. The Italian right has grown constantly during the 1990s, as the result of the policies of social massacre followed by the Amato, Ciampi and Dini governments, which had the support of the [centre-left] PDS and the trade unions.

The difference was that the existence of a communist opposition helped limit the right's ability to exploit the crisis. Today, surely our non-opposition to a government which is in continuity with those previous administrations risks to lift the final barrier to a rightist victory!

Far from using its first six months to consolidate the democratic victory of 21 April 1996, this government has accelerated the country's shift to the right.

Look at the re-emergence of the Northern League. Look at the huge right-wing demonstration in Rome recently. There is a real risk of the strongest right-wing electoral victory in post-war history (...)

The first step towards liberating the labour movement is to free ourselves of any illusions in a new reformist social pact. We should link our opposition to Maastricht policies with the strategic perspective of an anti-capitalist rupture.

We should renew the communist perspective as the only real, progressive solution to the crisis of humanity at this decisive moment between two periods, between two centuries. ★

Notes

1. Conservative French president Jacques Chirac

2. Socialist former president François Mitterand

3. Spanish conservative Prime Minister José-Maria Aznar.

4. Socialist former Prime Minister Felipe Gonzales.

Child pornography, helicopter sales, murder, and Maastricht

A most uncommon crisis

A series of parallel national crises have been transformed into a "crisis of the nation." The people wanted change. But their leaders didn't want to give it to them.

Alain Tondeur*

The discovery of the Dutroux child sexual abuse ring in August 1995 plunged Belgium into a series of scandals, touching all areas of public life. New life has been breathed into old scandals, from the illegal commissions on the sale of Agusta combat helicopters used to finance the Walloon (French-speaking) Socialist Party, to the mysterious and still unexplained deaths of some thirty people in the Brabant region in the 1990s.

The parliamentary commission charged with the child sexual abuse enquiry finally ordered the public prosecutor to intervene against the national police (*gendarmérie*), suspected of having hidden or destroyed evidence linking rich and powerful men to the sex-slavery and murder ring of Marc Dutroux. Two homosexual government ministers were accused of a politically-motivated amalgam of accusations.

But this is more than a series of scandals. Taken together, these developments have plunged this small country into an existential crisis, the end of which is out of sight.

Sex and politics

There is a moral crisis, fed by the considerable emotion generated by the horror of the Dutroux crimes. Then there is a crisis of neo-liberal ideology; Dutroux was among other things a cynical businessman, a self-made man, completely at ease in this society dominated by the unscrupulous race for profits. A crisis of Belgium's law-and-order institutions leans on this shaky pyramid. These scandals have demonstrated their impotence in the face of real crime, and the class nature of Belgian "justice".

There is also a crisis of the representative political system. The social mobilisation has revealed the gulf which separates the aspirations of the majority of society from the preoccupations of the political caste, obsessed with slimming the budget, and meeting the Maastricht criteria for convergence of European monetary policies.

In fact, Belgium was in crisis long before these scandals emerged. The country itself is relatively artificial, formed by the great powers in 1830, without any deep historico-social legitimacy. In this weak state, a ruling

class divided along national lines confronts a weakly-politicised but massively organised working class, with a history of revolt.

Collaboration

The explosive nature of this situation is contained through collaboration between the reformist leaderships of sections of the workers movement. At the political level this has taken the form of the participation of the Flemish (Dutch-speaking) and Walloon (French-speaking) social democratic parties in a series of coalition governments. At the economic-social level, Belgian capitalists have long accepted a "social accord between the social partners". In other words, co-operation with the trade unions.

Like the political parties, Belgian trade unions are divided into separate Christian democratic and social democratic organisations in each of the two linguistic regions. On the surface this four-way division makes life more complicated. Under the surface, it is an important contribution to the stability of bourgeois domination.

Economic crisis

In the 1980s and 1990s, this peculiar Belgian system slowly slid deeper and deeper into a crisis caused by the combination of three factors: the long recessive wave of the international capitalist economy, the growth of tensions between the "linguistic communities" and the Maastricht project for West European integration on a neo-liberal basis. (Which is an attempted response to the growing contradiction between the internationalisation of capital, and the national character of all existing states.)

In Belgium, this economic crisis had some specific factors, with particular political repercussions, which are important in understanding the current crisis. First of all, there is the "parasitic" domination of a handful of holding companies, which operate in an ageing industrial structure, based on the production of semi-finished goods for the world market. Unlike the other smaller capitalist economies, Belgium has not been able to specialise in any significant niche of the global economy.

When, in the late 1970s, it became clear that the economic situation had changed permanently, financial capital withdrew quickly from the steel industry, naval construction, glass-making and coal-mining.

The state rushed in to collectivise the economic losses, and soften the social shock. The opening of the Belgian economy to the multi-nationals was accelerated by a policy of investment incentives and selective tax reductions. There was mass unemployment: joblessness rose higher than 10% faster than in other West European countries. This is a

serious problem for the financing of the social security system.

Meanwhile, Belgium's already high state debt rocketed, due to a strong "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" practice in the political and business elites, and a well-developed lobbying system exchanging favours for public sector investment contracts.

Government debt is 133% of GDP. The interest payments alone represent 25% of the state budget. This terrible burden deprives the authorities of any room for manoeuvre when faced with labour or business demands, or social needs.

What is "Belgian" anyway?

In 1987, the Italian Carlo De Benedetti launched a hostile take-over bid against *Société générale de Belgique* (the country's most powerful holding company). The authorities blocked him by inviting the French group Suez to take a major stake in the holding. The "Belgian" (or Flemish) base of the economy is a recurring concern of the politicians, but once again the Belgian bourgeoisie proved powerless in the face of the concentration and internationalisation of capital...

Particularly since the Maastricht Treaty was adopted in 1992, European unification is a decisive process for Belgian capitalists. Even though their state is losing substance in two ways: its powers are being delegated higher, towards the European institutions, and lower, towards new "community" organisations for Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels residents, and for the small German-speaking minority. The central state looks increasingly strange, suspended awkwardly between these two levels of decision making. And yet, the central state is still the most legitimate, in the eyes of the population. Which means it still has an important role in managing the class struggle on behalf of the rich and powerful.

This legitimacy is the result of the prestige of the royal family, and an unjustified, but nevertheless real assimilation in peoples' minds between the maintenance of the national state, and the maintenance of an all-Belgian social security system. The contradiction is obvious: in this international climate, the ruling class has no choice but to weaken the cement of its own state.

The pseudo-federal reform of the country is politically unavoidable. The paradox is that this process designed to contain centrifugal forces in the regions is in fact accentuating the formation of two increasingly distinct societies, not just speaking different languages, but with separate political lives. There are, in effect, no national political parties, national media, or civic groups which operate uniformly across Belgium.

Marc Dutroux's serial rape and murder of

* Editor of *La Gauche*, newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party (POS/SAP), Belgian section of the Fourth International, which also publishes *Rood* in Dutch.



an unknown number of girls, and the impotence of the country's police and judicial institutions in the face of these outrages were the catalyst which united all the elements of the growing crisis in Belgian society. This seems strange, but it is so.

Or rather, it's not *so* strange. The fate of our children, is, after all, a condensed form of our fears and questions about the future. For the majority of the population, the commercialisation of the sexual violence done to these little girls is the sign of a barbarity which menaces society as a whole.

Massive response

With the institutions completely discredited, hundreds of thousands of people decided that they must mobilise themselves to show their refusal of the inhuman society that is taking shape around them. The parents of the victims, projected, against their wishes, into the centre of media attention, encouraged this civic mobilisation. They became the natural leaders of the movement. People trusted these unfortunate parents of the murdered children, because they gave the impression of thoughtfulness and responsibility, and of a determination to "go as far as is necessary".

This was a massive social mobilisation. On 20 October 1996 about 300,000 people participated in the "White March" called by the parents of the victims. There were hundreds of spontaneous local initiatives by high-school students, manual workers, civil servants, housewives, fire-fighters, bikers, and truck drivers. Innumerable expressions of the desire of ordinary citizens for change! Many were inspired by one magistrate, M. Bourlet's promise to "go all the way, if they don't stop me first". These words catalysed the desire of wide sections of society to "go all the way" in their struggles against all forms of injustice.

During the "crazy week" of 15-20 October workers in hundreds of enterprises stopped work and organised street demonstrations to protest against the removal of the Magistrate charged with the Dutroux investigation, after he committed a formal infraction of procedure. This began as a completely spontaneous movement, but was picked up by shop stewards and some lower-level

union officials. The workers' demonstrations coincided with a massive spontaneous mobilisation of high school students. Workers and young people found themselves standing on the steps of the country's courthouses, ridiculing the judiciary and denouncing the class-based hypocrisy of the system. The police intervention against youth demonstrations was surprisingly violent.

Here comes Albert

The government stabilised the situation a little by pushing King Albert II forward. He exceeded his constitutional powers, by entering into dialogue with the families of the victims. It proved to be a contradictory stabilisation. The price of calm was the establishment of a parliamentary commission of enquiry on the judicial enquiry into the Dutroux case. This is not a public relations manoeuvre. The committee has all the powers of a public prosecutor. And it operates under intense pressure from public opinion, which demands "the truth" and is extremely sensitive to the slightest hint of cover-up. The parents of the victims attend the sessions of the committee and, by virtue of their enormous moral prestige, they have a virtual veto over its operations.

The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Belgium no longer faces a series parallel "national crises", but a real "crisis of the nation." People are uncertain about their identity, and their future. They are ashamed of their political representatives, and their mediocre institutions. They recognise that the political class are nothing more than managers of a run-down, unjust and undemocratic society. And they think that they deserve something better. Those at the bottom are no longer willing to be ruled in the old way, while those above are divided on how best to reform the system of domination.

Popular or populist?

There is tremendous confusion in the popular "movement". But this does not make it "populism." That is certainly a risk. But a risk which existed before this crisis, not one created by it. This new situation also represents some possibilities for positive developments. For instance, there is visibly a widespread aspiration for greater social control

over "the system". This is something new. There is a desire to participate in the redefinition of the rules of social life, and to give a deeply democratic meaning to the social cohabitation of Dutch-speakers, French-speakers and immigrants on the small territory called Belgium.

What does the left have to say?

If the trade unions, the social movements and the left intellectuals had the same positive qualities as the workers and high school students who went on strike during that "crazy week" of October, there would be a real possibility of creating a powerful force in favour of change. A force liberated of all the confessional, corporatist "pillars" of Belgian public life. A force capable of giving people a new collective identity, in the struggle for democratic and social demands, and in the creation of new forms of solidarity and debate.

Unfortunately, only very limited forces see these possibilities, and are trying to exploit them. The Social Democrats are as pathetic than ever, clinging to power as if it was their only salvation. The leaders of the trade unions have made no proposals which could have given the mobilisations their full social dimension. And yet, it would have been easy to link questions of citizenship and democracy to the struggle against unemployment by reducing the working week.

Civic groups and associations have been virtually silent. What is left of the women's movement has been largely absent from the mobilisations and the discussions. Most of the country's intellectuals have been preoccupied with the "irrationality" of the masses, who's "emotion" threatens the rule of law, which, they stress, is the incarnation of "reason." The citizens in the street are paving the way for fascism, gentlemen!

All these forces want one thing above all: a return to "normal." They refuse to see that the far right's main chance to profit from this situation will come if, and only if, the masses are demobilised, with the impression of powerlessness.

At the institutional level, only the Greens are willing to say that the collapse of the current political regime is positive, if it leads to democratic reforms which would put an end to the whole system of privileges, clientelism and corruption. But the Greens don't make any link between these democratic demands, and the social and economic demands which would have a greater echo in the most active social layers of society. Layers among which the Greens, of course, have few networks.

The future is hard to predict. Belgium's women, workers, and young people have gone through a major experience of collective action, in which they have tasted the power of resolute, thoughtful mass action. The fruits of this experience will soon blossom, in all areas of society. The Dutroux crisis is over. What comes next? ★

Source: A six page feature on the Belgian crisis was published in the October 1996 issue of our French monthly *Impreco*. This article is available on request from our Paris office.

book notes

Gay history with a new moral

Frederic Martel's book *Le rose et le noir* (*The Pink and the Black*), acclaimed by the French press, has received more mixed reviews from lesbian/ gay and anti-AIDS organisations. They complain that his historical and sociological methods are dubious. Writing the history of the modern French lesbian/gay movement is certainly no easy task. But Martel's goal is less to establish the historical facts (even roughly) than to stigmatise in every possible way the "deviation" that he thinks threatens gay people: "communitarianism".

Martel's work *seems* seductive. He sets out to write "the history of a double revolution: first gay liberation, then AIDS". That explains his title: "pink" for gay people, "black" for AIDS. We have been waiting for this history for at least fifteen years.¹

The other purpose the author expresses in his prologue is "to deal with male homosexuality and female homosexuality" and try to analyse the dynamic relationship between

the gay and women's movements. Curiously, the relationship between these two movements has been analysed very little in France.² Martel's disappointing treatment of this subject makes us regret all the more that it has not been dealt with more elsewhere.

Intellectual fraud

The truth is that Martel's book, despite its 400 pages and tons of notes, does not fulfil these lofty ambitions, any more than it has won over the lesbian/gay movement's past and present activists. As many of them have stressed in numerous debates organised since the book came out, this history of lesbians and gay men in France is an intellectual fraud. It personalises the gay movement's theoretical debates and actions to excess; it fails to analyse, still less understand the social movements of the 1970s; it overestimates some forces and underestimates others (particularly far-left organisations); it fetishises high culture (great

writers and film directors). The author does not "follow" history, he dresses it up and makes it ridiculous for his own ends. In this way his "false revelation" that gays reacted with denial to the AIDS epidemic in the mid-1980s becomes for Martel the shining example of the gay "communitarian deviation", his book's central argument.

Above the movement

In whose name does Martel speak? From what vantage point today does he pass judgement on others' actions, thoughts and behaviour? What is the moral of his story? What are his historical and sociological methods? People blame Martel not so much for the position he takes but for his dishonesty in imposing his position on the facts, without ever making clear to the reader which is which.

The way he uses numerous quotations throughout the book — a very French intellectual practice — often adds nothing to his argument and in many cases is even suspect. For example, Martel finds the history of the Homosexual Revolutionary Action Front (FHAR) particularly difficult. Born in action — from an Act Up-style zap against a TV broadcast called "Homosexuality: This Painful Problem"³ — FHAR's achievement was to turn homosexuality and sexuality into political issues, issues of liberation. Martel minimises this political dimension. He shows the group's "stars" fighting with each other in anarchic battles whose political significance escapes him.

Formulas can be a seductive way of expressing ideas, but his formulas' stupidity makes one sick. "The tenors in FHAR had very different approaches to homosexuality and politics. What contradictions! What peculiarities! What sectarianism! Philippe Guy: a Maoist converted by reading Jean Genet. Françoise d'Eaubonne: libertarian feminism and straight love with gay boys. Helene Hazera: hysteria reined in by hormones. Daniel Guerin: anarchism flirting with Fernand Leger's engineers." (p. 36) In a forum last June in Paris, one former FHAR activist summed up his feelings: "He writes FHAR's history as if we were the Socialist Party! Martel has understood exactly nothing."

The other "ordeal" in this book is its painful exposure in chapter 10 of the notorious "gay denial" of the AIDS epidemic, which denounces and castigates the attitude of lesbian/gay organisations. According to Martel, "everything has happened as if, faced with this catastrophe, activists were struck dumb, incapable of articulating ideas. They invent shows to put on: denouncing (the "correlation expressed in the words") 'gay cancer' is one of them." He continues, "But by denouncing 'gay cancer', activists

NetWorking



Thrashing it out

A month-long virtual conference, "Labour and the Internet" brought together hundreds of labour activists from around the world in January, to discuss how they and their unions are using the Internet to build a better labour movement.

The event was moderated by Eric Lee, author of *Labour and the Internet: The New Internationalism*. Other seminars on Canada's Solidarity Network (SoliNet) include:

February: The Internet and labour in the third world

March: Technology organising

April: Labour mvmts worldwide

May: Russian labour movement

June: Education in the global economy

To join (free) >> www.solinet.org

Solidarity (USA)

The URL has been shortened. Meanwhile, the main page recorded 321 hits from 255 different locations in the first seven months of 1996. (Is that good or bad?).

<http://www.labornet.org/solidarity>

Mexican Labor News

The Home Page of the excellent Mexican Labor News and Analysis electronic newsletter now has an index of back issues and an urgent action alert section.

[HTTP://www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/](http://www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/)

>> 103144.2651@compuserve.com

Sector Critico (Spain)

New site of FID, a foundation close to the left "Critical Sector" in the biggest trade union, CC.OO.

<http://www.lander.es/~jdaza>

Indonesia solidarity

The webpage is being updated every Monday during the trials of PRD militants.

<http://www.peg.apc.org/~asiet/>

Listserv >> asiet@peg.apc.org

International Viewpoint

Listservs in English, Spanish, German and French. English listserv includes full contents of this magazine, and a selection of articles from our associated publications.

>> 100666.1443@compuserve.com

fall into the identity-politics trap that they claim to be fighting against. They confuse a disease that gay men do in fact get because of 'what they *do*' with a disease that gay men would supposedly get because of 'who they *are*'. (p. 225, author's emphasis)

In this part of his book Martel moralises and denounces. Unfortunately the people he denounces in this public way are not around to respond: they have died, precisely, from AIDS. He blames the way gay men lived, i.e. their sexual consumption patterns (back rooms and bathhouses), for their getting infected.

Martel can boast today of having been one of the only gay leaders to demand (albeit under a pseudonym) the closing of back rooms and bathhouses (as well as a ban on poppers, which he blames for gay men's dangerous behaviour).

Against a backdrop of "scandal", Martel paints an unflattering picture of the gay organisations, which he blames both for not realising the full seriousness of the new disease and for having defended themselves against those who used AIDS as a pretext for moralism and repression. In this discussion, contrary to any sound method and as "proof" of gay "denial", Martel contrasts editorials from the gay magazine *Gai Pied* — evidence in his eyes of gay groups' irresponsibility — with articles from the mainstream press, mainly *Le Monde* and *Libération*. This is not a serious approach. It cannot do justice to the movement's attitude, particularly to the gay men who have been struggling against AIDS.

Better to stay in the closet?

This sums up the main thesis of Martel's book. He defines "identity politics" as a bearer of danger, blindness and disaster. According to him, the most serious danger threatening lesbians and gay men is not the society that denies their right to exist, have equal rights and freely express their sexuality — he also forgets about the social and cultural construction of "homosexuality" — but the "temptation" of identity politics, symbolised by a supposed "culture of difference".

According to him, any sexual politics is dangerous because it threatens social cohesion and the sacrosanct "French-style" principle of integration, which he counterpoises to the dreaded US model. He deliberately amalgamates "minority culture" — which admittedly he can't understand with-

out some understanding of popular culture! — with a "culture of difference".

False conclusions

This ideological bias is reinforced in the book's last part, which tackles the resurgence of the lesbian/gay movement since 1988 and the growing success of Lesbian/Gay Pride demonstrations.⁴ Martel rapidly dismisses this success, which gets in the way of his argument. In the end he laments the fact that the AIDS epidemic has bound the community together "and thus become a source of identity production". He continues, "Gay differentialism is getting a fresh response, which means a break with the 1980s.... Rushing off down the road of communitarianism, a whole movement is taking shape today with formation of a 'community' as its goal." (p. 391)

In his conclusion, his one-sided vision of the lesbian/gay movement leads him to overestimate the tendencies that he sees at work: "This is why it's too early to say whether this new communitarian impulse ... has already peaked, whether this movement is condemned from now on to repeat itself and play out an endless more-gay-than-thou, or whether on the contrary it prefigures a French gay movement in formation." If the latter is true, he says, then Gay Pride "reflects a social shift and demands a reconsideration of the *French* model of minority integration". (p. 397) Let us hope so: this would mean that the lesbian/gay movement had taken on a truly radical dimension. So far this is far from being the case.

Reviewed by Sophie Massouri

Review translated from *Cahiers du féminisme* no. 78, autumn 1996

1. Martel cites in his bibliography Jacques Girard's *Le mouvement homosexuel en France 1945-1980* ("The Gay Movement in France, 1945-80") without giving it due credit.

2. Francoise Picq's book on the women's movement (1993) deals with this relationship too briefly in ch. 8.
3. The programme was broadcast live on 10 March 1971, with invited guests from the medical establishment, church and judicial system. The issue being discussed was whether homosexuality is a crime or a sickness. The gay activists in the audience got up in the middle of the broadcast shouting slogans, including the famous chant "Down with the hetero-cops!"

4. The last lesbian/gay march in Paris in June 1996 brought together more than 100,000 people.

Frederic Martel, *Le Rose et le Noir: Les Homosexuels en France depuis 1968* ("The Pink and the Black: Homosexuals in France since 1968"), Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1996.

A different Europe? Alternative conference,

- 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.
- 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.

Get in touch!

Committee for a Different Europe, c/o A SEED Europe, P.O. Box 92066, 1090 AB Amsterdam, Holland. E-mail: ander.europa@aseed.antenna.nl & (+31) 20/66.82.23.6

THE DISNEY COMPANY MAKES A LOT OF CHILDREN'S CLOTHES IN THE DESPERATELY POOR COUNTRY OF HAITI!



IF WE HAD THE RIGHT TO UNIONIZE AND BARGAIN WE COULD IMPROVE CONDITIONS!



Disney Haiti Justice Campaign

Pocahontas pyjamas cost \$12 in New York. The Haitian women who make them get 5-7 cents. No wonder workers at Disney subcontractors are trying to organize. We want Disney to stop doing business with subcontractors who refuse their workers' demands for • A wage of at least \$5 per day (double current rates) • genuine collective bargaining. • Improved working conditions, such as clean drinking water. • An end to indiscriminate layoffs, and firings for union organizing.

We have postcards, fact sheets and other materials which you can adapt for local organizing efforts.

✉ Disney/Haiti Justice Campaign, P.O. Box 755, Fort Washington Station, New York, NY 10001; (212) 242-0986. E-mail <bloom@soho.ios.com>

Against the Current

March/April issue includes: Global Restructuring, Rethinking Marxism & Filipino Women (D. Aguilar) • Sexual & Reproductive Rights: A Women-Centered Agenda for Activism (D. Billings) • Pornography, Censorship, Sexuality (N. Herzig & R. Bernabe) • Publishing in the West: Problems & Prospects for Arab Women Writers (A. Amireh) • dialogue with Barbara Harlow, author of *After Lives, Legacies of Revolutionary Writing*.

Price \$4.00. Subscription \$20 (outside USA \$25). - 7012 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210, USA. <ctc@igc.apc.org>

Revolutionary Marxism Today

Spring, 1997, #2 includes The Fall of Stalinist Bonapartism and the Collapse of the Workers' States • Joseph Hansen and the Marxist Theory of the State: A Dual Legacy, Part II • Lessons of 1919 • Female Genital Mutilation •

Price \$5.00. Subscription: For 1 year send \$20 to RMT P.O. Box 470679, Chicago, IL 60647-0679 USA. <RevMarxism@aol.com>

Socialist Information

No. 102, December 1996 includes: Red-Green Alliance and the result of budget negotiations: A catalyst for social pressure? (B. Rasmussen) • Schengen and nationalism: Two different ways of opposing Schengen (M. Bruun Pedersen) • Red-Green Alliance national conference: Progress and challenges • (A. Skovrind) • A hot autumn in Europe. Social resistance and trade union bureaucrats (F. Kjeller) • Denmark to sign Schengen treaty: Big Brother comes one step (M. Bruun Pedersen) • How do we impose a political change? Debating the Red-Green Alliance approach to the budget (K. Jensen) • A new concept of limits of tolerance: Critical theory or life-style doctrine? On ecologist strategies (L. Noernberg) • Ole Krarup: "Retten, magten og moralen" (Justice, Power, & Morality), Reviewed by M. Meldstad •

Monthly review (in Danish) of Socialistisk Arbejderparti (SAP), Danish section of the Fourth International. Contact <socinf@inet.uni-c.dk>

Quaderns per al debat i l'acció

Nº 1, Jan. 1997 (in Spanish) reprint of: Late Capitalism: Ernest Mandel's interpretation of contemporary capitalism (Jesús Albarracín and Pedro Montes)

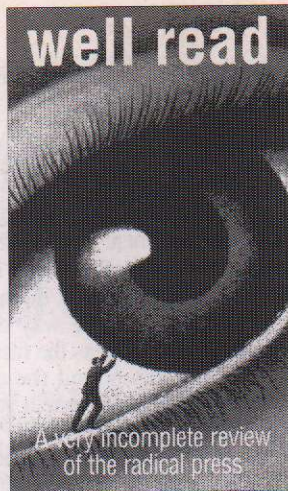
[A4 24 pages] Subscription (10 mailings) \$30 <di0s@milenum.com>

Socialist Outlook

No. 112 January 1997

The newspaper of from British supporters of the Fourth International has changed to a monthly, 20 page format. This issue includes • From Maastricht to Amsterdam – Towards A European Super-State • Euro-March for Jobs: campaign updates • Abortion Rights • New Labour • Keep Labour's Links to Trade Unions • Serbian Demonstrations • Peru • Indonesia • Central Africa • Censorship • Welfare State Campaigns • Bloody Sunday • Book Reviews.

Subscription: 12 issues for £7.50 (Britain and rest of Europe); £15.00 (rest of the world). Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. <outlook@gn.apc.org>



News from Wilthin

January issue includes 'Bantustanization & Privatization' (Tikva Honig-Parnass) • Ideological biases in '48 Palestinians research: Identity and Political Orientation — Report on Professor Samooha lecture • Only solution: 'bi-national state' (Response by As'ad Ghanem) • Amnesty Report on Palestinian Authority • Imperialist Market in the Arab Homeland (Adel Samara) • Textile merchants struggle with globalization and peace (Aisling Byrne) • Interview with Netanyahu (Arye Shavit)

Special Supplement: Mizrahim & Zionism: History, Political Discourse, Struggle: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims (Ella Habiba

Debate: Voices from the South African Left

A new journal dedicated to discussing critical issues of the nature, progress, and direction of the current transition in South Africa. Issue one sold out. Roseline Nyman begins issue #2 with a plea for working-class leadership within the women's movement and, more generally, greater attention to poor and working women's issues. The sentiment is concretised by Rita Edwards, who describes the recent emergence of a women's group in the Western Cape. Bobby Rodwell introduces the Zapatista movement, and Teresa Rendon, an academic and gender advisor to the Zapatistas, discusses how the indigenous people's struggle in Chiapas relates to historic demands by women - both organic and bourgeois-feminist. Patrick Bond's review OF World Bank endeavours helps explain why progressives must think globally and act globally, not because of massive new loan programmes, but because of the pernicious grip that Bank-think seems to have on Pretoria. And a text from the new Campaign against Neoliberalism in South Africa expands the debate by polemicising with Minister Alec Erwin. Chris Malikhane advances political economic debates within the South African Students Congress (Sasco)

Shohat) • The new discourse in Mizrahi politics in Israel 1980-1996 (Sami Shalom Chetrit) • A Short History (Zvi Ben-Dor) • Is the Mizrahi Question Relevant to the Future of the Entire Middle East? (Shiko Behar) •

Cost NIS 5 per copy or subscription \$60 annual subscription (abroad), Israel NIS 120 and NIS 70 Occupied Territories. Alternative Information Center Jerusalem-Bethlehem, POBox 31417, Jerusalem ☺ +972-2-241159, 740585 Fax: 253151

E-Mail: aicmail@trendline.co.il http://www.aic.org

Article 74,

Article 74 aims to raise awareness and support for a just solution of Palestinian residency and refugee issues. *Nº 18 (December 1996)* includes • recent NGO activities in defense of Palestinian residency rights in Jerusalem • Report of the Public Hearing on Israeli Violations of Palestinian Residency Rights in Jerusalem • Denial of Family Reunification and ID Card Confiscations: Unregistered Palestinian children - Denial of Health and Social Welfare • Palestinian residency rights in the self-rule areas •

Subscriptions: US \$15 for ten issues. Send a cheque made out to the AIC, PO Box 31417 Jerusalem; fax: 02-6253151; Or >> http://www.aic.org the (AIC website)

Suggestions for additions to this regular review should be sent to the book reviews editor at our Paris office.

using an argument that winds its way from Lenin to Amin and onwards. John Pape warns against South Africans dreaming that they can follow South Korea to an export-led future, and indeed for the Left to read more carefully the reasons for that country's recent industrialisation. This issue of Debate includes an excerpt from Carl Brecker's pamphlet on the need to revive the Permanent Revolution thesis, followed by a reply from a Communist Party organiser, Dale Mckinley, who posits that we need not falsely dichotomise permanent revolution with the National Democratic Revolution. Aaron Amaral (of the International Socialist Movement [a break-away from the grouping around the British SWP] argues against what he calls the "reformist" defence of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (the ANC's campaign platform) by Mckinley et al in issue #1. Darrel Moellendorf then takes us from socialist agency to socialist economic principles, by considering the choices of various blueprints that we as activists and strategists must surely grapple with one day.

Subscription costs US\$30 for three issues. Send cheques to Debate, P.O. Box 483, Wits 2050, South Africa <e-mail: 029frb@cosmos.wits.ac.za>