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# Iran student revolt

## New centre

Blair and  
Shröder don't  
deliver



## Khomeni's heirs face the students

**Iran's students shook the country in July. M. Agah analyses these massive pro-democracy demonstrations, and the prospects for the "Islamic Republic."**

The history of contemporary Iran is full of similar protests against despotic regimes. The 1979 revolution was germinated, sprung, and was sustained mainly by the universities. Six months after the fall of the Shah, Ayatollah Khomeini was full of praise and endearments for the students. "Iranian students faced deprivation, torture, and hardship during the long years of oppression by the Shah's regime... they were subjected to all forms of pressure, distress and intimidation because they dared to stand up against dictatorship, despotism, and refused to submit to the forces of evil."

But six months later the Ayatollah understood that he could not manipulate

the students for his political purposes. "All the troubles afflicting mankind have their roots in universities," he fulminated, calling the universities "centres of corruption" and "licentious reveries." He declared a bloody "Cultural Revolution".

In April 1980, the regime mobilised para-military and mob forces, and moved in to neutralise the challenge posed by the universities—under the pretext of "Islamicising" the universities through "Cultural Revolution". By using violence, by physically taking control of the universities, the regime hoped to 'purge' the educational sphere of opposition supporters—who constituted a big majority, both among students and the faculty. The use of para-military forces and gangs of 'club-wielders' also helped the regime create an extremely repressive "law and order" climate across the country.

Twenty years later, the regime tried

to use the same method, but in an entirely different situation. The political and economical character of Iranian society is quite different. The regime faces a very different national and international situation. And today's student protesters come from a new generation, which has grown up since the "Islamic Revolution."

Over the last two decades, the Islamic regime has failed to achieve its goal of cultural brainwashing of the people—despite the complete take over of universities and other educational and cultural centres, introduction of an Islamic ideology for government, harsh rule on all sectors of the Iranian society, and repression resembling Europe's medieval inquisition.

The regime tolerated student dissent, as long as they whispered their demands to one another. But when student demands and demonstrations echoed in the world, the foundations of

the regime were shaken. The regime knows very well that the students' demands for freedom, democracy and social justice are the same as the Iranian people's.

In response, the regime has resorted to violence. The bloody crackdown reflects the unity of the two factions of the regime—hard-nosed fundamentalists, advocates of absolute, despotic rule; and “moderates” who accept reform as the best way to maintain the trembling regime as long as possible.

## Background

The explosive situation in Iran is the result of two parallel crises: economic collapse, and a crisis of political leadership.

After two decades of Islamic rule, and nearly ten years of economical reform under the “moderate” wing of regime under ex-President Rafsanjani, (in co-operation with international finance organisations like the IMF and the World Bank), the Iranian economy is on the verge of total collapse.

For the vast majority of Iranians, the economic misery is worse than any period since the second world war. Unemployment, inequality, crime and corruption have reached unprecedented levels—despite the particularly savage punishments imposed on small criminals and others who break Islamic law.

Corruption has spread through the entire regime like a virus. Many officials have become very rich through controlling the black market (there is a state monopoly of foreign trade). Others have purchased nationalised industries and firms for ridiculously low prices.

Some have used more crude forms of corruption. Several years ago, the Rafighdost (leader of the *passdaran* religious militia) was implicated in the transfer of 123bn *Rials* into a Swiss bank. He is still at the head of one of the country's largest companies.

The *Rial* has been devalued to less than 1% of its pre-revolution value. Per capita incomes continues to fall as the population increases and national incomes diminishes. Foreign debt is about \$US16bn, with another \$11bn still owed for foreign purchases made through the Central Bank.

Iran's Central Bank has asked international lenders to reschedule its debt, while government officials are desperately pursuing new sources of external credit to repay their accumulating foreign obligations. Iran needs \$18bn of new loans to cover the expected 2000 budget deficit, and to partially finance the necessary invest-

ment in the oil industry—an estimated \$100bn will be needed over the next ten years.

Industrial output is on the verge of total collapse. The agriculture sector is even worse. In April 1999, the Iranian government officially acknowledged that it had attempted to buy \$500m of American agricultural products four months earlier. Iranian officials complained about the “Great Satan's” delay in responding to their demand. According to the US Secretary of Agriculture, the deal is “still under review.”

Reliable statistics are hard to obtain. But many analysts say the country now suffers from unemployment of 40% or more.

The drop in oil prices over the last 12 months has aggravated Iran's economic problems. Oil revenue still accounts for a huge portion of the state budget. As the price of the crude oil has dropped to its lowest levels in 10 years, the Iranian government has lost more than 40% of its foreign currency earnings.

At the same time, the Iranian population has increased rapidly since the revolution. Half of Iran's 65 million people are under the age of 18. A least one million new jobs are needed every year, just to keep up with this youthful population. The problem of unemployment is particularly acute among Iran's urban youth. Many are unable to find work, even after high school or university studies.

Many analysts are predicting “negative growth” in the country's GNP over the next 12 months. The rate of growth fell from 5% in 1994 to 2.5% in 1997, and 0% in 1998. Unless there is a sharp increase in the world price of crude oil—which is very unlikely—this economic crisis is very likely to have serious political implications, and potential violence during the Majles (parliamentary) elections in the early part of 2000.

## Khatami's election

After years of war mongering, the regime was obliged to accept the end of the 8-year war with Iraq. To revenge their humiliation, Iran's leaders liquidated over 10,000 political prisoners in a few days—an unprecedented act of barbarism.

The regime decided to get rid of its political opponents abroad as well. It launched a vast terrorist operation abroad, assassinating more than 100 opponents. The regime aimed to silence “noisy trouble-makers abroad” and tighten the screws of repression inside the country.

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But this violent backlash went too far, provoking international condemnation of the regime. It reached its peak in July 1996, when a German court officially condemned the regime's top office-holders for organising and ordering the assassination of Iranian opposition activists abroad.

The Iranian regime, which was desperately in search of new credits from international finance organisation, was so disgraced in the eyes of the world that it had no choice but to take some initiative to polish its image abroad.

### False democracy

And so, in June, 1997, Iranian people were offered a chance to take part in what the Islamic regime called a "presidential election". Democratic elections are normally considered to be a means of exercising the voters' political freedom to choose the government. In the Islamic regime they are used only to extend, deepen and strengthen the existing dictatorship. They are almost a sham and fraud. The rival factions within the regime use tightly managed "elections" to work out their internal power struggles for enrichment, position and dominance and give a spurious stamp of legitimacy to their dictatorial rule.

Genuine elections demand maximum political freedom. But Iran's 1997 presidential election took place in such an atmosphere of repression, fear and terror that even Moussavi, Prime Minister from 1980-88, did not dare to stand as a candidate, because he is now outside the main faction in the regime.

Only four of the 234 prospective candidates were judged "fit" by the Constitutional Supervisory Council (a watchdog for the "Islamic" constitution. Those judged "unfit" included a former Speaker of the "Islamic" parliament, and an ex-head of government.

The regime's candidate among the "lucky four" was Nateq-Nouri, Speaker of the Islamic Parliament. Despite the massive propaganda machine, 70% of voters chose Khatami, head of the unimportant Ministry of Islamic propaganda in 1980-88, and outside politics since then.

Khatami promised law enforcement, preventing lawlessness and promoting openness within the framework of the system. He advocates an "Islamic civil society". If the hardliners model is the Saudi Arabian system of government, Khatami stands for the Pakistan model of Islamic democracy. [This article was written before the coup in Pakistan].

With strong participation of the women, youths and intellectuals, Khatami obtained 21 millions votes versus nine million for his three adversaries all together. Equally surprising was the unprecedented turnout: 85%. The regime had to accept his victory as a *fait accompli*.

This massive vote for Khatami means a very big "NO!" to the regime as a whole. For the first time in many years, people had a chance to reject the regime, and express their desire for change. They grasped the occasion and used the election as a referendum to express their rejection of the regime.

In doing so, the "reformist" wing of the regime was born. This label was imposed by circumstances on an unwilling Khatami and his supporters inside the regime. Khatami has won support from the "left wing" of the regime—those who ruled the country for the first ten years after the revolution, but were pushed out of power after the Iran-Iraq war and the death of Khomeini. These "leftists" are now trying to surf on the new wave of popular struggle, reinventing themselves as "liberal democrats."

Twenty years ago, Iran's Stalinist left called this regime faction an "anti-imperialist" force—though "left fascists" would have been more accurate. After the death of Khomeini, Iran's (by now decimated) Stalinists thought they could distinguish this "left religious" current from the "traditional religious" and "modern right" factions in the regime. Now that Khatami has taken office, the Stalinists' terminology has again changed and they analyse the regime as having "reformist" and "totalitarian" wings. The only constant of this crude analysis is the Stalinists' desperate call for progressives to support the "reformists."

### Popular self-confidence

Following the remarkable defeat of the regime's presidential candidate, the masses regained their confidence. All section of Iranian society, specially women and youth, grasped any event to defy the system. Youth and women, whose votes brought Khatami to power, were particularly relieved at the easing of social restrictions, pushing the boundaries of Iran's strict Islamic law by displaying few centimetres of hair outside their compulsory headscarves. Women began to challenge the restrictions on riding bicycles and attending football matches, leading to violent clashes between women and both the police and the regime's thugs.

The seeds of a freer press were also

planted. Civil rights protests from writers became more frequent. Some clerics challenged the traditional rules. On 1st May 1999 workers defied a government ban, organised an independent rally and confronted police and paramilitary groups.

These multiple signs of protest encouraged even the extremely cowardly bourgeois nationalist leaders to call for reforms.

But the regime is deeply opposed to even the smallest changes in the system. The increasingly vocal press has been hobbled by hard-line courts. At least three pro-reform publications have been closed since the beginning of 1999. Dozens of journalists have been arrested. Some have been harassed, others jailed.

Groups within the regime even organised the assassination of a dozen intellectuals active in a small group hoping to form a freelance writers' guild, and the murder of an outspoken bourgeois nationalist opposition leader and his wife. But these assassinations boomeranged, when thousands of people attended the victims funerals.

The assassination of a dozen of intellectuals active in a small group hoping to form a freelance writers' guild, together with the murders of the an outspoken bourgeois nationalist opposition leader and his wife changed qualitatively the political scene of Iran. Their funerals attracted thousands, transforming their largely workaday lives into an emblem of people's desire to think and do what they want.

Government had to react to this public pressure. After days of hesitation and manoeuvring, a governmental commission was established to investigate the killings. The commission reported daily to the president. According to Khatami's cabinet secretary, suspicion focused almost immediately on the government itself. On July. 6, the government admitted the involvement of state agents in the killings. Subsequent reports indicated as many as 12 agents, including Mr Emani, deputy minister in the intelligence agency.

Meanwhile, hard-line elements in the conservative-dominated Majlis (Islamic parliament) finally succeeded in passing an extremely restrictive press law, on July 7. The following day *Salaam* newspaper was closed down, after it published a secret document showing that Emami had also advocated precisely this type of restrictive press law. [Emami died in prison in September. The authorities claim that he committed suicide by



drinking a hair-removing solution. He was almost certainly murdered by the regime.]

The mounting tension between the pro-democracy movement and the regime finally erupted into bloodshed when security forces and Islamic militants attacked a student protest over the closure of *Salaam*. This sparked six days of protest and repression.

On 9 July, at 4 o'clock in the morning, the students' dormitories were savagely attacked first by religious paramilitaries and then by members of state security forces. They ransacked more than 2,000 rooms, burned books, stole whatever they could find, and beat up and arrested several hundred students. There are confirmed reports that half-dozen were killed. One young man visiting a friend in the dormitory was thrown out of a third floor window and lost his life.

On 10 July, there was general condemnation of the savage actions of the security forces. Most of the jailed students were released. News of the brutal assault on the campus enraged public opinion. Over 25,000 people joined a protest rally in Tehran. Similar demonstrations took place in all major cities.

Students raised clear demands: free speech; free press; freedom of assembly, political parties, and associations; liberation of all political prisoners; dismissal and open trials for those who ordered and carried out the political assassinations of the last year;

and open trial for those who ordered and carried out the attack on the student dormitories.

Students were also shot and savagely beaten in Tabriz city. The university's Islamic Students Council told *Khordad* newspaper that at least 15 people were shot, including three women. What began as a peaceful campus sit-in turned into a scene of bloodshed after police helped Islamic vigilantes attack other demonstrators outside the university gates. Regime paramilitary thugs then locked themselves inside the university building, ripped the clothes off students and beat them for hours, the council said. The thugs then went to a local hospital and abducted those students who had been wounded by gunfire. The Tabriz atrocity was so horrible that the regime's Minister of Higher Education talked of "the most criminal event in the history of the Iranian universities."

More than 1,500 people were arrested in connection with the disturbances, including student leaders and prominent opposition figures. Authorities say some of those released will be re-arrested when the investigation is complete. Nearly all arrested were under the age of twenty—the generation that has only known the Islamic regime.

In fact, the "student movement" was infiltrated and compromised by security agents and vigilante thugs—who disguised themselves by shaving their beards and changing out of their

customary black shirts in order to provoke students into leaving the university compound, where they were beaten by other paramilitaries or arrested by the security forces. Vigilante groups also attacked banks, looted shops and harassed passers-by.

All genuine student groups distanced themselves from the rioters. The security forces witnessed and tolerated the spreading lawlessness. One of the infiltrators, a member of the hard-line Islamic militia, was captured by students and exposed in the *Sobhe-Emrooz* newspaper. A few days later, the publication was closed down.

The regime hoped to discredit the student movement nationally and internationally, by making it appear violent. The rioting served as a pretext for banning several independent daily newspapers that had played a key role in providing accurate information, and being a voice for reform during the last two years.

But the outpouring of sympathy for the students visibly shook the regime. Faced with seething unrest, the two factions set aside their differences, and united to strangle the pro-democracy movement.

The hard-line elements of the regime moved to appropriate the crisis for their own purposes by infiltrating the student movement and instigating violence in the city, culminating in a stage-managed anti-student march on July 14. All through the night of 13 July, busloads of "supporters of the regime" were brought into the city from provincial towns, camping overnight in tents by highways. Employees of state institutions and the soldiers were forced to participate in the anti-student march. This was widely confirmed and reported by independent sources.

An atmosphere of fear has descended upon Iran. Key sections of downtown Teheran have been colonised by roving bands of Hizbollah club-wielders who terrorise passers-by. Shops and bazaars were forced to shut and all the mobile phones and fax services were disconnected as the official demonstration called for "Unity" and the reassertion of the regime's power.

But the regime could only mobilise 60-80,000 in Teheran. Considering that the capital has about 12 million residents, and the state bureaucracy has more than four million employees, this "counter-demonstration" was a total failure.

This did not prevent the regime from claiming that millions of Iranians had demonstrated for order.

## ★ Iran

More surprisingly, the western mass media supported the Iranian regime's version of events. Unsubstantiated reports claimed that "hundreds of thousands" had demonstrated. Instead of reporting from the scene, western media recycled films and photos from 20 years ago.

What began as a genuine, spontaneous student uprising in defence of press freedoms and political reforms has now been appropriated by extremist religious paramilitaries and vigilantes aiming to discredit the students and provoke a crackdown by the regime.

With a remarkable political instinct, the students linked the regime corruption to their central democratic demands. The leading regime circles do not cling on to their monopoly of power essentially because of ideological dogmatism or religion fanaticism. They cling on to it so as to defend and extend these material privileges.



### Transformation and regroupment

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

In all the countries where such possibilities exist, the organisations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the re-groupment process. We consider this as an important step towards the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left on a world scale.

At the international level, the Fourth International is an active participant in re-groupment, bringing with it the advantages of a long tradition of combat against capitalism and Stalinism. ✱

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### After the unrest

Supports of Khatami have repeatedly accused the conservatives of staging the unrest to topple Khatami or block his reform agenda, while conservatives have alleged the riots were a sign that Khatami's reforms have gone too far. A week after the suppression of the student movement, Khatami dismissed any appearance of a factional split in the government as an "illusion" while claiming the unrest was a "declaration of war" on his reform programme.

On the eve of the protests, the elite was divided. On one side was Khamenei, whose support for a hard-line reaction to the students puts him close to the ultra-conservative elements, very hostile to even the smallest liberalisation of the system. On the other side was Khatami who, after some hesitation, has become a supporter of a much more measured reaction to the students, and some kind of "controlled" opening in the direction of insignificant reforms.

But as soon as the movement crossed what the regime called the "red line" (i.e. rejecting the system) Khatami and his "reformist" faction quickly and without the least hesitation joined the "hard-liners." On 13 July he personally ordered the suppression of the student pro-democracy movement.

The massive reaction of various layers of society, including journalists and university teachers, in support of the students, has visibly disconcerted the regime.

The savage attack and atrocity by the security forces of the regime and *Hezbollah* gangs of club-wielders showed once again that the regime is not capable of reforming itself. Even a "reportedly honest" man like Khatami, with 21 millions votes in his pocket, can not go further than his failed predecessor, Rafsanjani.

Two weeks after the bloody crackdowns the conservative-dominated judiciary announced draconian "thought-crime" legislation which, if voted into law, would make almost any criticism of the Islamic regime a political crime.

One of those arrested, Manuchehr Mohammadi, a leading member of the National Association of Students, appeared on state television shortly after the demonstrations "confessing" to his involvement with "counter-revolutionary agents".

In early September, just before the universities reopened, the regime announced death sentences against four

students arrested in connection with student demonstrations. A few days later, the regime announced that two of the sentences had already been approved by the Supreme Court. No information as the identity of those sentenced or details of the charges and trial proceedings against them, is available.

As usual, the trials were conducted in complete secrecy, and with no proper procedure. Trial proceedings in Islamic Revolutionary Courts are held behind closed doors, often inside prisons. Lawyers and observers are excluded from the proceedings. There is no right to appeal.

It is too early to determine whether the reform era has abruptly ended or just suffered another painful birth pain. But one thing is certain: Iran is not the same as it was in July 1997. Very few of the 21 million Iranians who voted for Khatami had any illusion in any faction of the regime. Many are totally disillusioned with his demagoguery, and the rest are very frustrated by his glacial pace of change.

### Pandora's box

The hard-liner Khamenei has been very badly humiliated. He will now try to play his role as the supreme judge-arbiter, pushing the most extremist elements of the two factions out of the political scene, and putting order in the rival wings.

But he does not have the same authority as Khomeini had in the past, and Iranian society is not the same as it was ten or even two years ago.

The students have opened the "Pandora's box" of social and political demands. Nobody is capable of putting the spirit back into the bottle! Some student leaders have gone as far as announcing the end of peaceful struggle, and the necessity of "other methods." ★

### New Publication

#### In defence of Marxism #2

The latest issue of this Persian-language magazine includes: M. Agah's "Reflection on the Globalisation," J. Kalibi on "Political Regime of the Bourgeois society," Ernest Mandel on "Marx, the Present Crisis and the Future of Labour," and Jesus Albarracin on "The Impasse of Market Ideology in France." Plus other essays and reviews

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# Opinion

## Lessons of the revolution

The basic cause of the defeat of the Iranian revolution was the absence of a revolutionary proletarian organisation with a revolutionary strategy and programme rooted in the vanguard layers. There was no revolutionary organisation of any significance which had a programme reflecting, albeit in a distorted way, the objective necessities of the Iranian revolution or providing a consistent and clear perspective for the revolutionary masses.

Such an organisation must exist before the revolutionary upheaval — it is extremely unlikely that it can come about in the course of the revolution itself.

This basic dilemma is even more acute in a country like Iran, where revolutionary periods are usually sandwiched in between long periods of severe repression in which mass organisations cannot develop. This only increases the importance of a revolutionary organisation capable of offering a political and organisational lead to the masses.

In the years following the defeat of the Iranian revolution, there had been much discussion on the Iranian left, resulting in numerous splits and realignments. Yet there had been almost no real reassessment of the tradition with which the left operated through the 1970s and into the period of revolution. At best, there had been some rhetorical denunciation of 'Stalinism'. But there has been little understanding of Stalinism's class basis and its impact on the left world-wide.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, most of the Iranian left abandoned Marxism and adapted themselves to the bourgeoisie. Today, most of the Iranian left is either attached to the old formulae or has gone to social democracy. The old ideas (Stalinism or reformism) dominate every area of theory.

During the 1979 revolution the strategies of the left, dictated by the Stalinist tradition, made it much easier for Khomeini to destroy the workers' movement and consequently the revolution itself. About half of the left supported the Khomeini regime because it was "anti-imperialist" — reflecting the Stalinists' obsessive search for "progressive" and "anti-imperialist" sections of the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie.

Today the tragedy is going to repeat itself in another way. Iranians face one of the most repressive regimes in modern history. The struggle for democracy and political freedom should be at the top of the agenda of every political group and opposition current. Even the monarchists and the most rightist groups accept the need for a "democratic" transformation of Iran.

But Stalinist "stagist" theory conflates the struggle for civil rights and democracy with the "democratic revolution". But since there is no evident dynamic towards the formation of "democratic" sections of the bourgeoisie or petit bourgeoisie, Iranian Stalinists attribute this historic task to one of the factions within the regime.

In every revolutionary upsurge in Iran's modern history, the central political demands of the masses have always been around the questions of democratic rights. The 1979 revolution brought about many democratic rights, after struggles which have marked the country's 20th century history. It was a consummate sequel to the unfinished popular movements that had sporadically shaken the thrones of the Persian Shahs during the previous hundred years.

But all those gains were brutally suppressed in Khomeini's counter-revolution. Iranians today have no more democratic rights than their great grandparents in the late 19th century.

The historical task of the Iranian revolution in democratising the state has been pushed back by a regime that — even in its demagogic "legal" expression — openly claims that all power rests with one man. The "Supreme leader" is completely outside all forms of control. He is chosen by the conservative-dominated Assembly of Experts (a body whose members are appointed by the same Supreme leader). But even this Assembly is legally forbidden to criticise his actions. In practice, he is accountable to nobody. He controls the judiciary, the security and police forces, the army, radio and television.

Iran is supposedly a republic. But no representative body can make any decisions that contradict the wishes of the supreme leader. He decides who may become a candidate in an election, overrule the results of elections, change any social and political institution, and decide on the allocation of all social resources. The country is run by a clerical-capitalist dictatorship which claims to have unlimited, absolutist "divine" authority.

The only "rights" recognised by Iran's clerical rulers are complete subjugation of everything to the arbitrary rule of the mullahs. The "Islamic Republic" is so repressive that it intervenes even in the private lives of citizens. What the masses are allowed to believe, wear, eat or drink are all decided by the state. [MA] ★



# Military takeover

**Troops took over key buildings in the capital, Islamabad, in the evening of October 12th, several hours after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced the dismissal of General Mussaraf. The Prime Minister and his brother were taken into "protective custody".**

**Farooq Tariq (General Secretary of the Labour Party of Pakistan) sends this report.**

In his first nation wide address, Army chief General Pervaiz Musharf did not mention martial law or announce any interim arrangements.

He said that everyone was aware of the kind of turmoil and uncertainty that the country had gone through in recent

times. "Not only have all the institutions been played around with, and systematically destroyed, the economy too is in a state of collapse... Despite all my advice, they tried to interfere with the armed forces, the last remaining viable institution in which all of you takes so much pride and look up to, at all times, for the stability, unity and integrity of our beloved country".

This is the usual demagoguery of any military ruler. But General Musharf has not yet announced martial law.

The military coup was apparently provoked by the announcement of the dismissal of the General. Only one week earlier, the Nawaz Government had promoted the General to Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Committee. The General had immediately purged

some senior military officers who were known as Nawaz Sharif supporters. In retaliation, the Prime Minister tried to dismiss the general.

This was the immediate excuse for the military take-over. But the main reasons are deeply rooted in the present economic crisis and its political effects. The coup is part of the aftermath of the Kargil dispute with India over Kashmir. The Nawaz Government blamed army chiefs for Pakistan's defeat.

In a move to reschedule the country's IMF loans, the Nawaz Sharif Government recently blamed the Taliban Government in Afghanistan for "terrorist activities inside Pakistan." This is a surprising U-turn. Pakistan is the only country in the world, which had formally recognized the Taliban Government of Afghanistan. It has actively supported the Taliban to take over Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan. Sharif's sudden hostility to the Taliban was not appreciated by the various religious currents within the army.

The economy is in absolute shatters.

## LPP Declaration Army out of politics!

[Lahore, 13 October] The Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) strongly opposes the army coup, and demands that the army go back to the barracks. The LPP further demands the creation of a workers interim government to hold fresh elections for a new legislative assembly.

The army coup mirrors the deep-rooted economic crisis that has exposed the internal contradictions and infighting of the Pakistan ruling class.

Nawaz Sharif, ex Prime Minister, wanted to strengthen his dictatorial power by forcing the retirement of General Pervaiz Mussaraf. But this coup proves that the army is the real ruler of the country. Nawaz's attempt at grabbing power was deplorable. But the army coup is absolutely unacceptable.

The new government—even if it is a civilian set up—will be a puppet in the army's hands. Whether we have a military or civilian regime now depends on

the generals' negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank. The coup was against the plans of US imperialism, but the US will find a compromise with Pakistan's military strongmen.

The new government will use accountability as a pretext, but this will be an illusion. The new government will not be able to recover loans from defaulters. In fact, the masses will be taxed even more heavily, in a futile bid to overcome the economic crisis.

The lack of protest against the coup proves the utter impopularity of the Nawaz regime, because of its economic policies. The new regime will have to carry out the same economic policies. So it too will be increasingly unpopular.

The army coup will sharpen the national question in the three smaller provinces, particularly if the army resorts to dictatorial methods.

For the moment, the masses might feel some relief, because

the army coup has replaced the Nawaz regime. But they will soon be disillusioned. The trade union movement, working class peasants, free press and political parties will suffer the loss of democratic rights.

The class struggle will be even more difficult. The working class will have to fight for democratic rights, in addition to their genuine rights and demands.

The Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) demands that the army return to barracks immediately. An interim workers peasant's government should be set up to hold the ruling class accountable.

This workers peasant interim government should hold elections for a new legislative assembly. Democratic rights should be restored immediately. No ban should be imposed on meetings, demonstrations, and processions.

The LPP vows to mobilize the working class and peasants to press for these demands. It will launch a campaign for the restoration of democratic rights and it will not accept any attempt by the military to impose martial law. ★



The Government's attempt to introduce a general sales tax was successfully opposed by the small traders association, which organized a nationwide strike on 4th September. In the face of this protest, the government ignored IMF instructions, withdrew the GST and introduced a new tax.

In another development, cotton growers were organizing massive demonstrations to demand an increase in guaranteed cotton prices. This increase was opposed by the powerful All Pakistan Textile Manufacturers Association APTMA. Cotton amounts for 70% of Pakistan's exports. The country produces 10% of the world's cotton. On 10th October, a nationwide protest of peasants and cotton growers blocked all the main roads of Pakistan for several hours.

All these developments exposed the extremely unpopular nature of the Nawaz Sharif government, and the dramatic decline in popular support for the Prime Minister. In early 1997, Nawaz won the general elections with 40% of the total vote, and 65% of seats in the national assembly. It used its majority to remove constitutional guarantees of trade union rights, women's rights, and the protection minorities and small ethnic groups. The government tried to bring the bureaucracy under its absolute control, humiliating the civil service in public.

Nawaz Sharif wanted to rule like a Mughal emperor, with his words translated into actions within seconds. He introduced a telephone help line, where he would listen to any complaint and take immediate action. State television would follow the story, giving people the impression that justice has been done in seconds. But all without any proper investigation of the complaint ...

The Nawaz Sharif government also had an obsession with highway construction. He wanted his roads to be built in days. Any obstacles had to be removed, without considering alternatives. Not surprisingly, many historical buildings were bulldozed, provoking widespread discontent among the urban population.

Despite his demagoguery, Sharif was unable to implement the IMF agenda for quick privatization of the main public sector institutions like railway, telecommunication, and electricity.

He clashed with some of the international power companies which had signed contracts with the previous Benazir Bhutto government to build the power generation plants. These contracts allowed the power companies to sell this electricity at a price above the

international competitive rate. The energy multinationals bribed the Benazir government to accept this deal. Nawaz's clique hadn't shared in these kickbacks, so was rather hostile to the deal. In the end, the World Bank intervened, urging Nawaz to seek a compromise with the power companies.

The Nawaz government also tested a nuclear bomb despite the hypocritical opposition of the USA. He went on war

with India, and lost. This isolated the Nawaz Government from its religious constituency and its international backers.

The government had high hopes that it could compensate by an ambitious trade relationship with the Daewoo group. But that Korean multinational is in deep crisis, and is not ready to expand its Pakistan operations.

The Nawaz Government was very

## LPP Conference Punjab revolutionaries

**Almost 250 people from 18 districts attended the first Punjab Conference of the Labour Party of Pakistan in late September. Farooq Sulehria reports.**

In a lively discussion, delegates stressed that Nawaz Sharif's government might not complete its remaining two and half years [though no-one predicted the military coup of 12 October]

The capitalists have not solved any basic problems of the masses. In the new era of globalisation, the process of recolonisation of the poor countries have gone quite far. The *per capita* income in Pakistan has fallen from \$US460 in 1990 to \$340 in 1999.

Religious fundamentalism has grown but a new Afghanistan or Iran like situation is not an immediate threat in Pakistan.

Delegates said it would be difficult for the army to take direct control, but that some new transitional government might take over, to ensure the speedy implementation of the IMF agenda of privatisation and introduction of new taxes.

There were no major differences between comrades' analysis of key perspectives. Delegates reiterated their commitment for

the ideas of permanent revolution.

The party's priorities have been fixed as youth, trade unions and among the remaining Left in the province. Delegates resolved to study and learn from the recent successes of the LPP in Sind province.

Only four delegates voted against the party's 43 member Punjab council. The newly elected provincial chairman is a Railway worker from Rawalpindi. A former leading member of the Communist Party, he and 32 comrades joined the LPP in August, after three years of joint discussions.

The conference was punctuated by a play about the peasant struggle against feudalism, and demonstrations against UN against Cuba and Iraq, against federal rule in Sind province and against the killings of political activists of opposition in Sind

The conference was reported by most of the national media, and delegates congratulated local comrades for an impressive local propaganda campaign, covering the town with posters and wall slogans. ★

International greetings were received from the Fourth International, Australia's DSP, the London group of the LLP, and the IIT.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

### The Gulf War and the New World Order

André Gunder Frank and Salah Jaber [72 pages A4]

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## ★ Pakistan/India

weak, unstable and isolated. Surprisingly, this did not stop it from intensifying its conflict with the military hierarchy.

### What now?

The military takeover did not provoke any resistance from the masses. There was a sense of confusion among the population, and, to some extent, a sense of relief.

Most political parties have gone along with this popular sentiment. The Pakistan People's Party, the party of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, has backed the coup. Bhutto said that she is willing to give the military dictatorship six months to bring corrupt politicians and parties to account.

Cautious support also came from the Pakistan National Conference, an alliance of seven left and radical bourgeois parties, from the National Workers Party (NWP) — established on June 2 with the merger of the Pakistan Socialist Party, Awami Jamhuri Party and Pakistan National Party — and from the Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party (CMKP).

These left parties see the military as a non-corrupt alternative to the extremely corrupt bourgeois parties.

In contrast to the Stalinist left, the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) is the only party to take a firm position against the military dictatorship. The LPP has called for a workers and peasants' commission to investigate the corruption of the politicians and bureaucracy. It has demanded an interim government of workers and peasants to hold impartial general elections for a new constitutional assembly.

On October 21 soldiers raided the offices of the LPP weekly *Mazdoor Jeddojuhd*. They also seized copies of *Prepare For Fight*, a new book by Amjad Ayub, LPP overseas organiser.

The military have not yet developed their strategy. Unlike previous coups, the generals have not used religion as the main pretext for their action.

If the generals try to establish open military rule under martial law, they may face opposition from the IMF, the World Bank and the US government. So it seems more likely that they will install a civilian puppet government — under full military control.

The main aim of this so-called civilian government will be the speedy implementation of the IMF agenda.

The military take over is yet another setback for the left and trade union movement in Pakistan. ★

Farooq Sulehria also contributed to this article.

# India's rightward drift

**Elections in September confirmed the sharp rightward shift in Indian politics under a Hindu-fundamentalist government.**

### Kunal Chattopadhyay

**Big business** at home and abroad was enthusiastic about the comfortable (though not huge) majority of Atal Behari Vajpayee's coalition government. The stock market broke the symbolic 5000 mark, and the Indian rupee — never a strong currency — strengthened on currency markets.

Bolstered by this support, Vajpayee's caretaker government went on the offensive. It increased prices of petrol and diesel drastically. Vajpayee warned that the nation would have to brace for tough decisions. The fat cats of the nation however remained unperturbed, showing they knew quite well on whom would fall the burden of the tough decisions. India's Standard and Poor rating rose slightly (meaning western bankers see the country as a less risky customer).

### Taking a risk with insurance

Vajpayee's next project is legislation to open the insurance sector to foreign multinationals. Insurance in India is far from ideal, with a corrupt bureaucratic machinery, and all kinds of "fine-print" limiting protection. But premiums are still affordable for workers in the organised sectors. True, this is a small minority of the population. But affordable insurance is still one of the gains obtained by Indian workers since independence in 1947.

Workers and employees in the nationalised insurance corporations have decided to agitate and strike against the "liberalisation of the insurance market." But such responses are fragmented, and often dispirited, because of the collapse of the left.

This is one of India's most right-wing parliaments. The National Democratic Alliance, a grouping of 24 parties led by Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has 297 of the 543 seats in the lower house. The far right is particularly strong. The BJP has 182 seats, and smaller extreme groups like the Maharashtra-based Shiv Sena, have a further eight.

The BJP has the same number of seats as in the previous parliament. This time it will have 23 allies; in the last parliament it was part of a 16-party coalition. So the BJP is now a smaller part of a larger coalition.

The main opposition party is the Indian National Congress, with over 100 seats. Congress is the historic party of the Indian bourgeoisie, and, since it was led by Rajiv Gandhi, it has been getting rid of all "socialist" rhetoric and populist policies. It was Congress, under the Prime Ministership of P.V. Narasimha Rao, and during the period when Manmohan Singh was the Finance Minister, that began the current project of inserting the Indian economy into "globalised" capitalism.

### Crushing labour

It is now clear that Indian capital wants the silencing of Indian labour. An indication of just how far they are willing to go comes from BJP ruled Gujarat, where the government has run a 10-month union-busting campaign against the Vadodara Kamdar Union, a Baroda-based "class struggle" trade union. The VKU had been growing at the expense of bourgeois and reformist dominated unions. It had spearheaded an important struggle to gain minimum wages for workers in the chemical industry. Unlike most Indian trade unions, the VKU also fought for peasants' rights, and against the eviction of people from the proposed Narmada dam area. The union also took up environmental and gender issues.

The BJP has also exposed its extreme antidemocratic politics in a campaign against *Communalism Combat* newspaper. The Home Ministry accused the magazine of breaking foreign exchange legislation after it published a series of advertisements protesting BJP policies (one of which was co-signed by some women's NGOs with foreign connections). *Communalism Combat* was subjected to a vilification campaign and forced to shift from Mumbai to Delhi.

### Problems for the left...

The two main left parties, the CPI and the CPI(M) have spend 20 years trying to create a third front, equidistant from the Hindu right and the Congress. On two occasions, this left-democratic,



or left-secular unity appeared to be on the verge of maturing, first when Viswanath Pratap Singh became Prime Minister in 1989, and next in 1996, when first H. D. Devegowda and later I.K.Gujral headed United Front ministries including CPI leader Indrajit Gupta as Union Home Minister. But both these governments were unstable — divided internally and under heavy external pressure.

The left parties extended a degree of respectability and democratic credentials, but the main constituent of the front, the Janata Party, shifted to the right and collapsed. Most of the fragments are now allied to the BJP. Defence Minister George Fernandes controls 19 seats. (Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party has not joined the BJP block.)

### ...a shattered strategy

The collapse of their main partner meant that the left contested these elections alone, for the first time in 25 years.

The results were disastrous. The CPI(M) won 32 seats, including a few outside its strongholds in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala. The CPI—less fortunate, and less skilful at alliance-building, only won four seats, three in West Bengal.

The old strategy of the left now lies shattered. Meanwhile, the CPI(ML), which over-corrected its previous anti-

parliamentarism, and presented a huge number of candidates (trying to replace the CPI(M) as the centre of radical protests) did far less well than it had expected.

The left block won 42 seats, plus one won by the radical left CPI(ML) Liberation.

The weakened parliamentary situation of the left means it will be even less able to act as a pole of attraction for progressive forces, and resist rightward moving legislation, especially economic legislation. This was the only justification for the final days of "left and democratic" bloc making.

### Time to build resistance

All left currents now need to seriously rethink their political line and tactics. Parliamentarism coupled with local actions will not halt the BJP.

The early pronouncements of Vajpayee, of Finance Minister Sinha, and of the leading spokespersons of the Indian bourgeoisie, make it clear that tough, and if necessary violent attacks on the working class are being prepared.

Building country-wide resistance means encouraging and supporting struggles against price rises, social security, health and safety, unemployment, and democratic rights.

With every bourgeois party shifting rightward, every left alliance with them will not just mean calling a halt to

workers' struggles—as in the past—but actually helping them to stamp out the struggles.

Look at West Bengal, where the left has been in government for over two decades. The state government is trying to behave responsibly, i.e., to stop "unnecessary" strikes, to evict hawkers from city roads, to beautify Calcutta at the cost of the urban poor, and offering special incentives for capitalist investors. As a result, the bosses have been milking the factories dry. Innumerable small, medium and big factories are locked out, the workers retrenched, or their pay reduced or workload increased.

Not surprisingly, all but one of the industrial seats of West Bengal have been won by bourgeois parties. The left block has 29 out of 42 seats, down from 33 in 1998 and 37 in 1996. The left's share of the vote remained constant, at around 47%, but the total vote cast declined, as many refused to vote. In many parts of the country, voters are tempted by tactical voting, in which the left could lose to bourgeois candidates.

The Indian left has learned nothing from the disastrous coalitions with "progressive" bourgeois currents in Spain in the 1930s and Chile in the early 1970s. But the Hindu-nationalist version of fascism is to be fought, mobilisations have to be organised and battles have to be fought. Time is running short. ★

# Timor's Transitional Council

On October 22, the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) announced the formation of a Transition Council of "national unity"

The central Timorese organ for the transition period to independence will be headed by Xanana Gusmao as president. His chief of staff will be Roque Rodriguez, ex-CNRT representative in Lisbon. The council also includes Taur Matan Ruak, FALINTIL commander-in-chief; CNRT Vice-President Jose Ramos Horta; UDT President Joao Carrascalao; FRETILIN Vice-President Mari Alkatiri, Socialist Party of Timor Secretary General, and Felicidade Guterres, a representative of Timorese women.

[Last month's *International Viewpoint* carried an interview with the PST secretary-general Avelino dos Santos, also known as Shalar Kosi].

Gusmao and Rodrigues returned to Dili on October 22. Taur Matan Ruak, Avelino dos Santos and Felicidade Guterres are currently based in Dili.

The Transition Council has established an Emergency Commission to organise humanitarian activities and to identify qualified Timorese for the UN transitional administration.

Jose Ramos Horta will be responsible for diplomatic issues, and Mario Carrascalao will look for overseas commercial investment.

CNRT leaders say that a united front

of all groups is necessary during the transitional period under UN administration, in order to defend the interests of the East Timorese people.

According to Jose Ramos Horta, political parties will now begin their own educational and mobilising activities as part of the preparation for the establishment of a democratic political system.

According to Roque Rodrigues, the CNRT supports the use of the Portuguese escudo as the currency for the period of transition as well as Portuguese as the administrative language. But the CNRT accepts that the main local language, Tetum, will gradually become the national language.

CNRT continues to maintain an office in Darwin, Australia. [JP/JD] ★

For further information see [www.asiet.org.au](http://www.asiet.org.au). For more information on the Socialist Party of East Timor see [www.dsp.org.au/etimor](http://www.dsp.org.au/etimor)

## Solidarity still necessary

Edi Ruslan talks to Antonio Makuit, research and development coordinator for Renetil, the East Timorese National Student Resistance.

Many East Timorese living within Indonesia's borders want to return to their homeland but are fearful of retaliation from Indonesian authorities if they attempt to do so. "This problem is particularly acute for the 130,000 East Timorese in refugee camps in which militia units remain active", Makuit said.

While Interfet now has a presence in most regions, its deployment outside the capital, Dili, was very slow.

"Conditions of absolute poverty persist throughout East Timor... Aid from organisations such as the International Red Cross and the UNHCR is not yet sufficient to relieve the shortage of food, medical supplies and other essential items. Continued pressure is needed, for a stronger relief effort."

According to Makuit, the "CNRT agenda is as follows: first to secure recognition of the ballot by the Indonesian govern-

ment and a withdrawal of all Indonesian troops; secondly to hold a conference of prospective forces to form a transitional government".

The CNRT will work with Interfet "as long as it is required to create secure conditions for such an election," Makuit said. The CNRT's armed wing, Falintil, will disarm "only after the threat of militia violence has ceased and security can be assured", he added.

"The priority is an economy that fulfills people's needs. The agricultural sector, especially the coffee plantations, must be owned and managed by East Timorese. We will enact land reform as soon as possible."

Renetil advocates the nationalisation of foreign-owned land, to be allocated to East Timorese for their cultivation on a collective basis. While foreign investment will be sought, Makuit wants to see "sufficient restrictions" on investors, to safeguard the welfare of East Timorese agricultural workers. "We will work to develop our own economy and not invest in infrastructure projects that will force

us into dependency on the IMF and the World Bank."

The CNRT wants East Timor to get 50% of revenue from oil exploration in the Timor Gap. The current agreement between the Australian government and Indonesia gives Australia a larger share.

"International solidarity continues to be of vital importance. We will continue to work in regional networks such as the Asia Pacific Coalition on E. Timor and the Asian Students Association to build solidarity amongst the people of the region."

Renetil will continue to support the struggles for self-determination in Aceh, West Papua, Sri Lanka and Tibet. "The movement in Indonesia for democracy and against militarism is of special significance to us", he said. "We must do whatever we can to help their struggle."

Makuit also stressed that the work of solidarity activists in Australia, in organisations such as ASIET, had played a critical role in securing a referendum and, more recently, a peace-keeping force. ★

Renetil has branches in several countries and a strong presence amongst the 500 East Timorese students still living in Indonesia. It supports the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT). This article first appeared in *Green Left Weekly*

# 4<sup>th</sup> International document

## Solidarity with East Timor

After terrible massacres and destruction by terrorist militias under the auspices of the Indonesian Army, the United Nations has finally sent troops to East Timor and the Indonesian government has had no choice but to retreat.

This was only possible because of the heroic resistance of the people of East Timor and their decades-long fight for self-determination and independence. A massive mobilisation and the results of the referendum held on August 30 made it absolutely clear—if it was not already—that the choice of the East Timorese people is for independence.

This was also made possible through the mobilisations and the pressure of international public opinion in many countries in the previous few weeks. In the spirit of international solidarity tens of thousands took concrete action as a way to stop the slaughter and took to the streets in indignation.

This forced the most powerful imperialist governments in the world—especially the United States—and the UN to take a distance from the Indonesian generals whom they have been supporting for decades.

This solidarity movement shows once more that the mobilisation of public opinion is the strength through which the course of events can be changed.

And that is the most important lesson that the East Timor events can teach us in our global struggle against injustice: we have to demand and create a new politics of solidarity, of popular action, of lived democracy.

That is also why we have the responsibility to continue to struggle for freedom for East Timor. The presence of the UN-mandated forces in the country should not and cannot be a substitute for this task of solidarity.

The East Timorese people are suffering from lack of supplies and medical and humanitarian assistance. The killers are still there, having applied a policy of scorched earth, forced deportations of thousands of Timorese and physical elimination of the leaders and fighters of the resistance, of the National Council of the Timorese Resistance (CNRT) and the Armed Forces of East Timor (the FALINTIL guerrillas) who nevertheless are still fighting back.

In fact, the massacres were the consequence of organising a referendum under the control of the Indonesian army with the aim of maintaining good relationships between imperialist countries and the Indonesian ruling class.

The Fourth International demands the immediate withdrawal of all Indonesian forces. The UN-mandated forces must guarantee the safe return of the thousands of refugees—those who escaped to the East Timor mountains and also those that were deported to other Indonesian territories, the leaders and representatives of the Timorese resistance, as well of Commander Xanana Gusmao.

The UN-mandated forces must also guarantee the immediate disarmament of the civil militias created and backed by the Indonesian army, and the arrest of all its leaders, so that they can be judged for all the massacres, murders and deportations that they are responsible for.

At the same time, the countries that have supported the Indonesian government must economically support the reconstruction of East Timor, for all the destruction and suffering imposed on this people.

The Fourth International cannot accept any eventual position of the UN-mandated forces on the ground that means the disarmament of the FALINTIL. If it is a question of

respecting the popular will then Interfet must put itself at the disposal of the National Council of Timorese Resistance and recognise the guerrillas of FALINTIL as the sole legitimate armed force to assure the security of the territory of East Timor. We absolutely reject any idea of partition imposed on the majority of the people.

The Fourth International equally cannot accept the idea that the forces under UN mandate should be used as a force to guarantee the maintenance of capitalist interests in East Timor as, for example, with regard to the oil of the Timorese sea, which is today exploited by both the Indonesian and Australian states, through a shameful agreement signed between these countries.

The Fourth International will continue to denounce the death traders that still sell arms to the Indonesian generals, in spite of their promises to the contrary, as in the case of the Blair government in Britain.

At the same time, we will continue solidarity with all the progressive forces that struggle for liberation and democracy in Indonesia and other oppressed territories within Indonesia.

The Fourth International considers these are the minimum conditions for the beginning of the process of reconstruction of this new country and stands in solidarity with the East Timorese resistance, continuing to develop all efforts, on a national or international basis, for the victory of the independence of the people of East Timor.

The Fourth International stands for the immediate recognition, by all countries, of the independence of East Timor and of its provisional government, as soon as the National Council of the Resistance decides that the conditions are right to proclaim this new country to the whole world.

International Executive Committee  
Fourth International  
September 1999



Latin America

# The neoliberal disorder

**The balance of forces in Latin America is changing. Political, economic, social and political factors are creating a generalised crisis of government. Ernesto Herrera reports.**

After years of neoliberalism, the landscape is changing again. The United States have reaffirmed their role as the world's "indispensable nation." But in their own "back yard, they lack what Zbigniew K. Brzezinski calls a "geopolitical pivot"—a state like Israel, ready to ensure the economic, political and military domination of the region on behalf of the world powers.

There are already clear signs of "disorder" in Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. The next 12 months contain a number of potentially destabilising events:

- the partial US withdrawal from the Panama canal, and the need for the imperialists to find new, reliable "platforms" for military intervention and domination of the region.
- the Ibero-American summit in Havana, Cuba, will confirm Cuba's integration into the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI).
- the crisis in the Mercosur trade block will exacerbate already-tense regional economic negotiations, and the underlying question of an all-Americas free trade agreement.

- Mercosur's agreement with the European Union, and the 2000 round of WTO negotiations—in effect, the dominated countries will be renegotiating the terms of their dependent relationship.

- **Argentina's** Peronists lost elections in October. **Uruguay's** broad left front (FA) may win that country's elections in November. The outcome of **Chile's** election is still uncertain.

But the crisis of the region's bourgeois leaderships is mainly the result of the brutal effects of the international economic crisis.

## Massive popular resistance

Latin America is also witnessing massive popular resistance—on isolated issues—which is changing the political strategies and programmatic proposals of most of the continent's left wing forces. Recent months have seen a wave of social explosions, strikes, land occupations, protest marches and violent confrontations.

**Colombia** is in a pre-revolutionary situation. The state is in deep crisis. It is caught between a powerful guerrilla movement and strong trade union and peasant struggles on one side, and a range of far right paramilitary groups and drug barons on the other side. All this, of course, during the deepest economic crisis of recent decades.

In **Venezuela**, all the institutions of the old political order are collapsing, and being replaced by a new regime which has enthusiastic, mass support. Chavez' populism is a double-sided thing. On the one hand, he is dismantling the clientelist state of the traditional parties, and transforming the country's relationship with the United States. On the other hand, he is applying an austerity plan which will facilitate foreign capital's entry into the oil industry and other strategic sectors of the economy.

There are significant—though less mediated—conflicts in other countries. Tens of thousands of **Brazilian** peasants and workers have organised marches demanding the resignation of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

**Ecuador** has been shaken by insurrectional riots. The government has been forced to suspend all foreign debt repayments—a first in Latin America, forcing the IMF to make a very tactical response. The debt question will be increasingly debated in the other countries of Latin America.

There are no signs of weakening of the major strike at **Mexico's** main university, UNAM. The indigenous people and the Zapatista rebels of Chiapas state are also continuing their protests.

**Chile's** leaders boast of "reconcilia-

tion," but Mapuche peasants and a range of trade unions have united with human rights groups to demand that the dictator Pinochet face trial.

**Peruvians** have massively rejected president Fujimori's attempts to extend his term of office. Here too, the level of trade union and peasant protests is increasing.

In all these countries, there are some common threads of opposition: to IMF "Structural Adjustment Programmes;" to privatisation imposed by the IMF, World Bank, and InterAmerican Development Bank; to the expropriation of people's rights, intensified by unlimited flexibilisation of working conditions; growing unemployment and job precarity; low salaries. There are anti-neoliberal struggles, with an anti-capitalist dynamic, in Argentina, Bolivia, Panama, Nicaragua and Uruguay.

In Latin America today, "class" identity is not expressed in the same way as in previous decades. Today's struggles involve a wide range of "social subjects." But, looking more closely, the urban and rural working people are the key, central element of these new forms of resistance.

But these new struggles involve new social groups which have suffered from the neoliberal counter reforms. More than ever before, small business people, shopkeepers, small farmers, and impoverished "middle class" groups have taken part in protest activities.

### **Economic misery**

Before the Brazilian crisis of January 1999, Latin America was expected to record a 1% economic growth (CEPAL). But the collapse of Brazil's *real* plan worsened the economic climate for the whole region. In April, the World Bank predicted a 0.8% contraction in economic activity. In May, ALADI predicted a 1.6% contraction.

The "opening up" of the region's economies since 1990 has created all kinds of disequilibrium between countries with very different productivity levels, and very different levels of foreign investment.

Loans and financial investments have been much more important than foreign direct investment. Most foreign interest has been focused on the wave of privatisation. The much-promised influx of capital, and increase in total investments, has simply not materialised. CEPAL estimates that two thirds of the foreign direct investment has been "purchase of existing facilities, rather than creation of new units of production."

According to an economist from Brazil's Getulio Vargas foundation, "investments have been concentrated in the service sector—which does not generate new foreign currency earnings."

There has been a massive transfer of "public property" to the private sector, and the imperialists have tightened their control in the process. In many Latin American countries, strategic economic sectors are now directly controlled by a small group of financial institutions, based in the G7 countries.

Earnings from privatisation have been used to pay the foreign debt. Argentina has used 57% of its US\$39.6bn from privatisation in 1989-98 to meet its foreign debt obligations.

In conditions like these, Latin America's governments have their hands tied. How can they develop elements of national sovereignty in the face of such imperialist domination?

If there is strong pressure from the mass movements, of course, there may be all kinds of unorthodox, nationalist responses to the crisis. Already in Ecuador, the Mahuad government has been obliged to reschedule payment on its Brady Bonds. Venezuela's Chavez government may also try to renegotiate the terms of the country's dependence.

But any serious attempt of this kind would need organised, determined, sustained popular support. And neither the continent's leaders, nor the institutionalised opposition parties, are ready for such a movement. After all, no-body doubts the determination of the imperialists, and their clear intention to consolidate their reconquest of the Latin American economies.

### **From the poor to the rich**

The transfer of wealth from Latin American workers to the banks of the imperialist countries takes a very brutal form. It is hardly surprising that the same mechanism is reproduced inside each country. According to the latest report from the InterAmerican Development Bank, "Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with the greatest inequality of income distribution, and the region where the richest in society receive the greatest share of the wealth produced... 40% of national income is in the hands of the richest 1%."

The Bank can give all the technical explanations it wants. But it cannot hide the social results of a continental "development" system in which one third of the continent's population—or 150 million people—live on less than US\$2 per day. The buying power of

Latin America's average minimum wage is 27 times lower than in 1980. And many people earn much less than the legal minimum wage. In the huge "informal" sector, average income fell by 1% during the "good" years 1990-98. And this is the sector where most new jobs have been created, according to an International Labour Organisation report (Lima, August 1999).

"What kind of market are we talking about, if more than one third of the Latin American population is excluded from the market by poverty?, asked Mexican economist Diana Alarcon, in a July 1999 interview with the Argentine magazine *Tres puntos*. "The big political challenge is to incorporate the poor into the market. If we want to improve the mediocre growth rates of recent years, we need to take steps towards income redistribution." Alarcon is a respected employee of the InterAmerican Development Bank. But her words could also have come from the IMF or the World Bank. Global financial institutions are increasingly willing to take preventative measures to channel and reduce the popular struggles which they expect to develop as a result of their own political actions.

But the central axis of all activity is still the "structural adjustment" of Latin America, to suit the needs of the imperialist heartlands. Enrique Iglesias, president of the InterAmerican Development Bank, told the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* that "privatisation at the municipal and state level [Brazil is a federal republic] can support and complete the administrative, institutional and financial reforms.

"It will liberate the energies of the private sector, attract new resources, technology and management know-how. It will help build a more balanced relationship between public institutions and civil society. Efficient governments, with resources, would be able to handle fiscal autonomy [a sharp reduction in federal tax redistribution] and concentrate on basic needs like health and education.

"Privatisation would strengthen national and provincial economies. It would be a long-term instrument of development, and of macroeconomic stabilisation. These are the essential conditions for reducing our vulnerability, within an international marketplace that is less predictable and less rational than we imagined."

This "second generation of reforms" would be accompanied by state initiatives "in cooperation with the private sector." The state and its private partners would intervene through social

security programmes focused on the very poorest layers of society. They would, of course, also co-operate in installing regulatory systems "which, alongside privatisation, will ensure competition.

The state will also work with industrialists to develop "education programmes that are adapted to companies' technological needs".

So we should have no illusion about the economic and social content of the new programmes which Joseph Stiglitz is trying to popularise on behalf of the World Bank. Popular mobilisation is essential.

But so is a continental debate on the alternative policies we should be struggling for. The "chapter headings" of such an alternative programme could be taken from the slogans of the various social movements already struggling against Structural Adjustment Programmes, against IMF/WB control over the economy, against the usurious foreign debt system, and in defence of health, housing, education, work, salary and job security, human and social rights, democracy and political rights.

It is time for a new look at the relationship between market and democracy, and a redefinition of the role of the state, in response to the opening of the national economy to global pressures. The various sectors of the left each have their own demands.

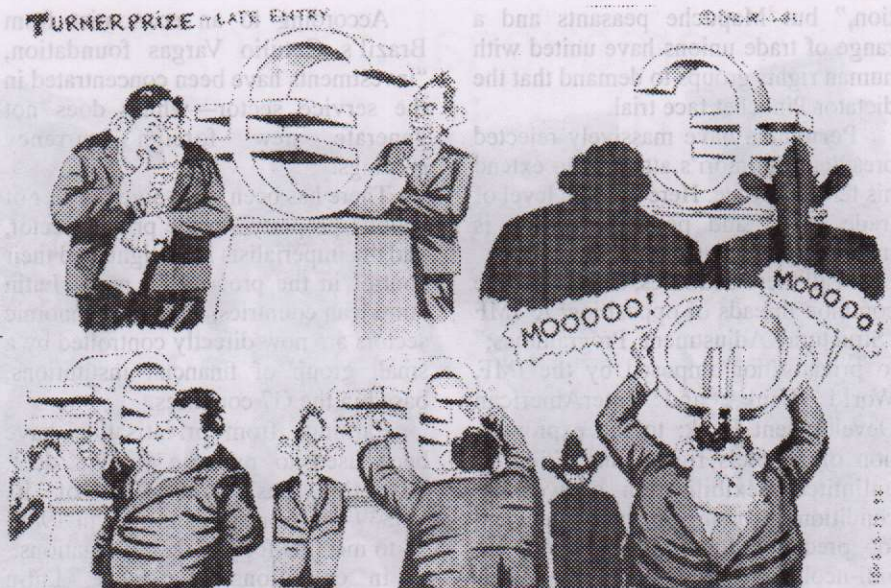
What we need to do now is bring these demands together, in a real debate about growth, the different models of development, the context of capitalist globalisation, and the various "alternative" social projects. Many of these projects imply some level of relative "deconnection" from the global economy—asserting national and regional autonomy, in order to meet local needs, rather than simply follow the agenda of global capital. ★

This article is also available in French and Spanish

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## Labour's rightward slide

**After 30 months in power, Tony Blair and his right-wing New Labour government are stronger than ever. The opposition Conservatives are seriously divided over the European Union. Alan Thorntton looks at the recent conferences of Labour, the Conservatives, and the Trade Union Congress.**

The September 1999 TUC conference was the most right-wing of modern times. It marked a new stage in the domination of New Labour over the unions. Not just because union leaders support what New Labour is doing, but because of the way they have embraced "social partnership" — the most dangerous form of class collaboration to be inflicted on the British trade union movement since the break with Liberalism at the beginning of the century. Social partnership commits the unions to support for the requirements of the employers without any of the elements of compromise evident in such schemes in the past.

In his speech to the trade union conference, Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair downplayed his long-term ambition of breaking the historic link between the unions and the Labour Party (Blair sees this as essential if Labour is to become the principal party of British capitalism). But, for the moment, he reassured unionists "You are now welcome back into number 10 Downing Street" (the Prime Minister's

residence), But it will "not be beer and sandwiches," (famously served at meetings between Labour Prime Ministers and TUC leaders in the 1970s), he warned. "Just tea".

New Labour has not just distanced itself from the unions. It has built a completely new relationship with the employers. For Blair, New Labour's relationship with the employers is infinitely more important than its relationship with the unions. Blair has always considered the trade unions an obstacle to his plans and ambitions.

This new relationship marks a big defeat for any kind of militant, class based, trade unionism and a victory for the Blairite project. We in new Labour have our 'third way', and you in the unions have your 'third way,' Blair said. He was talking of the TUC's commitment to partnership with the employers. TUC General Secretary John Monks told the conference that "the days of 'them-and-us' and industrial confrontation are over".

The most extreme proposals for social partnership came from (Sir) Ken Jackson of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union (a major TUC union). Jackson argued that the TUC should disband its own annual conference in favour of a biannual conference organised jointly with the employers organisation, the Confederation of British Industry!

Not a single heavyweight union leader used the TUC conference, to



Britain ★

speak out against social partnership. Most of them are already busily negotiating partnership agreements, often involving no-strike deals, and clauses tying the unions to the interests of the employers.

Many employers are looking to such deals to offset the possibility of extended union recognition under Blair's new Employment Relations Act, which regulates union recognition ballots in workplaces. If they are going to have to recognise unions more often, they would rather do so under a partnership deal and with the union most committed to social partnership. Recent examples of this kind of 'sweetheart' deal include Unilever, Barclay's Bank, Tesco, Littlewoods and the Legal and General Building Society.

Social Partnership was not the only right-wing theme at this conference. When it came to the European Union and the single currency (EMU) the conference was well to the right of New Labour. The conference rejected the New Labour line of "wait until the conditions are right" and voted to enter EMU as fast as possible. Those major unions more-or-less opposed to EMU mounted no serious opposition, and allowed the new policy to be adopted! Britain's biggest union UNISON had a clear policy against EMU. But their delegation abstained in the vote. This gave the pro-EMU unions a majority of votes.

Other major unions like the Transport and general Workers Union (TGWU) suddenly accepted current New Labour policy. General Secretary Bill Morris reinterpreted TGWU's opposition to EMU as meaning "we should not go in until the economic conditions are right".

The TUC leaders are prepared to back EMU in order to pursue their vision of the European social model. Yet the European social model is evaporating even as they clamour to join it. They may not have noticed, but the Thatcherite agenda of deregulation and privatisation is being enforced across Europe by Social democratic parties, who are in government in 13 of the 15 EU countries. By the time Britain enters EMU, what will remain of the elusive European social model?

The main resistance to the right-wing agenda emerged in a debate on the relationship between new Labour and the unions. Ken Cameron, left-wing leader of the Fire Brigades Union, caused consternation when he proposed that the unions take the lead in breaking the link with New Labour! He argued that since "the Labour Party no longer

sees us as their natural allies, we can no longer rely on them to be our natural allies". The trade unions, he said, contribute £6m (US\$9.5m) a year to Labour Party funds—over 30% of the party's total income. "Why should we keep on signing cheques to a party which no longer represents us?" Cameron asked. "Why don't we give it to organisations and candidates who promote our interests?"

The general disaffiliation of unions from the Labour Party would be a mistake. But this issue won't go away. The FBU is not the only union which is looking at ways of giving some money to non-Labour organisations or candidates which support the aims of the union. But massive disaffiliation would only make sense if it was linked to the development of a political alternative to Blairism.

### Soft left

The conference also underlined the serious crisis of the soft left. This was shown in their capitulation on the question of social partnership, in their collapse before the John Monks line on EMU and in their refusal to challenge the employers at almost any level.

Their inability to develop any independent perspective is personified in the decision of Rodney Bickerstaff (54) to retire as General Secretary of UNISON, the country's biggest union. In the past leaders like Bickerstaff would have clung determinedly to such positions. But the continuing historic low level of strike struggles and the domination of Blairism in the Labour Party and the unions have dramatically reduced the role that leaders like Bickerstaff can play. They have no intention of challenging Blairism, and there are no militant struggles for them to mediate.

The hard left also has its difficulties in the unions. Most have not grasped the need for a conscious struggle against social partnership. Most of the broad left organisations in the individual unions are weaker than a year or two ago. There is an urgent need for a cross-union left which can seek to coordinate a fight-back as well as conducting a political struggle against social partnership.

### Hard Labour

The TUC conference was bad for the left. But there was worse to come at the Labour Party conference itself. Blair could hardly have been more dominant and the left (there is still a left but it is much weakened) more invisible.

New Labour strategists have clearly already concluded that they are going to win the next election in two years time—and barring major developments such as severe economic crisis they are probably right. Blair therefore concentrated on developing the next stage of his project. The class war, he proclaimed, was over. Instead, he was going to declare war on "the conservatives of the right and of the left" who are standing in the way of New Labour "modernisation".

Ever since he abolished Clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution (which called for the nationalisation of the means of production), Blair has been trying to heal the spilt between labourism and liberalism at the turn of the century. He has now gone even further, and called for the pro-EU, "one nation" section of the Conservative Party to leave their hard-right comrades and join New Labour! Blair specifically mentioned Former Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke and former Tory Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine.

Since then Blair has formed a new, and unprecedented, campaigning alliance with Clarke and Heseltine (and the leader of the Liberal Democrats) in favour of the EU and in favour of entry into EMU "when the time is right"—which in reality means as soon as they think they can win a referendum on it.

The formation of this alliance has severely exacerbated the deep divide on EU questions inside the Conservative Party. In fact, the October party conference confirmed that the 'Tories' are verging on the edge of a formal split.

Conference debates showed that the Party has moved sharply to the right. Xenophobia ruled the day—the main themes were defending fox hunting (which Blair wants to ban), defending the pound (against EMU membership), and, when Margaret Thatcher took the floor, defending the Chilean dictator Pinochet against extradition!

The Tories are being torn apart by a combination of the success of Blairism in winning the middle ground of English (though not Scottish) politics, and the Conservatives own long-standing divisions over Europe. One-nation Tories no longer find the Tory Party habitable and feel much closer to Blair and New Labour. In fact what Blair says today about the EU is what the one-nation Tories have been saying for years.

Shortly after the 'conference season,' Blair carried out an audacious government reshuffle. Nothing shows

Blair's personal authority more than the decision to bring Peter Mandelson back after only 10 months out of the government (following a financial scandal). At the same time Blair expelled most of the surviving remnants of old Labour in the government team, and established a team modelled almost entirely in his own image. He feels no need to compromise with anyone in the Labour leadership. There have only been the most muted protests at his actions from within the party. Most of the media strongly approved his changes, including his resurrection of Mandelson—a key architect of New Labour, and Blair's closest confidantes.

The situation for the left in the Labour Party will get worse for the left. Under Blair's new rules, the party's National Executive approves or rejects all the party's parliamentary candidates. They will use political criteria—loyalty to the Blairite project.

### Worse is to come...

The left-wing Campaign Group of Labour MPs, who have kept their heads down for most of the time Blair has been in office. But their key members are reportedly on a hit-list, and will not be reselected as parliamentary candidates. (Though this will provoke resistance from deselected MPs and their local supporters, who traditionally controlled the selection of parliamentary candidates.

In 2000, the party will be reorganised at the constituency level, where the left, and the link with the unions, has been strongest. Local trade unions have had the right to send delegates to local general management committees of the Labour Party. The left in the party called this the "open valve" between the party and the unions. But it is to be severely neutered. Local committees will meet every three months instead of every month, and their decision making powers will be severely limited. Meetings will be open to all members, rather than delegate based. This means the end of representative democracy inside the Labour Party.

This is probably Blair's biggest single "reform" since he started to transform the Labour Party, certainly as far as its effects on the rank and file members is concerned. There could be significant opposition. Unfortunately, by the time the proposals get to next years conference they are likely to have been agreed by some form of referendum and the conference will have little choice in the matter.

Blair's end-game is to reshape the

Labour Party into the first party of the British bourgeoisie, replacing the Conservatives. His second objective is to ensure that, when the long downturn in the level of strike struggles ends, any new radicalisation will not easily find expression inside the Party.

There is still a fight to be had inside the Labour Party. But the main elements of a fight-back are likely to come from

the unions and/or the social movements. An upturn in social struggle might lead to a regeneration of the left in the Labour Party. But the Party is not where the struggle will start. This means that the priorities should be strengthening the left in the unions, and strengthening the intervention of the left in the campaigns and the social movements. ★

## Norway's red vote

**On September 13th Norwegians voted for 425 municipal councils and 19 regions. The result was characterised by a particularly low turnout rate and a slight polarisation. Bjarke Friborg reports.**

**One third of voters** preferred the Conservatives and the populist Progressive Party. The Social Democrats scored only 28% — their worst result since the 1920's. The Centre parties maintained their overall vote, as the third largest bloc.

The radical left had a particularly good result. The reformist Socialist Left Party (SV) won 8% of votes, and the revolutionary Red Electoral Alliance (RV) attracted 2.1% of voters.

### Five years after EU referendum

Norway's political landscape has changed a lot since mass mobilisations narrowly defeated a referendum on EU membership in November 1994. The movement against EU membership blossomed into the country's largest political grassroots' organisation in the country—rivalling the Social Democrats—with 140,000 members and a large number of activists.

The "No!" campaign was an inspiration for the RV and the Red Youth organisation, both undergoing a generational change and recruiting new revolutionaries with experience in mass work. The campaign overlapped with a period of student mobilisation on other issues.

The Social Democrats were kept in a firm grip by Gro Harlem Brundtland. She is internationally known for her environmental work in UN structures. But at home she was a staunch believer in an unhindered market economy and very often at odds with the Norwegian environmentalists. Nevertheless, she managed to keep the Social Democrats

at 40% of popular support, despite massive criticism of her pro-EU campaign. Even the main confederation of trade unions opposed her—reflecting an uplifting left wing victory over the labour bureaucrats.

The anti-EU struggle also radicalised the small farmers' Centre Party, which took an uncompromising stand against membership (which attracted some left reformists to the party).

### Forces for change?

The Social Democrats and the Centre Party are the main losers of the 1999 elections. The Social Democrats are losing their traditional core voters. Many Social Democrats are frustrated with Gro Harlem Brundtland's weak successor, Thorbjørn Jagland. The party has lost votes to the left, but also to the Conservatives. Some working class voters switched to the racist, right-populist Progressive Party.

The Centre Party have lost almost all their newfound supporters from the referendum period. The party has lost credibility because of its poor performance in the three party coalition government. The Centre Party is supposedly highly critical of the EU, but in reality they have given up presenting their own views, to the point of even recommending Norwegian membership in the EU's Schengen agreement on police cooperation.

Even the Socialist Left Party (SV) has forgotten that it was popular anti-EU mobilisation which put them where they are.

The party leadership is determined to enter a new government with the Social Democrats. Life in parliament is everything, while struggles in local communities and on the workplaces seem to be unimportant: When a group of young people in Oslo occupied a house to draw attention to the housing

problems, the SV candidates distanced themselves from the action "because politicians do not use that kind of method".

After several bleak years, the left opposition inside the SV has been encouraged by the radicalisation of the Socialist Youth organisation.

Like Sweden's Young Left (Ung Vänstern) the Socialist Youth are noticeably to the left of their mother party. The outcome of the present confrontation is still unclear.

### Yes to NATO?

The April SV congress faced total turmoil when chairperson Kristin Halvorsen threatened to resign if she did not win majority support for the NATO intervention against Yugoslavia. Like Germany's Green Party, the SV has its roots in the anti NATO movement in the 1960s.

Luckily for Halvorsen the war was over before the electoral campaigning reached the decisive phase.

Voter concerns were concentrated on education—a traditional SV strong point. So while core SV voters moved to the more radical RV, the party attracted a number of frustrated Social Democrats.

The increasingly radical Socialist Youth were the spearhead of a campaign which has made the SV the most popular party among 16-19 year olds. In parallel school elections, 19% of this age group voted for SV. The more radical RV maintained its traditional 6% score.

### The Red Electoral Alliance

This was the best ever result for the revolutionary Red Electoral Alliance (RV), which won 42,000 votes (2.1%). Support for the party has been slowly increasing since its foundation in 1975.

Back then, the RV was a pure electoral front for the Maoist AKP/ML (Workers' Communist Party/Marxist-Leninist). At that time AKP was Europe's biggest Maoist party with a daily newspaper, *Klassekampen* and several thousand members (in a country of only 4.5 million).

After a decade of relative stagnation, RV was transformed into an independent party with about 1,400 members and full freedom of tendencies and factions.

Today RV contains Maoist and Trotskyist currents. But the great majority of members just describe themselves as revolutionary Marxists.

This Red Electoral Alliance is turning into a real party, with activities and interventions all year, and a

relatively important presence in the trade unions and women's movement.

Of course, RV is not nearly as strong as the AKP was in the more radical 1970s. But the daily revolutionary newspaper *Klassekampen* is an important asset—and something most radical left groups in Europe don't have. Both the newspaper and RV played a crucial role in the protests against the NATO operation against Yugoslavia. The rest of the left was more disappointing—the SV leadership supported NATO and the old "Muscovites" in the NKP did not want to criticise Milosevic.

In the elections on September 13th RV won more votes than SV in several places, and in some municipalities the party won 7-13.5%. RV now has 6.5% in Bergen, 4.1% in Trondheim, 4.2% in the capital, Oslo, and 4.4% in Lillehammer, seat of the Winter Olympic games.

The party's main theme was the struggle against the strangulation of local economies.

RV refused to take responsibility for cutbacks, and encouraged people to protest against the growing centralisation and concentration of wealth. RV also protested against the crisis in the offshore oil industry.

Only a week before the elections 10,000 shipyard workers went into strike against the government's lack of a coherent industrial policy—the shadow side of deregularisation and market liberalisation hitting countries and workers all over the world. ★

## Portugal Left Bloc wins two MPs

The Left Bloc won 2.5% of the vote in Portugal's September election, and will form a new parliamentary group with two MPs.

The Bloc is a new movement bringing together the PSR (4<sup>th</sup> International), the ex-Maoist UDP and many independents.

The 130,000 votes for the Bloc is more than double its score in the June European election). The vote profile remains almost unchanged: young and urban

Francisco Louçã ("Chico") from the PSR and Luis Fazenda from the UDP were elected in

• **The right-populist Progressive Party** continues to gain votes with its dangerous cocktail of racism and social populism. Their main candidate in Oslo accepted the comparison between the Nazi occupation in 1940 with the present "immigrant wave", while another local candidate said he was in favour of centralising asylum seekers in camps—which they could only leave if accompanied by a Norwegian.

But their racist rhetoric is provoking increasing alarm. The editor of the Journalists' professional magazine poured his beer over one of the most prominent anti-immigrant politicians, and encouraged others to do the same

The chairperson of the main Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) suggested that people turn their back whenever a "Progressive" spoke at an electoral meeting—this tactic was used with great success in the early 90s, against the extremist Movement Against Immigration.

Demonstrators protested at almost all the Progressive Party's electoral meetings. Although the party still attained their best score ever (13.5%), they were overtaken by the Conservatives (in 1997 the Progressives had overtaken the Conservatives to become the largest right-wing party).

The Progressives lost almost 6% of their votes in working class districts in Oslo—where they had previously been increasing their support.

Extreme right parties scored record high votes in recent elections in Austria and Switzerland. [BF/JD] ★

the Lisbon region, where the Bloc has the best result (4.9%). UDP leader Fazenda entered parliament in 1991 on the Communist Party list. He was one of the most enthusiastic defenders on the idea of forming this radical left unity in the beginning of 1999.

PSR spokesperson "Chico" Louçã is an economist, and a leading member of the Fourth International. [PD] ★

• **The next issue of International Viewpoint** will carry an interview with "Chico" Louçã

# One year of Red-Green government

It is one year since the election of Germany's Red-Green coalition. Winfried Wolf takes a hard look at the results.

The change of government on September 27, 1998 was judged domestically and internationally to be "historic." It overturned the conservative government of Helmut Kohl, the country's longest serving Chancellor.

But no governmental transition in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany has been mismanaged so quickly. One year after taking office the "Red-Greens" has lost 30 to 40% of the support of the electorate. If new elections were held, the recently defeated CDU/CSU [Christian Democrats] would score a resounding victory.

Never in the history of the 20th century has the Social Democratic Party (SPD) — the "party of the people" — had such low support, as evidenced in the recent state elections in Saxony.

One year after the formation of the "Red-Green" government the smaller coalition partner, "Alliance90/The Greens", is even threatened by the complete loss of its parliamentary status: The party is no longer represented in any state legislature of any of the new Federal states (former East Germany). If Federal elections were held tomorrow, "Alliance90/The Greens" would fall below the 5% minimum, and receive no seats.

This government pledged to fight "voter political disgruntlement." But their policies have resulted in a

disastrous 50% participation in elections, the lowest in German history.

## Election Results

Since the federal elections there have been more than half a dozen elections. More than half of Germany's voters were covered by state elections in Hesse and in the Saarland, municipal elections in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, state elections in Brandenburg and Thuringia, municipal elections in North Rhine-Westphalia and the state election in Saxony. In June 1999, Germans also voted in the European parliament elections

Although the character of these contests and the corresponding configurations differed, they were dominated by federal politics — that is, stamped by the politics of the new Red-Green government.

If we leave aside a few "regional" differences, there are five common characteristics:

**First:** The leading party of the new federal government, the SPD, is soundly repudiated by the voters everywhere. The closer the respective SPD state administration identifies with the federal governmental course, the worse the result (eg. Brandenburg and Saxony). In places like Saarland, where the local SPD was differentiated from Chancellor Schröder, the decline was not so sharp. In the state elections in Saxony — a state with a definite social democratic tradition — the SPD barely made second place, for the first time in this century since the establishment of bourgeois democracy.

The Saxon SPD was slavishly loyal to Schröder's "Road Show." There was no criticism of the "Austerity Package." And the local party refused any collaboration with the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS, formerly the Communist Party).

**Second:** The losses of Alliance90/The Greens are quite comparable with those of the SPD. The smaller coalition partner lost 25-50 percent of its votes in these elections when compared to the previous balloting.

**Third:** The main winners in these elections are the conservative CDU and the

ultraright or fascist parties (DVU, Republicans, NPD). In almost all parts of the country, the far right vote increased much more than the radical left PDS.

**Fourth:** The PDS vote increased everywhere (except the municipal balloting in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania). This increase grew from election to election — and thus paralleled the public disclosures of the Red-Green Federal government. This tendency was particularly strong in the east German states of Brandenburg, Thuringia and Saxony. But the trend was also observable in the West, particularly the municipal ballot results in North Rhine-Westphalia.

This new PDS potency in the West of Germany meant that the party won its first municipal council seats there. It is now present in 20 municipal councils, winning 4.2% of the vote in the party's first campaign in Duisburg (800,000 inhabitants).

**Fifth:** The political landscape is stabilizing in different ways in different regions. In the east of Germany a new three-party system seems to have been established with the CDU, SPD and PDS. The centre liberals (FDP) and Alliance90/The Greens are no longer represented in the state legislatures, and it appears unlikely that they will be able to overcome the 5% minimum hurdle in elections to come.

In the West [of Germany] and the new federal capital, Berlin, the FDP is saying goodbye to any legislative representation on the legislative level. The latest ballot losses suggest that even the Greens are in danger of falling below the 5% hurdle in one legislative body after another.

The Saarland state election revealed a local two-party system, with very low voter participation — reminiscent of the hardly-democratic US political system.

Opinion polls for the coming elections in Berlin (the Senate) and in Baden-Württemberg (municipal councils) support this trend. If the SPD loses the 2000 elections in Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia, the disaster for the "Red-Greens" will be complete.

All this points toward the collapse of Schröder's coalition government.

## Blame Kosovo and Austerity

Of course, Red-Green electoral losses often also mirror local issues: The 15% fall in the SPD vote in Brandenburg is due to the concrete policies of Manfred Stolpe and his (non-coalition) state government.

## Electronic Viewpoint

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Running counter to the trend, the electoral losses of the CDU in Saxony (minus 1.2 %) express the growing criticism of the CDU one-party government of Kurt Biedenkopf.

Compared to the general trend, the relatively small ballot losses of the SPD in the Saarland (minus 4 %) stem from the fact that the state SPD under Klimmt distanced itself from the austerity policy of the Berlin government and from the "Third Way-New Center" declarations of Schröder and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

All observers agree that in these elections the federal political issues were decisive. The voters utilized the ballot — and voter abstention — in order to express their judgement of the federal "Red-Green" government. The key issues were austerity, and the war against Yugoslavia.

Most election commentators gave insufficient attention to the "war" question. On 27 September 1998, when the "Red-Greens" won the election, a few adherents of the federal SPD and the federal Greens might have suspected that as chancellor Schröder would continue Kohl's austerity measures. But no one suspected that this government would engage in an aggressive war. This shock continues today. It contributed substantially to the fact that the "Red-Greens" could not mobilize their "particular" potential in the elections.

As for the Greens who, much more than the SPD considered themselves a "party of peace," the "new" politics have led to a new party identity. Joseph Fischer speaks of this openly — in a conversation, appropriately enough, with the tabloid newspaper *Bild* — "In many fields there are still the concepts of the Seventies and Eighties. Position changes because new concepts have not yet entered the Green identity."

In a downright Stalinist turn of thought, he can think of nothing better to say about this than proposing brain washing: "This is a real problem of education! We must change this by instituting an internal reeducation program."

Most important among the federal political causes for the "Red-Green" electoral losses, however, is the austerity policy. Since Spring 1999, at the latest, the government has continued the redistribution from below to those above and takes from the "little people" — the voter clientele of the SPD — to give to the rich.

This austerity course embodies an immanent turn. Previously a series of laws and measures were passed that represented a considerable course cor-

rection in the social field from the politics of Kohl.

PDS leader Gregor Gysi described this turn in a speech about the year 2000 budget proposal: "In December 1998 a series of laws were passed — with our support — because they corrected gross social injustices. For example, the reduction of co-payments for medicines, the enlargement of dismissal protection, the reestablishment of 100% wages paid in case of illness, the suspension of the lowering of pension levels and the increase in child support.

"From the start, I had the feeling, Mister Federal Chancellor, that these laws were not quite to your taste. At least I noted that you did not refer to these laws in the election campaign in Hessa, for instance. In March 1999 there was a break in the politics of the Federal government. This coincided, not at all accidentally, with the resignation of Oskar Lafontaine."

This does not mean that "with Oskar" there would have been another governmental direction, or that the positive starts of the first quarter year of "Red-Green" would have continued. Such an assertion would be an idealization of the person of Lafontaine, forgetting the already-existing beginnings of an asocial austerity policy (in Saarland) and of undemocratic measures (press laws in Saarland; cosponsoring of the "great surveillance decree"). Such a view blinds us to the character of our society and to the modest role that individual persons, even those in a government, can play in such a framework.

### Parties of the System

It is not persons that are determinants, but the basic character of the economic and political system. The leaders of the SPD and of the federal Greens have proved with their politics, that they are "parties of the system." They function entirely in the interests of the capitalist system and of those that exert the real power in it — corporations, banks, insurance companies, and employer associations.

They have shown that if necessary they will pursue such politics even if opposed by a considerable part of their adherents. Even when they thereby destroy their own party and voter base. The Schröder phrase "We cannot change the program" — meaning the austerity policy — is almost

programmatic. But, obviously, this program was decided somewhere else. In fact the Federal Union of the Employer Associations (BDA) demanded in the spring of 1999 that "the Federal government return to a trustworthy and relevant course," that is, to continue the politics of chancellor Kohl.

Lately, since the Kosovo war and submission of the year 2000 budget, the employer camp appears satisfied and criticizes only partial matters, like the "DM630m (US\$3.2m) jobs" and cuts in the defense budget. (So we can expect that the "Red-Greens" will soon propose "corrections" that are "friendly" to employers and the armaments industry).

These central issues of "war" and "asocial austerity" in which "Red-Greens" acts against their own election programs are not accidental. The "system" poses precisely these demands in the current period. "Austerity" means continuation of the neoliberal politics of reduction of the state wherever it protects the weak, and simultaneous strengthening of the state wherever it substitutes surveillance and force for democracy.

Above all, it means the continuation of a vast redistribution from below to above. In the time period 1992-1997 the net income from employer activity rose by 44.1 per cent, while the net income of employees rose only three per cent (falling in real terms, as did the net real income of people receiving public funds and the unemployed).

In such a framework it is logical that Eichel's "austerity package" applies overwhelmingly to the socially weakest, and illogical that the "Red-Greens" would do what they promised in its election program, namely to re-institute the property tax.

It is then also logical and cynical when with the eco-tax the positively conceived protection of the environment is pressed into service for the redistribution from below to above and that with this tax the socially weakest are further enfeebled, public transport burdened and made more costly, while industry largely escapes any charges.

War, the second central issue, is also a logical consequence of capitalism in its current stage. The struggle for the world market, the division of the "rest of the world" among the 200 transnational corporations demands a national state policy in the interests of



Gerhard Schröder

## ★ Germany

the banks and corporations, by which war is considered as a "normal" part of business as usual, a continuation of foreign policy by other means.

The same interests are served by redistribution from below to above domestically and by intervention and war in foreign policy. Only a few months after taking office, the "Red-Greens" have proven that they exclusively serve those same interests.

"We have understood," writes Schröder after an earlier electoral loss. But he obviously had something different in mind than what his adherents were thinking. In the above-cited interview in *Bild*, Fischer makes it more clear: "Sometimes I feel very tired but I do not desist. Like a dog that does not let go of a bone. A real pit bull is only interested in the bone."

### Perspectives

One can only say: "...and good luck!" And then a CDU government or the Great Coalition will come again. In the meantime the PDS grows a little bit. And so the carousel continues turning.

But there are good reasons for thinking that things will change. And for that also the "system" is decisive. The material bases of the capitalist economy become ever more unstable as the neoliberal austerity policy and the competition for new markets ascend into the "terrorism of the economy."

Eichel, who failed in Hessa and yet is celebrated as austerity commissar by the neoliberal media, applied his torture measures to the socially weak during a relatively calm period. How will it be when a new recession beckons?

In spite of his asocial austerity policy, Eichel succeeded only in slowing down the debt increase, of putting a brake to the rise of public debt. At the same time the average interest on the public debt reached a record low, with 5.46 per cent. Even a small rise in the interest rate by the European central bank — in response to US developments — and all the austerity efforts will come to naught. Then there will be the devil to pay.

Scharping who failed as SPD-boss, became the media's darling as minister of war. He led the first German war since 1945. German is still a junior partner of the USA. But the Kosovo war was certainly a dress rehearsal for "our own" wars — coming soon to a country near you. Germany, or a German-led European Union will swing into action with an EU army, organised through the West European Union [the EU defence wing].

Meanwhile, mass unemployment, impoverishment and deportations increase as a logical result of the red-green neoliberal policies. Hundreds of thousands of "red-green" voters are migrating into the right wing and the extreme right wing camp.

There is no guarantee that the PDS will grow in all of this. In fact, the more it helps govern, the more the party becomes identified with the austerity measures. The more the PDS paints Blair-Schröder in reddish hues, the more certain it is of losing its own followers.

The PDS entered the European Parliament for the first time in 1997, with a record percentage of the total vote. But this was only because overall voter participation was so low. If we look at the actual votes cast, compared to 1994, the party lost 189,000 votes in the the new [formerly East German] states and gained 85,000 votes in the old [West German] states. The worst falls took place in Mecklenburg-WestPomerania (-65,000 votes) and Saxony-Anhalt (-46,000 votes).

The development of mass unemployment will be decisive. Without movement from below — by unemployed, employed and trade unions — mass unemployment will continue to grow, eventually come close to the historic heights of 1933, the six-million number. We can argue about the limits within which the capitalist system can function by means of bourgeois democracy. But it is for certain that this country is once again approaching those limits. And the Left is not prepared for that — even less than in 1933. ★

\*The author is a member of parliament for the PDS

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# PDS is "Social Home" for East Germans

**Bodo Ramelow is the deputy leader of the PDS fraction in the Thuringia state assembly. We talked to him about the situation facing the party in eastern Germany, and its changing relationship with the Social Democratic Party (SPD).**

• You failed to become Minister of Labor in Thuringia. Are you disappointed?

I did not want to become Minister of Labor; I only said that I would be willing to undertake the job! The PDS election program said that we wanted to reorganize the Ministries for Economy, Labor and Social Matters, and Science, and form a Ministry for Development and a Ministry for the Future. The budget for the promotion of the economy was to be combined with the budget for labor market policies, which would allow a certain number of initiatives to be undertaken in the public employment sector. That was our political concept.

• The SPD declined your proposal for a coalition government

Since the start of the Kosovo war, it was not clear anymore to me personally whether it would actually be possible with the local SPD to work towards a common change in basic political questions in the sense of a policy change. Not because I think of the SPD in Thuringia as particularly rabid war mongers, but because, since Germany joined the war in Kosovo, the basic conditions for a political discussion on domestic matters have changed. The total activity among the Greens and the SPD was directed to bring all elected official on board the war course. This paralyzed and used up all efforts for a meaningful debate in these parties. Since that time there has not been a real meaningful exchange about alternative labor and economic models. To build a public employment sector would have been an incredibly difficult task with the existing politicians of the SPD.

• After the election in Brandenburg the state chairperson, Anita Tack, said that the majority voted left. She came to this conclusion by adding

the votes of the SPD and the PDS. Do you agree?

It is hard to say what counts as left in the SPD and if everything other than the CDU can be counted as left. Arithmetically the assertion is correct but that is a very mechanical view. As a matter of fact our Kashmir-wearing chancellor is not a representative of the left wing. My problem is also that the left that was represented best by Lafontaine was lost totally inside the SPD. With the Greens I have the feeling that they have mutated into a green-painted FDP [centre liberal party]. They incline more towards the neoliberal course than to a strategy for fundamental societal change that looks for alternatives to the policies proposed by economic liberalism. So I would not dare anymore these days to simply add together the SPD and the PDS vote to get a "left spectrum."

When a party such as the PDS runs candidates, it must indicate how it is going to transform politics; that can be done under parliamentarism only through coalitions, because the PDS alone will not become a majority party (and that is a good thing). Changes will come in this society only when they are demanded outside of parliament with mass pressure. Parliament is only a part of the government through which movements can be channelled.

• The PDS will not be in a position to join coalition governments in the foreseeable future. What does that mean for the strategic orientation of the PDS in East Germany? Will it take the place of social democracy in the East German party configuration? What consequences will that have?

In Eastern Germany, a traditional social democracy has not regrown in the last ten years. There were people from the period of the transformation who functioned as social democrats: They defined themselves as victims of the SED [Socialist Unity Party, i.e., the Stalinist party]; they would never consider themselves as lefts or as natural partners of the PDS. They are only busy with drawing lines of demarcation. In some ways they are even worse than the CDU representatives in Eastern Germany, who blindly follow orders from their

Western bosses.

In the past years the PDS has achieved its social democratization, with integration into the existing party configuration. This did not happen because the PDS became a substitute social democratic party, but because it picked up the currents that existed in the East [of Germany] and for whom the party became a home and more than a milieu. When I compare the programs of the PDS in Thuringia with those of the South Hessian SPD in the Seventies and the Eighties, then the latter probably had a more left approach than the PDS today.

Old established views do not apply anymore. The PDS is considered a social home in the new Federal states [East Germany] and the more we become fleshed out as a party, the more we will grow.

But that is not enough for me. My perspective calls for it to become an all-German left party, to the left of the SPD. That means that we must work towards an all-German left profile. At this time the breach between the West PDS and the East PDS is clearly visible: there exist completely different ways of looking at things, completely different socializations. We will only become an all-German party if we succeed in finding common political assessments in the roots of both socializations.

• How to move towards this goal?

The best would be if we could finally discuss a common all-German constitution that is actually anti-militaristic, that lays out social rights, makes direct democracy possible, and where other life styles and social planning have room.

But other discussions can make do in the meantime: the right of asylum, the inviolability of the private sphere, the strengthening of those fundamental laws that guarantee civil rights. At the next census we shall see if there is once again a dispute over the informal right of self-determination, among other things, and if it can lead towards making an all-German political movement possible.

I will work towards this [goal] in the PDS. That is why I joined the PDS. At this moment apparently I am still the exception, still very much a vanguard West German. Many West Germans here in Thuringia are angry with me about joining the PDS. ★

This article first appeared in the German bi-weekly SoZ. Translated by Ed Kovacs, Los Angeles, U.S. Solidarity

# Farewell to the working class?



**Bodo Zeuner says trade unionists should realise that Germany's Social Democrats are abandoning the labor movement.**

The landslide collapse of the SPD in recent elections has renewed the debate about the character of the party and its relations to the working class. In the radical left newspaper *SoZ*, Heiner Halberstadt has predicted a regression to a two-party-system on the American model — the SPD becoming a bourgeois party like the US Democrats.

Berlin-based political scientist Bodo Zeuner disagrees. He made the following presentation to the Political Forum of the country's largest trade union, IG Metall, on June 4.

“Trade unions in Germany always were political. The first workers' protection (“shelter”) organizations developed in conjunction with political parties, above all the social democratic movement but also the Center and the Liberals.

As political entities, the trade unions always wanted to represent more than just their actual members. In principle they understood themselves to be organizations of the working class as a whole — of all persons dependent upon their labor. But there was always a division between the social democratic, Christian and Communist trade unions.

Within each political “family,” everyone agreed that trade unions should take care of the every-day economic matters but the parties would be responsible for the great questions of politics, above all the questions of state.

Until 1933 the social democratic unions accepted this division of labor — thought they never submitted unconditionally to the leading role of the party, like the communist RGO trade

unions.

There were exceptions. In 1933 the social democratic unions attempted to make overtures to Hitler, though the social democratic party did not.

After 1945, West Germany's trade unions were organized in a new, formally non-party German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB). But there was a *de facto* division of labor with the SPD. Over time, however, the unions became increasingly skilled at independent political interventions, even with the conservative CDU party. “Co-determination” in the mining industry was agreed between trade union leader Böckler and Konrad Adenauer, a conservative Chancellor.

## Bad Godesberg...

This system of labor division was broken in 1959, when the SPD abandoned many principles of social democracy at its historic Godesberg conference. Two years later, the DGB also approved a program embracing the market economy. But they did not follow in the SPD in declaring themselves no longer the party of the working class but a party of the people. The SPD, but not the unions, now aspired to represent, consider, and bring into harmony all societal interests, even those of the employers.

The trade unions could not just become “peoples' unions,” representing equally the interests of the employers and those of the employees. Despite all the union-employer agreements on “social partnerships,” and all the unions' attempts to function as an intermediary organization, finding common ground between the interests of wage labor and capital, the trade unions had to remain the representatives of the interests of the employees.

They remained a fundamentally single social party. They knew that moving away from this would dilute their reasons for existence. Union leaders also wanted to be taken seriously by their social partners and by the government. This required them to “stake out” a distinctive position.

It is no accident that immediately after the Godesberg Program, for the first time, independent currents and initiatives appeared within the trade unions, opposing the course of the SPD

or at least putting forward an emphasis that differed from that of the SPD leadership. IG Metall (the metal workers union) under Otto Brenner was especially important. SPD leader Herbert Wehner banned the Socialist German Student Union, but, with Brenner's support, a left wing formed in the SDS — and later became the germinating seed of the '68 movement.

In later years, the metalworkers', print and paper unions completely opposed the SPD justification of “emergency laws”. At least one section of the DGB trade unions had begun to step beyond the traditional division of labor between unions and the Social Democratic Party, and take independent political positions and undertake independent political activities as trade unionists.

## ...and bad Blair

In 1999, the SPD took another qualitative leap, comparable to the Bad Godesberg program. And so, once again, the trade unions face the problem of redefining their role.

Forty years ago, the SPD wanted to become a left peoples party in the reformist tradition of the labor movement. Today, the the wing that triumphed in the internal power struggle against Lafontaine wants to transform the SPD into a modern economic party. Gerhard Schröder wants the party to occupy a socially and structurally undefined middle ground. This means explicitly and demonstratively abandoning the political tradition of the labor movement. In fact, these traditions have become a burden to Schröder. He is inspired by British Labour leader Tony Blair, who has showed that one can win elections that way. Blair is very proud of his distant stance from the trade unions.

Programmatically, 1959 meant rejection of the class struggle, of the Marxist tradition, of the expectation of a collapse of capitalism and the ultimate goal of the largest possible social ownership of the means of production.

It meant a turn to Keynesian total manipulation, to strong state intervention that seeks to provide equity in distribution. Attempting to utilize the mechanisms of the market — capital, profit and accumulation — in order to civilize and to regulate for the common good.

The programmatic theory corresponded with governmental practice after the party took power. Karl Schiller, one of the architects of the Godesberg Program, put it into practice after 1966 as economic Minister.



At that time, the social democratic economic-political conceptualization was seen as modern and creative. It differed markedly from the old-fashioned economic liberalism of the conservative CDU and the liberal FDP. It meant orchestrated action as an institution to tie together the trade unions, the employers and the Bundesbank in the administration of the economy.

But in 1999 the Keynesian wing of the SPD, represented by the party chairperson and finance minister Lafontaine, lost the battle for the program and policies. They lost precisely because the SPD was now in government, after a long period of opposition. The party chairperson, Gerhard Schröder, was now Federal chancellor.

Schröder had often stressed that the SPD was a party of program. But little is known about what he really believes about economic and social questions. We are given sayings about how there is no specifically social democratic economic policy, that he is the chancellor of all Germans, and that, without the agreement of the economy, he can do nothing.

Confronted by persistent, mass unemployment, German voters decided that the SPD was more competent than the CDU/FDP. But not on the basis of a clearly delineated concept — certainly not from the Schröder wing. The only certainties appear to be saying good-bye to Keynes, Schiller and Lafontaine and turning towards the world-wide ideologically and materially dominant neo-liberal and monetarist ideas of deregulation and a minimal state.

The state is conceived as a national competitive institution. Like a private enterprise, it has to cultivate and compete for the favor of big capital. Schröder's team more or less accept the neoclassical explanation for unemployment: the theory that states that the price of labor is too high.

The limit that would demarcate what is specifically social democratic in such a policy is hard to discern at the moment. It seems clear that a policy oriented towards the "new center" wants to have little to do with the disadvantaged and the losers in economic transformation processes.

In other words, the qualitative jump of 1959 meant the turning away of the SPD from the traditions of Marxism. The qualitative jump of 1999 means turning away from the traditions of the workers movement altogether.

### The New Center

In their distrust of the state, Blair and Schröder endeavor not to do less

than their predecessors Thatcher and Kohl. Sometimes they speak of an "active" state that will "lead". But this only means the reduction of state intervention oriented towards the common good. The "tax burden on hard work and entrepreneurship" is defined as "too high." They have discovered a "burden of regulation" that needs to be reduced.

On the issue of public service, the "modern social democrats" descend into the vocabulary of the impersonal. They are concerned with "rigorously guarding the quality of public services and eradicating bad performance."

There is also a barracks tone concerning labor relations: Blair and Schröder are sure that the "traditional conflicts in the workplace must be eliminated." Social inequality will not only be tolerated but striven for. There is a new, elusive distinction between "equality" and "social equity." "Creativity and outstanding performance" call for higher compensation.

The losers of the modernization process on the other hand are offered — threatened — that "modern social democrats are transforming the safety net of entitlements into a spring board for self reliance." A low wage sector is desirable in order to decrease unemployment.

"Modern social democrats" promote a society in which all persons will confront each other in competition as owners of "capital." The loser will lose even more and the winner win yet more.

The already evident and ever sharpening divisions in society are no problem for them. They are aiming at a "new center." They mean exactly what one former general secretary of the FDP meant when he praised his party as the "party of the better paid."

So it is completely ideologically consistent that the FDP fraction of the Federal Congress presents the Blair-Schröder declaration as its motion to the Congress.

### Unions now lack political arm

If the SPD under Schröder definitively separated itself from the political traditions of the workers movement, then the traditional division of labor between SDP and trade unions has lost any basis. The SDP cannot be — and does not want to be — the political arm of a movement whose economic arm is constituted by the trade unions.

A completely new question arises for the trade unions. Will they want to continue the political traditions of the workers movement, without being tied to a particular party?

This means relying on themselves,

and building alliance with other social groupings. It means remaining equidistant from all political parties.

The alternative is an Anglo-americanization. There would be no social democratic party anymore, like in the USA and, increasingly, in England. The trade unions would develop as particular and mutually competitive interest groups, representing their respective members, without any politically motivated class solidarity.

In this scenario, the trade unions would accept the thesis that the tradition of a once socialist and social democratic workers movement has exhausted itself politically.

And, as the election research specialists argue, there are no more traditional left-right positions socio-economically based political conflict lines.

### Crossroads

The German trade unions must open a discussion. Do we accept or reject this thesis of the end of the workers movement?

This discussion has not at all been superseded by the formulaic compromises of the DGB's Fundamental Program, adopted in Dresden.

On the contrary, I think that a political program that can be a basis for action, and that does not disappear at once into the filing cabinet, is needed now more than ever.

Otherwise, the trade unions are threatened with a rapid descent into political oblivion in the maelstrom of increased global competition between national states, with unions more and more frequently entrapped in blackmail-like "social partnership" agreements.

Until now, German trade unions were connected to the Social Democratic Party, as part of a traditional division of labor within the workers' movement. But, in 1999, the Social Democratic Party said goodbye to the political tradition of the workers movement.

The question facing the trade unions is as follows: are we willing, are we strong enough to be the sole carriers of this tradition, without any connection to any particular party?

This independent politicalisation is certainly preferable to the alternative path: the reduction of our demands to the interest-group particularism of the American model. ★

This article first appeared in the German newspaper SoZ. Translated by Ed Kovacs, Solidarity (USA).

# Victorious left

The radical left did suprisingly well in Victoria's state elections. John Tully discusses the implications for closer left co-operation.

**Melbourne:** Weary with "New Right", neo-liberal policies, Victorian voters have swung decisively against the conservative coalition that has governed the state since late 1992. The lower house is now composed of 43 conservatives, 42 Labor and three independents. The independents have decided to back a Labor minority government.

After seven years of "elected dictatorship," conservative state premier Jeff Kennett is expected to leave politics in the near future.

The independents have issued a charter of key demands that includes a halt to further privatisation; an end to government secrecy; and an inquiry into a number of corrupt government business dealings. They have also demanded reform of the state constitution, proportional voting for the upper house, and simultaneous elections and terms of office for both houses.

The independents are quite rightly appalled by Kennett's threats to use his majority in the upper house to frustrate the legislative programme of a Labor/independent coalition.

## Radical left also does well

The election also saw an increased vote for the Greens and the candidates of three left-wing socialist parties. Susanna Duffy polled more than 8% for the **Progressive Labour Party (PLP)** in Northcote; the **Democratic Socialist Party's** Jorge Jorquera got 5.8% in Melbourne; and Steve Jolly scored an outstanding 12% for the **Militant Socialist Organisation** in Richmond. These results mirror similar developments for the socialist left in Europe and elsewhere in recent years.

In a happy break from tradition, the left parties and the **Greens** did not stand candidates against each other and thus avoided splitting the left vote.

## Closer cooperation

This new spirit of cooperation was explored further at a joint meeting of green and left groups on October 21st.

Also attending was Phil Cleary's

"**Independent Australia**" group. Cleary won the federal seat of Wills in Melbourne as a left independent following the resignation of ex-Prime Minister Bob Hawke, but only held it for one term. If he stood for the Senate, Cleary could be elected. He is a former football star, who has consistently endorsed the PLP's candidates, whilst declining to join himself.

**Arun Pradhan sent the following report from the meeting:** Chris McConville said, on behalf of Cleary's party, that although the party is still developing policy, it opposes all forms of economic rationalism. He supported initiatives for a broad alliance which he suggested could centre on "swapping preferences".

McConville warned against prescriptive or bureaucratic approaches. He said one of the main goals of such an alliance should be the democratic reform of Victoria's upper house.

Gurm Sekhom, the Greens' state coordinator, acknowledged that parliament was not the only road to change, but said the left needed a "mouthpiece" in parliament. He discussed the difficulties facing alternatives: to field candidates across the entire state, for example, would cost \$46,000.

Victorian (and most Australian) elections are run on the undemocratic preferential system, which, like first past the post voting, entrenches the major parties and allows them to form governments without an absolute majority of the vote whilst keeping dissident voices outside parliament. A change to the more democratic proportional voting system (as in New Zealand) would mean a Left/Green alliance in the state parliament for the first time.

Sekhom expressed the opinion of many of the speakers when he said the Labor Party was politically bankrupt and there is growing space on the left. He said the Greens were already registered, but suggested left parties might want to register together under the banner of some form of an alliance.

Wendy Bainger, from the Geelong branch of the Progressive Labour Party, discussed the development of her branch, which is built on community alliances. Bainger said work with unions, environmentalists and the indi-

genous community has been key to the PLP's success in Geelong.

Jorge Jorquera from the Democratic Socialists pointed to international examples of left forces overcoming differences, as well as examples from the Democratic Socialists' own history of alliances and joint work.

Both Jorquera and Steve Jolly, from Militant, argued that campaigns were crucial in alliances and in winning support. Both speakers also foresaw future possibilities for socialists and left forces because the union left would be forced to make breaks from a Labor government moving in a conservative direction.

A motion which commended the success of left parties in the state elections and called for "avoiding unnecessary divisions of the left vote" was passed unanimously. The motion also called on the parties to "increase their levels of cooperation by formulating a clear and concise statement of common political positions".

Sekhom said that, while the Greens had not voted on the motion, he believed the majority of branches would favour it. In summarising the initiative, Jorquera said that the aim should be for all groups involved to pose "a left list" at the next elections, based on basic green and left principles.

Bill Deller, from the PLP, acknowledged the meeting was the first step in an ongoing process of dialogue and work, but said it was a very encouraging development. ★

• **Steve Jolly** played a leading role in the year-long occupation of the Richmond Secondary College by staff, students and parents in the early '90s, and is a well-known anti-racist campaigner. **Susan Duffy** has an activist history going back over thirty years and is a well-known presenter on Melbourne's community station Radio 3CR. Duffy was also endorsed by the Greens, the Australian Women's Party and a number of high-profile community and trade union activists. **Jorge Jorquera** has been active in the Chilean solidarity movement for a number of years. A former Labor member, he is currently the Melbourne branch secretary of the DSP. ★

# Balkan balancesheet

**The International Executive Committee of the Fourth International adopted this document in September.**

The war that the NATO governments unleashed against Serbia is at the same time a new stage of the crisis that has torn apart former Yugoslavia, and of the geostrategic recompositions that have been affecting relations among the big powers, in particular the European Union and the United States, as well as their institutions (the UN, NATO, etc.) since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This is why it has elicited two main types of one-sided reactions from left milieus:

- 1) reactions arising primarily from rejection of the repression carried out by the Serbian regime in Kosovo since 1989 and more broadly from rejection of the policies of ethnic cleansing that have ravaged Croatia and Bosnia since 1991—it is from this current that NATO's war has drawn its popular support as a "moral" war, abusing inappropriate historical analogies; and
- 2) reactions from another current that has primarily seen the war as a NATO war like earlier ones, in the context of the "new world order", its hypocrisy and its international, geostrategic stakes.

Even if rejecting NATO and rejecting the Milosevic regime obviously cannot be put on the same level, rejecting both enables us to break with the false dilemma of having to choose one reactionary "camp".

Far from undermining resistance to imperialist policies, a critical approach to the Serbian regime made it possible to get a response from people who saw the difficulty and the counterproductive character of this war from the standpoint of its own declared goals (stopping ethnic cleansing).

Finally, the fact that Milosevic leads a party that calls itself "socialist" required us, more explicitly than in the case of Iraq, to express our criticism of his policies very clearly at the same time that we condemned NATO's war.

This is why these two critical axes, along with the defence of the Kosovars' right to self-determination, served as progressive reference points.

They did not however tell the Kosovars how to defend their right to

self-determination against the aggressive violence of the Serbian state.

Rather than sliding into a "pacifist" position that would be indifferent to the suffering of the Kosovar people, we supported their legitimate right of self defence.

We don't accept a symmetrical analysis of Serbian state terrorism and the armed struggle of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

But the KLA's political orientation after Adem Demaci was removed from its leadership, and the group's organisational weakness, made it impossible for us to consider the KLA the necessary base for the double struggle against ethnic cleansing and against the NATO war.

So we were reduced to the position of struggling for a halt to the bombings and in favour of an agreement which would prioritise the return of the expelled population—protected by a multinational force.

The end to the war, and the return of the refugees, was achieved through a compromise which reintroduced Russia and the UN into the Balkan procedure, and allowed NATO troops to occupy Kosovo. Such an agreement—between the Belgrade regime and the major powers, and excluding the Kosovar resistance—has a conflictual and reactionary content, which we must analyse and fight against, while supporting the right of the Yugoslav and Kosovar peoples to take charge of their own destiny.

## The consequences of the war and our tasks

The agreement which stopped NATO's attacks and made possible the withdrawal of the Serbian army and police has resulted in a military occupation of Kosovo mainly by NATO troops and the establishment of a big power protectorate under a UN mandate.

The massive and rapid return of the Albanian-speaking Kosovo expellees gave an initial legitimacy to the presence of the international interposition force—although this is the least reparation that could be made for a war that was a catalyst for (not an obstacle to) the worst ethnic cleansing committed by the Serbian forces. Of course

from the Kosovo Albanians' point of view the protectorate breaks the Serbian yoke, but it is at the antipodes of what the peace accords claim to be establishing: "a multi-ethnic and tolerant Kosovo". There is no plan to recognise the right of the Kosovar population to express their views about their own future.

KFOR (the multinational interposition force in Kosovo) says it is incapable of protecting the non-Albanian minorities that are massively fleeing from the province. All this can encourage the growing doubts in public opinion about the real goals (or at least about their "effectiveness" in reaching their supposed goals) of the war and protectorate.

This is in conflict with both Belgrade and the Kosovar pro-independence forces. On the one hand it is formally maintaining Serbian sovereignty over the province and the external frontier of Yugoslavia—which suggests the theoretical possibility of the return of Belgrade troops. But in practice it is making the Deutschmark the official currency of Kosovo at the expense of the Yugoslav dinar.

On the other hand the power of the big powers is coming into conflict with the aspirations of the KLA for independence and with its will to control the province's institutions.

Just as in the old colonial days, an "administrator" of Kosovo has been appointed. The "administrator's" troops will be present for years, maybe decades. For the moment, this Protectorate excludes the option of ethnic partition. But the reorganisation of Serb paramilitaries, and their entry into the (French-controlled) northern part of Mitrovica could lead to a new spiral of ethnic cleansing.

The various political forces of the Kosovar resistance are demanding the establishment of an army and police force based on the Kosovars' own decision-making. This is a legitimate demand. So is the demand for democratic self-administration, in place of a UN Protectorate.

The lasting presence of foreign troops and organisations will be a source, as in Bosnia, of very great social inequality, corruption and dependence—along with the acceleration of privatisation, which is a source of the same mafia-type disasters as in neighbouring Bosnia. Our objective is to help Kosovar civil society and in particular its young people and its workers — men and women—to take control of their own future, their defence and their institutions as quickly as possible in a

## ★ Balkan document

democratic framework. The development of international links, particularly on the trade-union level through a continuation of International Workers Aid for Bosnia will be essential in this context.

### **The right of self-determination for the Kosovars; respect for minorities; and solidarity among the peoples of the Balkans.**

Hesitations about defending this right derive from the fear that it will only lead to growing fragmentation and the building of ethnically pure states. But a selective approach to the right of self-determination or its rejection necessarily imply accepting that might makes right and accepting the Big Powers' arbitrary choices.

Our intransigent defence of peoples' right to self-determination does not mean that we support a universal solution of "one people one state". But it means that the people themselves have to decide in a given, changing, context. The defence of this right is inseparable from a struggle for political and ethnic pluralism, against all policies of ethnic cleansing and for equal treatment for all communities.

Albanians constituted 80% of the population of Kosovo. After Tito died, Milosevic's first act, in 1989, was to abolish the Statute of Autonomy which Kosovo had enjoyed within the Yugoslav Federation. It was replaced by an apartheid regime, with a system of 'national preference' installed for the Serbs.

The only democratic and political solution is through the self-determination of the people of Kosovo. Through a democratic consultative process, they must decide on their future. If they want independence, they should have it.

Self determination means that the Kosovo people should freely decide on their own political regime, their relations with other peoples, the status of Kosovo, its future, and its relations with the Belgrade government. This should all be done by a free choice, through a democratic consultation. Federation can only work if it is freely accepted by each of the components.

It is for the people of Kosovo to decide, though while respecting the rights of Kosovo's minorities (Serbs, Roma, Turks).

Such a process is the only guarantee that all the communities will define the rules and the institutions necessary for cohabitation and equality. On the other hand, increasing tension, and any desire to impose things on the minority will

surely lead to war and ethnic cleansing.

In September 1991, Kosovo's underground authorities organised a referendum, in which 87% of the population participated, of which 99% voted for a sovereign republic—leaving open the question of this republic's relationship to the neighbouring states.

This choice has been confirmed in all the subsequent elections organised by Kosovo's 'parallel' society. The elected 'president,' Ibrahim Rugova, was in favour of independence, but Kosovars disagreed as to how this independence should be achieved.

After the mass deportation of Albanians from Kosovo—organised by Milosevic—it is clear that a large majority of Kosovars are sympathetic to the call for an independent Kosovo. We support this legitimate aspiration. No-one has the right to force the Kosovars to remain in a Yugoslav federation led by the regime which organised the purges.

Equitable solutions and reciprocal rights can be realised for all the peoples concerned only on the Balkan level. This is why we defend both the Kosovars' right to self-determination along with respect for all minorities and the necessity of links between the peoples and workers of this region, so as to build regional relationships of solidarity, cooperation, and social, cultural and political equality.

### **NATO's war has solved nothing; rather it has increased the main danger that it was meant to ward off, the risk of further Balkan explosions.**

Far from facilitating the overthrow of Milosevic on the basis of a political clarification and progressive critique of his politics, the NATO war has confused things more than ever and made it still more difficult for a coherent, progressive opposition to emerge.

Milosevic has consolidated his power by playing every card: appealing to anti-bureaucratic mobilisations which made it possible for him to consolidate his power against his rivals in the first place—and relying on bureaucratic and clientelist mechanisms to control the enterprises; references to the Titoist, anti-fascist, Yugoslav past—and a radical break with this past through an alliance with Serb nationalist currents with anti-communist traditions; support for the secessionist aspirations and policies of the Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia relying on extreme-right ultra-nationalism and its paramilitary militias—and then support for "peace plans" which meant breaking

with his former allies. He thus appeared socially more protective than his neo-liberal opponents and more moderate than his extreme right—while he borrowed part of the extreme-right programme.

Milosevic is neither Hitler nor an anti-fascist. His political and programmatic alliance with Seselj's Radical Party and its militias is criminal. Just as criminal is the incorporation of extreme-right currents and orientations into the Tudjman regime in Croatia.

On this level, the lack of symmetry in the media's and politicians' treatment of Milosevic and Tudjman comes down very largely to a soft spot for those who identify with neo-liberalism and with anti-communism. To turn this hypocritical asymmetry upside down and support Milosevic as a "progressive" does not make any more sense.

Alone and unarmed, the Kosovo people were the victims of real ethnic cleansing, carried out by the ultra-nationalist Serb militias which became so infamous in Bosnia.

During 1998 Serb forces pushed about 200,000 Kosovars out of their homes. In the first week of the NATO intervention, a further 400,000 Kosovars were pushed to the borders. Just before the NATO intervention, Milosevic increased his aggression against the Kosovo Albanians. No-one can say that they did not know what was happening, that the nature of the Milosevic regime was not clear, after the years of war in Croatia and Bosnia, and after the Srebrenica massacres.

The Milosevic regime should be opposed. Its barbarian practices and its ideology based on ethnic separation or ethnic domination are just as dangerous as any other racist and xenophobic ideologies.

To stay in power, the Milosevic regime embraced a great-Serbian nationalism, which promised to bring all Serbs together in one state, through ethnic cleansing of a range of territories. These are crimes against humanity and war crimes. Those responsible should be prosecuted by the International Penal Tribunal in the Hague.

It is up to the Yugoslav population and particularly the Serbs—and not NATO—to draw up the final balance sheet of the tragedies to which Milosevic's policies have led.

The indictment of Milosevic and the conditions made for economic aid push a good number of the former supporters of "Greater Serbia" to "launder" themselves in "radical" campaigns for the resignation of Milosevic, a demand which replaces any real programme.

They can base themselves on the aspiration to peace and to receive Western loans in order to rebuild a ruined country—as well as on the accumulated disillusionment with Milosevic's regime. But the bitterness at NATO's policies also goes very deep, which makes the outcome of elections uncertain. The great majority of Serb refugees from Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia may provide an electoral base for the extreme-right Radical Party.

We denounce the way in which the Serbian people has been taken hostage twice, first by the war, then by economic strangulation (the population of Montenegro for its part was subjected to strangulation by Belgrade).

We also have to fight against the selective—and thus political—character of the International War Crimes Tribunal (IWCT)'s actions. Not that we reject the IWCT nor its indictment of Milosevic but we demand the prosecution of all the criminals and the extension of penal action under international law to the NATO leaderships, ie the imperialist governments.

**The overall mechanisms** of privatisation that accelerated the break-up of the Titoist federation, as well as the maintenance in power of a strong coalition between Milosevic's party and Seselj's Radical Party, will continue to have disintegrative effects, particularly in Montenegro. The loss of Kosovo is reinforcing a political offensive by Milosevic, in alliance with Seselj, around Bosnia. This could lead to a relaunching of military action with the goal of partitioning Bosnia-Herzegovina—gaining territory there, while definitively abandoning any claim on Kosovo.

At the same time, the risks of a break-up of Macedonia still exist, since it has not responded in a satisfactory way to the demands of its Albanian population.

**We therefore need to develop** solidarity and trade-union, grassroots and feminist links on a Balkan scale against the predominant reactionary policies in order to prepare from below a progressive recomposition of the links among peoples.

The growing awareness of the risks, of the (un-admitted) disasters of the war and of the overlapping national questions in the whole of Balkan Europe is the source of the proposal for a "Stability Pact", which was signed in Sarajevo on 31 July 1999 by all the region's governments—except Serbia's. The NATO governments will offer their

multinationals the chance to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by their war. As in Bosnia and elsewhere in the neoliberal universe, bribes in order to win privatisation contracts will accompany this "Pact" with its goal of "stabilisation", which will be contradicted by the socially disintegrative logic and social austerity policies involved in building neoliberal Europe.

This is the logic that we must oppose on the scale of the whole continent.

### **The dimension of the "world order"**

Expansion of NATO, of "humanitarian" neo-colonialism and of militarism: this is the disastrous balance sheet of this war. Nonetheless, even if on a limited scale so far, we may see the emergence as well of an anti-militarist, anti-imperialist "civic consciousness" based on demands for control over government policies and for equal power and respect for all peoples.

**Claiming to uphold the rule of law**, NATO's war has meant a flagrant violation of democratic rights, even the most limited ones, of the countries involved. Parliaments have been confronted with *fait accomplis*. In some cases the constitution has even been violated (this is the case of Italy whose constitution explicitly forbids recourse to war). This has been a real trauma in Germany.

The evasion of procedures for parliamentary control, as well as those of the UN, obviously do not mean that the same decisions to go to war taken by parliaments or by the UN or the specific content of the peace agreements are defensible in our eyes. But the demands for public control and radical contestation of an imperialist order are at stake.

It is not an innocent thing for decisions to go to war (which are particularly serious forms of intervention) to be taken by people who claim to act in the name of the "international community" without most of the countries of the world or public opinion having anything to say about it. Although they are all obviously part of a world order dominated by the imperialist powers, the UN, the OSCE and NATO are not identical institutions on this level.

**On the occasion of its 50th anniversary** NATO has redefined its reason for existence, its strategic goals and its rules of behaviour, although the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact should have

(and should still) put its dissolution on the agenda. Relaunching arms spending is once more on the agenda in every region of the world, with all the inevitable consequences for national budgets and social policies.

**The United States** are themselves "profiting" from the Kosovo experience by planning improvements and a supplementary research effort in order to supply itself with still more sophisticated and powerful means of destruction.

Japan and Germany have also experienced a radical change in the "peaceful" attitude that they adopted after their defeat in the Second World War.

Taken as a whole, the countries of the European Union are at a turning point. If they do not want to be outclassed by their ally/rival, the US, they have to make a maximum effort to reduce the yawning chasm that currently exists between them at the military level. After monetary convergence it is military convergence and an increase in military spending that are on the agenda—even while the restrictive logic of the EU's budget continues in force.

The mergers among arms multinationals, as in other fields, are also at stake in the political decisions made by the Big Powers, which will lead to growing disquiet and an arms race in the rest of the world, particularly in China.

**At the same time**, suspicion of NATO has also revived in the public opinion of most countries of Eastern Europe and the European Union, in contradiction to the unconditional support given by their governments. The balance sheet of this war in terms of ecological, material, human and political disasters will help to delegitimize it.

Our condemnation of this war is both moral and political. It flows from our opposition both to the political and economic interests of the big powers and to the overall strategy that they have concretely deployed in pursuit of its supposed immediate goals: pacifying Kosovo and defending human rights.

The pseudo-negotiations, the bombing to compel signature of an "agreement", using civilian populations as hostages, establishing a protectorate to block peoples' right to self-determination—all this is characteristic of the intrinsic arrogance of big powers.

The fact that a country like Turkey—where human rights and the rights of a national minority are trodden

underfoot—took part directly in NATO's bombing by opening its air bases to it is in itself sufficient to demonstrate the completely hypocritical character of the propaganda about humanitarian intervention.

A discussion and systematic balance sheets of this war in the different European parliaments should lead to challenges to a European "security" policy and to an international campaign for dissolution of NATO.

**In the short term** the European Union still has a considerable power of attraction in Eastern European and Balkan countries. Projects for Balkan regroupments are often perceived (or presented by the dominant parties) as diversions meant to slow down admission to the EU. We should refuse

to counterpoise rapprochements among Balkan peoples in a community of states and the links that they seek to the European Union. We must oppose the logic of building the European Union as a neoliberal fortress of rich countries.

In the face of the destruction caused by the war, declarations about openings towards the East and the Balkans have been multiplying. But they contradict the current austerity budgets and are oriented towards militarist priorities that will cut social programmes more than ever to bare bones.

A different Europe must redefine itself through a co-operative approach that respects the rights of peoples to decide for themselves.

We must push this perspective forwards by developing European links, particularly throughout the Balkan

region, with the political, trade-union, feminist and youth forces that resist every form of reactionary policies.

But from this moment on we must be in favour of any policy of aid for reconstruction of the countries devastated by this war – while demanding that they not be condition on "structural adjustment" policies and that they be subject to public, pluralist control. ★

**The International Executive Committee of the Fourth International approved this resolution in September 1999**

## Balkans solidarity network Time for a new world order

**As a follow-up to the International Appeal "for a lasting peace in the Balkans" launched in Paris on 15 May, several dozen signatories from different European countries met on 2-3 October in Geneva.**

The war decided by NATO outside any normal democratic procedure has had a very high political price, both on a local and regional level and with regard to international order.

In Kosovo, the legal situation and daily reality have been thrown into confusion following the agreement between the Serb regime and the great powers. Yugoslavia is supposed to retain sovereignty over Kosovo, which has been transformed—for an indefinite period—into an international protectorate by UN Resolution 1244. The DeutschMark has been decreed the official currency of this protectorate held under a UN mandate and NATO military occupation.

The Albanian population has returned, but the Serb and Romany minorities are in the process of leaving completely. Tensions between communities have greatly increased.

Aid programmes are deter-

mined by the strategic orientation which lay behind NATO's military intervention—integrating the region into NATO's security vision and into the rules of the market economy as defined by the major western powers.

This results in a denial of the right of peoples to make their own decisions about their future on a socio-economic and political level. The way the Yugoslav crisis has been handled by the "International Community" has been a disaster.

It is high time for a public debate on the role of NATO as a "private militia" of the major western powers. European security and world peace must not be based on a unilateral right of intervention (even worse, of waging war) which certain countries presume to grant themselves, either under the leadership of the United States or within the European framework.

One cannot claim to defend international law while at the same time failing to respect any norms, and bypassing the institutions whose very essence is universal. It is not possible to build peace and security without a determined policy of nuclear

and conventional disarmament, without a policy centred on economic and social development, solidarity between peoples and equality of rights.

Our unanimous condemnation of the way the Kosovo crisis was, and is still being handled, prompts us to continue our discussions and to pursue an exchange of texts. We also intend to make known other European initiatives whose orientation is similar. What alternative peace and security policy should be defined? Through which channels should it operate?

A first debate on international law, NATO, the UN, OSCE and the international tribunals was held by participants at the meeting in Geneva. They decided to form an international network dedicated to reflection, the critical analysis of Europe's leading media, and the exchange of information.

The network's objective is to develop an alternative to today's dominant policies on the basis of relations of solidarity, cooperation and friendship with partners in the Balkans who are involved in similar activities. This new network will participate in already existing projects aiming to organise "civic" conferences on the Balkans. ★

Contact the provisional voluntary collective via Suzanne de Brunhoff <Sdebrunhoff@compuserve.com> or Catherine Samary <samary@dauphine.fr> fax +33 1/42583030

# Obituary

## Mexican writer, militant

**Emilio Brodziak Amaya**  
(1938-99)

More than 200 people packed the auditorium at Leon Trotsky's house in Coyocan, Mexico City, October 16 to pay tribute to the memory of Emilio Amaya, who died on October 10 at the age of 61. At the time of his death Emilio was the national coordinator of the Co-ordinadora Intersindical Primero de Mayo, and a leading member of the Liga de la Unidad Socialista (LUS).

The son of a Polish father and a Mexican mother, Emilio Amaya joined the revolutionary movement in the early 1960s, becoming a member of the Liga Obrera Marxista. He participated in 1968 student movement, and in the same year helped to found the Grupo Comunista Internacionalista. In 1976 he was a founder member of the PRT (4<sup>th</sup> International).

Because he worked in public administration, he had to keep a low profile, and was for a long time confined to journalistic, publishing and internal party tasks. For more than 20 years he wrote, under a pseudonym, a column in the daily paper **Uno Mas Uno** defending workers' struggle and socialism. Until the time of his death he was a member of the council of the **Siglo Veinte Uno** publishing house.

In the 1970s he worked for

several years in France, where he was a member of the Latin American fraction of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire.

In the early 1990s, the PRT suffered a severe internal crisis, and eventually split into two groups. The part of the PRT Emilio stayed with decided in February 1996 to dissolve the organisation and go into the Zapatista movement. Emilio joined the opposition groups, led by Jaime Gonzalez and Manuel Aguilar Mora, which rejected this move and decided to fight for an open Marxist organisation. Two months later they founded the LUS.

In 1994, Emilio found himself in a financial position to devote himself full-time to the revolutionary movement. He seemed to be present at every demonstration of the workers and the left. He helped, in 1995, to found the Primero de Mayo left opposition trade union front, and became its principal organiser.

In the last year much of his time was taken up with the organisation of the National Resistance Front to defend the electricity industry against privatisation. He played a central role in writing and producing the LUS paper **Umbral** (Dawn); on the giant electricity workers demonstration on March 18 this year personally sold more than 100 copies. In the past nine

months he spent an increasing amount of time working to support to epic student strike at UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico). He also found time to be active in protests against the US war against Yugoslavia, and against the massacre in East Timor.

Like many on the Mexican left, he was active in support of the EZLN, which recognised the role of the Intersindical Primero de Mayo by sending a delegation of masked Zapatistas to lead the Intersindical's contingent on this year's May Day march.

The esteem in which Emilio was held was demonstrated by the speakers at the meeting. Fifteen workers' and peasant organisations sent speakers to the meeting, and many more sent messages.

Notable contributions were made by a member of the executive of the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME), whose members are to the fore in the anti-privatisation fight; and by a companera from the Consejo General de Huelga (CGH), the body leading the student strike.

Leaders of the Movimiento Proletario Independiente and the Partido Obrera Socialista also spoke. A moving tribute to his devotion to the socialist cause was made by his wife, Reyna Brodziak. The banner placed on the podium by the Primero de Mayo read: 'Your memory lives on in our struggle'. [MA/PH] ★

To contact the LUS e-mail: <maguillarm99@yahoo.com>

## IIRE fire safety appeal

New legislation obliges us to install a f40,000 (US\$20,000) fire alarm system. Unless we can raise extra funds, we will have to cut back on our sessions or publications. In the past many of you have supported our work. Can we count on you now to see us through this difficulty?

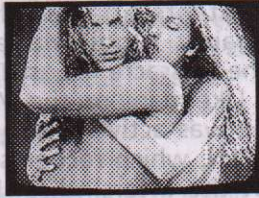
• Dutch guilders: bank transfer to Netherlands Postbank (giro) account #2079557, IIRE, Amsterdam

• German marks: account n° 17 495 011, BLZ 365 601 96, P. Berens, Volksbank Oberhausen-Mülheim, earmarked 'IIRE'

• US\$: Checks (tax-deductible) to 'Center for Changes', marked 'International Fund - IIRE'.

• Swiss francs: acct. 40-8888-1, COOP Bank, 266233.290005-6, Förderverein des Studienzentrums, marked 'E. Mandel/IIRE'.

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Pornography is omnipresent in western societies, and the subject of much pseudo-academic discussion.

Unfortunately, little of this theory is supported by scientific investigation.

### Richard Poulin

**Pornography is a delicate topic**, the subject of moral, religious and political controversy. The social and economic stakes are high: the trade in legal pornography is transnational and generates fantastic profits, impossible to calculate simply because we know so little about it. And, by definition, the scale of the illegal trade is even more difficult to determine.

Despite its omnipresence in our societies, there is surprisingly little real research and discussion about pornography. A number of academic and journalistic accounts of pornography exist. But these are above all descriptive,<sup>1</sup> historical,<sup>2</sup> or focused on the question of censorship.<sup>3</sup>

A large number of them ask bad questions because they fail to go beyond the surface of the issues. Statements like "saying that pornography is a form of writing full of hatred explains poorly why thousands of women seem disposed to spread it"<sup>4</sup> could be tested if the author were to go to the trouble of leaving his office and interviewing women working in the sector. But where pornography is concerned, social scientists prefer discussion to research!<sup>5</sup>

In the '70s and '80s, North American feminists attempted, often with success, to revolutionise analytical perspectives on porn.<sup>6</sup> But few of their reflections have been accompanied by research in the area. They also devoted a good part of their efforts to the issue of legislation<sup>7</sup> to regulate the distribution of pornography.

The lack of serious interest among

# The industry of sexual domination

researchers hasn't always been the case. At the end of the sixties, a number of governmental commissions of inquiry on pornography and obscenity concluded that it was inoffensive. The report of the American commission<sup>8</sup> is still considered to be one of the few reliable statements on the effects of pornography use. A large number of college-level introductory books on sociology produced in North America still rely on these inquiries. According to some of these, pornography had beneficial effects only: it served to protect women from male sexual aggression and, even, permitted a greater sexual harmony between partners.

But the research methods used by the appointees of the US commission have since been widely criticised and discredited by specialists.<sup>9</sup> It has even been proved that the commission's researchers suppressed some findings which suggested links between the use of pornography and sexual violence.

But above all, the premises guiding the research assumed, among other things, that women were less sexually stimulated by pornography than men because of their "social and cultural inhibitions". They took no account of the messages put out by this sexually explicit material. They did not consider the possibility that women did not use pornography because they felt attacked by it!

During the seventies and early eighties, psychologists, in laboratory experiments, showed that pornography consumption made sexual violence and rape seem more trivial to its users.<sup>10</sup> A survey undertaken in San Francisco in 1978, taking a representative sample of the female population, estimated that 10% had been "antagonised by men who, having read about a pornographic act, tried to make a woman do it with them".<sup>11</sup> This percentage is a minimal estimate because very many women don't know that their partner uses porn.

Most of the sex offenders who I have interviewed say that pornography has played a definite role in their crimes. One Californian study suggested that 57% of offenders carried out acts seen in pornographic films.<sup>12</sup> In France, the anthropologist Daniel

Welzer-Lang<sup>13</sup> drew similar conclusions in the aftermath of his investigation into men accused of rape.

When an important inquiry into pornography and prostitution was held in Canada,<sup>14</sup> no real research was ordered into pornography's effects. In this country, as elsewhere, the great majority of the "researchers" write about porn but do not actually inquire into the subject.

Pornography isn't merely a question of use. Pornographic images put on sale are made using human beings who live off it, who suffer from it, and who, in certain cases, die from it. Pornography is therefore also a question of production. Our knowledge is equally deficient in that field. What do we know about the women, men and children who are used as the labour force? What do we know about the men who produce porn? Practically nothing.

Almost all studies have concentrated on one aspect of the problem. They try to see whether there are marked effects on the users of porn. My hypothesis on this subject (reinforced by numerous interviews with men), is that porn participates in the development of fantasies. It therefore influences a share of its users, but not to the same degree. Some would like to fulfil their fantasies, others not.

What pleasure do men take in using images of sex rather than sex itself?

Pornography is used essentially by men. In Canada, they represent 80% of the film watchers, 90% of the clients at nude entertainments, and 95% of the magazine buyers. Where women are customers, it's usually in response to men's requests. Even a magazine like *Playgirl*, ostensibly for women, is used 85% by men. About three men in five use pornographic material regularly.<sup>15</sup>

What, socially, can explain such a massive use of fantasy products? And what kind of fantasies are these? From the point of view of a porn user, the naked body they see refuses sex. They can see it, imagine it, hear it, but they can't touch it. The body displayed mimics sensuality, and the image is sexualised. However, from the producers' point of view, the pornographic body is real; it can be subjected to demands—even to rape.



Using pornography involves more than watching it. It's also a matter of experiencing sexual excitement. Porn that "works" is that which excites the user. It doesn't have the ability to bewitch solely through images, but also by presenting them within a particular narrative code, by their specific organisation.

In porn, you see "everything". But this "everything" isn't just the "dross of reality".<sup>16</sup> The hyper-reality of pornographic production, the hyper-vision of genitalia in close-up, the promiscuity of watching it and the fascination with detail have as their functions a full reconstruction of reality, but of a reality from which humanity is removed, and which mechanises the sex act.

There is a spectacular absence of tenderness and love. The female pornographic body is dehumanised and infantilised: for *Playboy* it's a 'bunny' and for *Penthouse*, a 'pet'. The child's body, be it female or male, is feminised. Some heterosexual porn uses young boys as a substitute for women. According to Florence Rush, these youths share with women the status of "minor" and the "same feminine gender".<sup>17</sup>

At least sixty thousand Canadians were used as pornographic models in their youth.<sup>18</sup> Each year the US sex industry helps itself to a million and a half young people under sixteen.<sup>19</sup> With new technologies (videotape among others), the possibility is growing that a porn company will be built up through exploitation of children. More and more cases of sexual abuse linked to such practices have been exposed by social workers and police.

### Loss of identity

The model who is photographed for *Playboy* or *Penthouse* is consenting and generally an adult. She is there of her own free will. She is "happy" to show her "charms". She provokes sexual desire and this alone is enough for the man who masturbates while fantasising about this photography.

But what sexual desire are we talking about? To grasp this, it is necessary to explore the image of this woman's body further, by comparing it with that of a man in the same situation in a similar magazine, like *Playgirl*.

The naked body of the man is not presented in the same way. He is never shown without his head. In all the photos, his complete form, in other words the link between body and head, is safeguarded. When women are photographed, there is often close-up of the sex organs, and the head



disappears.

An erection is banned, but porn producers use various creams to moisten all the lips of the female body to suggest her excitement. We find the need to impose the image of his body dominating hers, so that she is, in a way, a sexual animal whose instincts are uncontrollable (hence also all the language appealing to animality to describe physical attributes and activities).

The man doesn't lose his identity; in essence, he is determined not by his body but by his work. One might be a well known sportsman, another an actor. In these cases, *Playgirl* never shows the penis. That would be "degrading" for these men. Only the unknown show their organ. But neither are they determined exclusively by their carnal character. A man is always more than a body!

The definition of pornography proposed by *Playboy*<sup>20</sup> and accepted by the Canadian pay-television First

Choice is: "a penis at 45 degrees". But the visual exploitation of the female body is never pornographic—just "erotic"!

Pornographic films always proceed in the same way: the scenes end when the man ejaculates into his partner. The man's pleasure structures the entire thing, and must be evidenced. The women celebrate their bodies autoerotically, but the men masturbate to keep an erection. Their movements are characterised by mechanical efficiency.

By definition—and pornographic representations of female autoeroticism are proof of this—screwing is the only thing women are good for, and they think of nothing else. They are nothing but sexual beings. They are offered—with enticing looks, suggestive poses, moist and half-open lips—to males, to real men who know how to master them. The women are to be conquered and to submit. They exist not solely for men's pleasure, but also to prove male virility.

Finally, the men must learn to defend themselves from them. In the pornographic imagination, aren't they "devourers of men"? To protect themselves from women, the men must discipline them. Pornographic discourse asserts that women have a "loathing of weaklings" (Lui). Women who are interested in exciting themselves sexually using pornography are rare, because pornographic fantasies are male fantasies.

### Dehumanisation

If explicit sexuality, hyper-real and mechanical, crystallises the features of pornography, this isn't just about sexuality. Social relations between the sexes lie at its foundation. Men stay complete, even when reified; while the body of the man is shown without decapitation, the woman is amplified and she is reduced to an animal sexuality. Pornography makes the female body sacred in order better to profane it.

As well as solitary sexual pleasure, the reification or dehumanisation of the pornographic body has the effect of conferring a human superiority on its male users over the women who are debased to animal level. In some cases, notably in that of bars with nude dancers, the man cannot even masturbate.<sup>21</sup> His pleasure is not physical. That which is pleasurable here is the alienation of women. It's also the fact that these bodies are there voluntarily. This is proof that women are subjugated to their sexuality.



Pornography functions like racism. Inferior beings are perceived as creatures of nature, contrasted with the people of "culture", the "civilised" people. The creatures of nature are, by definition, deprived. Their anatomy is their destiny. Here, too, the comparisons with animals are legion. Thus the black man is considered, physically and psychologically, as a "stallion". The women, for her part, becomes a "pet". Even you like this animal a lot, you must nevertheless train it so that it will obey you.

### The pornographic body

The pornographic body is altered (with tattoos, plastic surgery, body-piercing, etc) to accentuate its sexual characteristics. Few pornographic models and nude dancers avoid being transformed in this way. The breasts are made enormous and hard. They are filled with silicone. Their bodies are modified to satisfy an "idea" of what they ought to be. This swells the body, giving it a greater symbolic dimension. And there is a complete fusion with the object. The body concerned is definitively dedicated to sexuality. Artificially constructed, it incarnates the processes of seduction and becomes a material stigma. By this sort of physical metamorphosis, there isn't just expansion of certain parts of the body, but also expansion of one's awareness of the body.

These bodies are self-worshipping. They believe themselves to represent the ideal woman—a feminine woman, who releases the desire of men.

How can we explain this exaggeration? How can we understand that some women find self-enhancement in pornographic activity, while the majority of women reject this occupation?

What is lacking in the consenting pornographic body, just because it is a body, is the completeness of the personality and of the person. This is also its main quality in men's eyes. A

pornographic model could be defined as a person who distinguishes their body from the rest of their personality. Hence the possibility of trading it.

A likely explanation is that this is one of the ways for them to survive incest or sexual maltreatment undergone in their youth. The overwhelming majority of nude dancers that I interviewed had been victims of sexual abuse.

Another unpublished study<sup>22</sup> by a Montreal sexologist claims that all such dancers that he asked had suffered from sexual violence in their youth. Their family backgrounds turned out to be seriously inadequate, violent and sexually exploitative, on a moral and emotional level. In this way, these young women - whose bodies, because of a male relative, have been the source of their problems - use them in future as a means of gaining reward.

The men pay just to see them! But for the client, beyond the covetousness, the stare enveloping the body isn't comparable to other looks. There is a deduction, the feeling that these women are mere trash. There is the base and servile body. There is the flesh, empty of a soul; it is just a body alone. And this is living proof that the female sex is sick from its sexuality. The client enjoys this situation.

### Violence

The female body (or the feminised body of a child of either sex) is, in pornographic discourse, the element that crystallises fantasy. Even in heterosexual pornography, there is feminisation and infantilisation of male bodies in order to mark out the sexual stakes.<sup>23</sup>

And this implies violence. In magazines we can frequently read passages such as this one: "When I fuck a woman, I like to do it as hard as I can to prove to her that she has a man between her legs." This extract from *Penthouse*, a pornographic magazine described as 'erotic', which sells five million copies every month, shows that violence and sex are virtually inseparable for this industry. To glorify virility, pornography refers incessantly to brutality and aggression by men. Since virility is never assured, it has to be shown endlessly.

Rape is one of the more usual manifestations of this. After rape, the woman discovers 'real' sexual pleasure: "Now that he'd taken off her gag, she cried out with joy." (*Club*) The woman and child, non-consenting at the start of rape, necessarily become consenting afterwards because they discover "real

sexual pleasure".

According to psychological studies conducted at the beginning of the eighties,<sup>24</sup> subjects exposed to this sort of narrative were desensitised with regard to rape, and the majority of them admitted that they would commit rape if they were certain of not being caught.

With a mixed group at the university where I work, I watched a pornographic film in which there were three rapes of this type. None of the male students remarked that there had been rape, whereas the female students immediately spotted it. The idea that rape becomes pleasant for the person who suffers it—one of the ideas at the root of pornography—was shared by my male students, who accepted the premises of the film.

In pornography, not only can we speak of becoming accustomed to sexual violence, but also, we can venture to describe this sexual material as propaganda in favour of rape.

### The skin trade

Until now, I have avoided defining pornography, preferring to examine the reality of the sexual material available to all. In the usual definition, pornography is distinguished from eroticism in being more vulgar. Yet pornography concerns all the genres, all the categories, all merchandise created for a market divided according to buyers' means and the particular tastes of the various social strata.

But pornography is an industry. There is no real confusion between art, the product of individual creativity, which requires total freedom for the artist, and this "genitalised" representation of sexuality, which exalts sexual domination of one human being over another.

Not all sexually explicit material is necessarily pornographic, and nor is all material comprising representations of maltreatment and degradation in a sexual context. Books and films can include scenes of rape, and if they show the real repercussions of the aggression on the victim, then they are realistic, rather than pornographic presentations.

Pornographic images put on sale are created from human beings who suffer from it, who live from it and who, in certain cases, die from it. The sexual relations of domination structure pornography and its use. This form of sexuality expresses, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the paradoxes of our ambiguous sexual liberation.<sup>25</sup> Scenes of nudity and of sexual intercourse invade the media in Canada. But these images don't participate in

sexual liberation, but rather in the enforcement of subordinative sex relations.

Pornography is an industry in pursuit of fantasies and neuroses. As long as this sex market flourishes, the traffickers of all genres will try hard to bite fresh meat, because where there are enormous incentives, human sentiments disappear. Transforming sexual fantasies into commercial transactions allows no place for philanthropy.

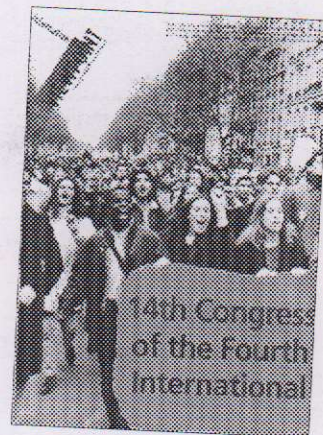
Pornography cuts up bodies in order to remodel them according to male desires. The body-objects that result are a symbol blessing the "moral superiority" of consumers—whose accomplices are the men who make money from them and the industry which profits. ★

Notes

1. See, for example, Serge Garde, *L'industrie du sexe*, Paris, Messidor, 1987; Roger Faligot et Remi Kauffer, *Porno Business*, Paris Fayard, 1987.
2. See, among others, Walther Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*, New York Viking, 1987.
3. See, among others, Varda Burstyn (ed.), *Women against Censorship*, Vancouver & Toronto, Douglas & McIntyre, 1985; David Copp and Susan Wendell (ed.), *Pornography and Censorship*, Buffalo, Prometheus Book, 1983; Catherine Lizin (ed.), *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties, a Radical New View*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.
4. Bernard Arcand, *Le jaguar et le tamanoir, vers le degre zero de la pornographie*, Montreal, Boreal, 1991.
5. This is even more obvious from the point of view of two young journalists who defend the "post-modern libertarian" thesis (to use Andrea Martinez's expression, found in "La pornographie sans frontieres", *Carrefour*, 19-1, 1997, p72): Nathalie Collard et Pascale Navarro, *Interdit aux femmes, le feminisme et la censure de la pornographie*, Montreal, Boreal, 1996—an indictment of the "orthodox" feminism that opposes freedom of pornographic expression. The book's accusation is made so virulently that the two authors feel the need to assure their readers that "we are not paid by the sex industry to put forward its defence." (p15).
6. There is a large literature on this subject. See for example: Micheline Carrier, *La pornographie, base ideologie de l'oppression des femmes*, Quebec, Apostrophe, 1983; Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, New York, Perigee, 1981; Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature*, New York & Toronto, Harper Colophon Books, 1981; Laura Lederer (ed.), *L'envers*

- de la nuit, les femmes contre la pornographie*, Montreal, Renuve-menage, 1983. I have contributed to the debate by publishing *La violence pornographique, la virilite demasquee*, (in collaboration with Cecile Coderre), Hull, Asticou, 1986; *La violence pornographique, industrie du fantasme et realites*, Yens-sur-Morges, Cabedita, 1993; *Le sexe spectacle, consommation, main d'oeuvre et pornographie*, Hull/Ottawa, Vents d'Ouest et Vermillon, 1994.
7. See Marie-Helene Cote, "Des strategies et des luttes contre la pornographie", *Cahiers du socialisme*, no 16, 1984, p.146-161.
  8. *The American Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. L'obscenite et la pornographie, extrait du rapport de la Commission U.S.*, Paris, UGE, 10/18, 1971.
  9. Diana Russell, "La pornographie et la violence, les recherches recentes", dans Laura Lederer, op. cit.
  10. See, among others, S. Feschbach and N. Malamuth, "Sex and Aggression: Proving the Link", *Psychology Today*, November 1978; E. Donnerstein, "Pornography and Violence Against Women: Experimental Studies", *Annals* New York Academy of Sciences, 1980.
  11. See the third part of my book *La violence pornographique, industrie du fantasme et realites*, op. cit., p107-150.
  12. Idem, p123.
  13. Daniel Welzer-Lang, *Le viol au masculin*, Paris, L'Hamattan, 1988.
  14. *Comite special d'etude de la pornographie et de la prostitution. Rapport du comite special d'etude de la pornographie et de la prostitution*, Ottawa, Centre d'edition du gouvernement du Canada, 2 vols., 1985.
  15. See my book *La violence pornographique, industrie du fantasme et realites*, op. cit. Following research on the World Wide Web, Andrea Martinez (op. cit., p83) affirms that "cyberporn" is first and foremost "a male thing".
  16. Jean Beaudrillard, *Les strategies fatales*, Paris, Grasset et Le livre de poche, 1983, p64.
  17. Florence Rush, *Le secret le mieux garde, l'exploitation sexuelle des enfants*, Paris, Denoel/Gonthier, 1983.
  18. According to the committee on sexual offences against children and young people. *Infactions sexuelles a l'egard des enfants*, Ottawa, Centre d'edition du gouvernement du Canada, 2 vols., 1984.
  19. Florence Rush, op. cit.; see also A. W. Burgess (ed.), *Child Pornography and Sex Rings*, Toronto, Lexington Books, 1984 and Shirley O'Brien, *Child Pornography*, Newport Beach, Kendall-Hunt, 1983.
  20. See *La violence pornographique, la virilite damasquee*, op. cit., p40.
  21. This is going to change very quickly. In Quebec, like in Ontario, bars employing "adult" dancers allow "dances" at C\$10, i.e. dances where the client can grope the dancers. Furthermore, many bars have created "booths" or private rooms where the client and dancer can be alone together and not only can they touch and fondle, but they can also engage in some sex acts. The distinction between pornography and prostitution is blurred at the margins. On this subject, see *La sexe spectacle*, op. cit.
  22. Study given to the author for scientific assessment.
  23. See Francois Moreau, "Pornographie et mouvement gai" in *Cahiers du socialisme*, no. 16, 1984, p73-88.
  24. Neil M. Malamuth and Edward Donnerstein, *Pornography and Sexual Aggression*, Orlando, Academic Press, 1984.

25. On this subject, see issue 6 of *Critiques socialistes*, Ottawa, 1989. This issue has the theme "L'amour aux temps du chlamydia". The authors try to draw the balance sheet of the "sexual revolution".



## Transformation and regroupment

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

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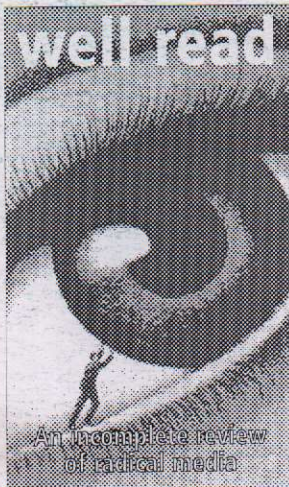
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# Conference listing Coming soon...

## Participative democracy 10-13 November, Porto Alegre, Brazil

International Seminar on Participative Democracy, based on Porto Alegre's pioneer "participatory budget process". In Portuguese, Spanish and English.

Contact the town hall, Praca Montevideo, 10, CEP 90010-170, Porto Alegre, Brazil. fax 051 228 8725, email <becker@gp.prefpoa.com.br>

## European Marches Network 13-14 November, Brussels, Belgium.

100 unemployed, labour and campaigning groups are expected to send delegates to evaluate the "Cologne '99" events, plan future initiatives, and decide how to improve pan-European coordination of unemployed groups.

For more information (in English or French) contact: Michel Rousseau, European Marches, 104, rue des Couronnes, 75020 Paris, France. Fax: +33 1 44 62 63 45. E-mail: marches97@ras.eu.org www.ras.eu.org/marches/ Email lists are available, in read only or in write-discussion mode.

## World Trade Organisation ministerial conference Seattle, USA, 29 Nov.-3 Dec.1999

An Inter-Continental Caravan, mainly composed by representatives of Latin American movements, will travel though the USA ending at the WTO III conference in Seattle. Details will be finalised at the Bangalore conference.

An email list has been set up to organise against the 3rd WTO Ministerial. To subscribe send a message to <PGA\_Seattle99-subscribe@listbot.com>. For more information, contact <PGA\_Seattle99-owner@listbot.com> or go to <http://members.aol.com/mwmorrill/pga.htm>

## European Marches Network December 1999 and afterwards...

At the initiative of the "European Parliament of the Unemployed", a European day of action against Workfare will be organised to coincide with the Helsinki European summit (dates not yet announced, but probably 6 December (St Nicolas celebrations in northern Europe!) or the 10, opening day of the EU summit.

The European Marches Network will also organise a European Meeting against Precarity, in Brussels, in the first half of 2000, and mass mobilisations in France in the second half of the year.

These events will include a new session of the "European Parliament of the Unemployed".

## Marxism 2000 Sydney, Australia, 5-9 January 2000

Journalist John Pilger and Latin America specialist James Petras will be keynote speakers at the second Asia Pacific Solidarity and Education conference organised by Australia's **Democratic Socialist Party**. Other speakers include Dipankar Bhattacharya (CPI-ML, India), Chris Gaerlan (Alab-Katipunan, Philippines), Farooq Tariq (Labour Party of Pakistan) and Sonny Melencio (Socialist Party of Labour, Philippines).

Participants are expected from Japan, East Timor, Burma, PNG, Bougainville, Malaysia, New Zealand, Kanaky, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Scotland, Palestine, and Bangladesh.

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Other articles include Steve Bloom's report on the Mumia Abu-Jamal campaign, and Emily Citkowski's eye-witness report from Indonesia.

Subscription costs US\$25 (six issues) in the USA, US\$50 for overseas (airmail), with 40% discount on orders of three or more. Contact ATC at 7012 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48210, USA <cfc@igc.apc.net>

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