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**MAI is back**

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# Winds of change

**Strategy for a queer planet**

# Multilateral Agreement on Investment revived

## A constitution for the global economy

You thought it was all over – but now the draft Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) is back to threaten the developing world. Sadly it is no surprise that developing countries have no hand in writing the agreements that control their wealth.

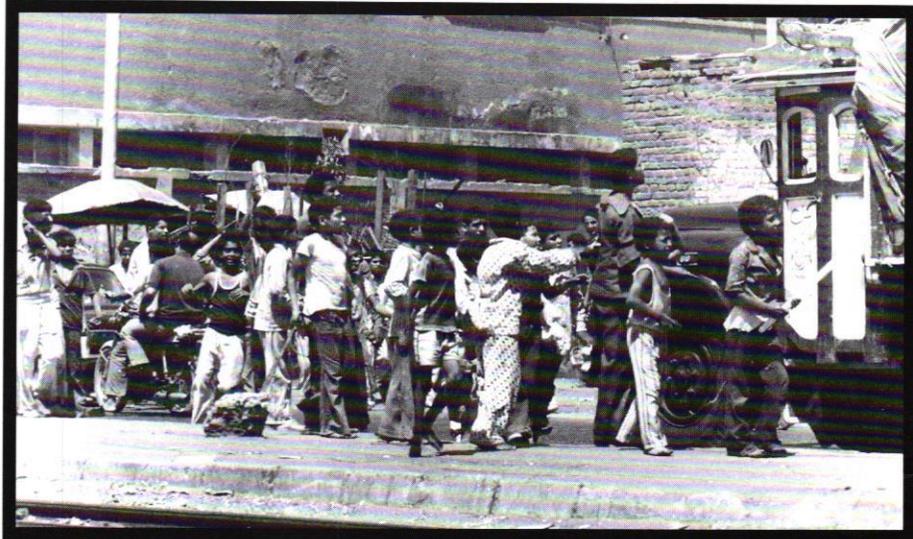
**Duncan Chapple\***

The MAI is an international investment agreement that is being drafted by the Paris-based group of 29 OECD countries. The treaty aims to increase economic growth by giving multinationals greater legal protection and giving governments less power to control their activities.

April's meeting of the key ministers involved in drafting the MAI finished with a whimper. The statement issued gave no deadlines for the development of the MAI. Discussions have dragged on, much to the chagrin of the US, over the possible involvement of developing countries in the decision-making framework of the MAI. Many commentators said the MAI was finished.

Since mid-July, a new flurry of activity suggests that the OECD will adopt the MAI next year. If the OECD does not agree the MAI, the USA will push arrangements similar to MAI down the throats of other international organisations, including the IMF.

The opposition is substantial. A united coalition of over 600 non-governmental organisations [NGOs] from 67 countries leading opposition to the agreement,



which threatens to undermine international efforts to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. The MAI's proposals would massively limit the ability of working people to win better laws to less the exploitation of the third world by imperialism. Almost any attempt to moderate the accelerating speed at which the North rips off the South and East will be illegal — and punishable in special international courts.

The MAI was due to be signed by OECD countries in April this year. The timetable was very optimistic. Similar negotiations, in the Uruguay round of discussions about the General Agreement on tariffs and Trade, had taken ten years. When April came, the assembled ministers were unable to agree the draft MAI. They

also failed to set a timetable for completing their discussions. Instead they agreed a break in negotiations. Many experts opined that MAI was dead.

### US threatens to give up

When the US State Department finally briefed the NGOs on MAI on July 15, it became clear that negotiations are indeed happening on a bilateral level. At the July meeting two key negotiators — Joe Papovich of the United States Trade Representatives and Alan Larson from the US State Department — played an interesting strategic card, threatening NGOs that if the OECD is unable to agree the MAI negotiations in the next six to nine months, the US will support moving the investment deregulation agenda elsewhere — World

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Trade Organisation [WTO], International Monetary Fund [IMF], etc. The US is attempting to scare the NGO alliance into accepting that the OECD group of rich countries should adopt the MAI. The alternatives, bodies like the WTO, are even less open to the influence of developing countries and NGOs.

The US negotiators clarified the lack of a deadline in this April's ministerial statement on the MAI by saying that there were two significant events on the horizon that put time constraints on negotiations even without a formal deadline: the April 1999 OECD ministerial meeting and the Autumn 1999 WTO ministerial meeting.

Clearly, the US want to finish MAI at the April 1999 OECD meeting. If opponents build up their work until then, the US might give up at OECD.

### Slow progress

Not much has happened with the negotiations since the Ministerial meeting in Paris in April. No new deadline was given to complete the negotiations by, and there will not be a multilateral negotiating session in Paris until October.

However, private negotiations are definitely underway. There were two meetings in July involving MAI negotiators from US, EU and Canada. The first was in Ottawa where US and EU negotiators tried to resolve differences between them. The EU opposes US exceptions for subsidies and procurement programmes, while the US is critical of the regional economic integration programmes supported by the EU.

The second meeting, in London, managed to escape public or media scrutiny. Despite the break in negotiations, most countries sent a representative.

The meeting was called by the 'New Labour' government in London to publicise the Fitzgerald report undertaken for the UK government on the likely impact of the MAI. The whole idea as an attempt to deflect criticism about how favourably developing countries would be treated under the MAI and under what circumstances they could be allowed to become decision making partners in the drafting of the Agreement

The UK suggests that developing countries be granted a relatively automatic waiver for a number of MAI's provisions and be treated as founder members – but only after the Agreement been adopted.

However, a number of OECD countries, with the US in the forefront of the hard liners, resisted any such blanket provisions for developing countries.

### Inequality

The developing countries effected by the MAI are frozen out of the decision-making. The OECD wants to get the MAI rules sorted out before they invite in the developing world.

Behind all the talk of free trade, the MAI enshrined unfair trade – in which the third world is plundered and exploited by the big multinationals that benefit from the MAI. It continues the biggest trend of the

twentieth century – not rock and roll but growing inequality.

The acceleration of the process of globalisation has coincided with a sharp increase in inequality. In many western countries, the equalisation of income and wealth that took place in the U.S. between 1945 and 1970 has since been reversed. Over the last 30 years the richest 20% of the world's population increased their share of world income from 70% to 85%. The share captured by the poorest 20% has declined from 2.3% to 1.4%.

These two trends – increasing economic integration and growing inequality – are causally related. The increasing mobility of multinational corporations enables them to play countries and localities against each other, forcing down wage bills and many working conditions in a global "levelling down". Environmental standards, workplace safety rules and similar safeguards are also weakened as governments come under increasing pressure to accede to the demands of highly mobile corporations who can always find another place to produce.

### Democracy is a victim

Democracy itself is undermined as the real power to make crucial economic decisions is increasingly removed from elected governments. This includes not only the ability to regulate in the interests of workers, consumers, and the environment, but also the ability to develop fiscal, monetary, and industrial or planning policies that could assured relatively stable and equitable growth and economic development.

The inability to make these policy decisions real has contributed greatly to the dramatic slowdown in global economic growth that occurred during the second half of the post-war period, with more than a billion people now unemployed or underemployed world-wide. It has also had a massively conservatising effect on people who identified with social democracy's programmes of bureaucratic planning.

Key policy decisions are increasingly becoming the province of unelected, unaccountable institutions whose role has grown in tandem with the power of transnational corporations: the G-7, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now including the World Trade Organisation), NAFTA, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

Some of these institutions have the power to review the decisions of national governments and demand they be altered under penalty of economic sanctions. The MAI is one more such undemocratic institution and another large step in the wrong economic and political direction. ★

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# Longest ever school strike

**Robert Noirel** reports on the two-month long school strike movement in the underprivileged *département* of Seine St-Denis.

**Seine St-Denis** is one of the most densely-populated regions of France. Part of the Paris region, the Seine St-Denis *département* (administrative area) rates particularly high in all the indices of social exclusion, unemployment, immigrants particularly illegal ones, low number of young people leaving school with a qualification.

It is a traditional bastion of the French Communist Party, and part of the "red ring" of suburbs around Paris). Nowadays, it also has a high National Front vote.

A two-month-long strike movement is unusual in the national school system, where unlimited strikes (revoted everyday by the strikers) are rare except in exceptional circumstance such as May 1968 or December 1995.

## Two months of struggle

On 12th March, a dozen *colleges* (schools for 11 to 15 year olds between primary school and *lycée*) went on strike in support of demands for more teachers in order to be able to cope with the difficult situation they faced, particularly in terms of violence coming from socially extremely under-privileged youth.

Since 3rd February representatives from different schools had been meeting regularly to prepare collective action, on the initiative of the Louise Michel *College* in Clichy-sous-Bois which was already on strike. Among them were a good number of activists from the Ecole Emancipée a current mainly based in the main teachers union federation (FSU). Their position is characterised by a defence of unity in struggle and support for the personnel in the most precarious situations. Members of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) are active in this current.

The strike spread rapidly to the whole *département*. During the biggest demonstrations two thirds of the primary and secondary schools in the Seine St Denis were affected by the strike movement. One third of them were on strike for several weeks. The pupils and parents participated in the movement (the latter occupied a certain number of the *colleges* and primary schools). This made it possible to have very big demonstrations of over 10,000 people and significant slogans such as "we want more funding, we are not less than nothings", revealing the feeling common to parents, pupils and teachers that the Seine-St-Denis were



treated with contempt by the Minister of Education who for weeks refused to even meet a delegation. Thirteen demonstrations were organised in all, most of them ending up in front of the (closed) doors of the Ministry of Education.

This collective presence of the teachers, pupils and their parents shows that the Seine St-Denis strike was a real social movement, revealing the crisis in the *département*. The movement put forward the development of public services, particularly in education, as the solution to this crisis. But many others are in the same situation, notably the health service. There were in fact links made between the teachers' strike and that in one of the main hospitals of the *département*.

The two months were also marked by a number of spectacular actions which pushed the media to maintain coverage of the struggle. On 26th April, the day after a mass demonstration following which the minister again refused to receive a delegation, and where the police felt authorised to charge and arrest demonstrators, 250 teachers from Seine-St-Denis interrupted a live broadcast in which the minister was to participate. This had a big media impact. For several days the strikers followed Claude Allegre, the education minister wherever he went. On 28th April another demonstration ended with a symbolic occupation of the Sorbonne, thirty years after May 1968. There were many other symbolic actions, for example making a human chain around the brand new football stadium in St Denis whose cost would have paid for many of the public services lacking in the *département*. The press

often underlined the inventive nature of the movement.

The length of this struggle, the diversity of actions organised show a determination that could not be deflected. How can this be explained?

## The roots of the revolt go deep

For several years the embers have been smouldering under a social and thus educational situation which has been getting worse and worse. With fewer teachers per pupil than the national average, teachers, particularly in the *colleges*, can no longer cope with the crisis situation in the schools of Seine St-Denis. This is the level at which the crisis is most clearly revealed. All children go to *college*, as schooling is obligatory until sixteen, but a large number, particularly in areas of social deprivation, fall into a spiral of academic failure. As they cannot succeed in classes too big for their needs to be really taken into account, they slide into violent attitudes and acts, towards fellow pupils and teachers.

Isolated struggles on similar questions (often sparked off by violent incidents) take place regularly. Last year a broader movement began to develop through support for the Galois *College* in Sevran whose teachers, after one month on strike, were beaten by truncheon wielding police in going to present their demands to the local education authority. These events demonstrate the similarity and difficulty of situations which is not found anywhere else at the level of a *département*.

Over and above the legitimate refusal to teach in the conditions which exist in many of the *colleges* of Seine St-Denis, the shared concern of majority of teachers is the desire to defend and promote the public education service as a bulwark against the social crisis and the political crisis revealed by the increase in support for the National Front. Thus the demands formulated by the teachers:

- twenty pupils per class and the creation of the posts necessary;
- rejection of job precariousity;
- the designation as "Education Priority Zones" of all the schools that ask for it. This designation brings a bonus for the teachers but most importantly extra teachers enabling class sizes to be reduced. Not a miracle solution. And in any case few colleges have obtained the label despite the obvious difficulties which exist.

## Self-organisation...

This was one of the essential characteristics of this struggle. A General

Assembly (AG) of schools brought together all the *colleges* and *lycées* involved in the action. It took its decisions on the basis of the vote of delegates mandated by their school general assemblies and met on average twice a week. This AG drew up the platform of the movement which was presented to the minister. A smaller "organising collective" prepared the AGs and ensured that actions were organised.

It was with this type of organisation that eventual divisions between the different unions were overcome and guaranteed to the non-unionised their ability to act and take decisions. All the trade unions were present at the meetings and accepted the decisions of the AG. This link between the self-organisation of those in struggle and the unions strengthened the movement and obviously had its consequences within the unions themselves. The AG was thus able to take decision which corresponded to the wishes of the greatest number of those involved at every stage of the movement.

### ...and the unions

In France there is a relatively high level of unionisation in the national education system (30% as opposed to 10% in the country as a whole). The main federation is the Unitary Union Federation (FSU) in which the members of the LCR are active. It is a federation of unions organising different categories of personnel, of which the main one is the SNES for teachers in *colleges* and *lycées*. The SNES accepted the decisions of the AG, which is a new departure for this union which traditionally distrusts different forms of self-organisation and coordination. This position played a crucial role in the development of the movement given the weight of the SNES, supported by two-thirds of teachers in Seine St-Denis in the elections of workplace representatives (in which all teachers, not only unionised ones, vote).

On the other hand the SNUIPP (FSU union for primary and nursery school teachers) put a brake on any possible extension of the movement to its sector. This was owing to a lesser mobilisation at the base of course, but also because in Seine St-Denis many of its organisers who are still Communist Party members did not want to embarrass the "plural left" (Socialist Party, Communist Party and Greens) in government.

The other unions, which are clearly a minority, respected the rules of the self-organisation "game". These were the SGEN-CFDT, the CGT (influential in the vocational *lycées* in which the LCR is also present), SUD Education created two years ago and the small anarcho-sindicalist CNT.

Only one union, Force Ouvrière, refused to accept the decisions of the AG. This union's teachers' sectors is led by the [Trotskyist] Lambertist current, which once again demonstrated its sectarianism and inability to understand a mass movement.

### Women in struggle

Women constitute 60% of the employees of the national education system in the secondary schools of the Seine St-Denis. In this struggle they were very much present in the demonstrations, the general meetings in the schools and the AG. In this latter their interventions were in general marked by a concern in taking forward the movement rather than being applauded, as was the case of a number of the male "leaders". However, at the level of the "organising collective" there was a rather smaller proportion of women, as was also the case in the elected delegations which represented the personnel in struggle in the negotiations with the authorities. We found the traditional division of labour and role of men whose social life leaves them time to take on this type of role (usually the "organising collective" members were in meetings at least four nights a week).

But it was above all in the union leaderships that women were under-represented. Almost all the union spokespersons were men. Women were thus present in the struggle but obstacles remain and must be discussed in order to be overcome.

### A strike at the heart of the political discussion

It is restating the obvious to say that the problems of schools are highly political, notably in a *département* where they are closely linked to the crisis which is tearing apart its social fabric. The teachers' movement showed this by raising the essential political problems of the moment.

Putting forward the defence of the public education service while there is a big rise in support for the National Front in Seine St-Denis is to be part of the struggle against this mortal danger. The teachers in struggle understood this very well on 28th March when they decided to form a contingent in the anti-NF demonstration following the regional elections.

Faced with a speech by Allegre accusing them of playing the game of the far-right, they showed that to be at the heart of the social struggle can bring you to the forefront of the struggle against fascism. They were part of the united-front demonstration (after discussion) while at the same time demonstrating against the left parties forming the government against which their action was directed. However the contingent of the Socialist Party had to fold up its banners as at the end of the demonstration, when it encountered the teachers calling for the resignation of minister of education Allegre.

The teachers' strike in Seine St-Denis acted as a litmus test for the governing Socialist and Communist parties. Within the Socialist Party we had to wait for a month and a half before any voices less hostile than that of the minister of were raised. The way in which he responded to the movement was as dishonouring to the governmental left as is the response of

interior minister Chevenement on the question of illegal immigrants. We heard everything: contempt for the personnel, accusations of playing the game of the National Front, lies, refusal to assume his responsibilities (instead blaming subordinates for "misinforming" the minister). From this point of view the popular slogan "Allegre resign" was perfectly justified. In letting him follow such a retrograde policy the SP can only cut itself off more and more from those who made possible its success in the last general election of June 1997.

But the Communist Party and line of Robert Hue were not spared either by the struggle. Seine St-Denis continues to be the party's electoral bastion as it holds the presidency of the *Conseil General* (elected government of a *département* which manages its budget) and the majority in many local councils. The CP was thus directly put to the test by the strike.

However, up until the end of March it supported the "catching up plan" proposed by Allegre but judged as completely insufficient by the teachers and indeed the spark to their strike. The Communist Party considered that this plan would "contribute to increasing academic success" in the words of a leaflet distributed on 21st March.

There were of course disagreeing voices such as Mr. Braouezec, a "renewal" communist and mayor of the town of St Denis. But overall the Communist Party preferred governmental solidarity to the mass movement. There is no doubt that many Communist teachers active in the movement did not identify with their party on this point.

### A first victory for the social movement

On 30th April, after six weeks refusal, Claude Allegre met the unions and the representatives of the AG. This was already a victory for the powerful movement of teachers, parents and pupils which had developed in Seine St-Denis.

The 3,000 new teaching posts (one hundred times more than in the first "catching up plan") which he conceded was first of all the confirmation by the minister himself of the immensity of the needs in the *département*. Of course, in September this year there will only be 800 (1,000 in 1999 and 1,200 in 2000).

Above all it is not clear how they will be attributed. The minister and the local education authority want to do so on the basis of the "projects" of different schools which could divide teachers by putting schools in competition with one another.

There is therefore the risk that the minister will in fact turn the situation to his advantage by using Seine St-Denis as a deregulation laboratory. This is why the movement has to continue as it has done since the end of the strike movement by continuing to hold regular AGs.

The balance sheet of the struggle even if we only take into account the 800 new posts for this September and with all the problems just mentioned, is rather impres-

## ★ France

sive. Particularly in a period of freeze on employment in the public sector. But of course the dramatic situation in many colleges will not be improved at the start of the new school year with the three or four additional teachers in each school.

### Justified frustrations

Among some teachers there is a strong feeling of disappointment. In September this could materialise as a renewed desire to struggle, demanding that the ministerial decision are really put into practice and new gains made.

Whatever the case, everybody agrees

that an unlimited strike, self-organised by those who struggle, in coordination with the unions has proved itself an effective weapon.

This is what forced Allegre to retreat because it faced the government (with a serious political problem and forced it to take its responsibilities).

In this sense the struggle which has just taken place and only encourage further action in the national education system and in French society in general.

The teachers of Seine St-Denis have shown that they can force this government, which they helped elect, to retreat.

Like the unemployed and the immigrants "sans papiers", they have shown the way to a generalised movement which must force this government to change its policy. To satisfy the demand of those "from below". And not to return to the politics which the majority of wage-workers already showed that they rejected in November-December 1995. ★

\* The author is a teacher in Seine St Denis and member of the LCR. The teachers in the LCR would like to have discussions with teachers from other countries to exchange experiences. Write to LCR-Enseignement, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100, France; e-mail <redaction@lcr.rouge>, stating "pour les enseignants".

## Strategy for a queer planet

During the first week of August Amsterdam made good its claim to be the gay capital of Europe by hosting the Olympic-style international Gay Games (previously held in 1982 and 1986 in San Francisco, 1990 in Vancouver and 1994 in New York). "Given that lesbians and gay men are so visibly emancipated nowadays," asked the Dutch media, "is there any need for a liberation movement?" Peter Drucker thinks there is.

The Gay Games are not the only recent landmark event. In Mexico City a congress for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights was held earlier this year with the support of newly elected PRD mayor Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and of Patria Jimenez, Latin America's first openly lesbian member of parliament. Over 300,000 people attended Europride '97 in Paris. In Brussels "Pink Saturday" has been growing every year, above all because of big turnouts from Flanders, the Dutch-speaking northern region.

Lesbian/gay/bisexual movements are increasingly internationally coordinated, particularly through ILGA (the International Lesbian and Gay Association) and ILGA Europe. But ILGA's orientation is mainly lobbying the UN, European Union and national parliaments.

Activists who see extraparliamentary mobilisation as crucial, including for parliamentary reforms, are less well organised internationally.

The August '98 Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Strategy Seminar at the International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE) in Amsterdam was one of the first opportunities ever for activists from the far left to meet for a whole weekend to discuss theory and strategy.

The participants came from Belgium, Bolivia, Denmark, England, France, Mexico, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sri Lanka. The atmosphere was one of excitement and personal warmth. While most of the participants were members of far left organisations, unaffiliated participants joined on an equal footing in the discussions.

Eight of the 20 participants were women, but they gave half the reports, participated fully in the discussion and

ensured that the lesbian dimension was not lost from sight.

The strong tradition of feminist discussion in many of the participants' organisations provided an important backdrop for exploring theoretical and practical questions of lesbian and gay liberation. Unfortunately the non-Europeans were less visible, both numerically and perhaps because the separate session on Third World themes came last. There was criticism that the discussions focussed too much on northwestern Europe.

### Community or integration?

There are nonetheless profound historical differences in practical and theoretical orientation, even among the gay/lesbian/bisexual movements in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Britain.

France has a tradition of 'republican integration', which makes any form of minority politics suspect. French theorist Jean Nicolas harshly criticised the 'myth of gay identity' in the 1970s; his perspective shows interesting similarities with the post-structuralist-influenced 'queer theory' of the 1990s.

The Dutch tradition of independent Protestant, Catholic and social-democratic subcultures led to a different climate for gay organising, although considerable gains by the lesbian/gay/bisexual movement have more recently led to questioning of gay institutions.

Britain, like most English-speaking countries, has lagged behind most other Western European countries in terms of lesbian/gay/bisexual rights. So doubts about the need for a movement in Britain get less of an echo.

These varying traditions have also left their mark on the lesbian/gay/bisexual left. The consensus among activists from these countries at the Amsterdam seminar was all the more striking. They agreed with each other that the roots of sexual oppression lie feel deeper than many lesbians and gay men themselves see, in the structure of the heterosexual family where children are still raised to take their place in a gender-divided, capitalist labour force. This means that, while lesbian/gay/bisexual communities are not

an end in themselves, the preconditions for oppression and thus the need for a separate subculture will continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

Even where conscious discrimination and prejudices are less widespread, as in the Netherlands and Scandinavia, this does not mean that lesbians, gay men and bisexuals can integrate themselves as equals into the broader society. Far-reaching social transformations are necessary in order to overcome the polarisation between heterosexuality and homosexuality.

There were lively discussions on other issues as well. Are we really for gay marriage? How much room is there for lesbian/gay/bisexual activists in the straight left? How can we make that room bigger? What sort of relationship existed early in this century – before fascism, Stalinism and Cold War witchhunts – between the left and 'sex reform' movements? When and how can or must lesbians and gay men work together? How can transgender people get an equal role in the movement, particularly in Third World countries? Could the unique victories for lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender rights in South Africa be repeated in other Third World countries, even in the midst of neoliberal austerity? Participants plan to publish articles on these and other topics in the year to come.

### Only a beginning

This network has to be maintained and expanded. Discussions will be continued, including on Internet. Reading lists will be mailed out. Documents will be translated. Many people hope to attend the Euro-Mediterranean Summer University on Homosexualities being held in the South of France in July 1999, some of whose planners were present at the seminar.

The next IIRE seminar in this series will take place in summer 2000. It will last a whole week. Among the possibilities for extra discussions are youth, trade-union work, the organisational situation of the movement in several countries, and some controversial aspects of sexuality. The 2-year delay should enable us to raise funds for more non-European participants, making it a more genuinely international event. One well worth the wait! ★

The "Good Friday Agreement" was approved by an overwhelming majority of the nationalist population in the North of Ireland. Sinn Féin, the political voice of the community which has opposed British rule over the last thirty years, called for its supporters to vote "yes" in the referendum to approve it and presented candidates in the subsequent elections to the new Assembly.

The Sinn Féin leadership presented support for the Agreement as a reflection of the "adaptation of its strategy and tactics to fit the objective conditions at any particular phase in the struggle." (*An Phoblacht*, May 14, 1998). It considers that the Agreement was achieved by "a political offensive [by Sinn Féin], one of such intensity and pursued with such relentless determination, that it has reshaped the political landscape North and South" and with this "new political self-confidence" Sinn Féin must fight "to turn the current political situation into a transition phase towards Irish unity". (*Int. Viewpoint* #300, May '98)

There can be no doubt that the new situation in the North, first of all the calling of a cease-fire by the IRA (followed, after Omagh, by two dissident nationalist forces, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and Real IRA), is a huge relief to the war-weary population of the North. Another important point for the community is the freeing of political prisoners foreseen in the Agreement. The hope that the next generation will not know only a situation of civil war and military occupation, as is the lot of all those under 30 today, is palpable. The horror and condemnation expressed on all sides at the August 15th explosion in Omagh is proof of that.

However, the protracted conflict over the Orange (pro-British Unionist) marches at the beginning of August had already shown that the situation is still far from stabilised. The introduction of new "anti-terrorist legislation" risks hardening the attitude of the nationalist population which will feel targeted, while Unionists are stating that they will refuse to sit in the Assembly alongside Sinn Féin representatives.

Some voices in the nationalist population, including Bernadette McAliskey, are very critical of the Agreement. They think it will be a block to advancing towards the historic goals of the nationalist movement because it is formulated in terms laid down by the British and Irish governments and thus accepts the partition of Ireland between the Six Counties in the North which are part of the British state and the Twenty-Six Country Republic. This position is expressed in the following article by **John North**, writing for Socialist Democracy, the group of Fourth International supporters in Ireland.

**Philomena O'Malley**

## After the Good Friday agreement Has Britain won in Northern Ireland?



The good Friday agreement proclaims a settlement to the conflict in Ireland. But the terms of the agreement read like a wish list for British strategists over the past 30 years. If successfully implemented they will mean a decisive victory for Britain and a successful restabilisation of their rule after 30 years of conflict in Ireland.

Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, which together asserted the overall aspiration to an independent and united Ireland, were to be removed and replaced with an affirmation of the undemocratic veto of the unionist minority in the North.

The Stormont assembly, representing a savagely sectarian repression and brought down by mass revolt, was to be restored in an improved form that would allow the Catholic middle class and Dublin government to support it. The improvement is to organise the assembly around a sectarian headcount and give each side a veto. There is to be a vague "equality agenda" that includes promises on Irish culture, human rights and policing.

The British would benefit from an assembly that distanced them from the reality of the sectarian state while reserving for them absolute control over the public purse and the state forces.

Dublin can wave a few cross-border bodies as proof that the long-term outcome will be Irish unity. In fact this element of the agreement, from the beginning meant simply as cover, has been watered down to the point of farce, and what remains is little more than the offer of capitalist stability and a junior advisory role with Britain. The Catholic middle class inside the northern state are offered their share of sectarian privilege.

Even the sharp divisions within Unionism, ranging from reluctant support to rabid hostility, should occasion no surprise. They represent a debate within unionism about whether or not they can survive even a minimal diminution of their sectarian privilege. For the "Not an inch" brigade gathered around Paisley, sectarian privilege is nothing if it is not absolute and written into the very bones of the state.

### Republican support

What does surprise many observers is the support of the republican movement in Ireland for a deal that negates the whole basis of their traditional programme. The military containment of their campaign and the growing realisation of the failure of a militarist strategy played their part, but the main mechanism in place was the political absorption of the movement by the Irish bourgeoisie and the replacement of a revolutionary nationalist program with a reformist program based on secret diplomacy and the sponsorship of capitalism and imperialism. This agenda was addressed by the "equality agenda" promising a desectarianising and democratisation of aspects of the Northern state.

In the way of many other petty-bourgeois democratic movements in other parts of the world, the republicans political retreat was both extensive and absolute. Six weeks separated a headline in their paper, *An Phoblacht*; "Defend articles 2 and 3!" and a special *Ard Fheis* (Congress) that agreed almost unanimously to dump their party programme, call for the deletion of articles 2 and 3 and their replacement with new wording endorsing an undemocratic unionist veto on Irish unity and agreeing to fight for a place in a new Stormont government.

In an earlier settlement which led to the partition of the country the British lent field guns to the pro-treaty forces. In this settlement the British and Irish governments lent prisoners to the republican leadership to urge support for the extreme volte-face the movement was taking.

The decay of the movement was amply illustrated by Gerry Adams. In a hymn to opportunism he urged delegates to vote yes at the *ard fheis* and whatever way they liked in the referendum.

### Referenda

The separate but simultaneous referenda that took place almost immediately after on both sides of the border shows the effect of this collapse. Polls in the South had indicated the over 1/3 of the population would vote "No!". In the event this fell to less than 12% and a fairly low turnout in the low '60s. In contrast a low-key campaign on the Amsterdam treaty produced an almost 40% "No" vote.

Although the overall vote in the North was just under 72%, this hides some major variations. It seems clear that here, where there was a strong republican base and a even stronger middle-class nationalist vote, the nationalist population voted overwhelmingly for the deal with a high turnout also. The "No" vote was at most 4% of the nationalist vote.

But the agreement had at its centre a recognition of a unionist veto over the

## ★ Ireland

democratic development of the Irish nation. It quickly became clear that the nationalist votes would count for nothing if there was not sufficient unionist support for the deal.

In the event David Trimble and the other unionist pro-agreement forces won slightly over 50% of the unionist vote. There was a neck and neck battle between those willing to do a deal and those anxious to fight on and secure total and unrestricted sectarian privilege.

One other major factor defining the nature of the agreement was the role of the British. Unionist disarray meant that the British had to take over the "Yes" campaign. Prime Minister Tony Blair spearheaded it with a signed poster assuring the bigots that in effect republicanism was being defeated. They made it crystal clear that part of the developing process would be a constant need to conciliate bigotry to ensure the survival of the Trimble faction.

### Assembly

The fragility of the unionist "Yes" and the need for further British support was confirmed by the Assembly elections in June, where electoral law slightly reduced direct British involvement. Unionist leader Trimble was humiliated when his party came second behind the SDLP in vote share. Technically this was still a victory, as the anti-agreement forces fell just short of the 30 seats that would have enabled them to block the working of the assembly, but the number of doubtful figures within his own camp who stood ready to defect meant that in the medium term the agreement would have to be adjusted even further towards unionism if it were to survive.

Within the main text there are a number of sub-texts. Sinn Fein's strategy has been reduced to electoralism and building itself as a party. The vote is enough to encourage it, but more significant is the increased vote for the SDLP. The imperialist victory has halted their decay and a re-established Stormont will be their natural home, where as the party of the bourgeoisie they will have an advantage over Sinn Fein in working the sectarian state structures.

Welcome news was the fall in the vote for unionist paramilitaries. With the support of sections of the republican movement and the left they have been posing as the socialist voice of the working class. This has proved too implausible and their real role, as muscle for the unionist bourgeoisie, has become all too clear. Unfortunately the right-wing UK unionists have now taken up the "socialist" mantle.

The Women's coalition, a post-modernist and post-feminist grouping supported by the Communist party and trade union bureaucrats, have a programme that boils down to support for the imperialist initiative [a remnant of the old Stalinist stages theory lives on]. This hardly seems enough of a programme to ensure their survival.



An attempt was made to launch a labour party in the 1996 elections, but in fact the alliance was totally unprincipled and made massive concessions to the right. It exploded into its component parts – opportunist, social democrat and the Socialist Party [CWI]. An attempt by the Socialist Party to continue this orientation met with disaster.

### Drumcree

Drumcree followed the elections. The whole timetable of the peace process was a guilty one – designed to put in place the structures of a settlement before workers could look too closely at the reality behind it.

The Orange marches at Drumcree I, II and III had shown all too clearly that reality: a rabidly sectarian mob demanding their 'right' to march through a catholic estate, state forces themselves filled with sectarian bile and the British willing to stymie Orangeism – if it could be done without putting their own base within unionism in doubt.

The British approached Drumcree IV with the political capitulation of republicanism and the majority of the nationalist population in their back pocket. But they knew that this capitulation was conditional on sustaining nationalist illusions of

gradual change. If the Orangemen marched down the nationalist Garvaghy Road it would be hard to sustain these illusions and would be seen as victory for the most reactionary elements of Orangeism. This would have weakened nationalist support and weakened the alliance between the unionist and nationalist middle class. In effect restraining the orange mob and defending the Stormont agreement became the same thing.

They built massive fortifications to ensure that the bigoted police were kept well away from the Orangemen set up a parades commission to give the appearance of impartiality and keep blame from the RUC while retaining absolute political control. They set out to divide the unionists, insisting that the orange campaign was simply the minority "No" vote. The new premier and deputy, Trimble and Mallon, were to hold the middle ground.

At first this appeared to work as Orange opposition lacked the unity and force of previous years, but within a few days it all went horribly wrong. The unionists made it crystal clear that they all supported sectarian privilege. Trimble threatened resignation and went into hiding. The Orange forces were active in sectarian attacks throughout the North, with the RUC standing well back and the Loyalist paramilitaries carrying out a form of ethnic cleansing. [They were not structurally involved, the RUC reported]

### British support

Yet in the end the British won, after the sectarian murder of the three young Quinn children. They won because the unionists were divided by the agreement. The unionist leadership was not willing to sacrifice the power that the new assembly potentially offered for a program of unrestricted privilege that was in practice unattainable without British support.

Within the British strategy there was also the need to hold unionism up. So there was a constant shifting of responsibility to the nationalist residents, hints to the Orangemen that if they would just speak once to the residents then they could march, assurances that if they gave way this year they could march the next and, when things got rough, panic pressure from the Dublin bourgeoisie and SDLP.

That pressure partially paid off. The parades commission tried to mollify the Orangemen by allowing the most offensive march of them all - through the Ormeau Road and past the site of a sectarian massacre. The residents, with the support of Sinn Fein, agreed to a token protest. Ironically this was originally the proposal of Orangeism – they march and residents protest ineffectively. The fact that it was the state that was sponsoring the sectarian display became invisible.

### Brave new world

The brave new world of the future became clear in the final major demonstration of the marching season at Derry. A "Civic Forum" [an unelected body based

### Votes and seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly

	'96 (%)	'98 (%)	Seats
Official Unionist	24.2	21.3	28
SDLP	21.4	22.0	24
D U P	18.8	18.0	20
Sinn Fein	15.5	17.7	18
UDP[UDA]	2.2	1.0	0
PUP[UVF]	3.5	2.6	2
UK unionists	3.5	4.5	5
Alliance	6.5	6.6	6
Womens Coalition	1.1	1.6	2
Labour	0.9	0.3	0
Independent NO unionists		n/a	3



on proposals by the Women's Coalition] was perfectly suited to mediate. It allowed the sectarians to participate without having to speak directly to the residents and outweighed the republicans with bourgeois representatives and local business people with no interest other than stability. The result – a compromise that met all the demands of the sectarians.

Not that Sinn Fein put up any resistance. They after all had endorsed the strategy of unity with the capitalists and help give it the form of local residents committees which would never be able to launch general mobilisations or introduce any class politics. After many attempts secret diplomacy had its day, and the price was the total and complete demobilisation of resistance and support for all the capitulationist proposals of the other members of the nationalist family.

### New Sinn Fein

Where now? Sinn Fein stand ready to "take their place in government" – a colonial government headed by noted sectarians and organised around a sectarian headcount. They expect to implement a reformist programme. This shift reflects a shift in Sinn Fein's social base, more and more integrated into the booming community and voluntary sector of the economy funded by pacification funds from the British, the EU and the US.

There's a base for reformists, but little for reform. The Northern Irish colony will remain unable to meet the needs of the working class. Sectarianism, the founding impulse of the state, will remain. The Stormont agreement suggests that sectarian privileges will be shared out, but they cannot be shared out equally. The state will need to establish unequal privilege and use the state forces to defend these. The vague promises of an "equality agenda will fade into air.

This is happening already. The promises on recognition for the Irish language and on human rights never made it to the Westminster legislation. Chris Patton, the last governor of Hong Kong, is to head an enquiry into police reform. He has made it clear where he stands by announcing abruptly that submissions will be terminated in mid-September. Reforms already proclaimed include a ban on recruits joining the loyal orders [at a time when recruits will be few and far between as the RUC retrenches]. The union Jack is not to be flown on July 12th when the Orangemen walk – that is they are not openly to join in the sectarian provocation of the loyal

orders. Very little else can be expected.

The biggest illusion of all is the new progressive role assigned to imperialism. The Trimble unionists have yet to meet Sinn Fein and are insisting that they physically surrender weapons before being allowed into government. The unionists are divided internally and face a strong challenge from the right. The loyalist ceasefire becomes more and more illusory, with frequent sectarian attacks. Trimble is trapped in the agreement, but shows little real willingness to operate it, while a powerful coalition crossing the Official unionists, the UK unionists and sections of Paisley's DUP plot against him and talk of a new party of the extreme right. The fragility of unionist support means that the assembly could easily fall to the right. What is not recognised by republicans is that the imperialists and bourgeois nationalists would then accuse themselves of being too hard on the unionists and look for further concessions.

The nationalist "Yes" vote marks a major victory for imperialism, but it also represents a lot of expectations that cannot be met. There are plenty of explosions to come, though these will be held back by the weakness of the political opposition.

Regroupment is made difficult by the totality of the republican collapse. Republican opponents have made no definitive political critique and are themselves unable to break from the concept of the nationalist family. They are unable to explain the collapse of the Republican movement and are mired in a militarist strategy – blind to the fact that it was the defeat of that strategy that lies at the heart of the peace process. All the long-standing Marxist critiques of militarism apply to the new groups in an even stronger form. The amount of force that can apply is not credible as a weapon against imperialism. They have even less of a political analysis and justification than the Provos had. At best they demobilise workers and at worst they damage the cause.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party has just announced that its armed wing, the INLA, is calling a ceasefire. It's clear from the context that there will be a political ceasefire also and they intend to be the "left" of the peace process.

The revolutionary left have fared no better. In theory the Socialist party and Socialist Workers Party oppose the deal, but in practice the former called for a yes vote while the latter claimed that the agreement somehow left the way open for "socialism from below".

Socialist Democracy has characterised the agreement as an imperialist offensive from the first talks between Capitalist representative John Hume and the republican leadership. We are preparing by fighting the battle of ideas and resisting the retreat on policy led by the republican leadership. We are building a network of discussion and activity among political opponents of the deal and aim to be in the forefront when sections of the working class find themselves in conflict with Britain and its

bigoted allies and when they also come into conflict with the leaders of the "Nationalist family" who themselves are part of the oppression. ★

The Socialist Democracy group has recently published *The Real Irish Peace Process*, available for £6.00 from Socialist Democracy, PO Box 40, Belfast BT11 9DL, Northern Ireland

## Socialist Democracy on the Omagh bombing

The members of Socialist Democracy would like to express their sympathy and sorrow to the victims and relatives of the Omagh explosion. There are some harsh realities that must be faced if we are to prevent further tragedies.

The atrocity at Omagh shows the bankruptcy of a republican platform based on militarism. This kind of slaughter is what fatally weakened the movement and led to the political collapse that fuelled the peace process. The "Real IRA" will never have at its disposal the kind to force that would defeat Britain. These sort of tragedies can only make the political process they oppose much stronger.

Militarism has nothing to offer Irish workers. At its best it is simply ineffective while demobilising the self-activity of working people that can bring real change. At its worst it discredits and demoralises the entire opposition.

But these is more to be said about the events at Omagh that sympathy for the victims or criticism of those who carried out the bombing. What it shows is that the peace process will not be enough. Because it does not actually offer a democratic solution it will time and again, as so often before in Irish history, produce desperate acts from those marginalised and left without hope.

Gerry Adams will be called on to do more. His movement will be asked to retreat further and settle for even less than the minor changes on offer. The British and Free state forces will now move to further restrict democratic rights and use all the forces of the state to silence dissent. Those supporting the current settlement will be asked to meet their responsibilities by supporting further police powers.

We call on all socialists and democrats to oppose this. Britain could make a giant step towards peace tomorrow by leaving Ireland. Giving her and her allies more power is not the road to peace and is not in the interests of working people. ★

Contact Socialist Democracy at: PO Box 40, Belfast

# Economic policy undermines political hegemony

In the streets of Greece demonstrators are again facing police forces. This radicalisation is due to an erosion of the neo-liberal hegemony: a dramatic rise in profitability followed by persistent unemployment and threatening poverty means that the bourgeoisie can no longer convince the labouring classes that their economic policy promotes the "general interest". Anticipating the rise of social unrest and agitation, the government is gradually shifting its policy from ideology to violence.

## Elias Ioakimoglou\*

The political hegemony of the bourgeoisie depends on its ability to convince the other social classes that its own particular interest is the interest of the population as a whole: the "people's" interest, the "national" interest, the "general interest". This hegemony is destabilised if, over a period of time, the bourgeoisie's economic policy clearly fails to increase the "general welfare".

In Greece, since 1986, economic policy has abandoned the targets of full employment and sustained economic growth and has concentrated its efforts on monetary targets. During the '90s, increased profitability has been accompanied by persistent and rising unemployment, thus making it more difficult for the ruling class to present the particular interest of the capitalists as the "general interest".

## Left Keynesians in power (1981-85)

From 1981 to 1985, the ruling socialist party (PASOK) successfully argued that social policy and economic growth are two aspects of the same process: the former (reduction of capitalist exploitation, increase in State social spending, the fight against poverty...) is a condition of the latter (economic growth).

PASOK policies during these years gave the labouring classes the opportunity to challenge the bourgeoisie's hegemony. Left Keynesian theory, frequently expressed in a Marxian-like glossary, helped express working class interests.

Since 1986, the bourgeoisie has been imposing the idea that falling wages and rising profits, public deficit reduction and the weakening of the welfare state contribute to the progress of "general interest".

Today, PASOK is a defeated party of

the labouring classes, a party that can no longer challenge the bourgeoisie's hegemony.

## "Social sensitivity" (1986-94)

The radical change in PASOK's economic policy from left Keynesianism to mild monetarism in October 1985 opened a new period in the class struggle. From the beginning of 1986, the balance of power shifted dramatically, at the expense of labour.

PASOK's new economic policy mirrored the policies that dominated in all OECD countries during the 1980s, supplemented by "social sensitivity", meaning some consideration for the social consequences of economic policy.

In this period of "social sensitivity" PASOK kept the support of the most vulnerable classes of the population. "Social sensitivity," combined with Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou's unpredictable character, created in the masses the feeling that a historical surprise, an unexpected "turn to the left" was possible. In other words, PASOK remained the party of the Social-democratic Contract – even if it was a contract in suspension – right up until 1994. This enabled PASOK to accelerate the modernisation of Greek capitalism, while efficiently and effectively managing the resulting social conflicts and problems.

## Deception and Instability (1995-98)

During the last three years, PASOK leaders have tried to convince the labouring classes that the immediate interests of Capital coincide with the general interest. The increase of profitability – by any means necessary – is supposed to be the precondition for general prosperity. And, secondly, the labouring classes should accept voluntarily all the necessary sacrifices. The government of Papandreou's successors has revoked even the last existing element of "social sensitivity" that could allow the maintenance of even a weakened relationship of representation of the labouring classes by PASOK.

In other words, Prime Minister Simitis' government is a weak government: firstly, because it abolishes even the minimum conditions by which the labouring classes could believe that PASOK represents them. Secondly, because it is a PASOK government that undertook the task of convincing the dominated classes that the Capital's specific interest is identified with the general interest (general prosperity in the future). The incredible thing is that a socialist government is doing this at a time when the economic policy is losing its credi-

lity among the citizens! It is losing its credibility because, in Greece, over the last 10 years, profitability has increased, while unemployment has reached unbearable levels. In spite of its success in controlling certain monetary variables, economic policy in Greece has had less than mediocre results in terms of unemployment, productivity, international trade, and investment.

Moreover, the government has adopted a "tough guys" policy. It is intervening directly to further reduce real wages, unit labour costs and the public deficit, to impose flexibility in the labour market and reduce trade union power.

As a result, the conditions for an exacerbation of the contradiction between Labour and Capital are gradually concentrating.

## Abandoning full employment

Economic policy in Greece has abandoned the "traditional" Keynesian hierarchy of targets, accepted by most economists between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the 1980s. The most important targets of this policy were economic growth and full employment. Of course, price stability, the control of the current account deficit, and low public debt were also targets of economic policy. But they had the status of secondary targets, of additional conditions for growth and full employment.

Since 1986, Greek governments have accepted to reverse the hierarchy of economic policy targets. Other European Union countries had already made such a shift. The fall in the unemployment rate is no longer an central economic policy target. Instead, it is a target of relatively autonomous "Employment Policies", inspired by the ideology of Labour Economics. Employment Policies act within the limits defined by economic policy. This relation of subordination is based on the assumption that the stability of prices, the reduction of the public debt and public deficits are the best ways to reduce unemployment in the long term.

This change in the targets of economic policy affects the ideological system of capitalist hegemony. The fact that economic policy in the past declared full employment as a target gave the dominated social classes the possibility to identify their own direct interests among the stated goals of the economic policy makers. Today's economic policy has removed this possibility: not one single interest of the labouring classes is represented in economic policy. As a result it becomes more and more difficult for Capital to present its own interest as the "general interest".

## Increasing profitability does not lead to decreasing unemployment

After years of monetarism in its various forms, we can clearly see that the fall in unit labour costs and the increase in profitability has not led to a significant increase of investment as a percentage of GDP and, therefore, in a decrease of un-

employment. The promises of governments during the years 1986-1997 have not come true.

To understand this, let us look at Greek companies with more than 10 employees. Until the mid-80s, gross fixed capital formation, calculated as a percentage of gross value added, shows fluctuations which follow, approximately, the changes in profitability (measured as the rate of return on fixed capital). But since the mid-80s, the two variables are no longer correlated and investment follows the variations of demand.

The only kind of investment which shows a significant – though mild – increase is investment in machinery. And this affects employment in a contradictory way. On the positive side, it enlarges the capacity of production, but on the negative side it replaces human work with mechanisation.

Economic policy is based on the theory that unemployment will fall as a result of the reduction of labour costs, and an increase in competitiveness, exports, profitability and investment. This theoret-

ical prediction is not confirmed by the facts. Unit labour cost in Greece is low compared to all other EU countries (except Portugal) and the relative decline is continuing. Profits are increasing, as the table shows. But investment is sluggish. In other words, the dramatic increase in profitability based on the reduction of labour costs has not led to an increase in investment or a decrease of the unemployment rate.

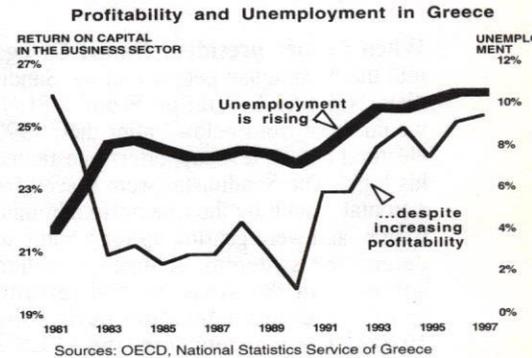
### A revival of struggle

Not surprisingly, the main elements of economic policy no longer inspire the same credibility among the labouring classes. It is increasingly clear to citizens that economic policy has nothing to do with the interests of the labouring classes, and that unemployment will continue to rise in the coming years, despite improving monetary targets and rising profits.

This credibility problem will make it increasingly difficult for the dominant class to present labour market flexibility, lower labour costs, privatisation and cuts in public services as necessary means to

improve the condition of the working people. The government governs against the labouring classes and most people now know it. That is why, in Greece, working people are increasingly taking to the streets in protest, and why they increasingly face the police when they do so. ★

\*The author works at INE, the Research Institute of Greece's general trade union federation GSEE.



## Iceland

### New directions for the left

This summer has seen much upheaval in left politics in Iceland. The mainstream left parties are moving towards closer co-operation and greater moderation, and a new group on the far left is striving to unite those who oppose this rightward slide. **Einar Olafsson** reports.

Surprisingly, perhaps, it is younger members who have been most active in the movement for greater cooperation between the left parties in Iceland, the social democratic People's Party (*Althyduflokurinn*), the socialist People's Alliance (*Althydubandalagid*) and the feminist Women's Party (*Kvennalistinn*).

In the 1994 municipal elections, an alliance of these three parties and the centre-ground Progressive Party (*Framsóknarflokkurinn*) won the majority in the Reykjavik city council. Apart from a four-year period in the seventies, the capital has been dominated for many decades by the right-wing Independence Party (*Sjálfstaedisflokkurinn*), Iceland's biggest political party.

Until 1995, the Independence Party and Social Democrats ran a coalition government. After elections that year, the Independence Party switched partners, forming a new government with the Progressive party.

In the municipal elections in May 1998 the left coalition held the majority in Reykjavik and in many other places there were left or left-centre coalitions, but their success was very variable.

The idea of this movement is a coalition in the parliamentary elections in 1999 with the eventual aim of unification.

Not everybody in the left parties agrees

with this strategy. Many militants would prefer that the parties go to the elections with their own programmes, but make a statement that they would cooperate in a government after the elections.

In 1997 some members (and one Member of Parliament) of the Women's Party (which do not recognise the term "left" and "right" in politics) left the party after it agreed to participate in a left coalition.

There have recently been defections from the People's Party, which approved the coalition at a special congress in July. Two Members of Parliament are among those who have left.

Partly in response to this growing co-operation between the mainstream parties, on an extremely moderate programme, a group of independent leftists came together in May 1998 to form *Stefna* (Direction). The group includes activists and leaders of the organisations of municipal and state workers, teachers and students and former members of Trotskyist and Maoist groups. The organisation's aim is to resist the neoliberal policy of the government and the neoliberalism that is more and more dominating the whole society including the left. *Stefna* hopes to become a broad organisation for left-wing people. The group is opposed to the privatisation and the marketing of the social services and will fight for the protection of the environment and for human rights, justice, equality and social security.

Although it is not directly said in the programme of *Stefna*, the group does not support the coalition policy of the left

parties.

The social democratic People's Party has always been dominated by right-wing currents. In fact, in 1938 and 1956 the left wing has left the party for coalition with the communists and socialists. The second split led to the formation of the People's Alliance. Although it is more radical than the social democrats, the People's Alliance is firmly pro-NATO, and argues that Iceland should join the European Union.

In 1991 the People's Alliance even joined a government coalition with the right-wing Independence Party, and was active in the introduction of neoliberal policies.

There is a growing social democratic tendency within the People's Alliance. The party has been two-faced for a long time, and the left face is more and more in the shadows.

In such a context, the new coalition of left parties and the Women's party is expected to follow the same road as Britain's Labour Party and many other social democratic parties, and move in the direction of economic liberalism.

Members of the new *Stefna* group hope that the current turmoil will eventually clear the lines of political difference on the Icelandic left. Now that the far-left is regrouped outside the coalition, it should find it easier to fight neoliberalism and criticise the social democratic coalition. *Stefna* hopes it will also promote honest cooperation between everyone fighting neoliberalism and fighting for the interests of the working people, the unemployed and other victims of the growing inequality of Icelandic society. ★

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# FSLN re-elects Ortega

Lisa Zimmerman reports from the recent congress of Nicaragua's Sandinistas

When former president Daniel Ortega told the Nicaraguan people that the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) would "rule from below" after their 1990 electoral defeat, few supporters questioned his logic. The Sandinistas were braced for a frontal assault by the Chamorro administration, and were gearing up for a battle to defend the sweeping changes they had achieved in the areas of land reform, health care, and education during the 1980's. The mandate from the FSLN's base seemed clear: to oppose government policies aimed at reconcentrating wealth and property; create an alternative to the neoliberal economic model being imposed by the international financial institutions; and, devise an electoral strategy to win the 1996 national elections.

The complexity of the challenge facing the FSLN became apparent within weeks of their handing over power. Differences of opinion among party leaders - both on questions of strategy and philosophy - about how to fulfil this mandate set the stage for an identity crisis that in large measure remains unresolved today. The debate over whether the party should be working constructively with the government to create stability or defending the interests of the poor majority by organising strikes and protests highlighted the difficulty of reconciling the various roles that the party was expected to play.

The FSLN's second electoral defeat in 1996 by Arnoldo Aleman, former mayor of Managua supported by associates of the Somoza dictatorship as well as the Somoza family itself, has brought this debate to the fore once again.

## Goodbye to "vanguardism"?

Another unforeseen difficulty had to do with readjusting the FSLN's internal structures and work style to the new political reality. While it was generally accepted during the 1970's and 1980's that the FSLN be run in a top-down fashion due to the demands of war, many members saw the 1990 defeat as an opportunity to democratise the party and develop new leadership. Significant changes were implemented during the early part of the 1990's, such as the election of all leadership posts within the party. But a majority of the historic Sandinista leaders found it difficult to let go of the vanguardist tradition.

The FSLN Congress, the highest decision-making body of the party, convened on May 22-23 to elect new leader-

ship and discussed proposed reforms to the party statutes. Faced with growing attrition among the party membership and serious ethical charges against its principal leader, the Congress was initially expected to put in motion a number of changes aimed at continuing the democratisation at the FSLN and rejuvenating its base.

The sharp decline in the population's support for the Aleman government as a result of alleged involvement in drug trafficking scandals, as well as its wholesale capitulation to the unrealistic demands of the International Monetary Fund, has been viewed by many observers as an opportunity for the FSLN to reactivate its membership and reaffirm its legitimacy



among the Nicaraguan people as a viable political option for the 2001 elections.

Discussions about the nature of the changes that would be made in the Congress began over six months ago. A committee was appointed, which, in consultation with both the party leadership and base, developed a document entitled, "A Proposal for the Transformation of the FSLN." The document represented an effort to "modernise" the party's positions on issues such as socialism, foreign investment, private property, and the environment, as well as to reshape party structures to allow for greater representation for the popular sectors and members active at the departmental and municipal levels of the FSLN. A second proposal called for the elimination of the National Directorate, replacing it with a number of secretariats, such as the Secretariat of Electoral Issues and Secretariat of Finances.

The debates prior to the Congress were

relatively limited, making it difficult to determine how much party members supported these proposals, and making it appear that the leadership opposed any sort of significant change. The "transformation document" was discussed at three "mini-Congresses" in the weeks before the Congress, but fewer than 50% of the delegates actually participated.

## Ortega's "family matters" matter

The limited debate was in any case almost completely overshadowed by the allegations of sexual abuse brought against FSLN Secretary General Daniel Ortega by his stepdaughter Zoilamerica Narvaez in early March. In a letter published in the Nicaraguan media, Narvaez accused Ortega of sexually and psychologically abusing for the twenty years, beginning when she was eleven years-old. She has since filed criminal charges of sexual abuse, rape, and sexual harassment against Ortega, who is protected by parliamentary immunity, and unlikely to stand trial for these charges.

This scandal provoked an almost immediate closing of ranks, with both the FSLN leadership and large sectors of the rank and file dismissing the allegations as a political conspiracy to destroy Ortega. Moreover, the party has argued that the case is a "family matter," eliminating the possibility that the charges will be taken up by the FSLN Ethics Commission.

Nevertheless, the scandal has served to highlight many of the obstacles that the FSLN faces: the "cult of personality" that has formed around Ortega; the failure of established mechanisms in the party to deal with charges of ethical failings against its members, and entrenched patriarchal attitudes and values. The editor of the political journal *Envio*, Maria Lopez Vigil, observed that the leadership's response to the allegations demonstrated that the FSLN "was not prepared to face and reflect maturely" about a crisis of this magnitude.

With these weaknesses exposed, many party members - including individuals in the upper echelons of leadership - began to question the wisdom of maintaining the status quo. Several members of the National Directorate, including historic combatants Bayardo Arce and Monica Baltodano, chose not to run for re-election. In explaining her choice to retire from this post, Baltodano is quoted as saying, "I would rather be a dreamer than a killer of dreams." Even with this growing dissatisfaction, few party members felt the time was right to openly oppose or challenge Ortega's continued leadership.

As the date of the Congress neared, expectations that profound changes would result from the meeting dissipated. The party leadership itself admitted that the work of this Congress would be limited to electing the new National Directorate and reforming the by-laws. In other words, it was generally accepted that the Congress would reform – rather than transform – the existing party structure. National Directorate member Victor Hugo Tinoco argued that “the party has already been greatly democratized – all of the leadership positions are elected; what we have to do now is perfect the system.”

### Under-represented groups...

Even with these lowered expectations for the Congress, a number of proposals were put forward aimed at creating space within the structures for traditionally under-represented groups. Women proposed that the minimum quota for female representation in party leadership bodies and on electoral slates be raised from 30 to 40%. The Sandinista Youth submitted a similar proposal calling for the youth quota (for members under 30 years old) to be increased from 15 to 20%. Also proposed was the expansion of the National Directorate from 15 to 20 members, with the intention of incorporating leaders of various popular sectors and the business community into this body. There was a move to increase the percentage of delegates elected to the Congress at the departmental level, as well as a call to guarantee 30 seats in the Sandinista Assembly for representatives of popular organisations.

The Congress itself, while bringing no major surprises in terms of changes made to the party structure, clearly exposed the tensions that have developed between the “old guard” and those sectors who believe that a transformation is crucial to the FSLN’s survival. While the orthodox sector of the party led by Daniel Ortega and Tomas Borge undoubtedly came out ahead in the Congress, their efforts to preserve the status quo were met with more than just nominal resistance.

The tension between these currents was most apparent during the debates that took place over the proposed reforms to the party statutes.

### ...stay under-represented

The proposals to increase the quotas for women and youth were both defeated. Because the youth quota was only defeated by three votes, delegates from the Sandinista Youth demanded a re-vote. Vice-Secretary General Tomas Borge, who presided over the Congress, agreed to this request, albeit somewhat reluctantly. When the delegates voted a second time, the measure was passed by 60 votes. Hoping to duplicate the successful efforts of the youth, a group of women immediately demanded that their proposal (which had been defeated by 68 votes) also be re-considered. Debate on this issue quickly became heated and chaotic. To re-establish

order in the Congress, Borge referred the request to the Electoral Commission. Claiming that party statutes do not allow for re-votes, the commission ruled against the women’s demand and declared the re-vote on the youth initiative null and void.

Those delegates who sought to increase the participation of individuals active at the departmental and local level were more successful in having their initiatives passed. It was decided that the Congress would be expanded from 600 to 717 members, 70% of whom will be elected at the departmental level. The Sandinista Assembly, which is the highest decision-making body of the party between Congresses, was also expanded from 120 to 200 members; 70 of whom will be elected at the departmental level, 30 by various popular organisations, and 25 by the Congress. The remaining 75 members will be comprised of members of the National Directorate, Political Secretaries, a number of FSLN representatives in the National Assembly and Central American Parliament, and other FSLN members with public posts or significant positions within the party. The only leadership body that was not expanded was the National Directorate, which continues to have 15 members.

### The new top...

The results of the elections for National Directorate, and in particular for the positions of Secretary General and Vice-Secretary General, are perhaps the clearest evidence of the orthodox current’s continued dominance within the party. Ortega was re-elected as Secretary General (having run unopposed) with 418 out of 423 votes. Borge was also re-elected to the post of Vice-Secretary General, but only by a slight margin over Victor Hugo Tinoco.

Tinoco’s candidacy was extremely controversial, given that it was a direct effort to dethrone the only surviving founder of the FSLN in order to create space for a new generation of Sandinista leaders.

Although unsuccessful in his attempt to affect change at the highest levels of the party, Tinoco is credited with reaffirming the democratic principle that it is acceptable to challenge historic leaders. This principle was first established in the 1994 Congress when Henry Ruiz ran against Ortega for Secretary General.

The election of the other members of the National Directorate was less controversial, with the exception of the candidacy of Herty Lewites. Lewites formally broke with the FSLN in 1995 to join the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) and unsuccessfully ran for the mayor of Managua in 1996. Having re-joined the FSLN last year, a number of leaders believed that as a member of the National Directorate Lewites could help to re-unify the party and strengthen its relationship with the business community.

In the end, he was not elected, primarily because the by-laws stipulate that candidates for the National Directo-

rate must have been a member of the party for the past five years.

### ...and broader leadership

There was significant turnover in the membership of the National Directorate; only four of the new members were on the previous Directorate (Ortega, Borge, Tinoco, and Rene Nunez). This was due mostly to the fact that the majority of the outgoing members chose not to run for re-election.

Edgardo Garcia of the Farm Workers’ Association (ATC) and Benigna Mendiola of the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG) were the only two members of the National Directorate who ran for re-election and lost.

The remainder of the newly-elected National Directorate is comprised of a mixture of historical figures, such as Father Miguel D’Escoto, Gladys Baez, and Doris Tijerino, and new faces, including Sandinista Youth leaders Vladimir Soto, Maria Ester Solis, and Roberto Calderon. Other National Directorate members include national Assembly deputy and former head of the FSLN Ethics Commission, Reverend Miguel Angel Casco; businessman Manuel Coronel; leader of the health workers’ union, Gustavo Porras; National Assembly deputy from Matagalpa, Martha Heriberta Valle; and representative of the cultural workers’ union, Emilia Torres.

### Business interests

Toward the end of the Congress, another episode of near-chaos occurred during a discussion about FSLN-owned businesses and property. Political Secretary for Managua Emmett Lang submitted a proposal which would bar any FSLN member who holds a public post from managing an FSLN-owned business.

Delegates, including sociologist Orlando Nunez Soto, immediately pointed out that this proposal was based on the assumption that the FSLN did in fact own businesses, and demanded full disclosure of the party’s assets.

The party leadership has consistently denied that the FSLN owns businesses, with the exception of *Radio Sandino* and the now-bankrupt newspaper *Barricada*. At one point during the debate, a delegate, apparently offended by the motion, marched up to the table where the executive council of the Congress was seated and tore the written proposal to pieces. Although the proposal was passed, the leadership gave no indication that a report of FSLN assets was forthcoming.

Despite the tensions that have developed in the party, the Congress voted nearly-unanimously in support of the FSLN’s continued identification as a socialist party, defining socialism as “an attempt to provide all Nicaraguans with a dignified life, access to employment, health care, housing, culture, sports, and in general terms, to establish a just distribution of wealth by taking advantage of the country’s natural resources.” While there

## ★ Nicaragua

is a consensus that the FSLN's ideology should be "modernised to reflect the current reality", there was no explicit call to move the party in a more social democratic direction.

### Transformation or stagnation?

It is still too early to determine whether this Congress was a sign of the ongoing transformation of the FSLN or a sign of its stagnancy. Much depends on the leadership's willingness and ability to create processes and forums for the continued analysis and discussion of the problems facing the FSLN. The party's future also depends on the type of action taken by those sectors dissatisfied with the outcome of the Congress.

It appears unlikely that there will be any significant division in the party, primarily because there are few viable alternatives being articulated. Henry Petrie and William Rodriguez, the two members of the FSLN Managua committee removed from their posts for their open support of Zoilamerica Narvaez, have started the "Initiative for the Resurgence of Sandinismo," a movement to address the FSLN's "ethical crisis" and "lack of strategic vision" from within the party structures. While many Sandinistas may agree in principle with their goals, few are willing to identify with this movement.

### Widespread retreat from party activism

Instead, it is becoming more common for disillusioned members of the FSLN to retire from the formal structures, and to shift their energies into social movements that continue to espouse allegiance to sandinismo. People like human rights activist Vilma Nunez, who challenged Daniel Ortega for the 1996 presidential candidacy to promote the democratisation of the party. She chose not to attend the Congress because she felt that there was no opening for change. In an open letter, she emphasised that, although she will not participate in any leadership body, she will not leave the party and will continue to defend the principles of the FSLN with her work with the poor majority.

Orlando Nunez Soto estimates that 80% of those Nicaraguans who identify themselves as Sandinistas are not currently active within the party. He does not consider this to be a negative phenomenon, but rather a sign of the limitations of modern political parties. Because such a high number of this 80% are involved in promoting social justice as members of civil society, their efforts outside the party complement the goals of the FSLN, while breaking the dependency on the party leadership to develop strategies and initiate change. Ultimately, Nunez predicts, the FSLN leadership will have to transform the party if it is to continue to be a vital part of the progressive movement.

According to Nunez, the gains of the revolution are still alive, even if not always within the FSLN itself. ★

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# Canadian choice

Abortion providers in Canada and Quebec are facing a new threat. Extremist groups are trying to identify and expose abortion providers, which increases the risk of terrorist attacks against them.

### Will Offley

In the last four years there have been three attempts to murder Canadian doctors connected to abortion clinics. No one has been arrested or tried for any of these shootings. The new "identify and expose" strategy of leading anti-choice campaigners in British Columbia is a clear attempt to profit directly from this terror campaign.

The growth of anti-abortion terrorism obscures the depth of the victory won by the women's movement in general and the pro-choice movement in specific in the 1980s and 1990s. True, sometimes it's hard to see that victory, given the dramatic extent to which English Canada's pro-choice movement has demobilised and dwindled since the peaks of activity in the 1980s.

In the neighbouring United States, the situation is much worse. There, choice is under a profound and sustained assault unlike anything taking place in Canada. Across the US, access to legal and safe abortion is being killed by a thousand cuts. Almost every state legislature is a battleground, and every week more and more grim news piles up, of 24-hour waiting periods, of compulsory 'counselling' (complete with colour pictures of foetal development), of laws requiring compulsory parental notification, of funding cuts, of limitations, restrictions, and outright prohibitions. Over the last 12 months, 28 US states have passed laws banning late-term abortions!

Nothing like this is occurring in the Canadian state. This is not to say that access is universal. Enormous barriers still remain, particularly for poor, native and rural women. In Prince Edward Island, it is impossible to get an abortion at all.

Despite this, the dominant picture in the Canadian state is a dramatic contrast to the rollbacks, reversals and defeats occurring state-by-state in the US. And, compared to the US, the Canadian anti-choice movement is in a complete strategic impasse.

### Anti-choice movement is in decline...

In the 1970s and '80s, the "antis" were a significant mass movement, capable of collecting 1,017,000 signatures to recriminalise abortion in 1975, and mobilising 30,000 supporters at the Ontario legislature

in October 1983, and 20,000 on Parliament Hill in September 1988. What a contrast with their 14 May 1998 mobilisation on Parliament Hill, which, despite the provision of special buses from Toronto and Montreal, attracted a crowd of only 700. At least, that was the estimate. One pro-choice witness counted less than 50 "antis."

In Vancouver, typical attendance at aggressive anti-choice pickets has declined from 1,500 during the 1985 visit by Henry Morgentaler to under 30 at the May 1998 convention of the National Abortion Federation. There has been a similar decline in the more mainstream Life Chain mobilisation in Vancouver every October. Leading "antis" admit that participation has steadily dropped from a high of 15,000 in 1991 to 4,000 last year.

The heyday of Operation Rescue's mass blockades of abortion clinics lasted only two years, from 1988 to 1990. Since then the dozens of small blockades have occurred more as an annoyance than a serious threat to access (though no-one should underestimate the genuine distress caused to those women directly affected).

With the defeat of the blockades and a demobilisation of their supporters, the antis intensified their 'sidewalk counselling' programme. This social service was rather unique, involving the involuntary, unasked, unwanted 'counselling' of women by untrained religious fanatics. But this campaign, too, was hard hit by legal measures in Ontario and British Columbia, preventing the antis from targeting or approaching women in the immediate vicinity of the clinics.

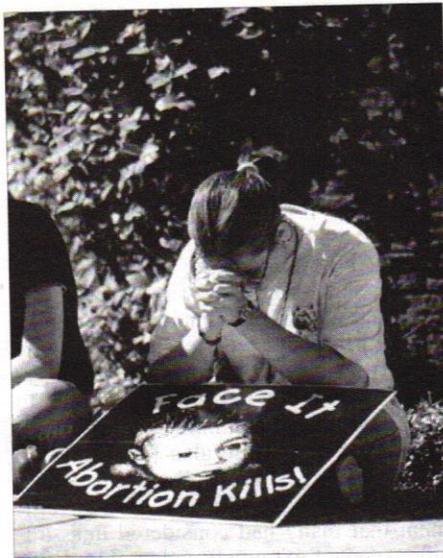
No attempt to remove abortion funding at the provincial level has succeeded. Not even the well-organised campaign in Alberta in 1995, organised by the Committee to End Taxpayer-Funded Abortions. Every provincial government except Prince Edward Island now funds abortion. In most provinces, the decision to fund was the result of a victory by the pro-choice movement over a recalcitrant provincial government.

### ...and the mainstream right is cautious

The durability and the depth of the pro-choice victory of the last 15 years obliges Canada's bourgeois parties to be extremely careful in the way they approach the issue. Just look at the right-wing Reform Party. Its leader Preston Manning is an evangelical Christian, but he's a smart politician, too. Ever since the founding of Reform, he's steered directly away from allowing Reform to come out in opposition to abortion, even where this has meant serious fights with large sectors of his own membership. Manning under-

stands very well the serious political price he would pay if Reform ever directly opposed abortion.

To avoid getting trapped between his anti-choice membership and a pro-choice electorate he now proposes 'a Reform policy to call for a referendum, constituency-by-constituency, whose results would be binding on the individual MP.' Not surprisingly, the leadership of the mainstream "anti" groups generally hate Reform.



In Canada today, choice on abortion is almost uniquely sheltered. Almost every other social policy and human freedom is under heavy attack in the current neo-liberal offensive. Of course, current reverses on abortion rights in the US can't help but spill over the border. In the long run, every freedom is being threatened. But for now, this one victory persists. ★

\* Will Ofley is a researcher who was for many years in charge of security at Everywoman's Health Centre in Vancouver.

## Cashing in on terror

Since February 1998, there has been a campaign of intimidation against abortion providers in British Columbia. Local health care workers have received letters asking them to identify physicians who provide abortions. The campaign shows clearly the moral bankruptcy of the 'pro-life' movement, and especially its leadership – some of whom are determined to cash in on terrorism, and the rest of whom are keeping their mouths shut.

The first letter was mailed to 144 health care workers in February. It asked those receiving it to name any doctors they were aware of who provide abortions. It also asked for the names of physicians who do not perform abortions, but simply refer women to doctors who do! The letter stated that the information would be widely publicised, but that informants would remain anonymous. It was signed by Kelowna Right To Life, an affiliate of the BC Pro-Life Society.

Soon after, a nearly identical letter surfaced in Vancouver. It was signed by prominent local "anti" Sissy von Dehn, supposedly on behalf of a group of 'pro-life nurses'. Von Dehn is actually an accountant for a cleaning contractor and has not practised as a nurse for nearly 30 years. Since then, at least four more letters have been detected, some mailed from Texas in the USA and Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

It now seems that the first two letters were copied word-for-word from originals supplied by a Texas anti-abortion group, Life Dynamics Inc., headed by Mark Crutcher. According to one prominent American "anti," 'one of the places where LDI excels is in developing a sophisticated and innovative intelligence-gathering operation, using a combination of ordinary pro-lifers, infiltrators, covert actions, and state-of-the-art electronic surveillance equipment'. Life Dynamics also

offers the services of 8,000 "spies for Life," "moles who use a variety of methods to collect information about abortion clinics."<sup>1</sup>

Crutcher's methods have included mailing out a bogus 'pro-choice' questionnaire to hundreds of US providers. The supposedly anonymous return envelopes had been coded with ultraviolet-sensitive ink, so that each reply could be matched to the specific doctor who replied.

In one incident in 1995, three of Crutcher's employees were arrested at a clinic in New Jersey. Two presented themselves as a pregnant young woman and her aunt. They were wired with a body-pack video camera, while a third LDI staffer taped the counselling session they were in via radio microphone.

LDI has issued calls for supporters to send it home addresses and phone numbers of providers, photos and vehicle licence plate numbers, leading to serious concerns by providers that LDI is covertly working with the pro-murder wing of the anti-abortion movement. These fears are magnified by the close links LDI appears to have with the American Coalition of Life Activists (ACLA), most of whose leaders have publicly called for the murder of doctors and clinic staff. In May 1995, Crutcher gave a half-day seminar to a national conference of ACLA in Wichita, Kansas.

On November 8, 1994, Dr. Garson Romalis was shot in Vancouver. Since then, two other Canadian physicians have been wounded in similar assassination attempts. No one has been arrested. Psychological terrorism, like these letters, has its greatest impact when there is real terrorism in the air. These letters have to be seen as a conscious and systematic attempt to terrorise BC providers into ceasing to perform abortions. When three doctors have been shot here and when six providers have been murdered in the

US, the threat of publicising one's name, address and picture is not a matter of minor harassment. At least one well-publicised anti-abortion web site in the US compiles this information on the Internet. Presumably some of that data comes from Life Dynamics.

What we are seeing here is a tacit division of labour, where the mainstream anti-abortion groups continue to denounce the shootings, on paper, while adapting their tactics to profit from the fear and terror engendered by the violence.

Significantly, both of the mainstream anti-choice organisations in BC have publicly endorsed the letters, and members of both groups have been those involved in sending them out. What's even more revealing is that none of the mainstream anti-abortion groups have condemned this intimidation. Most notably, the Catholic church has maintained complete silence on the letters, at least one of which was mailed out by a prominent Catholic. This can only be understood as the church's cynical endorsement, through silence, of a defeated movement whose leadership is sinking further and further into ruthless and morally degenerate tactics.

The letters are a clever tactic. They are genuinely intimidating, as intended. They carry a threat, but of an implied rather than explicit nature. This means that the writers will probably continue to escape criminal charges.

This represents a real challenge to the pro-choice community. We need to put the silent supporters of this campaign on the spot. Everywhere. At every opportunity. Either they condemn this campaign of intimidation, or shoulder the responsibility for it. [WO] ★

1. Paul DeParrie, 'The New Bad Kid On The Block', *Life Advocate*, December 1994)

# General strike

After forty days on strike, several one-day stoppages in various government agencies and a two-day general strike, Puerto Rico's telephone workers have returned to work without attaining their objective: forcing the government to break its agreement to sell the state-owned Puerto Rico Telephone Company (PRTC) to a group of investors led by the US giant GTE.

## Rafael Bernabe

The strike of the two telephone unions began on June 18. From the first moment it was evident that the government was intent on breaking it through a brutal show of force. In the early hours of the strike, workers clashed with riot police in at least three locations, including the main offices of the PRTC. Skirmishes and major confrontations between strikers and their supporters continued daily and climaxed on the morning of June 22, when police and protesters clashed in two separate PRTC installations. The government then obtained an injunction which prohibited picketing within fifty feet (18 metres) of the gates of PRTC buildings. This court order soon became a dead letter, given the size of the pickets mustered as soon as the Police made any attempt to enforce it.

## The people's strike

The strike enjoyed massive support. The struggle against privatisation had already led to a one-day general strike last October, and to dozens of mobilisations since. The campaign against privatisation has been coordinated by CAOS, a broad coalition of labour, student, environmental, community, cultural, political and religious groups. Annie Cruz, President of one of the telephone trade unions HIETEL, was the coordinator of CAOS as the strike began.

From the very first moment CAOS insisted on calling the strike *la Huelga del Pueblo* (the Strike of the People), to underline the fact that all working people had a stake and a role to play in it. Indeed, every day and every evening thousands drove past or joined the picket lines, contributed money and food to the strikers, while heeding the call of displaying the Puerto Rican flag in their cars as a sign of support for the strike. By the time the strike entered its second week the slogan *Huelga del pueblo* had become an accurate description of the feeling on the street. Students were particularly visible

among those supporting the strike. The government soon discovered that it was not faced with a traditional labour dispute, but with a protest which enjoyed wide support far beyond the ranks of organised labour. Governor Rossello's attempts to ignore the situation, minimising the size of the movement, while also justifying the brutal actions of the Police, only added fuel to the fire. All of a sudden, a government that many had considered unassailable, seemed extremely vulnerable. Even well-known supporters of the ruling party began to criticise its handling of the strike.

The ability of the phone workers to generate a struggle with such a wide resonance reflects the fact that the struggle against privatisation in Puerto Rico is impossible to separate from the issue of the control of the island's economy by US multinationals. This goes to the heart of Puerto Rico's colonial relationship with the US.

The struggle against the privatisation of the PRTC has thus become a condenser of a much wider movement of national affirmation.

## Targeting the left

On the third day of the strike, the Police Superintendent began to single out several union leaders and students as "outside agitators". This was the opening shot of an intense campaign, including newspaper and television adverts, accusing subversive "agitators" of provoking violent situations in order to "discredit" the government. Government officials insisted that the strike had been "hijacked" by left-wingers. Those accused included leaders of the radical left regroupment Frente Socialista, including labour lawyer Jorge Farinacci, and the author of this article. The House of Representatives even approved a resolution denouncing the "agitators."

## Union solidarity

During the second week of the strike several unions carried out actions in solidarity with the phone workers. The electrical workers' union declared a three day strike, while the water resources and the government insurance workers went out for one day. A contingent of workers from several unions (phone, dock workers, water resources, Teamsters) blocked and paralysed the main areas of the port of San Juan.

Meanwhile, sabotage activities significantly affected the phone system, above all in the interior of the island. All of this was part of what the Concilio General de



Trabajadores (CGT) —one of the three labour federations in Puerto Rico— calls "the state of strike" ("*estado huelgario*"), which means not a strike, but a situation in which all unions are on alert to take action whenever necessary. Actions may include anything from pickets, marches, caravans, selective and alternating strikes in different sectors with a general strike.

## The general strike

The first stage of the strike concluded on a high note: an CAOS assembly on the 28th of June attended by 1,200 delegates. The assembly issued a call for two day general strike.

The general strike (on July 7 and 8) was a huge, exhilarating success. The degree of activism, the size of the mobilisations, the palpable fighting spirit of hundreds of demonstrators on the street, the repeated battles with the Police in the period leading to the general strike was such that the Banco Popular and the main shopping malls decided to close during those two days. Hundreds of offices and shops also closed.

Previous general strikes (28 March 1990; 1 October 1997) have been basically limited to the public sector. This time a significant portion of the island's private economy (above all trade) was paralysed. And while previous mobilisations had been concentrated in the capital, San Juan,

this time there were mass activities and concentrations all over the island. It was a truly national movement which left no town unaffected. The general strike included daring and spectacular actions, such as the blockade for several hours of all the roads leading to the San Juan International Airport, and a similar blockade of the Condado tourist area.

### The morning after

And yet, the morning after the general strike, the leadership of the two telephone workers' unions, UIET and HIETEL, announced their willingness to negotiate a rapid return to work.

All of a sudden the movement seemed to be adrift. The leaders offered no perspectives. Where was the movement going? Had the general strike been a last desperate action? What were the leaders of UIET and HIETEL seeking to negotiate? Nobody knew. Participation in the picket lines dropped visibly. What had happened? Why was a movement, which only a few days before had led a massive general strike, apparently on the verge of surrender?

As the days went by, union leaders spoke exclusively about the conditions of a possible return to work. Was the battle over? As many sectors began to question the path being followed by the leaders of the PRTC unions, Annie Cruz resigned as coordinator of CAOS. All of a sudden the press was feverishly discussing the divisions, not within the government, but within CAOS.

Three weeks later, the negotiations concluded. The assembly of UIET to ratify the agreement between the government and the unions regarding the return to work ended in a major fist-fight after the leading group, led by union President Jose Juan Hernandez, imposed the accords without even permitting an open debate.

The fact is that none of these problems are of recent origin. The divisions that became visible after the general strike and which have led to the present situation are the product of tensions and differences within the labour movement, which have been part of this process from the very beginning.

### Chaos within CAOS

The CAOS was not born without a struggle. A year ago, after the Governor announced his plans to privatise the PRTC, a sharp debate erupted within the labour movement. A portion of the labour leadership, headed by Federico Torres, President of the Central Puertorriquena de Trabajadores (CPT), argued that the movement against privatisation should be led by the COS, an umbrella committee of Puerto Rico's three labour federations.

This was opposed by many who in the past had negative experiences regarding the COS's ability to function democratically and to lead sustained mobilisations. Those sectors favoured the creation of a new, broader organism, led by the phone workers and open to social and political organisations and not only trade

unions.

After a fierce debate in a general assembly on August 3, 1997, this second perspective prevailed and the CAOS was born. Its first coordinator was Alfonso Benitez, who was then President of UIET. Those who saw the creation of CAOS as an attack on their leadership role have made a priority of destroying the new movement, and reviving the COS structure.

### Militants lose union election

Their chance came during UIET's internal elections last spring. The CPT's old guard backed Jose Juan Hernandez against Benitez. The government also had an interest in removing Benitez. The Benitez group underestimated the opposition. As a result only a third (around 2000) of the union members voted. Hernandez won by less than 200 votes. The UIET and CAOS lost their main and most militant leader, while the UIET acquired a president whose commitment to the struggle against privatisation was, at best, uncertain. In particular, Hernandez was close to those who had opposed the creation of CAOS.

As soon as the preliminary agreement with GTE was made public, a sharp struggle erupted within the UIET and the CAOS, between those who favoured a militant response leading to a possible strike, and those who pushed for a disorienting wait-and-see attitude. Others, such as Jose Rodriguez president of the UNTS (Puerto Rico affiliate of the US trade union SEIU) repeatedly stated that "there were no conditions" for a general strike or for major mobilisations. While nobody openly came out against the strike, it was evident that a portion of the labour leadership was doing everything possible to demoralise, disorient and dishearten the rank-file, thus making a successful strike impossible.

It was the pressure of the delegates of the UIET that eventually forced Hernandez to go on strike. But, since June 18, his actions have all been directed at disarming the workers. His team did not even attempt to lead. Certainly, no mobilising directives ever came from him or his lieutenants. On the first day of the strike there was not even a plan to organise the picket lines at the main offices of the PRTC. No strike propaganda or literature was ever prepared. Most of this was provided by other unions.

The Hernandez group (and the government) hoped that without any direction the strike would collapse in a few days. When it did not (due to the presence of militant phone workers, as well as members and leaders of other unions, who took things into their own hands) Hernandez disappeared for several days. Annie Cruz became the only visible leader of the strike. We could compose a long catalogue of the many decisions taken by Hernandez and —as the strike progressed— by Cruz herself, and by other labour leaders close to them, that systematically undermined the strike.

This situation came to a head after the two day general strike. As the mobilisations reached their highest point, Cruz and Hernandez insisted that the strikers were willing to return to work if certain conditions were granted. Thus, they succeeded in turning a strike against privatisation into a strike about the conditions of a possible return to work.

At this point, part of the militant wing of both CAOS and the UIET argued that if a return to work was necessary, it was better to go back immediately, without any negotiations and with the militant spirit of the general strike still fresh. If the government declared a lockout it could only increase the already widespread support for the workers. Instead, the leadership of both unions dragged itself into a long negotiation with the government, while the thinning of the picket lines (which they had promoted) left them with little or no bargaining strength. The result was a rotten agreement, which at least officially ties the hands of both unions and their members for at least six months (during which the privatisation of the PRTC may be finalised). The CPT is even threatening to pull out from CAOS.

### The future

The most remarkable thing about these events is the fact that, in spite of everything —ranging from police brutality to the obstacles created by union leaders—the struggle against the privatisation of the PRTC managed to last this long, and to generate the widest social mobilisation in Puerto Rico since the 1930's. As a result, the labour movement is almost surely on the verge of a major realignment, which may open opportunities for the more progressive and militant sectors within it.

Moreover, the strike has demonstrated that there is a considerable sector of Puerto Rican society that is willing to join militant struggles, precisely to the extent that they provide a real living alternative to the "politics as usual" of the three traditional electoral parties.

In fact, on the very first day of work after the strike it became evident that the struggle is not over: five minutes after the first shift started hundreds of workers and their supporters were again on the streets, protesting repressive measures taken by management. These protests were immediately opposed by union officials. That, however, did not prevent the workers from insisting on their demands.

The opposition to Hernandez is now out in the open within the UIET. A caucus has been formed to oppose his policies. Will the rank and file be able to free itself of those who so dismally failed and betrayed them? Will the CAOS be able to survive the attempts to undermine it? Will the socialist left be able to consolidate itself on the basis of its growing visibility and prestige among a whole layer of workers and students? These are some of the questions which must now be answered, not through idle speculation but in practice. ★

# Teamsters: reversal of fortunes

The future of reform in the largest US private sector union, is in peril, writes **Alan Jacobson**. A variety of court decisions arising out of the 1996 election of union officers has shattered the reform administration of Ron Carey. His opponent, James P. Hoffa, is now likely to take control of the 1.4 million member union.

**Allegations of misconduct** in the December 1996 vote began to appear around the time Carey's second term began, in March 1997. The margin of victory over Hoffa was thin, around 16,000 out of 480,000 votes cast. Five vice-presidents on Hoffa's slate won, with the remainder of the General Executive Board was made up of Carey supporters. As is typical in a large and controversial election, many protests were filed by both sides regarding violations of election rules, including strict rules concerning financing of the campaigns.

Under the election rules, use of union resources and contributions from employers were barred. A post-election protest by the Hoffa camp against some late Carey fund-raising uncovered a multi-layered scheme on the part of four individuals to illegally finance Carey's re-election campaign.

Three of the individuals, including Carey's campaign manager, were outside political consultants, the fourth was director of the union's political action department. All had ties to the Democratic Party apparatus in Washington, DC. Ultimately, the three outside consultants were charged with initiating a scheme to donate \$800,000 of union political action money to liberal advocacy groups, with the understanding that these groups would then provide wealthy donors to contribute huge sums of money to the Carey campaign.

In addition, the consultants took advantage of the loose money to skim tens of thousands of dollars into their own pockets. According to government investigators, this arrangement was facilitated by the political action director.

Carey vehemently denied any knowledge of the scheme, stating that if he had, he would have immediately taken action to stop such activity. Nevertheless, the court-appointed election monitor, established by the 1989 agreement between the union and the Justice Department to end organised crime's control of the union, ruled that the serious infractions of the rules and the closeness of the end vote required the election be nullified and rerun.

A big question was whether or not Carey would be permitted to run. In addition, a federal grand jury indicted the three outside political consultants (who, in a plea-bargain plead guilty to charges of mail fraud and conspiracy) and threatened additional indictments. Over the summer of 1997, new information unfolded virtually every week. Just days after the successful conclusion of the UPS strike, the Election Officer announced a thorough investigation into Carey's knowledge or lack of, as well as the gory details of, the money laundering process, would commence.

## Good news for the old guard...

In November 1997, the results of the election officials' investigation were announced Carey would be barred from the rerun election. Carey appealed the ruling, which was upheld. His last resource is to the federal courts, a process that could take years. Carey stepped down as general president, leaving the union's secretary-treasurer, Tom Sever in charge.

Hoffa was not immune from charges of election misconduct. A thorough investigation of his finances was ordered at the same time as Carey's barring. The results of that investigation, released in May, 1998, found that the Hoffa slate had benefited from an underpayment scheme by one of Hoffa's closest advisors, long-time right-wing public relations henchman Richard Leebove. Leebove undercharged for many hours of work on the Hoffa campaign, making up the money from work for pro-Hoffa union locals.

Hoffa was ordered to pay over \$160,000 in fines for his campaign's violations. Several other lesser violations were listed, as well. However, the investigation did not find enough evidence to prove the Carey campaign assertion that over a

million dollars of Hoffa funds came from questionable sources.

With Carey sidelined and the reform movement on the defensive, both Hoffa and the employers felt that they had the upper hand. Hoffa began pressuring local officials loyal to Carey to switch sides and support Hoffa's campaign. At the same time, Hoffa took advantage of his celebrity status to proclaim himself in the press as the "only winnable candidate."

## ...and for the employers

During this period, negotiations with the nation's major motor freight companies occurred. Many people expected a reprise of the innovative member-to-member contract campaign like was used with UPS members. Instead, due to the chaotic situation in the union, tremendous pressure on the part of freight customers against both the companies and the union, and a very different workforce, the campaign around freight much more resembled negotiations as they were done in the past, with little membership participation.

Politically, local officers loyal to Hoffa exerted a lot of influence on the union negotiating committee. The final agreement, while not concessionary, was disappointing to many who hoped that the UPS agreement had signalled a period of union strength.

The Carey reform camp was left seriously damaged by these reversals. The many delays in election plans and the lack of clarity as to Carey's presence as a candidate gave Hoffa an open field in which to campaign and raise money. Many activists long entertained hope that Carey would be cleared at some point and would regain a leadership role. Potential candidates to replace Carey were hesitant to step forward until Carey's status was crystal clear, which prevented building organisation and gathering resources.

## Rebuilding the reform movement

Initially, forces led by Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the twenty-two-year-old reform movement, supported Tom Leedham, the director of the union's 400,000-member warehousing division. However, more conservative forces in the Carey camp, along with Carey, preferred Ken Hall, director of the Small Parcel division and key leader of the UPS negotiations. TDU ended up endorsing Hall in the interest of maintaining the highest degree of unity possible.

Soon after announcing his candidacy, Hall withdrew from the race, due to health problems. Also, the difficulty in launching a campaign and winning support from local union officials, played a role in his

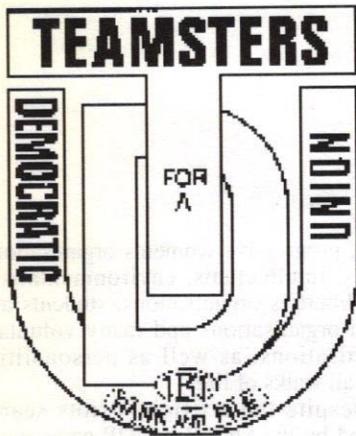
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## Lean Production: A Capitalist Utopia?

Tony Smith

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decision. Leedham again stepped forward as a candidate with TDU support. Unfortunately, the more conservative element in the reform camp would not support Leedham. They saw him as too tied to TDU, and likely to push for a platform more radical than they would accept.

Despite a great deal of effort to build unity, a second candidate emerged from the Carey camp: John Metz, director of the union's 160,000-member public sector employees' division. His slate includes the current General Secretary-Treasurer, Tom Sever. The Metz/Sever slate has not expressed a clear perspective and doesn't represent much more than a wavering centre group between reform and the reactionary Hoffa group.

United Parcel Service, the largest Teamster employer, has taken advantage of the union's weakened state. The corporation announced that they would not honour the new contracts provisions to create new full-time jobs, claiming that the strike cost long-time customers and resulted in loss of volume. A campaign on the grassroots level to force UPS to honour the contract was launched, along with threatened legal recourse on the part of the union. Local-level strikes may occur to force the company to respect the agreement.

Grassroots activity around the Leedham campaign has taken off well. While the gap between Hoffa and Leedham is immense, TDU leaders hope that the forceful, clear reform message of the Leedham campaign will attract a lot of excitement at the rank and file level.

Leedham's slate is a mix of incumbent officials from the Carey slate, including a number of the union's divisional directors, and a new group of rank and file candidates. In many ways this campaign will more resemble Carey's 1991 effort. Back then, very few people thought that Carey could prevail over well-funded, deeply entrenched officials.

The election may face further delays. A number of right-wing Republican Representatives in Congress have targeted the Teamsters situation as a way to attack the labour movement. The Republican leadership has refused to provide the funding to finance the election supervision as mandated by the 1989 "Consent Decree".

Efforts to force the union to pay for the supervision have been rejected by higher courts. With the impasse still not resolved, most people foresee that the election will proceed without the strict government supervision that has safeguarded membership participation in the past two elections.

### A hard race for Leedham

Out among the members in the thousands of job sites around the country, the response in campaigning has been heartening for Leedham. Reform campaigners have found a significant undercurrent of anti-Hoffa sentiment. Many members are not seduced by Hoffa's vague program and his relentless reference to his father's supposed positive contributions to the union. The reform slate is strong on campaign spirit, and many campaign leaders are

experienced organisers. The campaign message is oriented towards the rank and file, with key points around building membership participation and holding union officials accountable to the members.

With the many factors involved in this complex situation, members are justifiably confused and disaffected. Leedham supporters have a short period to reach out to the members. At stake is the continuation of the most significant experiment in union democracy in U.S. labour history. A Hoffa administration would mean a turn to the right, politically and socially, back to the old Teamster policies of isolation and reaction within North American labour. These events would effect the changes at the AFL-CIO, possibly derailing the Sweeney administration and opening the door to a turn to the right there too. ★

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# India's Hiroshima Day

Protests across India on Hiroshima Day (6 August) revealed the growing strength of the new anti-nuclear movement.

**Over 400 000 people marched** in Calcutta, West Bengal on Hiroshima Day, August 6th. It was the largest anti-nuclear demonstration in recent history. The March was supported by 66 mass organisations and convened by the "6th August Committee" set up in July to co-ordinate actions and coalitions in reaction to Indian nuclear tests, and the nuclear arms race with neighbouring Pakistan.

Like the huge European peace marches of the 1980s, the procession showed the tremendous variety and inventiveness of the peace movement. Roadside displays by scientific groups explained the all-pervasive pollution that affects humanity even when comparatively 'smaller' nuclear devices are exploded, whether above the ground, below the ground, or under water. Carcinogenic disease proliferates, babies are born with deformities. Genetic structures undergo horrible mutations. Vegetation and crops continue to die long after nuclear 'experiments' are terminated. The atmospheric conditions develop unpredictable changes with natural disasters rapidly increasing.

The procession also included bands of 'tribal' (*adivasi*) people from most of the twelve districts of south Bengal. In their own, unique manner, their song-and-dance ensembles voiced their protest against all kinds of nuclear 'experiments' that would ultimately harm the green earth and the people who inhabit it. Songs, dances, mimed-plays, street-theatre, recitations and on-the-spot paintings marked the progress of the marchers.

Just before the March, a Convention was held in the packed-to-capacity Netaji Indoor Stadium. The Convention was addressed, among others, by the writer Sunil Gangopadhyay, the poet Sankho Ghosh and film director Mrinal Sen.

The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not able to attend the Calcutta rally but they sent their best wishes for the success of the programme to the mayor of Calcutta.

There were smaller protests across India, including significantly large demonstrations in Tripura, Lucknow, Patna and Thiruvananthapuram.

In Chennai, Tamil Nadu a Committee Against Nuclear Weapons, consisting of many mass organisations including trade unions and organisations of students, women and youth, had been formed recently to observe Hiroshima Day and

building on a highly successful Convention Against Nuclear Weapons on July 26, attended by over 2 000 people. On Hiroshima Day they organised a three-kilometre human chain between the city's bus and rail stations. The composition of the crowd was as interesting as its size was impressive. There were at least two to three hundred children, a sizeable contingent of women and a not insignificant number of senior citizens including some who could vividly remember the Hiroshima and Nagasaki horrors. Among the more famous participants were trade union leaders, academics, and personalities from the independence struggle.

In Mumbai (Bombay) over 2,000 demonstrators took part in the Silent Procession, organised by a broad "Citizens Committee for Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki". This committee brings together 50 organisations including the Left parties, Left trade unions, Gand-

hians, progressive women's organisations, artists, intellectuals, environmentalists, civil liberties organisations, students and youth organisations and many voluntary organisations, as well as personalities from all walks of life.

Despite the artificial "riots scare" created by the Shiv Sena-BJP government in the context of the publication of the Srikrishna Commission Report [into the communal riots in 1992-93 in Bombay] on the same day, there was a big turn out. As in other cities, a significant number of participants were children. One carried a placard "I want to Grow Up - Not Blow Up."

Though the procession was silent, the demonstrators carried placards and banners with slogans for peace, disarmament and development protesting the arms race and criticising the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government for its nuclear war-mongering on the one hand and abject surrender to US imperialism on the other

## Imperialism, revolution and nuclear threats: lessons from Korea, Cuba and Vietnam

By Kunal Chattopadhyay

The nuclear weapons testing in Pokhran fulfilled part of the agenda of the RSS, a Hindu fascist party which is now the dominant partner in India's coalition government. RSS deputy-leader M.S. Golwalkar explicitly calls for a militarily powerful India, capable of exercising hegemony over much of South and South-East Asia. Prime Minister Vajpayee has reiterated the need for nuclear weapons as a strategic element in India's foreign policy.

Weaponisation is the outcome of long years of efforts by all Indian governments. How, then, to understand the hypocrisy or naiveté of those on the left who justified India's refusal to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a form of resistance to US imperialism. Even after the latest tests, N. Ram, editor of Frontline, and close to the CPI(M) in many of his positions, has taken such a position. Indeed, his position seems to be that the main issue now is to ensure that hawkishness does not give way to compromise with U.S. imperialism.

This is low-grade sophistry. One cannot separate the government of India's refusal to sign the CTBT from its ongoing nuclear programme. The main reason for not signing the CTBT was because India intended to make nuclear weapons. In the long years of planning India's nuclear

debut, leading left politicians must have seen the top-level files describing the programme. None reacted by calling for, or forcing a public debate. Despite knowledge of India's nuclear plans, they publicly opposed signing the CTBT, while pretending to occupy the high moral ground of non-testing, of "peaceful use of nuclear energy", and all the assorted garbage.

This has to be reiterated sharply, and again and again, in order to differentiate genuine anti-imperialism from the variety put forward today, not only by would-be patriotic leftists, but even by the RSS mouthpiece Organiser.

But that does not mean that US criticism of India's actions should be given the least credence. In fact, it is necessary to remind people today, not only that the only cases of actual use of the atom bomb in war was undertaken by the USA, but also that the USA has several times come close to using the bomb.

Writers on international conflicts, as well as major peace and anti-nuclear movements, often assumed that the major threat of nuclear weapons existed against Europe. This bias stemmed from the cheek-by-jowl existence of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the supposedly offensive character of superpower military deployments on European soil, and the

by acceding to the Convention To Ban Nuclear Testing.

Meanwhile in the Indian capital, New Delhi, thousands of people including large numbers of schoolchildren shouted slogans and carried placards proclaiming "We Want Bread Not Bombs", "No More Pokhrans, No More Hiroshimas, No More Nagasakis" and "No Weaponisation, No Deployment."

Among those participating in the March were leaders of the Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist), actor Raj Babbar and Janata Dal leader Surendra Mohan. The Booker prize winning novelist Arundhati Roy was also present. Her passionate and moving essay "The End of Imagination" condemning the nuclearisation of the sub-continent has been syndicated in newspapers around the world to mark Hiroshima Day. Roy had previously read from it at the Chennai Convention on July 26th.

The March ended at the Ferozeshah Kotla grounds where a resolution was read in Hindi and English by veteran Gandhian Nirmala Deshpande and historian Romila Thapar. The resolution noted that the tests carried out in May 1998 and the consequent provocative rhetoric of the BJP leaders "have only heightened tensions in the region, worsened relations with our

neighbours and undermined popular initiatives aimed at forging peace among the people of the region... India must return to a path of peace and disarmament. India, which always called for nuclear disarmament and did not wish to be a party to a discriminatory global nuclear regime, is now seen to be only demanding to join the Nuclear Weapons Club."

Calling the West's imposition of sanctions against India and Pakistan "hypocritical", the resolution said "if they are serious about non-proliferation, they must pursue a credible programme for destruction of nuclear weapons globally, starting with their own." ★

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fact that the major stockpile existed in Europe. As for the likely causes of such a nuclear war, a whole series of factors were advanced.

But the post-Hiroshima history of the near use of nuclear weapons shows a different picture. This is not meant to belittle those Europeans who mobilised in first thousands, then millions, in response to the threat of nuclear confrontation in Europe. But actually, Asia and Latin America appear as the most threatened areas. Practically every US nuclear threat from the 1950s to the 1970s was related to US opposition to forces of national liberation or social revolution. In other words, nuclear weapons have a clear class bias - for capitalism and imperialism, against the toilers, against the struggles for national liberation.

In attempting to establish, sustain or regain global hegemony, US imperialism made nuclear weapons a key element of its militaristic diplomacy. This was a bipartisan (Republican and Democrat) matter, stretching from Truman to Nixon. Nor should the racist dimensions of this imperialist nuclear policy be overlooked. Korea, Vietnam and Cuba, the three best-known cases, where the US went to the brink of unleashing its nuclear thunderbolts, were all occupied by allegedly racially inferior people.

In all three cases, imperialism was engaged in a high-intensity conflict with revolutionaries in underdeveloped countries, where the revolutionaries were expected to defeat the imperialists, as long as only conventional weapons were being used.

Before the full-scale US occupation of

Korea in September 1945, a revolutionary situation had developed. Bruce Cummings, in his study of the origins of the Korean War, traces how this movement had developed independent of any external intervention. Korea had a long history of communist activity. Local militancy had reason as a result of World War II and its end. Had there been no interference by any outside power, a revolution of sorts would have been inevitable. But the USA had already decided its post-war priorities, and it had assigned a key role to Korea. Hence a client state was set up in the south, under Syngman Rhee. When the revolutionaries overwhelmed the Rhee regime, the US, using the UN as a fig leaf, intervened.

Chinese counter-intervention evened the odds, and the US was again on the defensive. First the Pentagon, then the White House, seriously began considering the deployment of nuclear weapons. In September-October 1951, the US army, with the knowledge and approval of the White House, carried out simulated atomic strikes in Korea in support of US forces. Truman in 1952, and Eisenhower in 1953, planned the use of atomic weapons. General Mark Clark was at one stage instructed to end truce talks if certain US

arguments were not accepted, and carry out the war "in new ways". Dulles told Nehru around the same time that "unless the logjam is broken it will lead to the use of nuclear weapons". Missiles with atomic warheads were placed in Okinawa, threatening China. Rosemary Foot has shown that Truman and Eisenhower alike thought about using the nuclear weapons against China. Clearly, in this case, Moscow and Warsaw, to say nothing of Paris and London were not under the shadow of the mushroom cloud.

Truman and Eisenhower both said that in Korea and Vietnam, where the French were fighting to regain their colony, "the enemy wore a single face". In Indo-China, the situation was a little different, with the Communist party and the imperialists separately, but in effect not much different from jointly, acting to crush the Trotskyists and their radical nationalist allies. But as the French later tried to regain full power, and as the Cold War developed, the Vietnamese Communist Party did lead the war of national liberation. As the fall of the French power became a certainty, days before Dien Bien Phu fell, the USA seriously considered the use of nuclear weapons. Eisenhower was willing to loan a few bombs to the French.

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**Do the workers have a country?**

by José Iriarte "Bikila"

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Proof, if anyone needed any, of the US attitude to non-proliferation, and the degree of safety involved in US custody of nuclear weapons.

The clearest instance of US policy and the nuclear threat was the so-called Cuban missile crisis. In 1959-62, there was a revolution against the oppressive US-backed dictator Batista. The initial measures to control capitalist property culminated in a telescoping of national-democratic and socialist stages of the revolution. This deepening of the revolution deepened US hostility as well.

Imperialism failed at traditional forms of intervention. There were no significant local forces to act as imperialist stooges. The 1961 invasion by a US organised military force was resoundingly beaten back. Cuba's revolutionary regime had an obvious appeal across Latin America. Getting rid of it was deemed essential. The placing of Soviet missiles in Cuba was a misplaced action, taken moreover without the full awareness of the Cubans. But US reaction showed its willingness to grasp any straw to mount an all out attack. On October 16, 1962, at the meeting of the executive committee of the National Security Council, John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Robert McNamara, and others were prepared to go in for a general attack. Nuclear war did not break out, because Moscow was willing to trade its Cuban base against closure of US missile bases in Turkey, and because of the Cuban leadership's flexible response to the crisis.

The nuclear option was again considered by US leaders when American troops found themselves losing ground in Vietnam, despite a massive deployment of forces. In 1969 alone, the US had dropped 75,000 tons of non-nuclear bombs in Vietnam. When this was found to be useless as far as US strategic objectives were concerned, Kissinger and Nixon opened discussions on the nuclear option. At least once, between late 1970, and early 1971, a stand-down order was issued, indicating preparations for a nuclear attack.

This history must be borne in mind by those in India or Pakistan who advocate the retention of nuclear weapons, or of the option to weaponise, in the name of national security.

Vietnam and North Korea beat back the USA without nuclear weapons. Cuba has withstood the US for 35 years since the nuclear missiles crisis, and without a nuclear umbrella. The option to weaponise is not a deterrence option, but an option to bring wars nearer.

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# Inside Israel's peace bloc

Interview with Adam Keller of the *Gush Shalom* peace movement

**International Viewpoint: When was *Gush Shalom* (the Peace Bloc) formed and what organisations does it regroup?**

**Adam Keller:** It was founded in December 1992, after the deportation of 450 Palestinian Islamic activists to Lebanon. A few months later, the Rabin Labour government took power. At the time, it was a big disappointment. For the first six months of his term in office, Rabin did very little to advance the peace process, but instead was quite aggressive...

We felt that many of the peace movements in Israel — especially Peace Now — were too closely tied to the Labour Party. They were too inhibited about confronting the Labour Party... We felt the need for a group which would be independent from political parties, and which would be willing to support or oppose the government on the merits of what it was actually doing.

*Gush Shalom* was originally called the Jewish-Arab Committee Against Deportations. It was quite a broad coalition which included some elements which did not stay with us.

In the beginning we had the active participation of the Islamic movement [among Israel's Arab citizens]. We did not always agree with them, but at least we worked out a kind of *modus vivendi* which helped us to understand better those who are sometimes called Muslim fundamentalists. In fact, we became very doubtful about using the term "fundamentalists" which is now used as a catch-all term, as was the word "Communist" during the Cold War...

**• Did you discuss with them the question of terrorism, of armed actions aimed against civilian targets?**

Yes, of course. Firstly, we have to remember that this is the Islamic movement in Israel, whose members are Israeli citizens. On the one hand they certainly have officially declared fraternal relations with the Hamas, Hezbollah and the other Islamic movements in the Arab world. On the other hand, particularly through municipalities where they have been elected to power, they have an official working relationship with the Israeli government.

When the question comes up, they always say that they are against killing civilians, but that they have the right to take up arms when Islamic people are oppressed. When you talk to them about Hamas or the Algerian Islamic movement for example, they say that they do not agree with what those groups are doing, but that they understand that they have been

pushed into this situation by circumstances, occupation, oppression, etc...

**• But aside from the fact that they try to resist the oppression to which they are victims as Palestinians, aren't they reactionary, right-wing, obscurantist, religious?**

I don't think that is the case for all of them. When discussing the situation of women, for instance, we discovered that there were a wide range of opinions among them. It seems that Islamic law concerning the status of the women in society is subject to quite a lot of interpretation...

Actually, we found a lot of similarities between our discussions with them and with Jewish rabbis (priests). Moslem and Jewish Israelis both have a general assumption of a religious, God-given right to the land. But in both cases, the question arises of how far this God-given right should be pursued, and whether other circumstances, especially the sanctity of human life, could be an overriding factor against certain kinds of behaviour...

In any case, this initial stage was basically *Gush Shalom's* pre-historic period, during our anti-deportation work... As more general issues were raised, we started to work mainly with other forces, although we still find a basis for working with Muslim activists on specific issues from time to time.

**• What about the other components which make up *Gush Shalom*?**

*Gush Shalom* was initially conceived as a coalition of groups. There were a few small groups which merged with one another, losing their initial identity, and there were others which ended up leaving. In the beginning, the Communist Party, Haddash, was quite deeply involved, but that did not last very long.

From the middle of 1997, *Gush Shalom* was not really a coalition of forces, but rather a distinct group as such. We promote the two-state solution as the political scenario that could resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**• You said that *Gush Shalom* is willing to support or oppose Israeli governments on the merits on what they actually do. Have you yet had the occasion to support an Israeli government?**

Yes. In August 1993, we demonstrated in front of the Labour Party Headquarters when Rabin was attending a party meeting. We called upon him to talk with



the PLO, and we unveiled a large painting of Rabin shaking hands with Arafat. It was a very short-term prophecy, as less than two weeks later, Rabin put into practise exactly what we asked him to do in this demonstration.

For the first months following the signing of the Oslo Accords we supported the Rabin government. But we were among the first to start criticising it, at the end of 1993 and begiing of 1994.

The first thing was Rabin's refusal to release political prisoners. That was his government's first big mistake in a series which led to his assassination.

If he would have released nearly all of

the prisoners (except for a few hard-core convicted terrorists), it would have had an enormous impact on Palestinian society. The right wing would have made an outcry, but which would not have been a major obstacle. But he hesitated on this question, releasing a few hundred prisoners in gradual stages... Of course, the right wing protested using demagogy, saying that murderers were being released, although most liberated prisoners were not involved in killings.

That was the beginning. We started to criticise Rabin at that time.

He went far too slowly. He never respected any of the timetables specified in

the Oslo Accords. And so he let the opponents of peace apply their own agenda. First came the Baruch Goldstein massacre in Hebron. Then Hamas perpetrated its suicide bombings. The right wing then got more power, by asking the general Israeli public "how is it that we signed a peace agreement and now more Israelis are getting killed than before?"

#### • What was Gush Shalom's reply to that preoccupation?

We urged Rabin to move ahead, to go forward. We criticised him for not adhering to his own timetable. We told him that with this policy, he was undermining his own agreement and strengthening his opponents. We became more and more critical of him at the end of 1994 and at the beginning of 1995...

Towards the middle of 1995 the peace process started to gain momentum again. More mainstream groups like Peace Now also started to be more vocal.

Israel then evacuated the six big Palestinian cities as foreseen by the Oslo Accords. We then went through another stage of supporting the Rabin government. And then, of course, he was assassinated.

#### • Do you actually mean supporting Rabin's government or supporting a specific measure which that government undertook?

Don't forget that we are an extra-parliamentary movement so we don't have to deal with the question of giving parliamentary support. But the Rabin government basically wasted a whole year. It then started to go ahead with the Pales-

## Pakistan socialists condemn "atomic fanaticism"

Statement issued on June 5 by the leaders of the Left Alliance, which includes the Labour Party of Pakistan, the Pakistan Socialist Party, the Pakistan Awami Jamhuri Party and the Communist Mazdoor Kisan Party.

The safety of the more than 1.5 billion people in the subcontinent has been put in danger as a result of the mad race for nuclear weapons technology by the ruling classes of India and Pakistan.

In India, nuclear weapons are in the hands of the religious-fascist fanatics of the Bharatiya Janata Party, and in Pakistan they are controlled by a government under great pressure from religious fundamentalists.

Both governments will not spare any time in using these dangerous weapons if their rule, prestige and so-called "national and religious priorities" are in danger.

South Asia is in deep economic crisis

because of the policies of the World Bank and IMF. Despite this, the ruling classes of South Asia have been defending trade and economic pacts like the WTO [World Trade Organisation]. In the past 50 years, these pacts have become a danger to the political and economic independence of the region. The local market is controlled by the international monopolies because of these pacts.

Instead of fighting these institutions, our rulers are promoting atomic fanaticism and indirectly promoting the influence of imperialist forces. They are promoting national chauvinism to prolong their rule and increase exploitation of the masses.

The Pakistani rulers' justification for the nuclear weapon explosions is the farcical excuse of defence of the country. They should know that the Soviet Union could not maintain itself despite all its weapons. Only the people's economic and social stability can guarantee the defence of the country, not weapons.

The poor masses of both countries will be subject to increased hunger, unemployment, poverty and social degradation. In this region, over 78% live in poverty. As a result of this mad race for nuclear weapons, the people of both countries

will face more hardship. The Indian government has increased its defence budget by 14%. The Pakistan government has declared a state of emergency and taken back any civil rights the masses had in the past.

There are more economic measures the governments will take to increase the burden on the masses, including cuts in workers' wages. The Pakistan government has even cancelled the May national holiday.

- We condemn the atomic explosions by the rulers of Pakistan and India.
- We demand an immediate lifting of the state of emergency.
- We demand that India and Pakistan accept the right of self-determination of the people of Kashmir. India and Pakistan should sit at the negotiating table to sort out a solution to the Kashmir conflict.
- We demand a 50% cut in military expenditure.
- We demand that India and Pakistan sign a treaty not to attack each other.
- We demand an end to atomic arms throughout the world. ★

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## ★ Israel

tinians and did make an agreement with them. And it was more and more sharply attacked by the right wing as there were incidents of violence, violent language, and so on. We then certainly felt that there were two major camps and that we belonged to one of them, while conscious of the fact that we constituted the radical wing of that camp.

### • What were those two camps? How did you define them?

Our camp was that of those willing to go forward. A significant step ahead was made which to an extent was constituted by the extension of self-government from Gaza and Jericho to all the main cities of the West Bank. This step was highly contested by a very well-organised Far Right, which used demagoguery and so on.

There was another aspect which further radicalised the situation: the willingness of Rabin to rely on Arab members of the Knesset for his parliamentary majority. I think this is very important, although this is not often raised. This in fact was a much more radical act than the Oslo agreement itself. Because it confronted the basic question of the nature of the State of Israel.

Since 1948, there had been a guideline laid out by Ben Gurion and adhered to by all his successors, to the effect that Arabs are officially citizens of Israel with the right to vote. But in fact they should not be allowed to have a real share in decision making in Israel. There were all kinds of devices to make sure this line was respected. One of the basic devices is an official Israeli government policy which was never put into writing, to the effect that there should always be what is called a Jewish majority. In other words, a government should not only have a parliamentary majority among all members of the Knesset, but it should also have a majority among the Jewish members.

Even in Ben Gurion's time, there were very subservient Arab parties which we can qualify as exclusively puppet parties blindly serving the interests of the governing party. But Ben Gurion was not willing to include these subservient parties as a decisive part of his parliamentary majority. He always wanted to have a majority without them. Because the principal behind it was a Jewish state where power should be in the hands of the Jews; the real decisions should be made by Jews.

### • It sounds very much like the original founding Zionist ideology. Does Gush Shalom identify itself as Zionist, non-Zionist, or anti-Zionist?

No. Gush Shalom has deliberately refrained from including any reference to Zionism in its programme. In order to include both Zionist and non-Zionists who are in favour of peace. Anybody who accepts Gush Shalom's ideas is welcome.

Many of the things that are taken as Zionist axioms throughout Israel's

existence – and even before the creation of the state – are now put more and more into question, especially among intellectuals in Israel. There are quite a lot of intellectuals who identify themselves as “post-Zionists”, whatever that means. And quite a lot of people are criticising some basic ideas which have been shared in common in Israel up until now. They identify themselves as Zionists and, moreover, they say they're trying to restore the real, pure Zionism as it should have been at the time of the founding fathers.

I see this as an attitude which is developing towards Zionism in Israel, which is in many ways comparable to the attitudes on socialism in the Gorbachev years in the USSR. In both cases you have an ideology which was until then untouchable, and which is just now being called into question. People are starting to dig into history and look into things which until now have been suppressed. Very many people are saying that what they are doing is to renew the official ideology and restore its virginity and true content.

### • Gush Shalom puts forth the two-state solution. However in the Israeli Left there is also support for some other scenarios, namely a bi-national state and a secular, democratic state for all citizens within Israel. Are some members of Gush Shalom promoting these options?

No, not members of Gush Shalom as such. There is the Hebron Solidarity Committee – which is in fact a very misleading name because it started as a committee not dealing especially with Hebron, but pursuing ideological activities promoting the idea of one state and so on.

We sometimes work with them on specific issues. When we work together, we have to be very careful with the formulation of slogans and so on, because they would not agree to any slogan in favour of the Oslo process. But we are willing to cooperate with them.

Some of them have been not-exactly-members of Gush Shalom but there was a time when there were in West (Israeli) Jerusalem Left groups who were undecided. Their activists came regularly to our demonstrations and for a certain time there was a kind of division or clarification. Some of them ended up in Gush Shalom and others ended up in the Hebron Solidarity Committee. But still we have a good working relationship with them, as we do with Peace Now...

I would first like to complete my comments on Rabin with a point which is not often appreciated. When he was Prime Minister between 74 and 77 and adhered without question to this idea of the idea of the “Jewish Majority” – and when he once again occupied the Prime Minister's office in 92, he certainly wanted to have a Jewish majority. But what happened was that gradually, for different reasons (due both to the peace process and to other factors) he lost several Knesset members who sup-

ported him at the outset.

In August 95 when he had to obtain an agreement with the Knesset he found himself in a situation where he had to choose. Either to pursue it with the support of at least four Arab Knesset members, or to give up the whole agreement and the whole peace process. When he was confronted with this choice, he chose to go ahead. This was a unique act in the history of Israel. It was the first – and the last time, so far – that the Prime Minister was willing to let Arabs take a part in a very important political decision.

And that was the direct reason why he was murdered. The murderer, Yigal Amir, said it explicitly in court. He said: “I did not kill him because he gave up territory, although I'm against giving up territory. I killed him because he got the support of Arabs and therefore became illegible to govern the country.” And that was in fact the whole campaign against him.

It was not only the attitude of the man who pulled the trigger. The whole campaign of the right wing against Rabin centralised on this “sin”. That by relying on Arabs for his majority, his government was illegitimate and it therefore became legitimate to oppose the government with violent means. In the last interview which Rabin gave on television three days before his death, he was asked as what he thought of this criticism: that is was illegitimate to let such an important decision be made with Arab votes. Rabin answered that anybody who would say such a thing is a racist.

### • There is anti-Arab racism in large sectors of Israeli society. Do you see this as the major obstacle at this point in achieving a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Not necessarily. Because an interesting element is that this racism is not consistent.

The settlers and the Far Right in Israel are at least consistent. When you hear them talking about the Netanyahu government (and a potential 13% withdrawal from the West Bank), they say quite explicitly that they are against it, but they would not take as extreme measures against it as they would have taken if Rabin would have done it, because the Netanyahu government is a Jewish government that has a Jewish majority.

### • Aside from the settlers, and their fanatical right-wing or religious ultra-orthodox supporters, what about average Israeli citizens? Do they see working with Arab parliamentarians – or with Arabs in general – as being something objectionable?

Quite a lot of people in Israeli society do object to letting Arabs share in the decision-making process, because they object to Arabs being equal citizens to Israelis. So this is a question which has to be resolved... even if we make a more or

less satisfactory arrangement with the Palestinians on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

There is a quite possible scenario that Israel would give up these territories and make peace with the Palestinians, but it would still continue with quite discriminatory practices towards its own Arab-Palestinian citizens.

### • Are there any Palestinian members of Gush Shalom, or do you regroup exclusively Jewish activists?

We do have Arab members, who are welcome. But we are mainly active in the Jewish population centres of Israel. Most

of our Arab members are intellectuals who live in Tel Aviv or West Jerusalem, and who are more or less integrated into the Israeli Jewish intellectual milieu.

Given the way it has developed, Gush Shalom does not have at this time real structural support in the Arab population centres of Israel. What we do have is quite a lot of contacts there, which are enough for occasional joint actions. But it's not enough to build a real organisation in those localities. You have to understand that it is extremely difficult in Israel to maintain a bi-national organisation, even when it's composed of the most well-meaning people with political intentions to

link up to one another.

### • Does Gush Shalom also have privileged relations with similar Palestinian peace organisations based in Gaza and on the West Bank?

Yes, We have quite a lot of contacts with Palestinian peace organisations, with Al-Fatah (the Palestinian leadership) and with the Palestinian People's Party (Communist). But in fact our strongest tie with Palestinians is not so much through political organisations, but regional organisations. The most common type of action which we have with Palestinians starts

## Philippine left unity

Over 12,000 workers, urban poor, students and peasants reacted to President Joseph Estrada's "State of the Nation" address with their own noisy protests on July 27, writes *Reihana Mohideen*.

The "State of the Nation" address is traditionally an important day in the left calendar. This year there was a united mobilisation of several left political blocs which in past years have held separate demonstrations.

Marching together were the socialist organisation BISIG and several forces with roots in the pro-Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP): the MR, a section of the Manila-Rizal regional leadership which split from the CPP in 1993, and the Movement for National Democracy (KPD), which includes former CPP's leaders and activists in central Luzon, who left the party earlier this year in protest at its "sectarian" politics.

The July 27 rally also included a large youth contingent organised by the broad youth and student coalition Youth Arise. The main forces behind the Youth Arise contingent were Kamalayan and the BISIG youth organisation, MASP.

The rally was some 7000 strong. Popoy Lagman's BMP and the CPP held separate rallies numbering around 2500 each.

A new addition to the united left contingent was Liga Sosyalista (Socialist League), a revolutionary socialist organisation formed on July 19 by dissidents from the Komiteng Rebolusyonaryo ng Manila-Rizal (KRMR) headed by Popoy Lagman.

According to a founding member of Liga Sosyalista, Sonny Melencio, "The formation of Liga Sosyalista was the culmination of a period of intense debates and struggles within the KRMR group. The debates centred on the Stalinist and sectarian policies being implemented by the Lagman group and the continuing drift of its so-called 'pragmatic politics' towards the right."

According to Melencio, "The Lagman group has a stated position against the unity of the socialist forces in the Philippines. They refuse even to participate in tactical unity efforts with others on the left. Their view is that they are the only true revolutionaries.

"Given the fragmentation that has racked the left, this is not only very sectarian, but also an absurd position to have. We need to understand that... no one organisation encompasses all of the class-conscious vanguard forces."

Discussions are now under way amongst BISIG, MR, Liga Sosyalista and the revolutionary forces in the KED on the formation of a socialist front.

The editorial board of the Liga's newspaper *Progresibo* has been opened up to include other left groups, an important step in the unity process. There is also agreement on the need to set up a Marxist-Leninist school for the socialist front's members.

### Economic and social crisis

This unity process has also been driven by economic and social factors. Like in neighbouring countries, large sections of industry have collapsed. Manufacturing output is down by 50%. In agriculture, the crisis is threatening food security.

Unemployment is soaring to unprecedented levels. At least 10 million people are unemployed and 15 million more are underemployed.

The number of urban poor is exploding as more and more unemployed rural workers move to the cities looking for work. Criminality is rampant. Young people cannot find jobs, and many end up victims of drug abuse and prostitution.

The middle class is also suffering. Many have joined the ranks of the unemployed and the working class. The number of students is dwindling as the cost of education increases.

The economic crisis has led to increased social unrest. The number of

strikes is growing as companies resort to closures and lockouts. Urban poor communities facing demolition threats are pitching tents in front of government offices and setting up barricades (in some instances armed) around their communities. Mass actions are staging a comeback, a series of demonstrations, rallies, pickets and other protest actions taking place in the last few months.

The ruling class remains united around its programme to "solve" the economic crisis. The new government's economic programme is no different from those of previous regimes. Its hallmarks are continuing trade liberalisation, privatisation of government corporations and assets, and deregulation of local industries and the finance sector.

Estrada has already declared his government bankrupt. The government forecasts a P70 billion deficit this year. Foreign debt has reached P1.9 trillion (US\$45.6 billion), while domestic debt is P2.3 trillion.

The government admits there are no solutions in sight, no way of halting the slowdown, the double-digit inflation, the rising interest rates, the free-falling peso or even deeper economic depression.

Instead, Estrada is taking unpopular measures to raise revenue, including settlement of the "frozen assets" of the family of former dictator Fernando Marcos, and a soon-to-be signed Visiting Forces Agreement, which will allow the creation of new US military bases in the Philippines.

According to Melencio, the incapacity of the regime to solve the economic crisis and to deliver on Estrada's populist and "pro-poor" electoral programme will fuel the mass unrest. "An intensification of the class struggle is inevitable. The situation demands that the left unite its forces and maximise its striking capacity. A socialist front will enable us to achieve this in the short term." ★

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with contacting people from a particular village. The people tell us there is a big problem in their village: that their land is confiscated or that houses have been demolished or something like that. Then we go to the village and discuss with them to carry out common action such as a demonstration.

With such an approach, we prefer to work with as broadly-based organisations as possible. We go to the village and try to see exactly how broad the organisation which invited us is. We prefer to work with organisations which include all (or most of) the political currents present in the village. We try, as much as possible, not to become involved in local power struggles. The more united they are in this village, the more likely joint action will be successful...

**• Concerning the problem of land confiscations in Palestinian villages, Gush Shalom's most recent campaign is a boycott of Israeli products produced in the settlements.**

Yes, this is an idea we've been thinking about for a long time. It's a fact that the settlers are continually building up more of an economic infrastructure. They are getting more and more products into the Israeli and international markets. They get a lot of subsidies from the government. There are industrial zones in settlements, and many entrepreneurs are going there not for any ideological reason but simply because the government is making it very worthwhile for them. They get the land nearly for free, a lot of tax reductions and since it's not officially part of Israel, they are not subject to Israeli labour laws. So they can pay lower wages. The most conspicuous example is wine produced from vineyards in the Golan Heights and on the West Bank... There are three producers in particular which, together, certainly account for the majority of the wines which are now sold in Israel... Because they have so many subsidies they can undercut their competitors inside the Green Line [between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza]

**• So rather than ideological or nationalistic debates, is it the immediate financial interests of Israeli capital which are responsible for further confiscation and colonisation of Palestinian land?**

I wouldn't say that. These industrial zones, are undoubtedly also using up confiscated Palestinian land, but I would not say that they are the biggest consumers of Palestinian land.

**• But perhaps of Palestinian resources, particularly water, which is a key question for both agricultural and industrial requirements.**

Yes, that is true. If you want to consider the capitalists' interests which are

most involved in the settlement issue, you have to look at real estate brokers, building contractors, architects, mortgage banks. This part of the economy is certainly making enormous profits out of the settlements.

**• Does Gush Shalom consider that the immediate interests of Israeli capital - with its investments on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip - constitute a major obstacle in finding a political solution?**

If you want to reason in terms of capitalists and their interests, I think that there are different interests among them. I would say there is certainly a quite conspicuous group of capitalists: the biggest ones in Israel, who dominate the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Industrialists, and so on.

These are the high tech, most advanced industries in Israel, and in fact they are quite dovish from a political point of view, because basically what they would like is to open the market of the Arab world to Israeli products.

We can say that Israel's relationship with the West Bank and Gaza is a classical colonial relationship. It's a captive market for Israel, full of cheap labour.

There is a quite conspicuous and dominant part of the Israeli bourgeoisie which you could say is willing to make the step from colonialism to neo-colonialism. They basically feel that if, by giving up this captive market of over two million people...

Of course, Israel is still keeping this market captive for the time being. Also, Israel controls all the border crossings between the Gaza strip and Egypt and between the West Bank and Jordan, and there is a kind of enforced customs union between Israel and the territories. So Israel still has this captive market of two million people, and it's in fact quite a big part of Israel's economic success.

There are the more enlightened capitalists, if I can use that term, who feel that by letting the Palestinians go free and giving up their domination over the Palestinian market, they could get access to the market of the whole Arab world, which is made up of 100 million people. And especially to get access to the markets of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which have quite a lot of money and consumer goods. They consider that it would be a worthwhile exchange. And you could say that Shimon Peres, with his vision of the new Middle East, without a doubt politically represented the views of these enlightened Israeli capitalists. ★

Adam Keller is the spokesperson and member of the Executive Committee of Gush Shalom (the Peace Block). He was interviewed by Richard Wagman, who visited East Jerusalem as a delegate of the French Jewish Peace Union to a conference organized by the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment, entitled "1948-1998: 50 Years of Human Rights Violations".  
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# Habibie: The

The limits of the 'reforms' promised by the Habibie Presidency are increasingly clear. So are the new government's links to the previous regime.

## B. Skanthakumar

**Clear too is the challenge** for the "total reformation" wing of the pro-democracy movement, in this exciting but difficult period opened by the mobilisations, demonstrations, riots, strikes and other protests that have rocked Indonesia in recent months.

Habibie's greatest success to date has been in distancing himself from his mentor Suharto, declaring that he is "nobody's puppet" and not being manipulated by anyone least of all the ex-dictator. Some of his pronouncements and actions to date seem to support this.

However his greatest problem is that he is compromised by his past association with Suharto and the 'New Order' regime. Habibie's ascent to Presidential office was a regime strategy to outmanoeuvre the will of the pro-democracy movement.

Habibie continues to be seen both by supporters and critics as a transitional figure, overseeing the process of democratic change until Presidential elections promised before the end of 1999. However he is known to be keen to seek election in those polls for a "second and final" term.

There has been a liberalisation of political life throughout Indonesia, including in the most militarised regions of East Timor, Aceh and Irian Jaya (West Papua) where separatist conflicts have raged in recent years. The most important factor, as some Acehnese students recently declared is, "We are no longer afraid". The reward for overthrowing a 32 year old dictatorship and standing up to the Armed Forces (ABRI) is courage.

Yet Habibie's 'reforming' credentials have been belied by his enacting of Decree No. 2/1998 which in Orwellian double-speak is styled "Freedom of Expression". It bans demonstrations near the Presidential Palace, military installations, places of worship, hospitals, airfields, ports and railway stations.

Demonstrations are also banned on public holidays and after nightfall. Written permission must be obtained from the police at least 48 hours in advance of demonstrations larger than 50 people. Where demonstrations are under 50 people, written notice must be given to the Police at least 72 hours in advance.

These stringent restrictions aim to

# imits of change

clamp down on mass action in the streets and communities and encourage a diversion of energies into the parliamentary and electoral arena.

56 new political parties have been announced mainly based on religious, ethnic and social groups and loyalties. The government looks likely to disallow any such formations. Amien Rais, leader of the 28 million strong Muhammadiyah movement has formed the National Mandate Party (PAB) and 'Gus Dur', leader of the 40 million member Nahdlatul Ulama has formed the National Awakening Party (PKB).

Habibie himself has recently said that only parties with a minimum of 1.2 million members will qualify for registration. Also that they should be organised in at least 14 of the country's 27 provinces. Any parties which fall below this threshold will be allowed to be politically active but not electoral status.

These proscriptions are of course to the advantage of the state sponsored Golkar Party whose organisational structure, diffusion at every level of society and immense financial resources make it the leading contender in any electoral contest.

At the Golkar congress in July there were two candidates for the post of Chairman, one supported by the Suharto clique including his children and the other by Habibie. General Wiranto placed ABRI's support behind Habibie's nominee, who won.

This is another reversal of fortunes for the Suharto family and its cronies in Golkar who were hoping to use that Party as a political vehicle for the ex-President's family and their interests. In fact Suharto's ambitious daughter Tutut had been the intended (sole) candidate for this position some months ago, a plan she had to abandon because of the strength of feeling against her family.

Coalitions and blocs among the Opposition are anticipated to prevent a Golkar victory in the May 1999 Legislative elections through splitting the opposition vote. The elite opposition of retired Generals, business people and former state functionaries is quietly burying the demands of the reform movement and preparing to share power instead, if necessary with Golkar.

Megawati Sukarnoputri's Democratic Party (PDI) is reorganising itself and will hold a Convention before the end of November. It will be a sought after partner in any electoral arrangement.

One victory in recent weeks is that the radical Left Peoples Democratic Party



rights and responsibilities as citizens and the campaign for justice for the victims of the violence.

In towns and villages, people have agitated against state and local officials often securing their resignation. There is public debate on prosecuting Suharto for the worst excesses of his rule and on recovering the wealth his family thieved from the country. There have been land and pro-

(PRD) has been unbanned following a successful legal challenge to the September 1997 banning order imposed by the government.

Already 11 political groupings have formed a "Forum for the Communication of Pro-Total Reforms Parties". [They insist that it is not a coalition. Its participants include the United Democracy Party (PUDI) of Sri Bintang Pamungkas, the New Masyumi Party, the National Democrat Party, The Commoner's Party, the Islamic Brethren Party, the Economy Party, the Indonesian Nationalist Party, the Murba Party, the Marhaen People's Party, the Indonesian Workers' Party and the Alliance of Indonesian Democrats Party.

All the pent-up grievances, the experiences and reports of human rights abuses, the agonies of the ethnic Chinese community in the May riots and the frustrations of the common folk long suppressed are now in the public arena. 60 new publishing licences have been awarded and banned publications have made a return. Their pages over-spill with long taboo topics.

The rape of hundreds of Chinese girls and women in May and the death of at least 20 of them who took their own lives or succumbed to their injuries has provoked a public debate between ethnic Chinese and *pribumi* (Malay and indigenous) and within those communities on the future for Sino-Indonesians, their



party occupations by landless farmers. One action was the symbolic reclamation of a golf course whose construction had displaced poor farmers, by the planting of cassava overnight!

Nine peasant associations in North Sumatra formed a federated farmers union on July 8th declaring, "We reject the capitalistic economic system which has resulted in the theft of farmers lands, destroyed the environment and forced the farmers into a biased and unfair trading system, as well as violating the rights of traditional peoples."

The objectives of Indonesian Federation of Farmers Unions (FSPI) include lobbying for land reform; promoting organic and sustainable agriculture; develop agricultural co-operatives and promoting freedom of association and a political role for farmers.

This is a remarkable development: it was in the rural areas where the massacres of 1965/66 were the most brutal and lasted

## ★ Indonesia

the longest, and thus where memories and fear are strongest too.

### Trade union demands

While the independent SBSI labour union has been allowed to work freely, the economic crisis has created greater insecurities among workers who still have jobs and who fear dismissal for unionising. The reported membership of the SBSI is now 30 000, a tenth of what it had claimed four years ago.

The preoccupation of all workers is now their survival. When they are unsure from week to week whether they will retain their jobs and how to manage on the already low wages which are a fraction of its previous value, it is unrealistic to expect them to play an independent political role for some time to come.

Worker activists have continued to agitate combining political and economic issues in the best possible way. One protest outside the Labour Department in Jakarta had the following demands:

- Stop military intervention and violence in labour, women and civilian problems.
- Reject the draft law on demonstrations.
- Abandon Labour Law number 25/1997 which harms workers' rights.
- Stop corruption and collusion between employers and the Ministry of Labour.
- Free workers activist Dita Sari and other political prisoners.
- Freedom of speech and organisation.
- Remove discrimination against women in the

workplace.

- Lower prices.
- Raise wages by 100% or Rupiah

11,500/day.

- Stop the firing of workers and pay wages during temporary layoffs.
- Financial transparency of companies before its workers.

### Poverty and debt

The Government has admitted that 40% of the population (80 million people) are now under the official poverty line as compared to the 1996 estimate of 11% before the economic crisis. The spiralling cost of basic staples makes three meals a day a luxury for all but the middle class. The poorest skip a mid-day meal and look for substitutes to rice.

The government has announced the distribution of subsidised rice but it will take months before all those in need receive adequate supplies. The value of the rupiah has not recovered measurably from its 80 per cent depreciation of its value in June last year and the economy remains in the doldrums.

The Habibie regime has been the beneficiary of credit and loans from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and continues to implement an austerity programme which nationalises the US\$80 billion private debt of a handful of Suharto's cronies and family members and passes on the cost of repayment to the poor. A further package of US\$7.9 billion was agreed by the Consultative Group on Indonesia at the end of July.

On September 22nd the Paris Club of donor countries to Indonesia will finalise details of the "restructuring" of Indonesia's sovereign debt. The World Bank which chairs this meeting has acknowledged that it knew that at least twenty per cent of its loans to Indonesia during the Suharto regime were diverted into private purses, and thus it colluded with those corrupt practices. Yet it continues to demand repayment in full.

There is no strategy to restore the purchasing power of the people, to generate

the jobs that are needed, to write off the (public or sovereign) debt that is almost as large as the private debt and which was incurred by an illegitimate regime financed by banks and international financial institutions who should bear the costs of their irresponsible lending decisions and the whip of the 'market' they are so keen to flex on others.

### Army atrocities exposed

In Aceh, East Timor and West Papua, families of the 'disappeared' and human rights groups have come forward with details of those believed killed by ABRI in its counter-insurgency operations and 'dirty war'. Extra-judicial executions, 'disappearances', torture and long terms of imprisonment for political 'crimes' on trumped up charges were rife. General Wiranto made a public apology for ABRI atrocities in Aceh and has announced that 'non-organic military units' will be withdrawn.

All these 'provinces' too shared the status of 'Military Operational District' (DOM), which is blamed by locals for legitimising the militarisation of their societies and exacerbating the poverty-stricken conditions as military authorities and their activities frustrate and hinder employment and investment projects.

Ten mass graves on three sites have been identified in Aceh, where the military was engaged in a brutal campaign of terror and rape between 1989 and 1993 in suppressing the separatist *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement) there. At least 5 000 people 'disappeared' between those years there too.

The Aceh NGO Forum which has been leading protests there has demanded financial compensation and psychological counselling for the victims of torture, widows and relatives of those killed by the military; free education for orphaned children up to high school and freedom from detention for alleged separatists.

### Pro-independence protests

In West Papua, pro-independence demonstrators have staged protests in Biak, Sorong, Jayapura and Manokwari. Tragedy struck at one rally when the raising of the West Papuan 'Morning Star' flag was met by ABRI gunfire into the 500 strong crowd killing several and wounding many.

Meanwhile bodies of those suspected of sympathising with the Free Papua Movement (OPM) and its struggle have washed up along the shore of Biak Island reminding us that the Armed Forces continue their previous pattern of behaviour and are neither instinctively reform-minded nor willing converts to the pro-democracy cause.

In East Timor, the government claimed to have withdrawn 1,000 troops but the resistance reports that a further 10,000 have been secreted in across the border from Timor Barat (West Timor). The Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas has dismissed calls for a referendum on self-

## Australia: DSP electoral campaign

The Democratic Socialists will field Senate tickets in all states in the coming federal elections. The party will also contest several lower house seats.

"For the first time in recent history, every voter in Australia will have the choice of voting for a socialist candidate or ticket", said Peter Boyle, the party's national election campaign director.

"With up to 66% public disillusionment at the economic rationalist agenda of Coalition and Labor parties at an all-time high, more people will be looking to socialist solutions.

"Further, the socialists are the ones leading the campaigning in the streets against the disgusting racist scapegoating promoted by Pauline Hanson's One Nation party and their neo-nazi sup-

porters. We have received broad support for this campaign in the cities and in the country areas."

While Hanson is exploiting the turn against the major parties, the Democratic Socialists are determined to expose One Nation's reactionary agenda.

The Democratic Socialists are closely associated with Resistance, the socialist youth organisation that organised the recent high school walkouts against racism. "Without the support of Australia's youth One Nation has no future," said Boyle. Several Resistance leaders will be part of the DSP electoral list. ★

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determination as "out of the question". Instead he continues to parade his threadbare proposals for a "Special Autonomous Region within the Republic of Indonesia".

CNRM leader Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao speaking from Cipinang Prison in Jakarta is adamant that, "There can be no solution to the problem in East Timor without a referendum. Otherwise the situation will just continue as it did in Palestine. Autonomy is something you ask for after integration, and what's first needed is a referendum" (*Time Magazine* July 13 1998).

### Will the guilty stand trial?

A number of senior military officers associated with the feared special forces command unit KOPASSUS have been arraigned before military tribunals for their part in the abduction and torture of political activists and human rights workers in the run up to the March Presidential election. Most of them have now resurfaced, released by their captors with threats to their life if they spoke out about their experiences. However at least a dozen are still missing.

Chief among the accused is Lt. General Prabowo Subianto, son-in-law of the former President, who was sidelined to head the Army Staff College after Suharto's resignation. He is also under investigation for the role of his former command, KOPASSUS, in orchestrated acts of killing, gang rape and arson in the Jakarta riots in May which have now come to light including the Trisakti killings.

Prabowo was tried by a Military Honour Council, whose maximum sentence is a dishonourable discharge, to the disappointment of parents of the dead students among others. There have been broad hints in the press dropped by ABRI that he will face a court martial too.

The singling out of Prabowo who is reviled from Banda Aceh to Jayapura is convenient for General Wiranto who is anxious to defuse anger and criticism of ABRI and remove his arch-rival Prabowo in one fell stroke.

### Political prisoners

While many political prisoners have been freed, including three of the thirteen ex-Communist Party (PKI) members imprisoned since 1965 and four members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PRD), Wilson Nurtias Ken Kusumandaru, Coen Hussein Pontoh and Mohamad Soleh.

Those deemed the most dangerous to the State remain incarcerated. There are three categories of prisoners the government is opposed to releasing. They are the G30S/PKI prisoners [relating to the 1965/66 events]; those opposed to the state ideology of Pancasila and those involved in armed rebellion and related "criminal acts".

They include ex-PKI members such as Colonel Latief [one of the key surviving actors in the September 30th 1965 putsch which provided the excuse for Suharto's *coup d'état*], the resistance leader Xanana Gusmao and 120 other East Timorese, 24

West Papuans, 55 Acehnese, Islamists and leaders of the radical left Peoples Democratic Party (PRD) including its Chairperson Budiman Sudjatmiko, its Secretary Petrus Haryanto and labour front leader Dita Sari. The release of all political prisoners must remain a focus of the solidarity movement abroad.

The long march of the Indonesian people this century for freedom and justice has undergone many detours and forced halts. Suharto's removal puts the masses back in forward movement on that road which stretches ahead.

The agencies of radical change: the

working class, poor peasantry and the urban poor are unorganised, fragmented and lacking in anti-capitalist ideology. The struggle now is to defend and expand their capacity to create their own mass organisations in which class identity and class politics will be asserted.

As the PRD says, "What is important is to find ways so that mass actions by students, workers and other people again become vigorous and involve large numbers of people. Only through this mass pressure will the demands for democracy be won. Without real mass strength, the people's demands will be ignored!" ★

## Fires and famine

The forests are burning again. And this time the air pollution has been accompanied by early warnings of famine conditions in parts of East Kalimantan and a full blown famine in West Papua (Irian Jaya).

### B. Skanthakumar

In 1997 two million hectares of forest and non-forest lands were burned mainly by plantation companies and logging concessions in the Indonesian provinces of Kalimantan and Sumatra (International Viewpoint #295 December 1997), leaving an incalculable human, animal and environmental disaster in its wake.

This year new fires have been detected and old ones reignited in a rerun of last year and with the same underlying causes but far more serious consequences.

The tell tale smog which chokes the air and all who breathe it has been experienced by hundreds of thousands of people across Borneo and caused air pollution warnings as far afield as Singapore but not so far affecting Java.

Of the 176 companies identified last year as starting fires, only a handful had their licenses revoked and most of these were restored upon "further investigation" by the Forestry department. Thus no company has been punished and fined for its actions encouraging the culture of impunity that exists among these corporations.

No wonder that with plummeting revenues and the reduced value of their asset holdings owing to the depreciation of the rupiah and the wider economic crisis, many companies have intensified their unsustainable exploitation of the land by lighting new fires to clear more land without any fear of legal penalties.

Instead soldiers victimise indigenous communities who 'slash and burn', preventing them from planting new crops and scapegoating them for the fires. Twenty-five thousand people face severe food shortages in East Kalimantan as 95% of this year's rice crop has failed because of the prevailing drought. "No one has any rice, either to feed them-

selves or to sell to make money", one woman told *The Guardian* (23rd March 1998).

The Indonesian military which is the only state agency which has the human, technical and financial resources to do fire-fighting work is used instead to suppress popular protest and maintain in place the existing regime.

The only guarantee to put out the fires for good and revive the agrarian economy are the rains. And the monsoon hasn't come.

Meanwhile in West Papua (Irian Jaya), which was annexed by Indonesia in the 1960s, famine is killing thousands of people.

Last year's drought blamed on the *El Niño* weather pattern decimated food crops like sweet potato, dried up rivers and pools depriving villagers of drinking water and fish and killed livestock.

Malaria deaths are on the increase as the Indonesian military forcibly move highland villagers to lowland areas in counter-insurgency operations against the separatist Free Papua Movement (OPM) and so they can profit from gold, timber and other natural resources in those areas in collaboration with the Freeport-Rio Tinto copper and gold mine.

This combination of malnutrition and malaria has weakened the population and its ability to plant new crops let alone harvest them and to find alternative foods in the meantime. So there has been a sharp increase in reported deaths.

Many villages can only be reached by helicopter or small aircraft and food and medical supplies have been pitifully small in a province from which the media is excluded and relief agencies operate on the whim of the military high command.

The Indonesian regime in Jakarta has yet to admit to the scale of the suffering and need and therefore to adequately respond to it; further evidence that its occupation of West Papua has nothing to do with the well-being of the Papuans. ★

# Asia-Pacific solidarity

Political parties and groups from across Asia and the Pacific gathered in Sydney, Australia this April for a historic solidarity conference. **Pierre Rousset** was there for *International Viewpoint*

The event was a success, both in terms of the wide range of participants, and the warm spirit which dominated the proceedings. In this era of liberalisation and the east-Asian financial crisis, there is a clear need to rekindle internationalist activities and consciousness. Hence this initiative of Australia's Democratic Socialist Party (DSP).

The conference was an opportunity for in-depth discussions on the economic crisis in Asia, and on the situation of women across the region. There were also numerous side discussions between organisations of very diverse origins, and key moments of solidarity with progressive forces in Indonesia, Australia's sacked dockers, and the struggle for the rights of the continent's aborigines. Cultural events were organised by communities struggling for self-determination, from East Timor to France's Polynesian colonies.

So many different facets of internationalism. Over 750 people participated, including a large number of young Australians, who had come from all parts of the country to meet the 67 foreign delegations. This was a main contributing factor to the militant dynamism of the conference.

Among the participants from outside the Asia-Pacific region were the FSLN (Nicaragua), Solidarity (USA), United Left (Spain), PDS (Germany), ÖDP (Turkey), SOV-CWI (Austria), Socialist Party-CWI (Britain) and France's Revolutionary Communist League (LCR). Fourth International supporters from a range of countries were present.

But this was above all a meeting of revolutionary or progressive political parties, independence movements, democratic and feminist groups, trade unions, popular coalitions and personalities from the Asia-Pacific region. Australia's Democratic Socialist Party (who also sponsor *Green Left Weekly* newspaper and *Links* theoretical journal) succeeded in attracting

delegates from a wide geographical area, including very different countries. The Northern Pacific was represented by the Communist Party of Japan, the South Pacific by Matt Robson, foreign affairs spokesperson of New Zealand's radical Alliance. Others came from South East Asia and the Indian sub-continent.

The conference discussions reflected the great diversity of current popular struggles in the region. Some old, some new, but all reflecting the current situation. Yesterday's democratic struggle against dictatorship is not yet finished, and the resistance against the destructive effects of neoliberal globalisation has already started.

The relatively recent trend towards "democratisation" is far from completed. Philippine dictator Marcos was overthrown in 1986, but it is only in the last few months that the regime neighbouring Indonesia has entered into open crisis. The traditional political dominance of the army in has been reduced in Thailand, but, across the border in Myanmar (Burma), the ageing generals are still in dictatorial control. France has still not recognised the independence of its Polynesian colonies. The Tamils in Sri Lanka still live under military occupation. In a common pattern, political repression goes hand in hand with the crushing of autonomy and self-determination for national minorities.

France's continued imperial role in the Pacific, and the ongoing consequences of its nuclear weapons programme in Polynesia were vigorously denounced by Tamara Bopp Du-Pont, a member of the colony's Territorial Assembly, and by other representatives of the Tavini Huiraatira pro-independence movement.

Australian aborigines and Maoris from New Zealand told of the deep oppression which their peoples continue to suffer, as a result of the colonisation of their lands.

Representatives of progressive movements from the south-west Pacific islands (Bougainville, Aceh, Papua New Guinea and East Timor) condemned the Indonesian regime's crimes against the people of the archipelago, and western support for Jakarta.

One of the most emotional moments of the conference was the joint presentation by representatives of the East Timorese

organisation Fretilin, and the Indonesian radical left PRD party. They reaffirmed their solidarity, and spoke of their difficult struggle against the dictatorship.

Delegates from South Korea spoke of the coexistence of a decades-old struggle against dictatorship, and a very modern popular reaction to the neo-liberal policies being implemented at the insistence of the International Monetary Fund. The recent election of opposition personality Kim Dae-Jung as president marked a step forward in the dismantling of the former military regime and its institutional heritage. But the new president is implementing IMF policies which have made thousands of workers unemployed, in a country which lacks social security protection. Key sectors of the South Korean economy are increasingly controlled by Japanese and Western economic interests.



A follow-on conference is being planned for the Indian sub-continent. From the left: Shoaib Akber (Labour Party, Pakistan), Sunil Ratnapriya (NSSP, Sri Lanka) and Jayatna Rongpi (CPI-ML, India)

How to respond to this situation? Call for an immediate general strike against IMF policies? Does the balance of forces make this a realistic strategy? Is it too soon after the election of Kim Dae-jung? This debate has raged inside the militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), and provoked dramatic changes in the leadership in February and March.

Yoong Young-mo, KCTU International Secretary, explained this complex situation to the Sydney conference, and outlined the new organisational questions facing the Confederation. He discussed the problems involved in unification with the traditionally pro-governmental Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU). He also outlined the KCTU medium-term project for a new labour-type party, an idea also backed by the National Alliance for Democracy and Reunification of Korea (NADRK) and the Alliance for Progress-

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sive Policies (APP).

Delegates paid particular attention to the diverse nature of women's experiences across the region, and the various movements that have developed in response to women's oppression. There was, plenary discussion of the relationship between women's liberation, social struggles and democratic struggles, and workshops on women in the Philippines, the experience of Cambodian and other groups in working against the sex trade in women, and on reproductive rights. The conference created an Asia-Pacific Women's Solidarity Network to ensure permanent networking between feminist organisations present at the conference, and other interested groups.

### Solidarity meetings

In one sense, the Sydney conference was one long series of "solidarity meetings." The Asia Pacific region is probably more diverse than any other, in terms of history, culture, language, social structure and political regime. The countries represented varied from small Pacific islands to the Indian giant. Thailand has never been colonised, while the Philippines were conquered by Spain in the 16th century. This diversity, however, did not detract from the quality to the exchanges.

Some of the delegates were already in contact with each other (feminist groups, for example, had met at the UN-sponsored conferences in Nairobi and Beijing). Others met in Sydney for the first time. This was particularly striking for the three parties from the Indian sub-continent. The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation has some 65,000 members, and comes from the rural guerrilla Naxalite tradition. Its representative in Sydney, Member of Parliament Jayanta Rongpi, held long discussions with Mohammed Shoab Akber, president of Pakistan's Workers Party, which is part of the CWI grouping around Britain's Socialist Party (formerly Militant, and with Sunil Ratnapriya, who co-ordinates international work for Sri Lanka's New Socialist Party (NSSP), which is part of the Fourth International.

The three parties are currently preparing a similar conference focused on the South Asia region: encouraging illustration of the dynamic of solidarity generated by the Sydney conference.

The political focus of the conference

was on South-East Asia. Not just because of the wide range of delegates from those countries (including Thailand's Poor People's Assembly, the Cambodian Women's Development Agency, the Malay People's Party, Indonesia's PRD and Freletin from East Timor). But also because of the important questions facing progressive forces there. The Communist Party of the Philippines was for many years the most influential revolutionary organisation in the region. Now that it is in severe crisis, many revolutionaries are re-thinking their strategy and politics.

Inevitably, the crisis in Indonesia and the need for solidarity were at the centre of delegates' concerns.

The current neoliberal straitjacket imposed on the countries of the region in this age of globalisation make it very unlikely that Indonesia's problems will be "solved" by a democratic transition along the lines of the Philippines experience after 1987. It is more likely that the situation in Indonesia will continue to rot. Because of the country's vast size and geopolitical and economic importance, this will inevitably have a destabilising effect on the whole region.

Continued repression of opponents to the regime makes Indonesia solidarity particularly important, something the Australian left has long realised, and which should be developed in all other countries.

Philippine delegates stressed their desire to work together, after a period of splits and fragmentation following the implosion of the Communist Party of the Philippines. That disintegration continues, but new networks of co-operation are forming, seemingly as fast as the splits take place!

Two of these new coalitions participated in the Sydney conference. The national-democratic federation Sanlakas, and the Akbayan People's Party are specifically electoral organisations. Apart from

the "continuing" Communist Party, these two coalitions regroup most of the components of the radical left, including groups which come from the CP, and groups like BISIG, which have a different history. While they discussed the high and low points of their experiences in a frank and friendly way, they agreed on one thing that serves as a warning to all those fighting the neoliberal globalisation: where the forces of the left retreat, the political space is quickly occupied by more or less religious movements, which are often very skilled at manipulating the population.

### Perspectives

The organisers of the Sydney conference want to ensure that the links made here are maintained and developed. They hope to prepare a second conference in the same spirit.

As in other parts of the world, inter-governmental and UN conferences are increasingly used as a focus of initiatives to articulate the voices of "those below." But, as elsewhere, the agenda and membership of these events are largely dictated by the agenda of the "official conference." In Japan, in particular, Parc-Amp has organised a series of international meetings to elaborate elements of a popular alternative to the dominant neo-liberal project. But there has been little space for radical political parties to be represented in their own right.

And the evolution of the sphere of "Non Governmental Organisations" is increasingly problematic. There is a risk that many NGOs will be integrated into the system which they claim to criticise.

The Sydney conference was not the first attempt to bring together more radical voices. In the 1970s the Japanese Revolutionary Communist League (4th International) initiated a series of "Asian Youth Conferences." But times have changed, and it is clear that the Sydney initiative has regrouped a much wider range of organisations than previous initiatives. In the face of a difficult international context, a bewildering geographical and political diversity across the region, the Sydney conference was a real success. The enthusiastic participation of so many political parties, coalitions, fronts and associations confirms the rebirth of the internationalist spirit. Good news! ★

\* Pierre Rousset is editor of *Rouge*, the weekly newspaper of France's LCR. He is the author of the IIRE Notebook *The Chinese Revolution*, available from your International Viewpoint distributor for £3/\$US5

## Conference website

The conference organisers are gradually uploading contributions, resolutions, and profiles of the participants to the conference website

The most recent additions include • Defeating Neo-liberalism, Prospects and Projects (Max Lane, DSP) • Crisis in the Asia-Pacific: Stop Repression, Build

Solidarity (Jayanta Rongpi, CPI-ML) • For a non-aligned & neutral Japan, for better lives. A report on the Japanese people's struggle (Norio Okada) • How the Japanese Communist Party intends to change Japan (Kimitoshi Morihara) and Pakistan today (Shoab Akbar, LP). [www.peg.apc.org/~apiaustralia/apsc98.htm](http://www.peg.apc.org/~apiaustralia/apsc98.htm)

## ★ conference reports

### Cuba: women's solidarity meeting

From April 14-18, women activists from all over the world met in Havana to express solidarity with the Cuban people against the illegal trade blockade of Cuba enforced by the U.S.A in the last two years following the Helms Burton law. **Nellys Palomo Sanchez** reports.

Some 3,200 women from 36 countries met for four days to agree on the need for not giving up hope in these difficult times for the human race. In the face of globalisation and human tragedy the idea of solidarity must be raised above all else.

During the meeting the wandering from hotel to hotel or university to study centre where the workshops were taking place caused great disruption and dampened the mood for many participants. Many workshops were not properly organised. Some were so overcrowded that a raffle was held to determine which speakers from each delegation would participate out of the 100-200 who were due to speak.

Undoubtedly this meeting was a challenge for the organisers who had not expected so many participants and couldn't cope with the large numbers. The long delays and queues aggravated the problem and resulted in many interesting and important workshops having to be cut short.

From the inaugural speech it was clear what the objectives of this meeting were; to go no further than expressing solidarity and condemnation of the blockade. The concluding global declaration took account of women's oppression in a macro sense without going into the minutia of the patriarchal oppression under which women live in all societies despite great social advances such as those achieved in Cuba.

Effectively the meeting was not to discuss a long list of specific topics or for the advertised workshops to find consensus on the different themes as these had only been allocated one day. It was basically a demonstration of solidarity and to show what effects the blockade had on the island, its people and in particular on women.

The Vice President of the International Democratic Women's Federation, Mayada Abassi said in her opening speech "it is the dignity of the Cuban people and Cuban women that will make the international community realise that this situation enforced on Cuba is unjust."

She also told us of the need to fight against social inequality and the pauperisation of millions of human lives on this planet; She dramatically described the social effects of neoliberalism on people pointing out that the first victims are women and children.

In the face of this devastating panorama she said "the only means we have to combat neoliberal policies is the solidarity between those who fight against the feminisation of poverty, violence, discrimination, illiteracy, militarisation and the annihilation of cultures and people different to those of the West, such as this meeting today with the indigenous peoples of the continent."

In the same way Nora Castaneda, general secretary of the FCMDVD (Continental Front of Women for a Life of Dignity), made reference to the consequences of structural adjustment programmes in Latin America, which have not had the same effect in Cuba, and have imposed on women the burden of administering poverty.

Understanding that in today's world there are two conflicting forces; neo liberal globalisation and the internationalisation of solidarity, Nora supports "the hope for a fairer world, equitable and humane, where solidarity is the love of our people". Obviously in this ideal world women will have to discuss how we build and what way of life we propose as a women's movement.

Must we adapt to the neoliberal ideology, or can we incorporate the feminist ethic into resistance against globalisation and social struggles? These were questions that were left unanswered for many at this meeting.

#### The real lives of women in Cuba

"Where is the feminist perspective in Cuba and at this meeting?" one Colombian participant asked one of the Cuban activists. This question bothered many participants, and is a stinging question for some Cuban women. The few who we could talk to faced up to the challenge and dared to talk about this taboo subject in Cuba.

Many women activists in Cuba have been the beneficiaries and the protagonists of the "revolution within the revolution" as Fidel calls it and the great changes it brought about in Cuban society. But, despite these gains, they continue suffering from *machismo*, which finds its expression in serious ways such as violence in interpersonal relationships, and overwhelming female responsibility for childcare and domestic tasks. For many Cuban women today the constant demands of the family continue falling on them and they have to

struggle with the unresolved problems that have worsened during the "special period."

As Mirta Rodriguez says, the material problems, so basic and painful, have their reflection in politics and in the psyche. It is them, it is us who determine in a measurable way the mood of the country. We are the ones who educate the others. Even in the queues, that intangible component of calm and firmness which translated into words says "despite all that has happened to us, it's worth persevering and resisting to conserve the sense of dignity, of educated poverty and of equal rights that we have as Cubans".

#### How representative is the Federation?

And what about women's organisations in Cuba? In January 1961 the FDMC (Federation of Cuban Women) started with 17,000 members, and grew to 239,000 members by 1962. Their objective was to raise the ideological, political, cultural and scientific level of women with the aim of incorporating them fully in the process of building the new way of life.

This was a dignified objective that, in those years, was an orphan of the feminist ethic being discussed elsewhere.

Even though the material conditions are much better than those in all the other countries in the region, in education, health and child care services, the Cuban Women's Federation does not reflect the day to day realities of Cuban women. The president of the Federation, Vilma Espin pointed out an endless list of impressive statistics to support the material advances in Cuban society, that women make up 37% of the labour force, 58.3% of technicians, 61% schoolchildren and 57% of university students. However she did not mention what percentage of women hold positions of responsibility in the leadership structures. In Parliament, for example, women held 33.9% of the seats until the last election, when this figure was reduced to 22.8%. In the Cabinet there are only two women ministers.

If we look at the Magisterial Conferences, we see a complete absence of women civil servants working for Carlos Lage (chief architect of the economic reforms), Ricardo Alarcon (president of the National Assembly) or for Rosa Elena Simeon, minister of Science, Technology and the Environment.

They told us about the government plans and policies to deal with the terrible situation the country is in, but they failed to mention what they were doing about prostitution, unemployment (currently rising among youth and women) or about the "Puertas Propistas" women who go door to door selling desperately needed goods now regarded as luxuries in Cuba.

After this meeting we continue to condemn the U.S blockade of Cuba as a criminal act against the Cuban people. However some of us were left with questions about women's oppression in Cuba and the inequality in political, social and economic fields. ★

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## coming soon

### Neoliberalism, the IMF and International Solidarity

Seoul, S. Korea, September 9-12

Korea, sandwiched between the Third World and advanced industrial nations, has become a new flashpoint in the ongoing battle between the people and the neo-liberal offensive. Hence the interest of this conference, which is organised by a range of South Korean labour unions and other people's organisations. They describe the conference as "a small step towards building cross-border and cross-sectoral alliances among various people's movements." There will be working groups on unemployment, privatization, migrant workers, environmental issues, the urban poor, and IMF-WB-MAI-NAFTA.

Travel subsidy may be available for those from the global South. Registration costs \$US1,000 (Northern participants) or \$US70 (Southern participants). Food and accommodation are included in this price.

For more information contact:

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Web: <http://kpd.sing-kr.org/~picis>

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### MAI '98 in Paris

An international week of action against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) will take place on September 21-28. The aim is to put MAI back on the front page of the newspapers, and build for the International gathering against MAI in Paris, France in October.

In France, Canada, the USA, Belgium and New Zealand, the disclosure of the content of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment has caused public indignation and at long last generated public debate. The meaning of this "constitution for a single global economy" has been grasped by scores of NGOs, trade-unions, political organisations and social movements. They are now working together in a common resistance to the "Silent Coup" of multinationals and investment banks, who, via MAI, have imposed a new set of rules on the world.

The Paris protests will begin on Saturday 17 October, two days before the official meeting on MAI resumes at the OECD building in Paris on Monday 19 October. (confirmation pending). Large delegations to the counter-meeting are expected from France, Belgium and Switzerland.

Tony Clarke <clarke@web.net> from the Polaris Institute, Canada is centralising all suggestions and amendments on his draft final declaration of the meeting. In France, Susan George <sgt@globenet.org>, from the Observatoire de la Mondialisation, is also working on a "People's Treaty." In Belgium, Gerard Lambert <gerardlambert@skynet.be> and Paul Lannoye (Ecolo Party), are consulting around a set of basic principles and obligations of investors.

### Preventing violence: the role of health professions and services

Mumbai, India, 28-30 November 1998

Health professionals and activists know from their experience that,

- The poor and the underprivileged masses in the Third World still do not have access to basic health care. Access to health care is a human rights issue.

- The world in general and India in particular, are in the grip of massive epidemic of violence. Violence affects the physical and psychological health of survivors and in worst cases, lead to death

A vigilant and sensitive health care service could contribute positively by caring for survivors and be effective in prevention by assisting survivors in getting justice. While this crucial position of health services and profession is understood by all of us, their roles and dilemmas are hardly discussed.

We also haven't created space for doctors, nurses and other health workers to interact with activists from women's, human rights, humanist and other movements. Indeed, we have lot to learn from each other. This conference is intended to provide such space.

Within the general framework of violence, the conference will focus on three themes: Violence Against Women; Caste and Communal Violence; and Violence by State Agencies.

As well as a range of Indian groups, interest in participation has been expressed by Physicians for Human Rights (USA, UK, Israel, Palestine, South Africa), the British Medical Association, International Federation of Health and Human Rights Organisations, Bangladesh Medical Association, treatment centres for survivors of torture in Bangladesh, Nepal and Denmark, and many more groups and individuals.

Thus, we would like health professionals as well as activists from various movements, NGOs, other professionals such as lawyers, media, academia, researchers, etc. in India to participate.

All participants – from 'health' or 'non-health' backgrounds – but active or interested in the issue, will play a crucial role in making the conference a success.

There are some funds for travel expenses of participants from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Accommodation and food are provided.

Contact: CEHAT, 519 Prabhu Darshan, 31 S. Sainik Nagar Amboli, Andheri West, Mumbai 400058, India Tel: 0091-22-6250363, Fax: 0091-22-6209203. Email: [admin@cehat.libom.ernet.in](mailto:admin@cehat.libom.ernet.in)

### 1999 Value Theory Mini-Conference: Deepening The Dialogues

Boston, USA, 12-14 March 1999

The principal justification which economics offers for excluding its foremost critic, Karl Marx, is the proposition that, whatever the merits of his contribution on individual issues, his concept of value is invalid because it leads to internal inconsistencies. A growing body of independent research shows that this argument is no longer sustainable.

This is the sixth "New Directions in Value/Price Theory" mini-conference, organised by the International Working Group on Value Theory (IWGVT). It will be held as part of the Eastern Economic Association (EEA) conference in Boston, USA in March 1999.

The major objective is to deepen the dialogues begun in the first five conferences, and encourage direct engagement between theoretical perspectives and in-depth examination of existing controversies, at the 1999 conference:

Panelists will present completed papers only (except at roundtables), which will be circulated to panelists well before the conference to allow for comment and engagement. A 15-minute norm for presentations will allow for more dialogue. To deepen existing discussions the organisers are departing from a common academic practice: they "strongly encourage papers that revisit contributions at past IWGVT mini-conferences, particularly 1998. Can you say something you've already said more effectively? If so, we will do our best to ensure it is listened to."

Final acceptance is conditional on provision of a completed paper for which the deadline is November 1st. The IWGVT is run on a voluntary basis and its costs greatly exceed its income. Due to limited financial resources, you must send a submission fee with your paper. This is \$US20 or £15 (\$10/£7 for low-waged). Checks payable in US dollars should be made out to Andrew Kliman; checks payable in UK pounds should be made out to Alan Freeman.

Contact <[value.theory@greenwich.ac.uk](mailto:value.theory@greenwich.ac.uk)>

# bookandfilmnotes

## A road movie that leads nowhere

**Men With Guns.** A film written, directed, and edited by John Sayles

Reviewed by Gary Cristall

From *Canterbury Tales* to *Heart of Darkness* to Hope, Crosby, and Lamour to Hard Core Logo, the 'road' genre has proved a worthy vehicle for an examination of society and its foibles. *Men With Guns* operates firmly in the tradition.

Set nowhere in particular in Central America, but clearly about Guatemala in the 1980s, John Sayles' latest movie accompanies a doctor on vacation to the rural villages where his students have gone to establish clinics. They don't phone, they don't write: so the good doctor sets out to find them and to examine the pride of his life's work. Starting off alone, the doctor is soon joined by a young boy – a victim of the military – and then by a deserter from same, who has given up, out of revulsion for what he has been forced to observe and participate in.

Next comes a priest who has fled a village to escape execution at the army's request.

We now have innocence (the doctor) and three ambiguous and flawed victims of the terror going down the road. At each stop, it appears that the doctor's students have been murdered, mostly by the army, but at least once by the guerrillas. At each stop, the villagers claim impotence in the face of 'men with guns.' As the quartet moves along, the message is clear: those without guns are at the mercy of those with. Only somewhere in the far off mountains is there a perhaps mythical paradise where there are no men with guns and therefore a peaceful life. By the end of the movie, the travellers, now five with the addition of a mute woman who has been raped by soldiers, receive their rewards. The doctor dies of a heart attack, having lost innocence and found knowledge, the boy finds a home, the deserter finds forgiveness and redemption, the priest regains his lost martyrdom, and the mute woman continues to search for paradise. It is all a bit too neat, and a lot too ambiguous.

The film, Sayles' eleventh feature, is well made. Sayles is a brilliant editor, and, with a crack European cameraman, the film looks good. From the first credits, with shapeless forms moving to reveal the names of the crew and cast, to the end, this is a professional telling of a tale. The problems are in the details.

There is a total lack of suspense: you can pretty much predict the story after ten minutes. The army is bad, the guerrillas are not as bad, but they are bad enough. The American tourists who meander in and out of the picture as the story unfolds, are two-dimensional at best, combining cliched, hackneyed, stereotypical tourist lines with equally cliched, hackneyed, stereotypical, bad Spanish. The peasants are equally two-dimensional; simple people of the earth, full of goodness, honest to a fault (unless corrupted by 'whites'), and looking only for a quiet life, uncontaminated by urban society. Even the names of the villages are cliches: *Caras Sucias* (dirty faces), *Tierra Quemada* (Burnt Earth), and the paradisaical *Cerca al Cielo* (Near to Heaven).

The musical score is similarly oblivious to reality. Mason Daring, Sayles long-time collaborator has crafted a 'world beat' fusion of Afro-Caribbean vocals and New York brass fusion; all this set in a region where the Mayan traditional music (including some of the wildest brass band music in the world) is as lovely, and evocative as any composer could wish for. The whole thing rings false.

This brings us to the question of the politics of the film. Sayles is no fool. *Matewan*, his film about the war of the mine owners against the miners in West Virginia in the 1920s, is about as sophisticated an analysis of American politics as has been put in an American film. What is he telling us here? I think there are two possibilities. The first and most likely is that, like much of the US left, Sayles has reached a political impasse. The army is a bunch of murderous bastards, killing, raping, robbing and plundering. The guerrillas are better, but ineffective, weak and not above the odd atrocity of their own. Only the 'people' are inherently good, always victimized, and without much hope. This really is a road that leads to nowhere, a pessimistic abandonment of all hope for change.

The other possibility is that Sayles is brilliantly creating a frustrating tale where only 'Men With Guns' are subjective actors. In this reading, those without guns should get them; organization (the clinics) without armed protection is useless. If this is Sayles message, it is at least optimistic – simplistic, but at least more real than the search for 'Cerca al Cielo.'

My bet, however, is on the former rather than the latter reading. This is not a great film. It is interesting for what it says about the thinking of American artists on the left ten years after the collapse of Stalinism, the winding down of the war in Central America, and the 'death of Socialism.'

This is, after all, the John Sayles who, a decade ago, lionized the gun-toting volunteers of the Lincoln Battalion in Spain, writing, 'The example of their sacrifice stands up in history for those not yet born when they shipped out for a Republic that was mostly a belief in what

the 4<sup>th</sup>  
International  
**60** years

Next month the Fourth International is celebrating its 60th birthday. Our Swedish section, the Socialistiska partiet (Socialist Party), has produced a beautiful 21 mm2 badge to mark the occasion. It is black, red and white on a copper-plated background.

For a picture of the badge go to [www.internationalen.se/sp/badg.htm](http://www.internationalen.se/sp/badg.htm)  
The cost is 30 SEK (25FF, \$US4). This is reduced to 20SEK (17FF, \$US3) for orders of 10 or more badges. Postage is included.

To order, send payment to the Socialist Party's Swedish postal account No 67 81 68-6. For larger orders you can also send a cheque payable to Hakan Blomqvist to: Socialistiska Partiet, Box 6087, 102 32 Stockholm, Sweden.

## Electronic Viewpoint

Some of the articles for the next issue of **International Viewpoint** are already viewable at our web site. We are slowly adding a downloadable archive of articles published in previous issues

[www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.html](http://www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.html)

The **International Viewpoint** list server enables you to receive all our articles, as soon as they are translated into English. Several weeks earlier than they are available in paper form! As well as announcements and updates from our sister organisations around the world.

We also have lists in French and Spanish. Subscription is free.

To add *your* name, send a message to: [<100666.1443@compuserve.com>](mailto:<100666.1443@compuserve.com>).

**International Viewpoint is at**  
[<100666.1443@compuserve.com>](mailto:<100666.1443@compuserve.com>)

people could be...'<sup>1</sup>

Now, Sayles has a different take. For Sayles, as well as his fictional travellers, and perhaps his political fellow travellers as well, this may well be the end of the road. That may partly explain why there is not a larger solidarity movement with the current Mayan uprising in Chiapas ★

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Shouts From The Wall, Posters and Photographs Brought Home From the Spanish Civil War by American Volunteers*. Uni. of Illinois Press.

## Post-Trotsky Trotskyism

**The Fate of the Russian Revolution: Lost Texts of Critical Marxism vol. 1. Edited by Sean Matgamna. Texts by Max Shachtman, Hal Draper, C.L.R. James, Al Glotzer, Joseph Carter, Leon Trotsky, and others. 608 pp. ISBN 0-9531864-0-7.**

What exactly was the USSR? The collapse of Stalinism and the resulting disorientation of much of the left has brought back to the fore the question of the fate of the Russian Revolution.

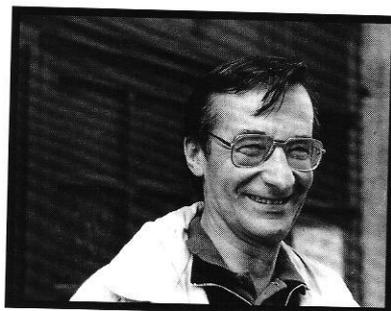
One major perspective has been buried in the archives for almost 50 years – that of Max Shachtman, Hal Draper and others who saw October 1917 as a genuine workers' revolution, but Stalinism as marking the creation of a new form of exploitative class system. While the writings of Trotsky, Cannon and others who saw the USSR as a form of workers' state have remained available, those who opposed their view of Stalinism have been out of print from many decades, and available only in a few specialised libraries.

This book presents the writings of this tradition from its origins in the disputes in the US Socialist Workers Party in 1939-40, through World War II to the post-war expansion of Stalinism and stabilisation of capitalism. By following the issues "in real time", in connection with the political choices of the day, it traces the developing disorientation of post-Trotsky Trotskyism as it was faced with new conditions. It also shows unexpected connections between the question of the USSR and other controversial issues in socialist politics – the national question, democracy, evaluation of post-1945 capitalist expansion and the concept of the revolutionary party.

An introduction by Sean Matgamna critically analyses Trotsky's own writings on the USSR from 1928 until his death.

Further information and a full table of contents are available on:  
[www.labournet.org.uk/awl/book/index.htm](http://www.labournet.org.uk/awl/book/index.htm)

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## Hans-Jürgen Shultz (1933-98)

**On the 15 July 1998** our comrade Hans-Jürgen Schulz died at the age of 65 of the cancer from which he had suffered for almost 10 years.

In 1954, when the defeat of the West German Left was already indisputable, he joined what was then the high school organisation of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) – the German Socialist Student Alliance (SDS) – and a little later the Young Socialists, the youth organisation of the SPD. At times Hans-Juergen belonged to the national leadership of the SDS.

Hans-Jürgen took part on the left wing of the Party in the controversies of the 50s, around the questions of the remilitarisation of West Germany, the equipping of the newly-formed armed forces (Bundeswehr) with nuclear weaponry, and the adaptation of the SPD to the restored capitalism of the Adenauer era. And he learnt what it means to swim against the stream.

When the SPD leadership made its infamous announcement that membership of the SPD was incompatible with that of the more radical SDS in November 1961, Hans-Jürgen, who in the meantime had become a member of the Hamburg leadership of the SPD, preferred to be expelled from the Party than betray the SDS. In the following period he kept up contact with left socialist circles through the "Society for the Promotion of Socialism", later "Socialist League" around Wolfgang Abendroth.

In the 60s he played a leading role in the 'Easter march' movement against the nuclear arms race. Despite massive police harassment and denunciation by bourgeois politicians, the Easter marches crystallised the extraparliamentary movement in West Germany.

In 1967 a spark of rebellion ignited youth across West Germany. Hans-Jürgen, who in the meantime had made a name for himself as an active trade unionist and shop steward, was one of the leading organisers in Hamburg of the biggest explosion against the bourgeois order in West Germany. The 1968 movement was a decisive and formative phase of his life.

In 1969, after the German section abandoned entrism in the SPD, Hans-Jürgen joined the Fourth International. He soon played a leading role in the GIM – the International Marxist Group as the section was then known. He contributed authoritatively to the development of the practical politics and analytical foundations of revolutionary socialism in West Germany, whether in the 70s in antimilitarist work and in the campaign of trade unionists against the bomb, in the antiwar movement of the 80s or the antiracist and antifascist movement of the 90s.

In 1986 Hans-Jürgen supported the merger of the GIM and KPD to form the VSP, the United Socialist Party. When he became convinced that this experiment contributed nothing to the strengthening of the revolutionary left, he, together with several others, left the VSP at the end of the 80s/beginning of the 90s. It is from this time of a renewed defeat of the West German left that he suffered the most painful personal and political wounds.

Despite much resistance and his severe cancer, Hans-Jürgen did not allow himself to be swayed from also organising a revolutionary Marxist nucleus in East Germany. Through the 'Avanti' group he made a massive contribution to the refoundation of the German section, and the formation of the RSB in 1994.

He was active in Vietnam solidarity, campaigning for the liberation of Kurdistan, the struggle for socialism in Sri Lanka, and the European Marches against unemployment.

In Autumn 1982, Hans-Jürgen and his wife Barbara were arrested in the GDR for the transport of underground material of the Fourth International to Poland and held for 18 days. Stasi chief Mielke kept himself personally informed about the course of the process against them. Only an international campaign led to their release.

Writing as Karl Karew, Fred Sommer, or simply HJS, he left us countless articles, books and pamphlets. He analysed militarism in Germany, the Soviet Union and the USA; he investigated the workings of secret services and fascist organisations; he dissected the downfall of Stalinism in East Germany and the development of neoliberal capitalism in West Germany and internationally.

It is our task to take Hans-Jürgen's exemplary involvement against all forms of exploitation, repression and exclusion as a spur for ourselves. To continue the organised struggle against capitalist barbarism and for revolutionary socialism - with the radicalism, tenacity, sincerity, modesty, seriousness and humanity which Hans-Juergen passed on to us.

**Political Secretariat of the RSB**

# Same time next year!

After two years of preparation the fifteenth youth camp in solidarity with the Fourth International finally arrived in Denmark.

**Intensive propaganda work** by the Danish comrades to convince those from the South that Denmark was not (quite) Arctic conditions paid off as almost five hundred young people converged on West Jutland for a week of politics and partying, from Moscow and the Canary Islands, from Poland and Portugal, and all points nearer. After many years work in International Workers Aid participants were particularly pleased to welcome a delegation from Bosnia.

Under the slogan "Reclaim freedom" the different forums and workshops explored the ways in which the freedoms of young people, of women, of gays and lesbians, of immigrants and the peoples of the Third World are restricted and eliminated in the name of the "freedoms" of the capitalist world, the free market, free trade, individual freedoms against collective rights for workers, for students, for the unemployed.

Prepared, as every year, by a meeting of representatives of the participating youth organisations, the political programme combines contributions by older comrades of many years experience with contributions by the young comrades, who both reflect the activity of their own organisations on their own themes, and tackle new questions specific to their generation, such as the role of music in creating youth identity.

Specific questions are taken up and discussed in depth in particular ways, in the women's only discussions in the women's space, the debates organised in the gay and lesbian space, or the permanent commissions which work on ongoing aspects of common activity. The permanent commission on student struggles was able to come to the camp this year with a brochure including contributions from Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, France and Belgium on the educational system in their countries and the recent student fights. (To obtain a copy of this brochure contact **International Viewpoint**)

To mark the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International the camp invited Charlie van Gelderen, sole surviving militant of the twenty-two delegates present at the founding confe-

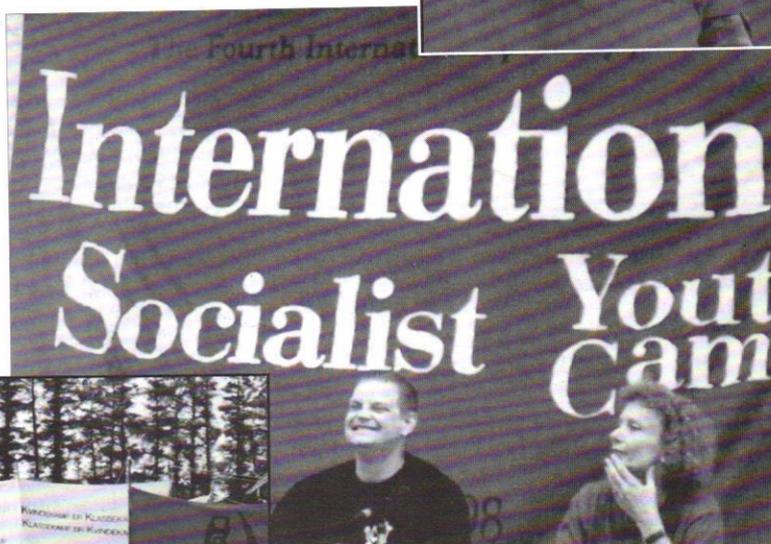
rence in 1938. The warm and appreciative welcome given to Charlie was returned in kind as he assured the evening rally:

"Your enthusiasm has relit the flame that was kindled at the historic Founding Conference, sixty years ago when, like many of you, I was in my twenties.

"Don't be disheartened by defeats and set-backs. Don't be dismayed because we are still small in numbers...

"Yours is the future. Stay true to your revolutionary spirit. You must win where my generation failed."

At the same rally, Tatau Godinho, member of the executive of the Brazilian PT and of the Fourth International leaders-



hip, spoke for the generation that came into politics in the context of the worldwide youth radicalisation following 1968 and outlined the fight to build a broad inclusive revolutionary movement.

Andrea Peniche from Portugal spoke for the young people present in asserting their commitment to the fight for revolutionary transformation.

Soren Sondergard, member of the Danish parliament for the Red-Green Alliance in which the SAP, Danish section of the Fourth International, participates, spoke of the anti-racist fight, one of the major campaigning themes of the youth comrades.

This annual initiative, successfully organised now for fifteen years, is considered indispensable by the delegations as a moment of national and international exchange in a context removed from the pressures of day to day activity. Next year the delegations look forward to meeting again, perhaps in rather a sunnier spot! ★

