

international
VIEWPOINT

May 2000
No. 321

**SPANISH STATE: RETURN
OF THE RIGHT?**
plus
**BASQUE NATIONALISM AT
THE CROSSROADS**

USA: A16 MOBILIZATION

RUSSIA: TSAR PUTIN

NICARAGUA: FSLN CRISIS

Argentina	\$2.00	Denmark	Dkr20	Malaysia	M\$5.00	South Africa	R8
Australia	\$4.00	France	FF 35	Netherlands	f6.00	Sri Lanka	Rs 50
Brazil	R\$ 2.50	Greece	500 Dr	New Zealand	\$4.00	Sweden	SEK 20
Britain	£2.00	India	Rs 20	Pakistan	Rs25	Taiwan	NT\$ 100
Canada	\$4.00	Ireland	£2.00	Puerto Rico	\$2.50	Uruguay	\$20.00
Czech Republic	10 Kc	Lebanon	US\$3.00	Philippines	P25	USA	\$3.50
				Poland	3.50 Zl	Others	US\$3.50

Putin 1st, Tsar of all the Russias?

WHY did Vladimir Putin emerge victorious from the first round of the Russian presidential elections? He is an ordinary apparatchik, having been a career civilian cop and subsequently a mediocre administrator.

“Putin has no obvious personality, he is like a screen on which everybody projects whatever they like”, argues psychoanalyst Victoria Potapova.¹ And through the adding up of these projections, in the absence of any alternative, Putin gained 52% of the votes at the first round.

JAN MALEWSKI*

THE popular aspiration towards “normality” and the crushing of Chechnya — which allowed him to play on the nationalist strain in the Russian people, who easily identified the national aspirations of the Chechnyans with the pillage of public property by all kinds of gangsters (*nouveaux riches* and “Mafiosi”) — are certainly among the elements in Putin’s success.

Russian workers are disorientated by the sudden commodification of their environment, rampant inflation, stagnant wages, and the incomprehensible change in the rules which regulated their lives before the beginning of the capitalist restoration.

Goal is normality

They aspire in their majority to “normality”, in other words an end to the incessant changes of which they are the main victims. Putin’s discourse on the strong state — supported by the show of force in Chechnya — finds a lot of takers.

The Russian working class, whose awakening had begun with the miners’ strike in the spring of 1991, has been defeated without having had the time to organise itself into fighting shape. Putin and, for a minority, the Stalinophile bureaucrat Zyuganov, appeared to it as a last hope of stabilisation.

The beginning of an economic upturn — boosted by the quasi-tripling of oil prices (Russia is an oil-exporting country) and the substantial devaluation of the rouble (after the financial crash of August

1998) — meant that industrial production leapt last year by 8%, raising the rate of growth of GDP to 3% for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union and offering the Putin administration greater margins of manoeuvre. This incipient upturn nourished the hope that Putin would at last pay wages and pensions, collect taxes and ensure the minimal functioning of services.

Contrast

In contrast to some countries in Eastern Europe (Poland and Hungary in particular, but also the GDR), where the introduction of private property at the end of the 1950s was progressive and allowed a social assimilation of the nomenclature and “private initiative”, those elements of the Russian nomenclature who sought the stabilisation of their social privileges through personal enrichment had to wait until the second half of the 1980s until their moment came. The new Russian bourgeoisie had not benefited from 30 years of apprenticeship through “petty commodity production” and trade, like their Polish or Hungarian counterparts.

When the leadership of the Russian bureaucracy became convinced that it could no longer “continue as before” without being potentially confronted with a popular revolt like its Polish vassal, it acted without any long maturing project, without transitional measures, without commodity reflexes rooted within society. The IMF’s ultra-free market “shock thera-

py” project, which the Poles and the Hungarians introduced without facing major working class opposition, was adopted by the majority of the Russian leadership in place of the pragmatic half-measures taken by Gorbachev.

It meant a brutal retreat from state administration of the productive sphere and a de facto distribution of property to the layer of bureaucracy capable of carving its share out. All of this concealed by a discourse which airily conflated democracy (“power to the people!”) and *laissez-faire*.

But if this *laissez-faire* allowed primitive private accumulation, it now represents a brake on the enlarged reproduction of fraudulently gained capital. And those who once proclaimed their opposition to state interventionism and their commitment to “business freedom” now wish to operate within a framework protected and regulated by the state. The new Russian bourgeois class aspires to form itself into a dominant class and they need the umbrella of the state for this purpose.

When Putin argues that “the stronger the state, the freer the individual” and that “only a strong and efficient state can guarantee freedom of enterprise, the individual and society”, he is responding to the aspirations to stability of the Russian *nouveaux riches*. The electoral defeat of the ultra-liberal candidate Grigori Iavlinsky² witnesses to the new Russian dominant class’s desire to turn the page.

Putin’s nomination as Russian head of state, legitimised by the election of March 26th, could signify the end of the first period of capitalist restoration in Russia — the end of the sharing of social goods amongst the nomenklaturists, under the pretext of the privatisation law or with no legal basis whatsoever, the end of primitive private accumulation.

Scandal

The scandal of the misappropriation of IMF funds which had tarnished the Yeltsin clan (a scandal which Putin has done his best to cover up) was a sign that we were at the end of an epoch, as were the raids by mafia elements on the (ill gotten) property of certain enterprises, expropriating by force the ex-nomenklaturists who had thought themselves definitively integrated into the new Russian bourgeoisie.

Inside of the Russian oligarchy, which has been able to carve out for itself whole sectors of former Soviet property, the aspi-



racketeering and support the local mafias. Thus the immense wealth of Asiatic Russia cannot be developed by capital, a situation which the latter considers to be unacceptable.

Putin has announced a strengthening of control over the regions and the republics (88 in all), which he believes enjoy too great an autonomy. The extreme brutality of the armed intervention in Chechnya and the accompanying war crimes are also there to show that the Russian state led by Putin is ready for any extremity in order to limit the autonomy of the republics.

When Putin says that a “strong state is the source of the guarantee of order, the principal motor of all change” and that “Russia needs a strong state” this is not only in order to link up with the tradition of Peter the Great, whose portrait hangs in his office. He wants to found

ration is also henceforth to stability and security. It is necessary — they claim — to guarantee private property.

An aspiration shared by international capital, which has been reluctant to invest in Russia, fearing that its investments (so profitable on paper!) will be swallowed up in a society where theft has become the most normal means of social promotion.

Putin’s strong state will not have as its immediate target the Russian working class. Atomised and politically astray, having suffered an unprecedented pauperisation, deprived of traditions of struggle and self-organisation, it does not today constitute a threat to the power of the Russian nomenklaturist bourgeoisie.

Autonomisation

The affairs of this latter are much more directly threatened by the autonomisation of the regional powers, who do not hesitate to resort to local taxes in order to assure the survival of the local administrations, when they do not purely and simply practice

a “modern capitalist state”, “a Russia integrated into the world economy”.

Immediately, that means a new tax code which would protect the “rights of shareholders”, the suppression of aid to failing enterprises and the establishment of private property in land — all measures welcome in the Western chancelleries.

The Western Club

Meanwhile, Putin tells Mrs Albright that Russia should be considered as “a member of the Western Club”, stressing his “European mentality” and envisaging — “why not?” — that his state join NATO, asking for no more in return than the Russian state’s right to cultivate its own garden.

Although the Russian bourgeois class is weak and cannot aspire to a first level role on the world market and although Putin’s state is eager to facilitate the investments of Western capital in Russia, the Russian political administration will not be satisfied with a subordinate (“exot-

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ic” to use Putin’s formula) position.

All the more so in that, after 10 years of administrative disorganisation, the Russian state takes material form to a greater degree than ever through its army, its information service, its political police (FSB, ex-KGB) and its diplomacy.

These apparatuses want to see Russia rediscovering its status as a great power. They seek to police Russia’s borders — initially in Asia, where the Afghan and Iranian regimes and the Indian-Pakistani confrontations are dangerously destabilising, but also in the Balkans (as in Bosnia) — on behalf of the new world order, inside of the “Western Club” if possible, but if need be against it. And in so doing allow Russian capital and capital assimilated in Russia to do business — in the tradition of the Tsars and not that of the Red Army

State apparatus

The very weakness of the new dominant classes in Russia authorises such an autonomy of the state apparatus — and the resurgence of inter-imperialist conflicts (following their suspension in the name of superior capitalist interests during the Cold War) allows the Russian bourgeois bureaucracy to hope to play an autonomous role in the world political disorder.

The EU’s Lisbon summit offered Putin the opportunity to “develop a truly efficient strategic partnership” between the EU and Russia. Russia’s nuclear weapons are there to recall the grandeur Putin would like to see revived.

It remains the case that Putin’s world-view and, more broadly, that of the new Russian bourgeoisie, are inspired by Stalinist manuals of contemporary history. The strength of states was presented in these as being based on tons of coal, steel and oil products, the grandeur of armies and the abilities of supreme leaders. Capital was seen as a mass of wealth. The contradictions of modes of production had no place in this world view.

Even if the new Russian leaders want to be pragmatists rather than ideologues, the world that they describe is an idealised one. And the projects they hatch are the fruit of this idealisation. This can lead them to overestimate their capacities. ★

* Jan Malewski is a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

1. *Libération*, March 25-26th, 2000.

2. Grigori Iavlinsky’s *Iabloko* party, financed by a significant sector of the new Muscovite bourgeoisie, gained 6% of the vote. In Moscow he got 19%, against 46% for Putin.

A16, Washington DC: the battle after Seattle

TEN years ago, Francis Fukuyama, putative scholar and U.S. State Department functionary, wrote “The End of History,” in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. In it he argued that capitalism had finally triumphed. It was the “end of history.” Consequently, none of the events that recently occurred, first in Seattle and then in Washington, D.C., can have happened according to him. What was Frankie Fukuyama thinking?

RODNEY WARD AND RICK WADSWORTH*

THE movement against capitalist globalization finally arrived on the public stage in the United States last November in Seattle. It has now continued by means of the demonstrations in Washington, DC. The activist coalitions formed around these demonstrations represent the coming together of many movements. Seattle was not the beginning, but the result of many small to medium movements that have been gathering strength for over two years.

Environmental organizations are decades old and are bringing an ecological critique of capitalism to this movement. The United Students Against Sweatshops, a relatively new organization, has focused attention on capitalist globalization in a manner not seen in the U.S. for some time. And although the main US trade union organization, the AFL-CIO, has attempted to hang back, it has been drawn into objectively anti-capitalist political activities to a degree unprecedented for decades.

Shortly after the Seattle actions against the WTO, attention of some of the activists involved turned toward the meetings of the governors of the other two Bretton Woods institutions — the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Scheduled for the week between April 10th and April 17th, the meetings were held at the organizations’ headquarters in Washington, D.C.

These meetings of the world’s finance ministers were the target for the “Battle After Seattle” demonstrations, intended to

continue, broaden and deepen the organization of the forces that came together in Seattle — especially young people, opposed to capitalist globalization.

Direct action

Sunday, April 16th and Monday, April 17th were picked as the focus for the actions. Discussion of this idea was carried on in the Direct Action Network (DAN) which formed around the Seattle demonstrations. Because initial outreach was carried out mainly through email list-servers, word at first spread sporadically. Local labor activists in Washington, DC — mainly members of the DC Metro Labor Party Chapter, activists in rank-and-file caucuses like Teamsters for a Democratic Union, as well as a few staffers in more progressive trade unions — learned in late January that community meetings to organize for action against the IMF and World Bank were already being held.

At this point the labor activists decided to attend and it was at that time that efforts began to broaden involvement beyond the — mostly young — activists committed to direct action as the key to changing the world. (“Direct Action” in this context means the tactic of non-violent extra legal actions like blocking the streets. It is similar to civil disobedience except that arrest is, if possible, evaded rather than submitted to on principle).

Although the participation of the AFL-CIO — with the exception of the ILWU

and some local unions, such as Teamster Local 174, for example — in the Seattle actions was in many ways half-hearted, the fact that there was action involving both the social movements and organized labor was so contrary to the myth of a reactionary “Big Labor” (a myth devoutly propagated by U.S. corporate media), that it produced great interest and surprise in the broad public and even among the reporters themselves.

This led to a much wider discussion of the negative effects of capitalist globalization — for both U.S. working people and others in the G-7 countries, and the people of the global south and east — than has ever before occurred in the U.S.A. Grassroots labor activists naturally hoped to see this dynamic continue. Several factors, however, complicated this prospect for the DC demonstrations.

Labor ties

Many of the leading figures of the D.A.N. understood the utility of labor ties. But others looked to the voluntaristic direct action of a small minority as the only way forward. They consequently saw efforts to build the sort of broad actions that might draw labor support as a snare and a diversion. Nevertheless, intervention by local labor activists in their first general meeting led to agreement to build — alongside direct actions — the sort of march and rally that the AFL-CIO might possibly endorse.

Moreover, effort was given to the overall name of “Mobilization for Global Justice.” The AFL-CIO Executive Council had named their campaign around global trade issues the “Campaign for Global Fairness.”

In view of the AFL-CIO’s strong backing of the Gore presidential campaign and deep implantation in Democratic Party politics, it was clear that no friendliness toward extralegal actions was to be looked for. It also needs to be kept in mind that so far as most American workers are concerned, they absolutely-positively-cannot-be-in-jail-on-Monday-morning.

Aside from the fact that no one relishes going into captivity, U.S. social conditions, relative to Europe, create a special barrier (to give some examples: no legal right to employment security; denial of unemployment insurance — in many states — if discharged due to arrest; no public or affordable childcare; little or no public trans-



The A16 mobilization in Washington continued the tradition of last year’s demonstrations in Seattle

portation; and so on.)

Following the community meeting in late January where the name change was made, preparations for the anti-IMF/WB actions, usually referred to as A16, while formally unified, tended to proceed in two tracks. One of these aimed at outreach mainly to students and young bohemians and the formation of affinity groups as well as a spokes-council for the direct action. The other was a more conventional coalition building toward a rally and march. Some people, of course, took part in both.

Global fairness

The situation was also complicated by the nature of the AFL-CIO’s Global Fairness campaign. Rhetoric aside, it consisted basically of two actions: Jubilee 2000 (April 9th), a mainly faith based effort to promote forgiving the financial dominated countries’ debt, which has drawn hypocritical support from some ruling class circles (Al Gore sent a message to the Jubilee 2000 Demonstration on the National Mall).

The demonstration was heavily supported by the AFL-CIO. For April 12th,

the AFL-CIO called, in its own name, a mass rally and “lobby day” at the U.S. Capitol, against Permanent Most Favored Nation status for China. This demand is in itself controversial in the movement. Permanent Normal Trade Relations (a.k.a.: MFN) is required for China to enter the WTO. The question of permanent MFN has been put on the political agenda by an Administration sponsored bill before Congress.

Many in the movement think that agitation by the AFL-CIO against China is anti-communist and, in the view of U.S. labor’s shameful history of “yellow-peril” racism, completely unacceptable. Moreover, they object to the exclusion of China from the WTO by decision of U.S. imperialism.

Chauvinist rhetoric

In fact, it is true that the lobby materials of the Teamsters Union and the speeches of George Becker, President of the United Steelworkers of America, have been chauvinist and anti-communist (though not explicitly racist). On the other hand, at the rally of April 12th, this chau-

vinist rhetoric was coldly received and clearly caused embarrassment among many Teamsters and members of the Steelworkers Union present. Speeches from the AFL-CIO, UNITE, United Students Against Sweatshops and others were couched in terms of international workers' solidarity.

The language of the Executive Council's call for the Campaign for Global Fairness was consistently internationalist, albeit reformist. Moreover, many in the movement point out that admission of China to the WTO will, by further integrating China in the capitalist global market, surely deepen the growing inequality and hardship that Chinese workers and farmers have suffered since the beginning of the current economic reforms.

In the event, both the Jubilee 2000 and the anti-China-Trade demonstration were brought into the orbit of the anti-IMF/WB protests, mainly by the handing out of 10-15,000 flyers for the April 16-17th actions. As the convergence for A16 began on April 8th, both of these demonstrations were associated with the more militant anti-IMF/WB efforts in the media. In addition, the AFL-CIO, the Teamsters and Steelworkers endorsed the march and rally on April 16th, just in time to be included in the final publicity.

The SEIU (Service Employees International Union) endorsed somewhat earlier and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), UE (United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers) and ILWU (International Longshore and Warehouse Union) had been in from the early days. So it can be plausibly claimed that the aim of preserving a united front (or at least the appearance of one) between labor and the social movements was achieved.

Convergence

From April 8th until about April 13th, the convergence of activists for the direct action proceeded more or less festively, with puppets, parades and concerts and productively, with Teach Ins and meetings on labor, environmental and trade related issues — attended by hundreds — and trainings in nonviolent direct action tactics — somewhat more heavily attended. On the evening of Thursday, April 13th, the process of repression began with the arrests of anarchists for possession of chains and plastic pipes (not items usually

considered contraband!) On Friday morning, police raided the headquarters for direct action and nonviolence training — the "Convergence Center."

Subsequently, they continued to raid new Convergence Centers as they were set up. Considerable amounts of personal effects and demonstration related materials were seized, although demonstrations eventually forced the cops to release baggage and bedrolls as well as "liberate the puppets." (A sign read "Please Excuse the Delay: State Repression in Progress.") Police action continued on Saturday night with the arrest of 600 demonstrators who were protesting against the Prison Industrial Complex. These activists were busted by ambush: led into a cul-de-sac created by police, they were seized without notice or order to disperse for parading without a permit.

Symbolic disobedience

In all, up to the end of April 17th, about 1,350 were arrested. This includes about 400 who voluntarily submitted to arrest, apparently opting for symbolic civil disobedience when direct action proved impossible due to overwhelming police presence. Repression was quite pervasive. Although various police forces were seen at the demonstrations, a considerable amount of troops were seen stashed on side streets.

Police armored vehicles were deployed and many helicopters hovered overhead, including at least one military "gunship" type. Police clearly had extensive intelligence on demonstration plans and generally intervened in ways well calculated to disrupt.

Although pervasive, in some respects more pervasive than at previous demonstrations in D.C., repression cannot be described as severe, yet media coverage has made it appear more gentle than it truly was. In each Convergence Center raid, police were accompanied by a Fire Marshall and a pretence was made that safety regulations were being enforced. Serious criminal charges were not at issue.

In general, the police acted with greater discipline than in Seattle, avoiding initiating police riots when media cameras were present. However, several demonstrators were sent to the hospital in incidents of severe brutality that took place away from the view of the press. Conditions in custody were often rough. Some prisoners got

neither food nor water while in custody for up to 48 hours. Despite these conditions, both the rally and march and the direct action were successfully carried out.

Overwhelming police logistics practically closed down the "Foggy Bottom" section of Washington to all but the IMF/WB delegates. Consequently the meetings of the governors were held and the agendas completed. These agendas, unlike that of the WTO in Seattle, were entirely routine. Nonetheless, the meetings were held under what must have been very difficult conditions for finance ministers used to a different sort of hospitality.

Direct action on A16 (Sunday) was to commence at 6am, so the ministers were up at 4am and were sneaked in through the White House grounds before the protest blockades were set up. Some ministers (such as Laurent Fabius, the French IMF minister) refused to get up at 4am and were loath to forgo their limousine rides for a ride in a minibus. Protesters surrounded Fabius' limousine and he was forced to turn back and hole up in his luxury hotel for most of the day.

Bleary eyes

Underscoring the difficult conditions the delegates met under, one *New York Times* reporter, Joseph Kahn, wrote: "Delegates looked bleary-eyed after their predawn wake-up calls, and a handful arrived several hours late. But the member nations of the International Monetary Fund achieved a major breakthrough today: they met" (17th April, 2000). IMF Acting Chief Fischer told delegates "We will meet, we will get through this..." (*Wall Street Journal*, 17th April 2000)

More importantly, compared to the two dozen protesters last year, 8,000 to 10,000 people participated in direct action Sunday morning (with perhaps half or one third that many on Monday). The direct action as well as 20,000 to 30,000 protesters in the legal march cast a political shadow over the proceedings of the IMF and WB.

Used to almost zero public scrutiny, the masters of Structural Adjustment were defensive in media interviews, attempting to position themselves as anti-poverty fighters. James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, told reporters, "It's a bit demoralizing when you see there is a mobilization for social justice when you think that's what you're doing every day."

(Los Angeles Times, 17th April, 2000).

Especially important, the protests divided the delegates (as in Seattle). The G77 Nations (the poorest nations of the world) expressed support and solidarity for the protests. Of course, since (unlike the one-nation, one-vote WTO) voting is skewed toward the U.S. and other imperialist nations, so divisions amongst delegates had no chance of manifesting themselves in a scuttling of the meetings' agendas as they had in Seattle.

Except for the corridors in the IMF/WB vicinity, demonstrators took the streets at will (keeping in mind that the troops deployed were held in reserve and never used.) A somewhat larger number attended the Sunday rally held on the Ellipse, south of the White House. Although the AFL-CIO had made no effort whatsoever to mobilize members, some groups wearing union hats and t-shirts attended. International Unions did, however contribute material aid to holding the rally.

Confrontation

The march route left the rally site, proceeded to within one block of the IMF/WB and returned to the rally site. Most participants in the direct action who were not in custody joined the march. An attempt by police to provoke a confrontation at the very tail end of the march failed due to efforts by rally peacekeepers.

Due to rain and wind that made use of the sound system impossible, as well as cutting way down on attendance, the Monday Rally was cancelled and a press conference held. Extremely effective speeches were made by Tanya Margolin, a student at George Washington University, where both anti-sweatshop organizing and efforts to unionize low paid academic employees are strong, and by Chris Clement, a student at Howard University, the premier African American campus in the Northeast U.S. The press conference was covered by C-SPAN and partly by CNN — probably because Tim Robbins and Susan Sarandon appeared and spoke in solidarity with the demonstrations.

The April actions were not "another Seattle" but they continued the movement begun there and furthered the education of U.S. workers on the human costs, at home and elsewhere, of capitalist globalization. ★

*The authors are supporters of the US socialist organization "Solidarity".

Sweeping victory for Spanish right

THE results of the March 12th general elections in the Spanish state confirmed tendencies which have been at work over the course of the last 2 decades within Spanish society. These rendered unlikely a triumph of the coalition of the two national political forces of the left: the Partido socialista obrero de España (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE), and Izquierda Unida (United Left, IU). However, it was difficult to forecast that the right's victory would involve them gaining an absolute majority or that the defeat of the PSOE would be on such a scale.

JAIME PASTOR*

TWO figures stand out from the results. The Partido Popular (Popular Party, PP) gained 44.54% of the votes, 183 deputies and an absolute majority in the new Parliament, against 38.79% of the votes and 156 seats four years ago. The PSOE on the other hand went from 141 to 125 deputies and from 37.63% to 34.08%.

The IU lost 13 seats (8 against 21) and half its votes (5.46 against 10.54% in 1996). As for other forces, the Partido Nacionalista Vasco (Basque Nationalist Party, PNV) benefited from the non-participation of Euskal Herriarrok (EH)¹ and gained two seats more than the five it previously held; the Catalan right nationalists (Convergència i Unió, Convergence and Union, CiU) lost 1, while Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia, ERC) kept its single deputy, as did Iniciativa per Catalunya (Initiative for Catalonia, IC, a formation expelled from the IU).

Another significant element of these elections resides in the fact that the Chunta Aragonesista (CA, left Aragon nationalists) gained a seat, which will be held by the famous author and interpreter José Antonio Labordeta, while the Partido Andalucista (Andalusian Party) returned to Parliament. Finally, the Bloque Nacionalista Galego (Galician Nationalist Bloc) increased its strength, although not as spectacularly as predicted, going from 2 to 3 seats.

A fundamental element in these elections was the increased rate of abstention, which was over 30% (30.02% against 22.62% in 1996) and was higher in Catalonia and the Basque country (although the campaign for a boycott of the elections by EH did not have the success anticipated). Spoiled ballots were also up, from 0.97% to 1.58% or 366,083 electors. Abstention was however down by around 7% in relation to the European elections of June 1999.

Partial conclusions

Several partial conclusions can be drawn. The first relates to the factors that contributed to such a crushing and general victory for the PP (including in a part of the Basque country). Probably the main factor stems from the effects of the favourable economic conjuncture, which have concealed the visibility of negative consequences like unemployment, increasingly precarious nature of work and the feminisation of poverty, growing inequalities in the distribution of wealth, or increasing concentration at the financial-economic and media levels.

The reduction of direct taxes and interest rates, promises of higher pensions, the so-called "popular capitalism" with the sale of shares in privatised enterprises, all allowed Aznar and Rato (the minister for the economy and finance) to sow illusions among social sectors who did not see major divergences between what the PP

proposed and what was promised by Almunia (secretary general of the PSOE). Another element was the use of ETA attacks and the costly experience of the “governability” pacts with CiU to show that only the PP could guarantee “the unity of Spain” and the possibility of governing the country without depending on peripheral nationalisms.

These two arguments succeeded in counteracting the condemnations of racist actions like those in El Ejido (where a pogrom against immigrant North African workers took place), where the PP saw its vote go up sharply, and obscured scandals like that concerning stock-options in the Telefónica enterprise or the Pinochet affair. This strategy of diversion proved successful thanks to the control of the “political agenda” exercised by the majority of the media in the service of the PP.

Demagogic critique

We should also mention as a secondary factor the demagogic critique made by the PP of the PSOE-IU pact – its accusations of “a hidden programme” generated a more significant mobilisation of its electorate. On the other hand, as the leaders of the two formations now recognise, the PSOE-IU pact “has not functioned”. In a climate of virtually general demobilisation of the left and the majority of social organisations, the programmatic agreement for government did not revive the “hope” anticipated by the *Manifiesto of Intellectuals* encouraged by the two parties, which some saw as a development which could take root in certain sectors like the trade unions.

In the end not even the leaders of the UGT and the CCOO, the two main trade union organisations, dared to give public support to the left – aware, no doubt, of the final polls on voting intentions, which were not made public, and more interested in giving priority to dialogue with the party that was going to win the elections. The pact was interpreted as “opportunist” in the stricter sense of the term.

The leadership of the PSOE, having eliminated its internal oppositional sectors from the lists of candidates, was conscious that it could not succeed in winning votes alone. Its tactical turn towards left alliances did not prevent it from continuing to orientate politically towards the “centre”. The IU leadership’s objective was simply to sign an agreement, whatever its

programmatic content, so as to avoid the final disaster of disappearance from the parliamentary institutions.

The political concessions made to the PSOE and the confusion that they created among militants and electors, some educated in “anti-félipismo”² and others in the cult of ‘programme, programme, programme’ meant that, if on the one hand the unitary aspect of the agreement won some votes, this orientation certainly led to losses on the other.

Even if we should await the necessary sociological surveys to confirm it, it is not rash to advance the hypothesis that among the abstentionists (around 10 million electors) were those who remained perplexed and without illusions about an electoral pact incapable of counterbalancing the right’s hopes of victory. One can conclude that the percentage of abstentionists (and spoiled ballots) linked to the social left (and not only to the radical left) was significant enough to tip the balance, taking into account the fact that the PP gained 1.8 million votes in relation to the Europeans whereas the left only gained 400,000 votes.

All the same, in some places (Madrid, the Asturias for example), IU succeeded in halting its electoral decline, but this was not the case everywhere (Andalusia, the Balearics). The problem of the IU leadership is that it kidded itself that the pact with the PSOE had changed the political sufficiently to defeat the PP and form a leftwing government with IU ministers, elect a not insignificant number of senators (despite the agreement with the Socialist Party, IU did not obtain any) and emerge from internal financial crisis.

No leap forward

It is for this reason that Francisco Frutos, candidate number one of the IU and secretary general of the Partido Comunista Español (Spanish Communist Party, PCE) acknowledged a “defeat without extenuating circumstances” and admitted his frustration at not having made the “spectacular leap forward” that he had predicted during the campaign.

To this we must add the result of the Andalusian regional elections. Here, even if the PSOE succeeded in keeping a relative majority, the progress of the PP was significant, whereas the defeat of the IU was comparatively stronger than in the rest of the Spanish state (it won 6 seats as

Results of the parliamentary elections of March 12th, 2000

Parties	%	Votes	Deputies
PP	44.54	10,230,287	183
PSOE	34.98	7,828,001	125
IU	5.46	1,253,821	8
CiU	4.20	964,990	8
PNV	1.53	351,816	7
CC	1.06	243,489	4
BNG	1.32	302,726	3
PA	0.90	205,720	1
ERC	0.84	193,629	1
IC-V	0.52	118,846	1
EA	0.44	100,570	1
Chunta	0.33	75,234	1

PP: Popular Party; PSOE: Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party; IU: United Left; CiU: Convergence and Union (Catalonia); PNV: Basque Nationalist Party; CC: Canarian coalition; BNG: Galician Nationalist Bloc; PA: Andalusian Party; ERC: Republican Left of Catalonia; IC-V: Catalan Left-Greens; EA: Eusko Alkartasuna; Chunta: Aragonese Junta

against 13 previously).

Of course, there was no agreement with the PSOE for the elections to the Andalusian autonomous community,³ but this was not due to lack of will on the part of IU co-ordinator general, Antonio Romero, who throughout the campaign demanded an “agreement of government” and accused the leader of the Andalusian PSOE, Manuel Chaves, of sectarianism.

For our part, we reaffirm that the pact signed was not “the only deal possible”. A left force with a project of transformation should never accept this argument, which conceals the renunciation of some aspects of its programme which could leave IU “without identity, without profile and, very probably, without political space in the future”, as Francisco Fernández Buey wrote in an article published before the agreement was reached.⁴

We believe that there could have been agreement on nominations, on mutual support for the Senate and a general common declaration, without commitment to government, which did not include the dramatic points concerning the respect of international engagements, the stability pact, fiscal policy or the Basque conflict. This type of agreement would probably not have

generated major enthusiasm, but it would at least have guaranteed an equilibrium between, on the one hand, a form of unity of action of the left against the right which eliminates all suspicion of “connivance” with the PP, and on the other, the maintenance of signs of the IU’s basic identity.

Added to the unacceptable character of this agreement was the experience of an electoral campaign during which Almunia spent his time reaffirming that the policy of privatisation had been initiated by Felipe González and that he would respect it, while “forgetting” to include the objective of the 35 hour week in his announcement of the 18 first measures to be taken in the course of the first 100 days of government — one can only draw a critical balance sheet.

Axes of polarization

In reality, so far as the two main axes of polarisation of the electorate, the social question and the recognition of the plurinational character of the Spanish state, were concerned, no clear differentiation of the national left from the PP could be observed in the course of the campaign.

It is then no surprise if a part of the PSOE’s ex-electorate voted for the PP while others chose abstention or a left nationalist vote. IU showed no concern either to accent non-economic themes, apart from the Pinochet affair and, finally, support for the initiative for a referendum on the foreign debt.⁵ The indifference shown to mobilisations like that of the alternative sector of students in Madrid and other cities on March 9 also illustrates the preoccupation with giving a “respectable” image so as to develop a “culture of government”.

It is not as if there was insufficient time to explain the accords (newspapers like *El País* and television chains like Canal Plus broadly popularised them). The problem was located in the context of the demobilisation of the left and the lack of credibility of a pact between two formations which had carried out a 180-degree turn in their policy of alliances for fundamentally political reasons.

We now find ourselves facing the consolidation of a new political cycle which began at the time of the May 1995 regional and municipal elections, and which was confirmed by the “bitter” victory of the PP in March 1996. Since then the political right has firmed up its links with the dom-

inant bloc of social and economic power, deepening some aspects of the economic policy developed by the PSOE (like privatisation). It has pursued the policy of the socialists in other areas (Atlanticist foreign policy, European Union) and has introduced new elements which imply ruptures with the preceding period, notably in the area of culture and media.

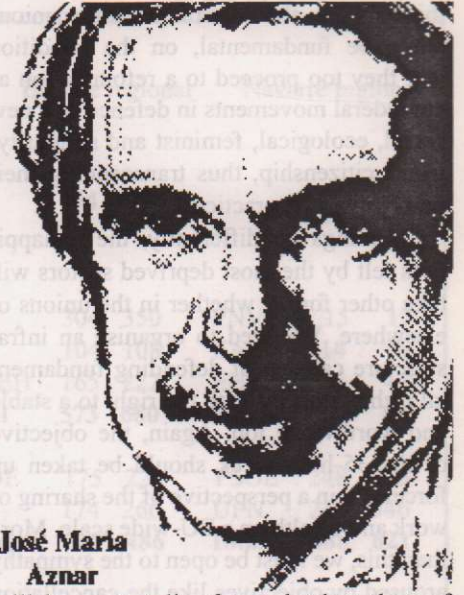
The federal leadership of the IU, obsessed with its objective of ‘overtaking’ the PSOE, was very late in understanding this change of cycle. This has led it to make serious tactical errors since May 1995, to the extent that the 5th Federal Assembly of the IU decided to rely on “the unity of action of the left” to finally bring about a pact of government — around the programme of the PSOE.

Today, the risk exists that the consolidation in power of a neoliberal, centralist and xenophobic right would lead to an overestimation of its strength in society and the view that the only worthwhile choice would be to opt for the “lesser evil” and the reconstruction of the unity of action of the left around the political “centre”. It is probably the conclusion that will be drawn by a significant sector of the PSOE “barons” and, one must fear, a part of the federal leadership of the IU.

Historic importance

This does not mean that we underestimate the historic importance of the PP’s electoral victory. It is undeniable that this latter will mark the beginning of an offensive against the institutional and social positions of the left in a number of regional and municipal authorities and social organisations. This triumph could turn into an immediate threat for the weakest and the most socially vulnerable, starting with immigrant workers. The Basque country in particular will continue to be a place of tension, even if it may be that a change of head at the ministry of the interior might allow a carrot and stick policy in relation to the PNV.

But we need to examine the strategic projects for recomposition which can be implemented, precisely because the electoral defeat suffered should be digested over the medium term. As to the PSOE, it is still too soon to make predictions, but it is obvious that it is the PP which has finally put an end to “félipismo”. A new stage is opening for the PSOE, in the course of which, as is the tradition in this party, there



José María Aznar

will be more talk of new leaders than of projects.

However, one can note two and a half possible perspectives: the first is to steer more towards the “centre” to contest the space gained by the PP; the second is to forget about the “third way” and rebuild a social-democratic project; while the “half” perspective could originate from regions like Catalonia, where the two aforementioned perspectives would be accompanied by a federalist tonality which would differentiate itself from the dominant Spanish centralism. In all these cases, these perspectives would be accompanied by a demand for reinsertion in society and the citizens’ networks which should not be dismissed.

Twists and turns

The IU, for its part, should begin by recognising the need to end all the twists and turns in its policy of alliances and the sectarian treatment of various internal currents (including Espacio Alternativo) and of many social organisations. It must also recognise that there is no possible electoralist shortcut out of its minority position in society. After this initial self-criticism, the medium term task would be to continue to criticise, evaluate and reinterpret our societies so as to arrest the progression of the values of the right among those “at the bottom”.

This programme of research and collective political, social and cultural action should be based on the priority given to the work of reconstruction of “nodes” of citizens’ networks and social organisations, building their power, resting on their initiatives and respecting their autonomy. In

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this process, the role of the trade unions could be fundamental, on the condition that they too proceed to a refoundation as confederal movements in defence of a new social, ecological, feminist and solidarity-based citizenship, thus transcending their neo-corporatist practices.

If things go differently, the unhappiness felt by the most deprived sectors will take other forms, whether in the unions or elsewhere. We need to organise an infrastructure capable of defending fundamental rights, starting with the right to a stable and worthwhile job. Again, the objective of the 35-hour week should be taken up forcefully in a perspective of the sharing of work and wealth on a EU-wide scale. More than this, we must be open to the sympathy aroused by objectives like the cancellation of the debt, the struggle for the control of capital movements, or the diversity of sectoral (health, education, housing continue to be the central questions) and local struggles.

Three projects

Even where there is agreement on the necessity of this project of rebuilding links with the cultural and social left as well as with the "people at the bottom" in general, three different projects seem to exist within IU. The first would be to deepen the adaptation to a "social-liberalism" in crisis and to a "neo-Spanish-centralist" perspective, accompanied by an abandonment of the federal organisational model.

The second would be a return to the perspective of the "two camps" (IU in one, the PP and PSOE in the other) and the affirmation of the identity of a "Communist" and centralised IU. The third could be that of those, numerous even if increasingly less active inside IU, who support an alternative, federalist, left which recognises plurinationality and respects internal political pluralism. Such a left would accord more weight to the discourse and practice of the effective fusion of red, green and violet (the latter is the colour associated with feminism in Spain).

Each of these three projects gives a distinct response to the problem of the "unity of action of the left" against the right. The first maintains the PSOE as its central reference and accords a minimal role to the nationalist lefts and the collectives distanced from institutional politics, when it does not ignore them altogether. The second implies a vanguardist and patrimonial

conception of the left, relegating the question of relations with other forces to the level of simple tactics. The third seeks to build a radical left which can in some way converge with the PSOE, the nationalist lefts and that sector of the politicised social left which abstains or has recently become distanced from the IU.

The triumph of this third option should lead in reality to a refoundation of the IU and would imply a change of name, as well as a thoroughgoing generational renewal, bringing the composition of the leadership in line with that of the majority of its electors. But it will be difficult to realise these objectives during the 6th Assembly, above all if, after the timid self-criticism made up to now, we are obliged to focus on the question of the succession to Julio Anguita.

Turning outwards

It is for this reason that IU militants would do well to devote their energies to turning the IU outwards to the active social organisations, preparing a counter-offensive against the right, rather than becoming closed in once again in self-centred dynamics and internal power struggles.

So long as we don't succeed in creating the conditions of a new cycle of social mobilisations which opens the possibility of putting into practice "non-reformist reforms", we can hardly advance in the reconstruction of the left and challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism over society.

So far as Espacio Alternativo is concerned, all this means that we will devote our efforts to creating this "bridge" between the political and the social, which has been one of the reasons for our constitution as a network of collectives and a current inside the IU. To reaffirm and reinforce our project, we will organise our second confederal meeting this May. ★

* Jaime Pastor is a member of the Espacio Alternativo current and of the federal leadership of Izquierda Unida.

1. The Basque nationalist left (Herri Batasuna and Euskal Herriarrak among others) called for a boycott of the elections.

2. From the name of Felipe González, former secretary general of the PSOE and prime minister until 1996.

3. The "autonomous communities" are the equivalent of administrative regions, but with extended powers.

4. Francisco Fernández Buey, "Sobre la unidad de la izquierda aquí y ahora", *Rebelión*, January 26th, 2000.

5. On election day the citizens' network for the abolition of the foreign debt, supported by around 25,000 activists, mainly youth, organised a popular vote with ballot boxes in public places.

Organisers believe that the rate of participation was high, which will allow the continuation of the campaign and increase its popular audience.

Basque nation faces cross-roads

JOSÉ RAMÓN CASTAÑOS

'TROGLO'*

THE Spanish state elections of March 2000 transmit an image of Basque society which is opposite to that offered by the Basque and Navarrian elections of 1998 and 1999.

IF one could then observe a progression of the Basque parties in relation to the "Spanish centralists", this was reversed in favor of the latter at the elections of March 2000. To get an idea of the tendencies at work, consider the figures shown in the attached table of electoral results.

Several things are apparent. In the first place, it is clear that the Basque electorate votes in a very different manner depending on whether the framework is local, national (Basque country or Navarre) or that of the Spanish state, and that the majorities can change from one ballot to the other. Secondly, apart from some light vicissitudes, a political fracture between opposed blocs – supporters of Basque sovereignty and Spanish constitutionalists – persists and divides Basque society into two. On the other hand, the data for the Basque and Navarrian autonomous regions shows an inversion of majorities, emphasizing the difficulty of articulating a unified political regime in the two territories.

Concerning the elections of March 2000, the results of the Spanish elections in the Basque country could be summed up thus:

- A progression for the PP-UPN¹;

- A continued decline of the PSOE;
- A displacement of the leadership in the "Spanish centralist" bloc from the social-democratic left to the post-Francoist right;

- The disappearance of Izquierda Unida as an electoral point of reference in the Basque country;

- A crushing defeat for the abstentionist policy of the nationalist left, because it gave the electoral majority to the Spanish centralist right, and was only observed by 7% of its own electorate.

- The electoral progress of the PNV, which succeeded in reaffirming its political leadership of the Lizarra Pact because of the number of votes coming from the nationalist left.

A profound change?

Has there been such a profound change as the electoral arithmetic would appear to show? The strong impression given by these results has led to some very superficial commentaries. But to understand the complexity of the Basque labyrinth it is necessary to get away from "ideological readings" of reality. All the media have, for example, assimilated the progress of the PP with the idea of a Basque people supposedly converted to Spanish national ideology.

This ideological reading of reality is obviously a politically motivated mystification, as we will see later. But something identical is going on in the opposite sense inside the "nationalist front". The propagandists, in their desire to take their dreams for reality, banalize the triumph of the Spanish centralist right as if it implied no modification of the political situation. They point out with some justification that the mass of the Basque electorate tends to behave in a different fashion according to the type of electoral consultation.

In the table of results attached, it can be seen that in Basque elections there is an increased tendency towards the "useful vote" for the nationalist parties, for these elections decide the national (i.e. Basque) political regime, whereas in the Spanish elections, where the question of state power is settled, the tendency to the useful vote helps the Spanish parties (PSOE, PP, IU).

Any serious analysis must take these elements into account, inasmuch as this electoral behavior has persisted for more than 20 years. But they do not explain the

	Spanish elections			Basque regional		Navarre regional			
	1993	1996	2000	1994	1998	1995	1999		
PNV	292	319	352	PNV	304	350	PNV	15	17
EA	130	116	101	EA	104	108	EA	14	16
HB	174	154	Abs.	HB-EH	165	222	EH	25	47
Total	596	589	?	Total	573	680	Total	54	80
PSOE	291	295	347	PSOE	175	220	PSOE	248	275
PP-UPN	191	311	472	PP	174	266	UPN	240	346
Total	482	606	819	Total	349	486	Total	488	621
IU	103	165	85	IU	93	70	IU	121	75

(Izquierda Unida has participated in both opposed blocs over the years, even if recently it is undeniably aligned with the pro-sovereignty bloc).

social breadth taken on by the tendency to the useful vote for the Spanish centralist parties, nor the gravity of this problem in Navarre, nor the displacement of the PSOE vote towards the PP, nor the concentration of the useful vote around the PNV. Like it or not, the reality is there, giving us an image opposite to that given 18 months previously with the hope inspired by the Lizarra Pact.

These elections have expressed a very profound political change in the perception society has of the political parties and the propositions they formulate. This change is particularly important so far as the Socialist Party and the nationalist left are concerned, the two having been, in their manner, directly responsible for the crisis of leadership inside the Lizarra Pact. The PSOE because it has refused to participate in the opportunity for a dialogue-based solution to the national problem and the question of violence. The nationalist left because the unilateral breaking of the military ceasefire has made ETA responsible for the general reversal of the political tendencies opened up since Lizarra.

Even if it sometime gives such an impression, the Basque crisis has not reached the point where we face an irreversible change. The situation can be stabilized, providing the two key pieces on the chessboard, the Socialist Party and the nationalist left, modify their respective political strategies. For that to happen, they must begin by recognizing their errors, for

it is these (and these alone) which have led to defeat.

Retrenchment of blocs

Basque society is divided into 2 irreconcilable political blocs: the project of sovereignty represented by the Lizarra Pact and the Spanish constitutionalist project of the Forum of Enea. It is necessary immediately to say that these blocs do not correspond to a supposed division between indigenous Basques and Spanish immigrants. Nor is there a fracture of cohabitation between two national communities, between those who define themselves as nationalists and "solely Basque", and those who identify themselves as "Basque-Spanish" and constitutionalists. The delimitation of these political factions 20 years ago was the inevitable consequence of a political act: the Basque rejection of the Spanish constitution. It was a problem that had nothing to do with the conflicts of identity, to the extent that when classifying the parties of the Spanish left in the Basque country it is not always correct to include them in the Spanish centralist bloc. All the more so in the case of the first legislative elections, during which the PSOE had gambled on the theses of self-determination, or in the case of the Basque section of Izquierda Unida, which participated actively in the Lizarra Pact up until ETA's decision to end their ceasefire.

Understanding Basque politics means

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grasping the dialectic of this politics of blocs, of which the most significant traits are the following:

- Permeability, which is increased because the partisans of the one bloc are never completely the same and each of the political parties participate in alliances with the parties of the other bloc. This is the case for the intertwined alliances which have existed in the course of the last 20 years - pacts of government, social alliances opposed to political alliances, inter-nationalist alliances superimposed on anti-terrorist pacts, and so on.

- The equilibrium of forces divides Basque society into 2 equal parts. What is characteristic is the imposed cohabitation of the pro-sovereignty tendencies of Lizarra and the opposed tendencies, in such a manner that the apparently overwhelming success of one of the two parties in an election should not be overestimated, for often the opposite occurs some months after in the following consultation.

- The retrenchment of these political blocs generates a situation of infinite equality, whose lasting consequence is a crisis of national leadership. Given that this situation reoccurs in the same terms at each electoral cycle which opens, one can understand the difficulty experienced by each bloc in gaining qualified electoral majorities.

- The novelty of the present situation is that the political gap separating the two blocs has been radicalized by each of the extremes: the Spanish government wants to resolve the Basque problem through repression, and ETA aspires to recreate the conditions for a negotiated solution, showing through armed actions that it cannot be ignored. The efforts of the Lizarra Pact to go beyond the dialectic of the blocs have for the moment foundered.

The frontier moves

Despite everything, the frontier between the political blocs is moving. It is changing in two opposed directions, in an ebb and flow movement. The equilibrium shifted first in favor of the pro-sovereignty bloc (the Lizarra Pact), but the Spanish government's resistance to change and the evolution of the Socialist Party (abandoning its alliance with the PNV in favor of a pact with the PP) shifted the balance in the opposite direction.

The Lizarra Pact has experienced difficulties in developing itself. The Spanish



left insolently turns its back on it. Far from defending the democratic rights of nationalities, it has become one of the pillars of the centralist state. Its campaign against Basque nationalism has helped to mobilize Spanish public opinion against the rights of nationalities in general, leading in the process to the paralysis of the Barcelona Declaration (an alliance of Basque, Catalan and Galician nationalists). Fear of becoming the target of Spanish centralist fury has meant that this front of nationalities now devotes itself to empty declarations on the national question, without any commitment to solidarity-based action for the collective right to self-determination. The resulting isolation is still more evident as the doors of the European chancelleries remain closed, and this change of mood has provoked a political nervousness and the modification of ETA's political strategy. Its decision to end its ceasefire shifted the political center of gravity to the right. The gap between the political blocs has changed, but not in the direction hoped for following the Lizarra Pact.

The Penelope syndrome

Those of us who wished to see the breakdown of the ETA ceasefire as a warning to the government, the Socialist Party and the PNV were wrong. ETA put its threat into practice by assassinating a soldier in Madrid. We then hoped it amounted to a tactical rupture; a sort of concretization of the threat so that it would be taken seriously. At the end of the day, ETA had shown its operational capacity and its willingness to act if it was not taken seriously.

We were wrong again. ETA killed the spokesperson of the Basque Socialists

(Fernando Buesa) in the midst of the electoral campaign and thus provoked a general crisis with unforeseeable consequences.

ETA has weakened the credibility of the Lizarra Pact and parliamentary alliance. Who will believe in the viability of this project when none of the political, trade union and social forces which support it are capable of ensuring that the weapons remain silent? How can the credibility of a government (of the Basque country) which rested on a pact which ETA has not respected be maintained? ETA has also undermined the credibility of the nationalist left's ability to lead a movement of refoundation of the Basque left. This process has been brutally interrupted, for there can be no regroupment of forces, no alliance between the political and trade union left, no renewal of discourse, no construction of new ideological values with a reactivated armed struggle.

The political autonomy of the organizations of the nationalist left (Euskal Herritarrok, the LAB trade union, and so on) in relation to ETA has been radically "frozen" as a consequence of the "solidarity" demanded by the armed struggle. The dead weight of state repression (500 prisoners and 2,600 exiles) generates a unity between the civil organizations and the military organization despite the enormous political divergences that exist between them.

ETA's strategies play on emotional blackmail. Like Penelope in the *Odyssey*, they devote themselves to unraveling in the night the tapestry of political alliances woven in the morning by the civil organizations of the nationalist left. So long as this relationship of tutelage, of quasi-vasalage, exists, there will be no future for

the left or for the Basque nation.

Degeneration of Socialism

The degeneration of Basque Socialism is another determinant factor of the logjam in the political resolution of the conflict. It is a problem perceived by the majority of society but recognized by only some of the ruling Socialists. The PSOE accuses ETA of being an autistic organization, but this qualification of political autism could also be applied to the Socialists. Today, nobody inside the leadership of the Socialist Party recognizes that the shift of political leadership towards the Spanish centralist right can be attributed to the passivity of the PSOE.

It is undeniable that the resumption of the armed struggle by ETA has mobilized in reaction the votes of depoliticised sectors of society (generally abstentionists) against the idea of barbarism invoked by political assassination. This does not amount to a Spanish centralist and anti-Basque vote as the PP seek to claim, but a vote against violent methods of political action. However, this does not explain why this vote of reaction against ETA was cast for the right and not for the social democracy.

The origins of the socialist defeat should be sought in the change of political alliances promoted by the team of Fernando Buesa (assassinated by ETA during the electoral campaign) and Nicolas Redondo, who, unlike his father, the charismatic UGT leader who radically opposed the liberal-socialism of Felipe González, has broken the historic continuity of Basque Socialism and its political alliance with democratic nationalism.

The PSOE-PNV alliance goes back to the San Sebastián Pact of 1931 for the proclamation of the second Spanish Republic, and continued in the context of the first statute of Basque autonomy (1936), the civil war against fascism, the democratic resistance against the Francoist dictatorship, the preparation of the Statute of Guernica (1977) and over the 20 following years the autonomous Basque government.

The consistency of this alliance allowed the integration into citizenship of the 50% of the Basque population which is of non-Basque origin, and three successive generations of Basque citizens have been educated in this culture of dialogue and cultural exchange. The big error of the

Buesa-Redondo team has been to reverse this historic tradition in favor of an alliance with the PP. What was initially presented as a tactical breaking of the governmental pact with the PNV to carve out an electoral space became in the course of time a general reversal of political alliance.

The selective critique of the PNV has developed into the defense of the centralized constitution. The road of dialogue to resolve the problem of violence has been bypassed in favor of radical opposition to the peace plan put forward by president Ardanza, and opposition to the Lizarra Pact, even though this latter led to the ETA ceasefire and the offer of dialogue.

Basque Socialism has thus lost its historic role. Where there was previously a conscious search for an integrated sense of citizenship there is now the idea of a political split of a Basque-Spanish community located in the working class of non-Basque origin. Where previously there existed a discourse of dialogue and détente there is now a discourse of war and unconditional support for the right's anti-terrorist policy. This renunciation of a democratic and social profile of the left in relation to the right has produced the inevitable; to finish off violence and radical nationalism, it is better to choose the original than the copy, the well known firmness of the right rather than the bragging of a left which apes it.

The other problem is that the defeat of the PSOE contributed to the defeat of Izquierda Unida, which lost its single deputy. The accumulation of these debacles implies a change of great breadth.

Need for regeneration

In order to open new perspectives for the Basque crisis, what is necessary is a regeneration of the two political forces that hold the keys to the situation: the PSOE on the one hand, the nationalist left on the other. The Socialist Party is beginning to show signs of change, but the manner in which this organization will finally evolve will not only be conditioned by the Basque situation but above all by the way its crisis of leadership at the level of the Spanish state is resolved. None of the three following possible hypotheses should be ruled out:

a) A radical upheaval of leaderships and political projects at the federal scale. This hypothesis, not very probable, should not then form the basis of speculation.

b) A tightening of grip on the leader-

ship of the party by the "barons" of the "félipiste" apparatus. In this case, taking account of the narrow Spanish centralism of the Castilians, the Extramadrurians and the Andalusians, Basque socialism will remain anchored in the Spanish centralist fold that we are familiar with.

c) The equilibrium of forces between the different "baronies" (the above-mentioned group on the one hand, the Catalans of Maragall and the Basque group accused of "nationalist deviations" on the other) allowing an autonomy of action for each of the parties. According to this supposition, if the Basque socialists can act without centralist subjugation, they will undoubtedly return to their historic tradition of preferential alliance with democratic nationalism. But the problem would then again be agreement on the content of Basque autonomy (what political sovereignty?), the explicit recognition of territorial unity (between the Basque country and Navarre) and the reopening of dialogue with Euskal Herritarrok and ETA. We are sure that this is the political gamble and the offer made by the PNV.

We can also be certain that the social legitimation the elections have given to the policy of repressive solutions implemented up to now by the Spanish centralist right can endanger Spanish democracy (given the totalitarian temptations the PP's absolute majority will present) and that this could lead Basque socialists to give a radical turn to their national policy. Let us note in passing that the Catalan and Galician nationalists are also faced with the possibility of drawing up, together with the Basque nationalists and the socialists, a new democratic alliance capable of definitively resolving the problem of the articulation of nationalisms in a new European context. The task is a hard one but it is worth the effort. It amounts to building a broader understanding on the basis of Lizarra, which can include the Basque socialists and attract trades unionists in the UGT and CCOO. The condition will be the same as that which made possible the Lizarra Pact – ETA's resumption of its ceasefire, this time on a definitive basis, given the loss of credibility occasioned by its breakdown. This is the only way of giving civil society and democratic debate the place they deserve, in place of tutelary alliances and political blackmail. ★

* The author represents the Charter of Social Rights (GOGO) inside the Lizarra pact.

1. The UPN is the sister organization of the PP in Euskadi.

Tony Cliff - an appreciation

TONY Cliff (Ygael Gluckstein), the founder and chief theoretician of the British Socialist Workers' Party, died on Sunday 9th April 2000 at the age of 82.

ALAN THORNETT

TONY Cliff was a major figure of the far left in Britain and internationally. He built an organisation which during the 1990s has been by far the biggest on the British far left. Whilst I have had a range of disagreements with his politics and analysis the contribution he made to revolutionary politics in Britain was clearly substantial. His energy and integrity will be greatly missed and the workers' movement will be the poorer without him.

Cliff became a Trotskyist in his native Palestine in the 1930s. After a spell in jail in Palestine he arrived in Britain just after the second world war and joined the principal Trotskyist group at the time, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). Although not the originator he became the principal protagonist of the theory of state capitalism: the idea that the USSR was a state capitalist country and not a degenerated workers state as Trotsky had argued in *Revolution Betrayed*. These ideas were set out in his seminal work *State Capitalism in Russia*. After expulsion from the RCP at the end of the 1940s he established the Socialist Review group. This later became the International Socialists (IS) and in 1974 the Socialist Workers Party.

First meeting

I first met Tony Cliff nearly 40 years ago when I was a young shop steward in the car industry in Oxford and still a member of the Communist Party, even if a dissident one. There were two Trotskyist organisations in Oxford at the time, the Socialist Labour League (SLL), led nationally by Gerry Healy and Cliff's IS.

My growing interest in Trotskyism, along with other militants from the car industry, was triggered by contact with a group of SLL students in the University. In the same period we had a discussion with Tony Cliff as well. He came and addressed

a group of us from the car plants.

We were unconvinced by Cliff's rank and file politics, and IS's consequent reluctance to take positions in the trade unions and shop stewards movement — to build only amongst the rank and file, and as a result leave key leadership positions in the hands of the right-wing to be used against the rank-and-file, never made sense to us.

Rejection

Our decision to join the SLL a couple of years later was based on our rejection of Tony Cliff's two key ideas, rank and fileism and state capitalism. Cliff concluded that what had happened in the Soviet Union was not that the power had been taken from the working class by a counter revolutionary bureaucracy on the basis of existing property relations, but that the mode of production had changed back to a form of capitalism — state capitalism. The bureaucracy were now a new ruling class extracting surplus value and accumulating capital as capitalism does.

This led him to conclude that there was nothing at all to defend in the USSR and that it was as much an imperialist power as the USA. The practical application of this theory came when he took a position of neutrality in the Korean war, but it is a position which was not carried through consistently. The IS/SWP was not neutral in the Vietnam war but correctly opposed US imperialism and later developed a more consistent anti-imperialist position whilst maintaining its "Neither Washington or Moscow" slogan.

Tony Cliff saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR and the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe as a massive vindication of the theory of state capitalism. This view was shared by the SWP as a whole, and it gave them confi-



dence at a time when the Communist Parties went into free fall in many countries including Britain and sections of the far left drew pessimistic conclusions out of these events. In my view it was Trotsky's analysis which was confirmed by the collapse of the USSR, not the theory of state capitalism. This is shown in the immense problems encountered in re-capitalising the Russian economy. Even 10 years later the capitalist mode of production does not predominate in the Soviet Union.

By the 1990s the SWP, with 4-5,000 members, was by far the biggest far-left organisation in Britain. It remained, however, a dogmatic, insular, top-down organisation with a history of riding rough-shod over other sections of the left on the single minded pursuit of higher membership figures.

Higher demands

In the period immediately before Cliff's death, however, the rightward march of Blairism was placing ever higher demands on the unity of the left in order to build a political response. It is to his great credit that Tony Cliff recognised these changes and emerging opportunities in the last months of his life and fully backed the London Socialist Alliance.

At the major rally of the LSA Paul Foot of the SWP spoke on the same platform as Tommy Sheridan of the new Scottish Socialist Party and Alain Krivine from the LCR on the theme of rebuilding the left across Europe. Only a year or two ago such a thing would have seemed inconceivable.

The organisation he built, regarded by many as insular for a very long time, has partly opened itself up to a dialogue, joint work, and collaboration with other sections of the far left. It would be a tribute to him for this to continue towards the construction of an effective alternative to the rightward march of new Labour. ★

The General in the labyrinth of law

PINOCHET had no reason to believe his visit to Britain in September 1998 for back surgery would be any different from those he had made since the 1997 general election victory of Labour and therefore with its full knowledge. The Anglophile was fond of attending arms fairs in Britain and taking tea with his old friend and former prime minister, Margaret Thatcher.

On those trips no attempt had been made by the Blair government to deny him entry or to initiate legal action for the torture of two British nationals and one's disappearance. However, on October 16th, 1998 Spanish investigating judge Baltasar Garzón issued a warrant for the General's arrest and extradition to Spain, to face charges of torture and murder of Spanish nationals in Chile while he was head of state between 11th September, 1973 and 11th March, 1990. The British government had no alternative but to entertain this request and the slow wheels of the legal system began to turn.

Cacophony from right

The cacophony of voices raised against Pinochet's confinement came predictably from the political right in Britain and abroad. The same tired and increasingly threadbare lines were recited. That Pinochet's extradition to Spain would undo years of reconciliation and harmony. That the Spanish authorities proposed and the British government were colluding in an infringement of Chilean sovereignty. That if Pinochet was to be tried anywhere it ought to be in his own country, by his own people and according to Chilean rules rather than that of a foreign tribunal. This last assertion became the tack taken by the campaign for Pinochet's release.

However, under the terms of the transition to civilian rule in 1988, Pinochet secured immunity from prosecution for human rights violations during the dictatorship for leading members of the regime including himself. This was in addition to the 1978 law which provides a blanket amnesty for abuses committed between 1973 and 1978 and a similar provision in

SO the old tyrant made his escape. Aided and abetted by the British government in the person of its home secretary (interior minister) Jack Straw, Augusto Pinochet Ugarte returned, as detective stories tell us the murderer always does, to the scene of the crime.

B. SKANTHAKUMAR

the 1980 Constitution. Further, in 1998 when he finally relinquished his control of the armed forces, the General elected himself Senator-for-Life which also guarantees immunity from prosecution.

It is true that the Concertación coalition which has governed Chile since 1989 created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (better known as the Rettig Commission) to investigate acts of violence during the dictatorship. This body has performed the important duty of documenting the names of those murdered or disappeared by Pinochet's secret service, the DINA. However it never had the power, and nor is there the political will in the coalition, to punish those responsible for those acts.

"Impunity remains virtually total in Chile", according to Amnesty International. Between 1973 and 1998, "approximately 5,000 judicial complaints of human rights violations have been presented in Chile, yet only twelve cases have led to prosecution. Despite statements to the effect that Augusto Pinochet should be tried in Chile, the Chilean government has shown no intention of removing obstacles that make such trial currently impossible..." The Chilean Supreme Court has consistently failed to offer judicial redress for state violations of human rights, often throwing out cases.

This is the reason why human rights defenders in Chile were unconditionally enthusiastic about foreign forums for Pinochet's prosecution and pinned their

hopes on international law. It is necessary to grasp the bleakness of this admission and the desperation it underscores before forming a judgement on their recourse to foreign jurisdictions and the vagaries of international law.

Well-heeled cheerleaders

From soon after Pinochet's arrest in London, his supporters in Chile were anxious to influence the political debate in Britain and to counter the activities of human rights campaigners. The Pinochet Foundation in Santiago subsidised trips of his cheerleaders to London. Well-heeled women waving posters of their hero, wearing badges with his name, and screaming abuse at Chilean exiles, were brought in by the plane-load whenever the case reached a critical point. They would picket Parliament in between shopping excursions to Harrods and the pilgrimage to Kensington Palace, last home of Diana, Princess of Wales. Far removed from the women of the *poblaciones* who never allowed Chile to forget its disappeared, who resisted the dictatorship through community initiatives, and who continue to struggle for their livelihoods against neo-liberal capitalism.

While hugely out-resourced by the Pinochetistas and unlike them without the services of a public relations firm, the Chile Committee for Justice, a coalition of Chilean refugees and British leftists, politically and generationally broader than the old Chile Solidarity Campaign, led a sophisticated and media-savvy campaign which changed the climate of public opinion in Britain from indifference and ignorance to at least recognition of Pinochet's guilt. It would be mistaken to believe that campaigners were paralysed into awaiting the decisions of the Courts and the twists in the formal political process, even if these did regulate the rhythm and routine of activism.

First, it had to be established that the crimes in the warrant were extraditable crimes and that Britain had jurisdiction over the alleged offences. Second, that Pinochet, as a former head of state, did not

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enjoy immunity from criminal prosecution for acts committed by his government. The international law doctrine of sovereign state immunity has traditionally been interpreted as conferring absolute immunity on public officials for acts performed in the course of official duties.

Extermination state policy

The High Court, while finding that some of the charges constituted extraditable claims, upheld the traditionalist view in the present case and quashed the writs for extradition. "History shows that it has indeed on occasion been state policy to exterminate or to oppress particular groups."

Therefore Pinochet enjoyed state immunity in lieu of those acts being acts of state. On appeal the case came before the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords. The point of law before them was as to the "proper interpretation and scope of the immunity enjoyed by a former Head of State for arrest and extradition proceedings in the UK in respect of acts committed while he was Head of State."

On November 25th, the House of Lords by a margin of three to two reversed the High Court ruling, finding that a former head of state had no immunity in respect of acts of torture or of acts of hostage taking. A minority among the Law Lords agreed with the High Court that sovereign immunity was absolute and did not depend on the criminality or morality of the act in question as long as these were committed in a governmental capacity. In other words, if Pinochet could prove that he was head of state of Chile and used the apparatus of state for torture then he was free of prosecution for it!

Their justification for this legal-conservative or orthodox interpretation of the doctrine being that, while the crimes of genocide, torture and hostage-taking are recognised by international Conventions as international crimes, the British legislation which incorporates these Conventions into domestic law is silent on the culpability of heads and former heads of state, suggesting that it wished to preserve absolute immunity for them.

To the relief of international human rights lawyers and activists, a majority in the House of Lords rejected this view and instead took a legal-reformist or liberal stance. Lord Steyn noted that: "The development of international law since the



British Home Secretary Jack Straw

Second World War justifies the conclusion that by the time of the 1973 coup d'état, and certainly ever since, international law condemned genocide, torture, hostage-taking and crimes against humanity (during an armed conflict in peace time) as international crimes deserving punishment. Given this state of international law, it seems to me difficult to maintain the commission of such high crimes may amount to acts performed in the exercise of the functions of Head of State."

This didn't end the matter. Under the British statute the Home Secretary has quasi-judicial powers and has to make the final determination on extradition applications. Never before (nor since) has Straw's political and personal stock been higher within his own Party than when, two weeks later, on December 10th, 1998 he authorised the extradition. However intervening events had already rendered that decision redundant.

Trustee

While Pinochet's legal team prepared to appeal against the House of Lords decision, it emerged in the right-wing press in November that one of the Law Lords of the majority was a trustee of a charitable foundation associated with Amnesty International. While Lord Hoffman had not delivered a separate judgement, his undisclosed relationship with a human rights organisation which had intervened in the case was sufficiently close to attract accusations of bias and demands for a re-trial.

On December 17th, 1998, another panel of the House of Lords having reviewed the application for re-trial set aside its earlier judgement, holding that the case should be reheard. In January 1999 a newly assembled and expanded bench of

seven Law Lords was convened to deliberate upon the legal issues once more.

On March 24th, 1999 this group of judges held by a more authoritative margin of six to one that a former Head of State had no immunity in respect of acts of torture or conspiracy to commit such acts (he was however entitled to immunity from the charges of murder and conspiracy to murder which, unlike torture, are not presently for former heads of state an extraditable crime under international law.)

Lord Browne-Wilkinson explained, "How can it be for international law purposes an official function to do something which international law itself prohibits and criminalises? Yet, if the former head of state has immunity, the man most responsible will escape liability while his inferiors (the chiefs of police, junior army officers) who carried out his orders will be liable ..."

However, the Law Lords then proceeded to undermine their own decision by finding that the General could only be extradited from Britain for acts committed in Chile after December 8th, 1988 when the British legislature ratified the UN Convention Against Torture 1984 and at which point Spain and Chile had acceded to the Convention too. Invoking the principle of double-criminality, their Lordships decided that an extraditable act must not only be a crime in both Spain and Britain now, but must have been a crime in Britain when it took place in Chile.

This controversial reading of the extradition law caused dismay among human rights lawyers. Once more the British judiciary revealed itself to be insulated from international human rights norms and resistant to its extension and assimilation in the domestic legal arena.

The application before them was not to

try Pinochet in Britain but to extradite him to Spain. Leave to extradite him was not a presumption of guilt but rather a procedural hurdle to be surmounted. Instead of treating it as a technical aspect and allowing Pinochet to answer for all the charges of torture, which in any case has been unlawful at least since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the House of Lords was fettering the Spanish judicial authorities in striking out some charges.

The Law Lords also recommended that Jack Straw review his decision to permit Pinochet's extradition in light of the reduced number of counts. The immediate effect of the ruling was to reduce the charges from 31 to just three. Baltasar Garzón, who had by now achieved folk hero status in some quarters, promptly added 53 further cases of torture committed after 1988 to the charge-sheet.

Presumption

The presumption following the Lords decision was that Jack Straw was obliged once more to allow extradition unless there were compelling compassionate grounds against a trial. In the summer of 1999, in meetings between British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and his Chilean and Spanish counterparts, this was identified as the face-saving solution for all sides which would enable Straw to rid himself of Pinochet without delivering him into the hands of the Spanish judicial authorities.

In October 1999 the Chilean embassy in London formally requested that the General's medical condition be examined and the following month the Home Office appointed a panel of physicians to conduct medical and psychological tests on him.

In January 2000 the Home Office released a briefing on the medical report, according to which the General, "would not at the present be mentally capable of meaningful participation in a trial." The Home Office's interpretation of this report was that Pinochet would not be capable of understanding the charges against him, implying that a trial would not be appropriate. Jack Straw announced that based upon this report he was "minded" to halt extradition. Pinochet would be free to return to Chile.

The medical evidence was presented and considered in secret. It was not shared with anyone other than Pinochet and therefore not open to scrutiny by other medical experts. Human rights organisations felt

that fitness to stand trial was something which could be established once legal hearings had begun. It was also revealed that a Chilean psychologist had been staying with Pinochet for several months in the run-up to the medical examination, suggesting that the General had been coached to fail the tests.

Pinochet victim

Certainly the British authorities were right in surmising that Pinochet could not understand the nature and gravity of the charges against him, but for another reason. It is not the General's medical condition, but rather that he does not feel himself to be guilty of any crime. In fact he never doubted who had been wronged, who had suffered injustice, who had been victimised. "I have been the target of a political, judicial plot, cunning and cowardly, which has no moral value", he declared in an open letter to the Chilean nation. "While [in Europe] and specifically in the countries which now condemn me through spurious trials, Communism has killed many millions of human beings this century, I am pursued for having defeated it in Chile, saving the country from a virtual civil war."

In February Jack Straw was ordered by the High Court in London to release copies of the medical report to Spain, Belgium, France and Switzerland, all of which had warrants for Pinochet's arrest. This information was immediately leaked to the Spanish and Chilean press by the Spanish government, which calculated that its disclosure would torpedo any possibility of the General's extradition to Spain.

On March 3rd, Pinochet returned to Chile where he was greeted by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. His supporters drove around Santiago in cavalcades, honking horns and holding aloft his picture. The General himself, revived by the air and sun in his homeland, seemed to have made a near miraculous recovery. He was positively jaunty as he stepped off the plane, looking mentally and physically restored, to greet the other gorillas on the tarmac.

The Pinochet case has fuelled on-going debates on the nature and future of international law. The philosophical foundations of the judgements in the House of Lords date from the late nineteenth century. In that era of crumbling empires and newly emerging European nation-states, the func-

tion of international law was thought to be the maintenance of an international order of juridically equal states which exercised absolute sovereignty over their own inhabitants and their own affairs. Except where each state individually and voluntarily decided to pool sovereignty in international institutions. This state-centred international system, which jealously guards sovereignty and preaches (but does not always practise) non-interference in each other's affairs, is the legal-conservative's *weltanschauung*.

Through the twentieth century it has come under two challenges. Global capital, striving to escape the constraints of national boundaries and demanding that international law protect its interests and not only that of states, has secured the lifting of state immunity for commercial transactions. It is therefore now possible for states to be sued by trans-national corporations: and not claim, as they have previously, sovereign immunity from prosecution. It is also possible for transnational investments to be legally protected from expropriation and even nationalisation with compensation, which undermines state sovereignty over foreign investment and its natural resources.

The second challenge has come from the human rights movement which emerged out of the ashes of the Second World War. This current has long been skeptical of states, which the prevailing regime of international law entrusts with the protection of human rights, but which also happen to be the primary agent for the violation of human rights. Where national laws are seen as retrograde or backward and national legal institutions as impotent or craven, international legal norms and international legal institutions are regarded as universal and undifferentiated in application, radical in content and catalysers for progressive change.

As Hugh O'Shaughnessy, author of *Pinochet: The Politics of Torture* commented, "People round the world cheered when it seemed that international lawyers might be made to do something more useful for humanity than protecting the profitable copyright for Mickey Mouse in Bangladesh, nurturing tax-evaders in Bermuda and ensuring that defenceless patients in sub-Saharan Africa had to pay over the odds for western pharmaceuticals." One conclusion which human rights activists seek to draw after the frustration of the British legal process is that the inter-

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national system must be expanded to include non-state actors other than giant corporations and multilateral international organisations and that transnational legal institutions must be developed to compensate for the weakness and unevenness of national ones.

International court

Hence their enthusiasm for an International Criminal Court (ICC). In June 1998 members of the United Nations met in Rome to establish a permanent tribunal to adjudicate on core crimes of international humanitarian law such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The jurisdiction of the ICC will include individuals and not be restricted to states, but its competence only extends to cases which cannot be heard in the state where the crimes were committed or the state of nationality of the alleged offender and where the jurisdiction of the Court is accepted. The Court remains a long way short of the minimum number of 60 ratifications needed before it becomes operational and is opposed by the US among other countries.

The sentiment of human rights internationalism is an honourable one. However a discordant note must be sounded. Even transnational institutions and a transnational legal order exist among states. States may be granted legal equality but certainly do not possess political and economic equality. The asymmetries of power which exist between states — that is, the reality of an imperialist world order — cannot be prevented from reproducing themselves within these brave new institutions any more than they are absent from the old ones. International law does not stand above states and classes but rather is imbricated in its relations. Neither is it independent of a world economy which everywhere imposes the rule of capital.

The existing war crimes tribunals on Rwanda and former Yugoslavia were established and function because of the backing of the great powers. However, can anyone conceive of a tribunal to try Russia for its atrocities in Chechnya or the US for its war crimes in Korea and Indo-China? To ask the question is to answer it. It is important therefore that the protagonists of human rights internationalism resist the (ab)use of human rights ideology when it is paraded as the Siamese twin of neo-liberal capitalism; when it is wielded hypo-

critically and selectively as a stick to beat the enemies of the West; when it becomes a cloak to justify aggression and armed intervention in some countries. It is essential that human rights internationalism is not snared by human rights imperialism.

Pinochet has returned to a different country from the one he left in September 1998. Chile and Chileans have changed in ways that it is still too early to fully appreciate. Opinion polls show 70% of the Chilean people want Pinochet to stand trial. The fear that any public discussion of the coup and its aftermath will bring tanks onto the streets is being conquered. On September 11th, 1999, 20,000 Chileans marched to mourn the anniversary of the coup and affirm the struggle against impunity.

Pinochet's arrest allowed, even in a partial way, the past to at last confront the present. The families of the disappeared and their supporters have reclaimed the memory of that long dark night of the dictatorship from the historical revisionism of the Right. They understood with Walter Benjamin the imperative of "seizing hold of a memory as it flashes up at the moment of danger ... that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins."

Already the facade of a united armed forces is beginning to crack. Retired army officers have publicly spoken of Pinochet's personal responsibility for Operation Condor, where cross-border state terrorism was co-ordinated with military dictatorships in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay to identify and persecute dissidents and exiles. Chilean prosecutor Juan Guzmán Tapia, at tremendous personal risk, has formulated 59 separate criminal charges against Pinochet and is assiduously pursuing him through the domestic legal system.

The Concertación coalition (grouping the Christian Democrats, the Socialist Party and the Party For Democracy) has been riven by tensions over the Pinochet affair. The Christian Democrats, who occupied the presidency during Pinochet's detention in London, assumed the mantle of defenders of Chilean sovereignty and national dignity demanding Pinochet's return.

Their Socialist Party partners, eager not to concede patriotic credentials to the Christian Democrats nor to relinquish their carefully cultivated respectability and trustworthiness before the Chilean bourgeoisie, supported this call, though with

less enthusiasm. Nevertheless some of its parliamentary caucus and certainly most of its base are less willing to bury the past along with their dead as their leaders counsel them to.

New president

In January Ricardo Lagos of the Socialist Party won the second round of the Presidential elections, narrowly beating the ultra-rightist Joaquín Lavín. He was visibly uncomfortable when his supporters at a victory rally demanded Pinochet be prosecuted in Chile. The new President has said he will not interfere in the judicial process. Yet it is politics and not law which will determine whether Pinochet enjoys impunity or faces justice.

Lagos has declared that he will govern as the Concertación's third President and not as the Socialist Party's second. In other words, affirming the Socialist Party's strategic choice of unmooring itself from its historical roots and its association with the Popular Unity period, instead anchoring itself within the post-Pinochet political consensus of the Concertación and the economic consensus of neo-liberalism. He will be anxious to preserve the coalition through deflecting appeals for justice which will uncover the relationship between the Christian Democrats and the dictatorship and therefore its culpability in Pinochet's atrocities.

Outside of Chile the General's arrest has been an inspiration to human rights campaigners, survivors of military terror and families of the disappeared all over the world. They have found solace and strength in the prospect that even after 25 years it might be possible to hold dictators to account. Acting on a complaint of genocide including the murder of Spanish nationals, made by indigenous rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchu, Spanish investigators have turned their sights on someone else. In late April it was reported that Guatemala's former military strong-man and now president of its Congress, Efraín Ríos Montt, had cancelled a trip to France after having been advised by his lawyer that an international warrant for his arrest is outstanding. Does anyone know Henry Kissinger's itinerary for the next few months?

Justice, long-delayed for the victims and survivors of Latin America's military dictatorships, has become hard to deny. ★

“We must be heretics in order to be Marxists”

HUGO BLANCO is 65. His world renown stems principally from having led a peasant guerrilla movement at the beginning of the 1960s in the south of Peru. He spent 8 years in prison but through international solidarity was freed and went into exile. He returned to Peru in 1978 and became a member of the Constituent Assembly — he was subsequently a deputy and a senator until President Fujimori closed the Peruvian parliament down in 1992. Today he again works the land and is a member of the peasant organization the Central Campesina del Peru (CCP) and the Partido Unificado Mariateguista (Unified Mariateguista Party — PUM). Pedro Brieger* spoke with him at the CCP headquarters in Lima, shortly before the Peruvian general election of April 9th — at which President Fujimori was forced into a second ballot, to take place in early June. The interview has been abridged slightly for reasons of space.

FOR a number of years you were a parliamentarian and today you again work the land as a farmer. How have you experienced the change from parliamentarian, with a decent standard of living, to peasant?

I never had luxuries nor needed much to live, so the difference is not that great. The money that I received as a parliamentarian I used to keep in touch with the grassroots. Today, I am a farmer and in the Confederacion Campesina del Peru (CCP), trying to defend farmers who are dying of hunger as a result of neoliberal policies. The peasantry is the most hard-hit sector because the neoliberal policy has allowed the entry of cheap industrial goods and this has closed the Peruvian factories. The workers have been sacked, those who remain are full of fear that if they try to increase their wages they will be sacked. As a result of unemployment and low wages the urban population cannot afford to buy the products of the countryside.

■ **At the political level is there a big difference between being in parliament and being out of it?**

Sure, when you are in parliament you are always in the media and today I do not

have coverage in the press. But this is a secondary thing because I have always worked in a social function. Sometimes the press gives me attention and sometimes not; sometimes I am a parliamentarian, sometimes not, sometimes I am a prisoner, sometimes not... I am a social fighter who has been obliged by circumstances sometimes to be a guerrilla and sometimes to be a parliamentarian. When we suffered repression from the government and big landowners we defended ourselves with arms. Then with time we had the possibility of doing parliamentary work and then I was in parliament in opposition to the pro-big business right wing majority, not simply Fujimorism... It is true also that this got media coverage and I participated as a parliamentarian in popular struggles.

Paradoxically I received the most beatings of my life when I was in parliament. Parliamentary immunity is a pure myth, because on a number of occasions I had to go to hospital after having been beaten by the police. Then in 1992 Fujimori dissolved the parliament with his “autocoup”.

■ **Why was there so little resistance to Fujimori’s autocoup?**

Because parliament did not deserve the

support of the people, it was cut off from the people, as parliaments have always been in Peru. And people did not view with hostility the fact that this parliament was dissolved. The people had voted against parties and for this reason voted for Fujimori. APRA (the previous governing party, linked to the Socialist International) was a party that milked a lot of money from the state enterprises, from the Agrarian Bank.

So when it was said “we have to privatize” people felt happy. “Good, they said, this will put an end to this corruption in the state enterprises”. Also Fujimori was supported because Sendero Luminoso had terrorized so many people. This terror ended because Fujimori crushed Sendero and people can now breathe more easily. This also helped Fujimori. Then there was the problem of inflation. One can say that in the past the people voted for Fujimori, but I do not believe that would be the case today were it not for electoral fraud. Also the people do not have a valid alternative because the opposition is dispersed. If we were united, the people would vote for the opposition. Some will vote for one or another, some will spoil their votes, others will not vote, but with the discouragement of knowing that Fujimori will win.

■ **What is the current situation of the Peruvian left?**

It is very atomized and weakened, and for this reason will not even present a candidate for the April elections. The PUM still exists, fundamentally at the level of peasant work, but as a party does not have much profile. The PUM had a good parliamentarian in Javier Diez Canseco, who is honest, combative, and intelligent, but is not on the list this time. Javier is the ideal candidate to be a member of parliament because the militancy in which he believes is located at the level of parliament. But this is not so for me. Always I was more linked to the mass movement. This is my place.

■ **What is your analysis of the indigenous and popular uprising that overthrew the government of Jamil Mahuad in Ecuador?**

I believe that revolutionary processes take place in two stages. In “soviet” terms this compares to the February revolution and the October revolution. In Chile, for example there was the February revolution with the coming to power of Allende in



Voting in Peru

1970, but Allende held back the advance of the process and this is why the coup succeeded in 1973. If the process does not advance, it goes backwards.

■ **But in Ecuador less than 40% of the population is indigenous. What success can a movement enjoy when it does not represent the majority of the population?**

In reality they were the vanguard of the struggle because the urban population also participated in their support. Now, the movement had the removal of Mahuad as its objective; but it had not envisaged what to do then. For this brought it up against something much bigger, that it had not discussed and for which it had not prepared. Perhaps it was an error to negotiate to form a junta with the military... One has to be very innocent to be betrayed by the Armed forces, knowing that they are the enemies of the people and that they are with the oppressor sectors... It would be one thing to set up a junta of colonels supported by the people, but this was not the case, it was a triumvirate formed by the joint command. It is absurd to think that the peasants can govern with them.

■ **In the 1960s and 1970s there was a very significant process of migration from the countryside to the city that changed the social structure of the majority of the countries in Latin America. Today we see the importance of the social weight of the peasantry in Ecuador, in Chiapas, in Peru...**

That's right. But it seems to me a posi-

tive step. Because I am one of those who struggle for the defense of cultural identity that does not exist in Peru like in Bolivia, Ecuador or Mexico, where there is a strong pride in cultural identity. In the CCP we are majority indigenous but sometimes it seems to people that we discriminate against non-indigenous peasants because the secretary general was an Aimara Indian, then a Quechua Indian. In our secretariat over the past period the majority were Quechua. There are demands which are ours, indigenous, that we raise as general demands, like for example the defense of coca, of the peasant communities and of our form of social organization. But this is done at the level of the CCP. Indigenous and non-indigenous peasants alike, we defend the peasant communities.

■ **What is the relationship with the urban sectors, what is the situation of the workers' movement in Peru today?**

The workers' movement is very much weakened because the factories have been closed as a result of neoliberalism – and those who remain in the factories are afraid of losing their jobs. They are very much weakened. The only strong sector is in civil construction – this is the most combative sector and it is indigenous in its majority. But factory workers are very much weaker – like the CGT-P – and are not combative.

■ **You lived in Mexico for several years and have followed the Zapatista uprising closely – what does Chiapas mean to you?**

Unhappily, Chiapas is alone because in Mexico the social movement is more uneven than in Peru. It is true that Mexico City elected a leftwing governor. But there is not the kind of relative uniformity that exists in Brazil, Peru or Ecuador. The important thing is that they seek to break out of their isolation using the Internet and linking up with all progressive movements or political currents anywhere in the world. These things reflect very well on the Zapatista leadership and it pleases me very much that indigenous identity is one of their themes, because the indigenous movement of Latin America integrates other struggles, it considers itself part of all the exploited sectors, stressing its identity and its own struggle, but not feeling itself superior to the other exploited sectors, fortunately.

■ **What future will there be for the Zapatista movement if it does not pose the seizure of power and is concentrated in one region?**

It depends on the development of the whole social movement of which they are not the vanguard, as they themselves emphasize. Everything depends on the development of the struggle in this country, sadly Chiapas is very isolated and I do not know what the future holds. In truth, I thought that they were going to be crushed but happily this has not yet happened.

■ **Doesn't this raise the necessity of a revolutionary party that can centralize struggles? Or do you no longer believe in the necessity of building revolution-**

ary parties?

I don't now believe in the "vanguard" role of political parties. They should exist as centers for discussion, debate and reflection on social problems and take it to the social movements. The trauma that we have suffered with the USSR shows us that so-called democratic centralism became deformed and turned into bureaucratic centralism with Stalin at its head.

Obviously this is the worst example, but I have not seen any more positive example in the development of struggles. I don't believe that there are two kinds of people, some who are the elect of God, those inside the party and others who are outside. I agree with democratic centralism inside the CCP, for example when it is necessary to support a march. But this is democratic centralism by action, not in terms of ideas.

■ **What meaning does it have to be in a party then, why stay in the PUM?**

Because it is an important forum of debate. I don't believe I will be thrown out for saying outside the party what I say inside.

■ **You were well known for openly defining yourself as a Trotskyist. Do you still do so today?**

I think so. It depends. I would call myself a Leninist, but not with respect to democratic centralism. If Lenin came back, he would be disappointed at the way we have copied the Bolshevik movement. We boast of being "Bolsheviks". But this was a movement that was effective in Russia in 1917 and there is no reason it should be effective in Peru in the year 2000. It seems to me that this is completely anti-dialectical. We quote Mariategui when he said that the socialist revolution in Peru would be neither tracing nor copy. We keep saying it but we also continue to copy.

Lenin was a heretic because Marx thought that the revolution would take place in England, the most developed country and Lenin said rather that it would happen in the weakest link of capitalism. This heresy is what makes one authentically Marxist. So we must be heretics in order to be Marxists, but not "Bolsheviks". The essential of Marxism is the analysis of reality and paying appropriate respect to that reality. In this sense I continue to consider myself a Marxist, and a Trotskyist, but if you form a party of the Leninist type,

you will form a bureaucracy and I am against this type of party.

■ **Fujimori has crushed Sendero Luminoso; for the mass movement is the disappearance of Sendero a positive thing?**

You bet!!!! Today the CCP can go forward because Sendero does not exist. They would kill peasant leaders — including some who had been prisoners for being Senderistas — as "traitors" to the peasant movement because they advocated other roads than the armed struggle. This weakened the mass movement. Also because the army used Sendero as a pretext to repress us, and killed us in the name of the fight against Sendero. There were people who were killed by the army and then they would say it was Sendero. The armed forces killed us claiming that they were actions of Sendero and repressed us saying that we were Senderistas or things of this kind. These things don't happen now.

■ **And the MRTA?**

The MRTA were not like Sendero because they were more respectful of the mass organizations and of the CCP. But I do not agree with them because they substitute the action of the population in general with the audacious action of a vanguard and this method does not seem to me correct however much I respect them. I don't agree with this vanguardist methodology in any sense, and much less in an armed sense.

■ **Are the popular forces demanding the liberation of the Sendero leaders?**

No, in no way. They remain a marginal sect.

■ **And you?**

Me, yes because I am in favor of amnesty for political prisoners although one can do nothing in common with Sendero because even on demonstrations for human rights they come with their banners calling for the armed struggle and impose it on everyone else.

■ **Given the deindustrialization throughout Latin America and the weakness of the trade unions, how do you see the recomposition of the popular camp?**

History will tell us. You have to open your eyes and see how the popular movement is recomposing. The CCP gets

stronger all the time. From having been smashed by repression, by war — because we were fired on by both sides, Sendero Luminoso and the army — today we are coming back. I believe that in quality we are better than before because we have learned much with experience.

There are distinct opinions in the CCP because there are people who take the CCP as the pillar which is going to head the struggle and others — like me — who believe that we are a force but that the regional movements are another increasingly vigorous force.

On May 1st last year I was in Cusco and there were no proletarians there, it was the itinerant peddlers who were there on the demonstration. This means that it is the peddlers, the students, the professional layers or the popular neighborhoods who are coming forward.

■ **You mentioned the peddlers as forming part of the social struggles although they belong to a fairly marginal social sector. It is a very different scenario from that of 30 or 40 years ago when one looked to the working masses to mobilize for sectoral or more general demands.**

Yes, that's true. I believe that aspects of the *Communist Manifesto* are still valid now, like the concentration of capital or the internal contradictions of capital. I believe that today this is taking place in a much more acute manner than Marx ever imagined. Nowadays some are very happy because the working class is disappearing little by little and being replaced by the machine... Yes, but the machine will not buy commodities.

But, as to this question of the working class vanguard... in Latin America now I do not think that it is thus, because of the organic weakening that the working class has undergone and because there are other social sectors that are coming into struggle. This is not the time to speak of the dictatorship of the proletariat, not even in the sense that Lenin used it, of democratic government, a dictatorship against the bourgeoisie, because I don't believe that this is the time to speak of dictatorships. Now the people are mistrustful of dictatorships. I believe in a future government composed of distinct sectors, peasants, workers, employed and unemployed, neighborhoods, regions, professionals, and so on. We'll see in the course of history. ★

* Argentine sociologist, journalist and writer

The decomposition of the FSLN leadership

THE struggle we undertook in Nicaragua to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship, the struggle of the FSLN to make a revolution, was also a struggle for human rights. It has always been very difficult for me to establish the frontier between the revolutionary and the human rights activist, because I have always considered that the struggle for human rights is a revolution.

Participating in the anti-Somoza struggle when I was a student, I was involved with the FSLN well before the insurrectional struggle, until I was imprisoned in 1979. When I was still a prisoner and the revolutionary government was still in Costa Rica, I was made Vice-president of the Supreme Court of Justice. The work of reorganizing a judicial power that would serve the interests of the Nicaraguan people took up all my time during the years of the revolution.

Rank and file

While it was in power, the Frente Sandinista did not manage to develop itself as a political party. It went from a politico-military movement, a guerilla organization that took power through armed struggle, to forming a government administering the country. There was no time to build a political organization, to develop a party, to consolidate democratic styles of leadership and participation. No time, or no will because the top leadership thought it was not necessary? Whatever the case, it was a big error that extremely vertical and not very democratic styles of leadership were developed and justified on the basis of the war that the United States waged against us.

The 1990 electoral defeat showed that the FSLN was not prepared to assume the role of an opposition political party. With the confusion between party and state that existed in the 1980s, a lot of the donations that the FSLN received as a party went automatically to the state. After the defeat, it was judged that the wealth of the Frente was an indispensable basis for keeping the party alive. But soon, what was meant to

VILMA Núñez, a prominent member of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and President of the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights, spoke to *Envío* on her assessment of the current crisis of the organization. Her contribution has been abridged for reasons of space.

be the wealth of the party was concentrated in a few hands. Laws 85 and 86 — belated efforts to mitigate the error of not having made a timely distribution of properties on a legal basis — were also used by some to appropriate property for themselves. The lack of a political organization adequate to the new circumstances, corruption in relation to the redistribution of property, and insecurity and individualism amplified by the electoral defeat were the three axes underlying the decomposition of the leadership of the Frente Sandinista.

Starting from 1990 the historic leaders of the FSLN began to move away from the rank and file, apart from Daniel Ortega. Although he was as much responsible for the authoritarianism and lack of transparency as the others, he appeared “linked” to the popular sectors in their struggles against the new neoliberal economic model. Today we see that in this behavior there was an element of manipulation of these struggles to maintain his status as political leader and to develop his position as *caudillo*.

Vertical and autocratic

I was among the last to realize what the vertical and autocratic styles of leadership that today are openly criticized in the FSLN were developed and consolidated from the years of the revolution. On the other hand, in the area where I worked during the revolution — the juridical, legal, institutional area — I realized from the beginning that what was being developed was a government that did not believe in

laws, for legal formalities had no value, among other things because it was thought that the revolution would remain for ever, that a revolutionary government would always be in power. In the Supreme Court of Justice we had to accept many dubious legal changes that were always justified in terms of the “defense” of the revolution.

First congress

After 1990, the FSLN began to organize itself as a political party and convened its first congress in 1991. On this occasion, I was invited by the national leadership to join the Electoral Commission of the FSLN. Thus I participated in the approval of the first Statutes and Declaration of Principles and in the election of the first party posts chosen by a Congress. On this occasion also, through no wish of my own, I was proposed and elected by the congress as coordinator of the first Ethics Commission, created precisely to deal with the investigation of allegations that were already piling up against some leaders.

The decomposition of the leadership of the FSLN, its moral debacle, is not something new. It is a process that has been gestating for a long time, and there are many stories that illustrate this sad fact. I had the opportunity to see signs of this decomposition up close when participating in the Ethics Commission. In those years all the investigations turned around the theme of the property of the Frente: what it was, who administered it, what use was made of these goods... If there was some political justification for the transfer to the FSLN of some of the property of the revolutionary state, there was no justification for individual Sandinistas benefiting privately from this collective wealth.

When the Ethics Commission began to fight a battle to have information on the property of the FSLN, it faced obstacles on all sides.

We recognized that there was no political will in the National Leadership to give us information on what constituted the wealth of the party. They distrusted us. We recognized that the Ethics Commission

had been created solely through the pressure of international solidarity and national public opinion.

Obstacles

In the Commission we were faced with serious denunciations of corruption against Sandinista comrades at all levels, charged with misuse of Frente property. When the Commission asked for information from the National Leadership, we always faced obstacles to getting hold of the information. At first, I saw my participation in the Ethics Commission as a very great stimulus. In practice, this was one of the saddest stages of my party life, since I was unable to work in accordance with the principles and the statutes of the party and the rules of the Commission. Thus, at the second Congress of the FSLN in 1994 I said I did not wish to accept any post in the Commission. On this occasion I was elected a member of the Sandinista Assembly.

Although this was theoretically the highest authority of the party I recognized that this organ of leadership did not function. We only received information on what had already been decided. Sometimes they listened to us and we believed that our opinion would be taken into account. But it was an illusion. This situation was increasingly consolidated, and many times Daniel Ortega would announce something at a demonstration or in the media and then met the Sandinista Assembly to tell it what was already in the public domain. Among many assembly members who hoped for a democratic system and real participation in the structures of the party this style of conduct was generating an increasingly deep disappointment.

At the 1996 elections, I was convinced that with Daniel Ortega as candidate the FSLN would not win. I decided to listen to the advice of many militants, men and women, and launched my candidature in the FSLN's internal consultation, a novel experience that could have been a democratic exercise. I took this decision not in the belief that I would win, but believing it would be an interesting test of the truth of the democratization of which the FSLN leadership had spoken. I was intent on the democratization of the FSLN and not on victory, intent on conquering rights and spaces for women. Daniel Ortega never accepted my candidature as an effort to democratize the FSLN, rather as an unforgivable irreverence, the worst disrespect

that could be shown to him as leader. It convinced me it was necessary to launch new struggles to democratize the FSLN.

The second electoral defeat of the FSLN in 1996 brought new proofs that the FSLN did not really believe in the juridical institutions. Daniel Ortega fiercely denounced fraud, but the FSLN did not make use of all the resources that the Electoral Law had at its disposition to contest the fraud. We fought the 1996 elections in a disorganized manner, preoccupied by the crowds and the images of the electoral campaign. I believe that this was one of the reasons the FSLN lost these elections.

Defeat

This defeat — not expected by the structures of the FSLN, although they were responsible for it — and the analysis made by the leadership of the FSLN of the advantages gained from the protocol of transition made in 1990 with the new government of Violeta Chamorro, led to the current pact. The leadership clique took the easiest road to maintain spaces and shares of power, making a pact with the new government of Arnoldo Alemán, which was of a very different nature to that of doña Violeta. And today we know that already on January 12th, 1997, two days after the coming to power of Alemán, the first private meeting took place between him and Daniel Ortega. More meetings followed. That day the pact that has now been consummated began.

The pact is one of the final acts expressing the political and ethical decomposition of the FSLN leadership. Divorced for some years from the cause of the people, from the base units of Sandinismo, they have renounced the task of opposition and allied with a government which is Somozista in thought and deed, to keep their share of power and accede to more.

The *pacto* does not consist solely of the legal and institutional transformations agreed between the two leaderships. More important than all this is the hidden pact, all the rules, which guarantee shares of economic power to Ortega and his cronies. The real motivation of the Pact is to guarantee to the FSLN leadership, among other things, very valuable properties that are currently in the hands of cooperatives or are part of the *Area Propiedad de los Trabajadores*. Secondly, the FSLN hopes to return to power on the basis of the con-

stitutional and electoral reforms derived from the pact.

The pact has been carried out against democracy and political pluralism, which was one of the principles of the revolution. It is an outrage against the institutions of democracy. It seeks to organize a state that guarantees the murky interests of the two groups that have made the pact. It will politicize both the judicial and electoral authorities. Most seriously of all, it puts an end to the *Contraloría General de la República*, the sole governmental institution that had won credibility in this country for its struggle against corruption.

It is hard to accept all these realities, it is sad to assume them, and also it is dangerous to say them. But if in Nicaragua, if everyone does not assume their own responsibilities we are not going to go forwards. The pact has raised the crisis inside the FSLN to an unprecedented level. The leadership circle is in terminal crisis.

Disquiet

Among FSLN militants there is currently much disquiet, discomfort and uncertainty. But, on the basis of the sad experience of the many valuable comrades who left the Frente to form the MRS in 1994, the groups which today criticize publicly the current direction of the party — Izquierda del FSLN, Iniciativa Sandinista, Sandinistas por la Dignidad, Foro Sandinista and others — believe unanimously that the struggle to rescue the FSLN, to transform it and make it once again an instrument of popular struggle should take place within the FSLN.

I believe that at times like this the main thing is not to be afraid, for one of the factors that works against the transformation of the FSLN is the fear that has taken possession of the militants. Fear of breaking myths. Fear of being silenced by reprisals. And fear also of losing the material resources that the revolution has given to many. What unites us is the conviction that the FSLN does not belong to the clique of leaders who today have kidnapped it, but rather belongs to all Sandinistas. And not only Sandinistas but also all the people of Nicaragua.

So it is urgent that Sandinismo reacts and elaborates a project adequate for this moment in the history of Nicaragua and the world.★

* *Envío*, monthly review of the Central American University (UCA), Managua, Nicaragua. This interview was published in the January-February 2000 issue.

Historic victory in Senegal

THE second round of the Senegalese presidential election held on March 19th 2000 surprised everyone, both in terms of the scale of Abdoulaye Wade's victory (Wade was the candidate for the opposition Coalition Alternance 2000) and the degree of good grace shown by his defeated rival, outgoing president and Socialist Party candidate Abdou Diouf.

BIRAM BAKARY

AFTER his defeat, Diouf showed no hesitation in congratulating his rival, thus undermining those in his party who might have been tempted to carry out a coup that could have plunged the country into barbarism. Through this gesture, Senegal has initially escaped the spiralling of post-electoral conflict and a good example of democracy has just been given to the whole of Africa.

Diouf was beaten in every town in Senegal and in Dakar Wade won in every polling office, with 76.39% of the votes. This was a tidal wave in favour of change and the defeat of the Senegalese party-state resembles a real peaceful democratic revolution whose outcome is still uncertain.

The first round of the presidential election on February 27th saw a weakening of the party-state, the Socialist Party (PS — in power since 1960!). Abdou Diouf obtained 40.3% of the vote and Abdoulaye Wade 30.9%. The result represented a first great historic victory for the Senegalese people in the face of fraud, corruption and the complicity of a partisan administration.

Discontent

How was it possible? In Senegal, discontent is general. The people have suffered greatly from the various structural adjustment policies, devaluation and so on. Many jobs have been lost in recent years and youth unemployment is endemic. The youth say, "We are born retired and we don't want to die retired". Radical rappers have made a big contribution to the alienation of the youth from the system.

Despite the government's technocratic discourse about growth (5%), the people

reply that growth cannot be eaten and that they need to eat, be cared for, and find work. Poverty has got very much worse, while in the midst of the electoral campaign PS deputies secretly increased the wages of members of parliament. The immorality of this kleptomaniac gangster regime served to radicalise youth, who broke with their traditional abstention and voted in large numbers. The PS, worn out by power, has experienced significant divisions and splits. Two former ministers, Djibo Ka and Moustapha Niasse, left the PS to form their own party and ran against Diouf in the presidential election. Their departure marked the culmination of a profound crisis in the recomposition of the political-bureaucratic bourgeoisie, which has held power since independence. There were no less than three presidential candidates originating from the ranks of the PS. The opposition, ranging from the left parties to the liberal Abdoulaye Wade, took advantage of the PS's dislocation to create a coalition to beat Diouf.

The unity of this coalition is founded around a programme for a government of transition of one year's duration. It envisages profound institutional reforms, in particular the elaboration of a new constitution which

will be adopted through a referendum, the suppression of the useless Senate, the dissolution of the national assembly and local councils and the organisation of new free and democratic legislative and local elections under a new electoral code and an independent national electoral commission. The programme envisages emergency social measures to help the poor and job-creating workshops for the youth but above all it prioritises good governance and the struggle against endemic corruption.

Fraud

The last parliamentary elections in 1998 saw 60% of the electorate not voting, essentially because of the multiplicity of lists, which favoured the PS's fraud. The Coalition Alternance 2000, which brings together the PDS led by Abdoulaye Wade, the left pole (And Jëf/PADS led by Landing Savané, the LD/MPT, the PIT, the MSU, the UDF/mboloo-mi) and three other small parties, essentially includes all the political parties which mobilised for democratic conquests in Senegal. Abdoulaye Wade was chosen to head the Coalition list because he was the most representative candidate.

Why did the left not present an independent candidature? For the parties of the Senegalese left, what was at stake in these elections was putting an end to 40 years of the PS party-state and unfreezing the existing system to throw up the bases of a gen-



Supporters of defeated President Diouf

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uine democracy. Given that a divided PS had experienced difficulty in crossing the 50% barrier at the last parliamentary elections, it seemed possible to beat this party through a broad Coalition.

The PS called the left's alliance with the liberal democrat Wade an alliance against nature. But it would be hard to imagine anything to the right of the PS in economic terms. This party has applied all the ultraliberal policies of the IMF and the World Bank, has privatised water, electricity, telephones and transport, has suppressed assistance to the peasants, lowered prices to producers and so on. The labour code has been revised to encourage greater flexibility, the rights of workers have been undermined and in the public service there has been a drastic slimming down. Thus the debate with the PS was not ideological, as it would pretend, but rather political.

Sopi, (the Wolof word for change), was a popular demand and everybody wanted to see Diouf go.

While the regime had planned every kind of electoral fraud, the opposition grouped inside the 'Front for the Regularity and Transparency of the Elections' succeeded in thwarting a good few of its plans thanks to its mobilisation of hundreds and thousands of people in unitary demonstrations. On February 27th, the day of the first round vote, Diouf was crushed in the all the main towns of Senegal and the anti-Diouf vote in the urban areas compensated for the vote in rural areas where fraud was the rule. The elections saw an extraordinary eruption of youth, who mobilised throughout the electoral campaign and assured the security of the voting offices against the professional frauds of the PS.

The two candidates who campaigned on religious themes, Ousseynou Fall and Cheikh Abdoulaye Dièye, only got 2% of the votes, confirming thus the desire of the citizens to separate politics from religion. The marabouts supporting Diouf were not followed by the faithful, marking a big rupture in the process of the alienation of the masses.

Several factors explain the unprecedented defeat of Diouf in the second round.

1. All the candidates who wanted change came together in the 2nd round inside a front called FAL (Front pour l'Alternance). Djibo Ka of the Union for Democratic Renewal finally decided to support Abdou Diouf despite previous declarations. This betrayal was very badly received by the people and URD militants who organised demonstrations in front of his house. The people showed they would no longer tolerate political traitors.

2. The people were sick of 40 years of the party-state and deeply desired change. This victory is first and foremost a victory for youth (50% of the population is under 20 and the voting age is 18). They mobilised very strongly and assured the security of the voting booths against the PS. Also women, who are more affected by poverty, are strongly engaged in the fight for change.

3. Some religious leaders who had advocated a vote for Diouf were disowned by the people. Others preferred to let the citizens choose freely. The consciousness of the people has been strengthened on the necessity of separating the religious from the political while respecting freedom of belief and worship.

4. Civil society organised through a number of NGOs in a front for control of the electoral roll. It was thus possible to correct the electoral roll and remove many dual inscriptions — the corrected electoral lists were then put at the disposition of the political parties, limiting electoral fraud.

5. The free radio stations did extraordinary work throughout the campaign, broadcasting objective news and giving the results on a quasi-instantaneous basis, thus blocking any possibility of the publication of false results.

Party atmosphere

Throughout the country there was a party atmosphere. The victory revived an immense hope and freed the Senegalese people who had felt themselves in prison.

★ Senegal

The composition of the future government of transition is still awaited and already there is much jockeying for position among the parties. The next parliamentary elections will be decisive for putting the PS in the dustbin of history but already the party is deeply divided and some members of its political bureau demanded a collective resignation of the PB after the defeat. The change of government is a catastrophe for the kleptocracy. After his election Wade demanded that all those who managed national companies and property should remain on the national territory and undertake to carry out an audit of the country and particularly the companies, which were the milk cows of the party-state.

Immense hope

The change has aroused immense hope and the task will be difficult, so great are the demands after 40 years of suffocation. The measures which will be taken by the government to meet the expectations of the people and the young in particular will be decisive as to their behaviour at the next parliamentary elections. The left, which has played an active part in the defeat of Diouf, will be in government and for a party like And Jef/PADS (in which Senegalese supporters of the Fourth International participate) this would be its first such experience since its creation. Its political future will depend on its capacity to respond to the aspirations of the people. One of the big challenges the new government will face will be the resolution of the crisis in Casamance (a region in the south of Senegal where a pro-independence movement has been in armed conflict with the central government since the 1980s). In voting totally for change the Casamance has shown that it did not want Diouf. Already President Wade has arranged to meet the leader of the MFDC (Mouvement des forces Démocratiques de Casamance).

But the PS is not dead even if it has been wounded. The perspective of the dissolution of the national Assembly, reform of the constitution, the next parliamentary elections will be the occasion of various political recompositions which cannot yet be predicted. In any case, the parties of the left pole will be confronted with the necessity of affirming their own identity while allowing no possibility to the PS to reconstitute itself in parliament through opportunist alliances. ★

Programme of the government of transition (extracts)

“AT the dawn of the 21st century, our country, Senegal, despite all the economic potential that it has enjoyed since decolonisation, is at the end of the queue of African countries. Since independence, the same political party has guided the destinies of our country; thus for 40 years we have been governed by the Socialist party, a Party-State which confuses the interests of the nation with its own.

The reign of Abdou Diouf is marked today by a deep crisis of confidence, a moral crisis in society and a crisis of authority. To these crises is added that of Casamance which will soon have lasted 20 years – every day soldiers fall on the field of honour, children are misled to die for a lost cause and there are numerous innocent victims. The regime of Abdou Diouf and the Socialist Party has killed hope among the young who can no longer live in unemployment. It has worsened insecurity in households, making more inroads every day on their meagre purchasing power, while rendering jobs more precarious. It has sold off our national enterprises.

Abdou Diouf and the Socialist Party have tarnished the image of our country at the African level and our relations with the neighbouring countries have worsened considerably. In committing the serious error of involving our national army in the Guinea-Bissau conflict in contempt of the lives of our soldiers and national opinion, the government has shown its incapacity to lead our country on the road of peace in the sub-region.

Our country is in crisis, in insecurity and in danger. We must save it to rebuild it together. Throwing out Abdou Diouf and the PS on February 27th 2000 will give birth to an immense hope, put the country back to work and give confidence to investors. Thus, we can, through working, attain a higher growth whose fruits would be shared equitably in the nation. At the end of this millennium, our parties, conscious of their responsibility to save the leaking canoe which is Senegal, have decided to unite their forces to defeat Abdou Diouf by supporting Abdoulaye Wade as their common candidate in February 2000.

In uniting our forces, we wanted to respond to the long-expressed wish by the overwhelming majority of our people to see the opposition unite to finally rid Senegal of the regime of Diouf and the Socialist Party. We have put the essential forward in stressing our convergence, our common struggle from the beginning for a new government and the economic and social development of our country. To get rid of Abdou Diouf and the PS, change the system, the men and the politics of regression, to build the bases of a new Senegal where life will be good for all, that is the meaning of our Coalition. Our victory in February 2000 will open a new era for Senegal.

The new government which will be formed after our victory in February 2000 will implement a short-term programme called the Programme of the Transitional Government. It will appeal for the mobilisation of all popular forces in a participative manner to reach the objectives set. It will act after the elections to assure a transition of one year to pass from the current dispersed presidential regime to a parliamentary regime, through a referendum which will be organised for the adoption of the new constitution and the organisation of new free, democratic and transparent general elections, of members of parliament and municipal, rural and regional councillors. Through this programme, the new government will give the people clear strong signs of our desire for a clean break with the methods of government of the country and of management of the national resources which have been those of the PS.

That means, among other things, that the transitional government's actions will be carried out in the name of transparency, rigorous management, a break with the politics and practices of the Party-State and permanent dialogue with the citizens through their representative associations, in the search for solutions to the problems of the country, the active involvement of these latter in the implementation of solutions, of unfailing respect for republican principles and the norms of the state of law. It will seek to create a political, economic and social climate capable of restoring confidence to the people, and hence to mobilise them and put them more effectively to work, through making them understand the interest that they all have in acting in this way.” ★

Canada and Quebec: stalemate to checkmate?

THE swift passage through the Canadian parliament of the 'Clarity Bill' is the latest manifestation of a depressing political evolution in the country. The Clarity Bill seeks to knock down the key pillars of the 1970s compromise between Ottawa and Quebec.

RAGHU KRISHNAN*

IT overturns the assumption that Ottawa is politically and legally obliged to accept the outcome of the democratic process in Quebec, and to negotiate with Quebec on that basis. In addition to attacking the post-War Quebec national project, the ruling Liberal Party have also succeeded in destroying the hope the post-War Canadian national project once inspired.

Following the Second World War, Canada's fundamental political projects began to undergo a slow process of disintegration and recomposition. The tremendous weakening of British influence and the emergence of a "Keynesian" social consensus — with a greatly enhanced role for an interventionist and redistributive state — fed the emergence of two distinct national projects in the country. The first was a "Canadian" one; the second "Québécois".

Opressive features

Both national projects were capitalist-imperialist in nature and had oppressive features, particularly with respect to Native peoples. But in terms of wealth and state power, the Canadian project was unquestionably the dominant one of the two. This meant that, from the start, the Canadian national project had the greater set of specific responsibilities. Unfortunately, it has patently failed to live up to these responsibilities. Tension between the two new national projects was inevitable, but in theory the relatively progressive "Keynesian" socio-economic order and fluid political and ideological environment could have enabled the two to

come to some accommodation. The great tragedy of the last 40 years — for it was Quebec's Quiet Revolution in 1960 that blew open the process and opened up a number of possibilities — is that no such arrangement was worked out.

There are many reasons for this, but the main responsibility lies with the specific choices made in Ottawa in the late 1960s by the political representatives of the Canadian national project, chief among them the Liberals under Pierre Trudeau. The emerging Canadian national project would deny the existence of another nation and another legitimate and modern national project within Canadian territory. Trudeau held to this view, even though the emerging national consensus in Quebec did not negate the existence of the Canadian nation. In part, this was linked to the Canadian elite's fear of the more explosive political and social dynamics at work in Quebec — where the national project was also a battlefield between a subversive and militant working-class and youth movement, on the one hand and a rather weak Québécois "national bourgeoisie" on the other.

Unhappy story

The unhappy story of these 40 years can be divided into two parts: the period from 1960 until 1982; and the period from 1982 until the present time. From the beginnings of the Quiet Revolution in 1960 until the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982, a kind of working compromise or stalemate was reached between the two national projects. There

were a number of reasons for this. Chief among them were the strength and dynamism of the Quebec national project, certain progressive socio-economic and "utopian" features of Trudeau's Canadian project (such as official bilingualism and multiculturalism), as well as the relative weakness of both national projects, especially in relation to the American behemoth to the south.

During much of this time, commanding majorities of Trudeau Liberals were consistently returned to Ottawa by Quebecers, at the same time as Parti Québécois governments were voted into office in Quebec City.

Turning point

The great turning point was the 1982 repatriation of the Constitution against Quebec's wishes. This constituted a major offensive by Ottawa to break the stalemate with Quebec. The victory of the "no" side in the 1980 referendum on sovereignty-association had convinced Ottawa that the time was ripe to go on the offensive. The repatriation signalled a major step forward in the emergence of a "liberal imperialist" Canadian national project. In one fell swoop, the Liberals would attempt to negate the multinational character of the country and entrench an American approach to the relationship between individual and group rights, the political process and the law. This proved the undoing of the Trudeau Liberals.

As a result of the Charter, the country had become that much more "ungovernable", precisely at a time when capitalist and state elites were demanding radical counter-reforms of the kind being implemented by Thatcher and Reagan. As a result, the Liberals were roundly defeated in the 1984 elections, largely due to the collapse of support in Quebec. The Tories under Brian Mulroney came to power in alliance with a section of Quebec sovereignists and nationalists. In hindsight, the Mulroney Tory years (1984-1993) can be seen as a bumpy and incomplete transition from the "Keynesian" or "Welfare State" order to the new "leaner and meaner" order of neo-liberal globalization. It was, among other things, the alliance with sovereignists and nationalists in Quebec that held the Tories back. But that same alliance also ultimately proved their undoing.

When the Tories and the Canadian



Canadian PM Jean Chrétien and Finance Minister Paul Martin

political community generally (the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords) failed to right the wrongs of the 1982 unilateral repatriation, the Quebec Tory MPs broke away to form the Bloc Québécois. Coupled with the rise of Reform in the West, this defection in Quebec led the federal Tories to their worst defeat ever — in the 1993 elections, which brought the current batch of Chrétien-Martin Liberals to power.

The balance sheet of the Open Letter Campaign (an initiative based around an Open Letter against the Clarity Bill which attracted widespread support from academics, trade unionists, feminists and socialists) is mixed.

Impressive network

The campaign has been defeated on the most important question — the adoption of the Clarity Bill. But it was able to establish an impressive network of contacts and organize a handful of relatively successful events. This shows that there is indeed a current of opinion whose ideas and energies can and should be mobilized now and into the future. The Clarity Bill has become law because for the time being, there is very little political space outside Quebec for those who want Canada's laws, institutions and identity to reflect the country's multinational reality. We are for the most part hostages of the broader political situation, and of course of developments in Quebec and among First Nations.

One of the central reasons underlying the failure of the Campaign is the wider situation within the English-speaking Left. There is clearly a generational divide around the matter of Canada's national questions. One weakness of the campaign was its inability to bring many young activists on board, even though the country

is meant to be experiencing a youth and student radicalization of sorts. Most of those involved in the Campaign were in their 40s and 50s. Like much of our increasingly "Americanized" English-speaking Canada, the sights of today's young activists are set southwards — to Seattle, Washington and New York.

This is in large part a natural and encouraging response to the emergence of a broad and creative movement against neo-liberalism south of the border. But we simply cannot neglect the work of rebuilding links between radical and progressive youth milieux in Canada and Quebec. Recent youth protests in Quebec have peaked the attention of radicals in the rest of Canada, and this bodes well for the future.

A specific strategic failing of the Campaign was its inability to make any inroads into that section of left-liberal opinion which has been rethinking its approach to Quebec since the 1995 referendum and the neo-liberal transformation of the federal Liberals. Many in this current of opinion have realized that little or nothing remains of the tacit agreement between themselves and the Trudeau-era Liberals.

In exchange for a strong centralized government committed to social programs, regional redistribution and a foreign policy independent of the Americans, this current was willing to back and even champion Ottawa's pitched-battle approach to Quebec sovereignty.

For many, this deal is dead and cannot be resuscitated. If in future we can be brought together around this and other questions, we would have an ally with considerable strength and depth right across the country. Here again, for this to happen

we are largely dependent on a number of factors beyond our control — in particular, the crisis in the NDP, the rise of the hard-Right Canadian Alliance and the state of siege mentality this is sure to create.

There is also reason for concern when so few non-whites and immigrants express support or interest in a campaign of this sort, especially since they are disproportionately involved in a number of other progressive campaigns, especially in the Toronto area where most of them live.

The real failing of the Campaign, however, was its inability to attract support from any First Nations individuals or organization, although the Campaign was quite right to forge ahead nonetheless. Still, Ottawa now holds most of the cards in Canada's complex national-question poker game. It will take more than the goodwill of a handful of people from the pan-Canadian Left to reshuffle the deck.

Developments to watch

There are two symmetrical sets of developments on the political Left in Quebec and Canada worth watching. In Quebec, the Rassemblement pour une alternative politique (RAP) is preparing to launch a new Left-sovereignist political organization in the Fall. The RAP is made up of left-labour forces, breakaway elements from the left-wing of the Parti Québécois, and a number of small socialist and activist groups.

Although nowhere near as far along in the game, in English-speaking Canada some momentum is building around former Canadian Auto Worker (CAW) leader Sam Gindin's proposal for a "structured political movement" of the Left. A conference is set for the Fall in Toronto to see what can be done by those who have expressed interest in the project thus far.

Even moderate success for both, with a clear orientation to work together into the longer term, would breathe some life into all our talk of Canada-Quebec-First Nations solidarity, accelerating some of the developments over which we have thus far been able to have little influence. It would also be a big boost for the pan-Canadian Left in the fight against neo-liberalism and capitalism — against NAFTA and the FTAA, towards a multinational Canada within a democratic-socialist federation of the peoples of the Americas. ★

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THE answers to those questions need to be placed within the historical framework of Australian politics in this vast country which began its "modern" existence as a penal colony and developed later as a colonial settler state of "Mother England" in 1788. Ever since federation in 1901, Australia has effectively been a two-party state. Government has either been in the hands of coalitions of conservative parties, or, less frequently, in those of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The conservative coalition of the Liberal and National parties form the federal government today. Smaller parties, including those of the Left, have effectively been frozen out of the parliamentary political process. In fact there has only ever been one parliamentarian from a party to the left of the ALP; Fred Paterson from the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), who sat in the Queensland state parliament in the 1940s. Although the country's trade union movement largely remains affiliated to the ALP, in recent years that party has earned the sobriquet of "Alternative Liberal Party" and jettisoned its socialist rhetoric.

Peculiar system

The explanation for the domination of "official" politics by the ALP and the Conservatives lies at least in part in the peculiar voting system for the House of Representatives. Known as "Preferential Voting" (PV) it has nothing in common with the proportional representation systems common in Europe and ensures the dominance of the large parties. Smaller parties have been known to win up to one million votes, yet fail to capture even one House of Reps seat. The voting system for the Senate is on the basis of proportional representation, but with individual states as the electorates and with the same number of senators regardless of the wide differences in population. This has favoured the smaller, more conservative states, but it has also allowed some representation to parties such as the Greens.

The Australian working class has a history of industrial militancy second to none. Melbourne stonemasons won the 8 hour day in the 1850s and by 1920 the miners at Broken Hill had won a 35 hour week. The maritime workers have an exemplary record of internationalism, including taking industrial action to prevent steel being shipped to Japan in the 1930s in solidarity with the people of China; bans on all

A contradictory history

WHAT future is there for the forces of the Left in Australia? What are the major parties on the left and what kinds of progressive social movements have existed here?

JOHN TULLY*

Dutch shipping during the Indonesian independence struggle; and the refusal to handle any cargo or sail any ships for the imperialist war effort in Vietnam. Australia was also the home of what was perhaps the most radical left wing union the world has yet seen. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the NSW branch of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF), under the leadership of a left current in the CPA, embarked on a startling programme of militant, democratic and socially and environmentally progressive unionism. And nothing was done without the express consent of the members. They were smashed by the combined forces of the state, the employers, and a conservative and ultra-Stalinist group within the union, but not before they had set the standards for what a union should be.

The union was a pacesetter in winning better wages and conditions in what had been a dangerous and ill-paid industry. Flying pickets, mass picketing and construction site occupations mushroomed in an industry previously used to right wing unionism led by gangsters. The union also invented the political term "Green" (which was later taken back to Europe by Petra Kelly). The union placed scores of "green bans" on the demolition and redevelopment of parks, historical sites, working class residential areas and places of environmental significance. Significantly, this was not done by bureaucratic decree. Residents had to first appeal to the union officials and they would then put the matter to a vote of the union membership to decide. In one instance in 1970, workers building an extension to a student hall of residence went on strike to force the university authorities to re-instate a student who had been expelled for being gay. The union was also prominent in supporting the

upsurge of the Aboriginal people and favoured the hiring of women in a traditionally male area of work.

Darker side

Yet the history of the Australian workers' movement has a darker side. Right back into the 19th century, the "White Australia Policy" was a central plank of the policies of many unions and of the ALP. Indeed some unions even denied membership to Chinese and "coloureds", claiming that they were fighting to prevent white workers wages from being undermined by "cheap" foreign labour. In some cases these racist restrictions were not removed until the 1960s and it was not until that decade that white ranchers were prevented from paying their Aboriginal stockmen in tea, flour and sugar.

Australia has undergone vast demographic and economic changes since 1945, when it emerged from World War II as an under-industrialised provider of raw materials for a weakened Britain that was turning elsewhere for its supplies. In 1945 (with the exception of the Aborigines, who were "unseen and unheard"), Australia had a very homogeneous, "Anglo-Celtic" population. It is now perhaps the most multicultural country on earth, with millions of descendants of immigrants from around the world. This was largely inadvertent, and stemmed from the need for labour for growing industry from the 1950s. Anti-communism was strong, in part because of the strong influence of the Catholic Church, but this was reinforced by revelations of the brutalities of Stalinism.

In 1945 the CPA had over 50,000 members and many times that number of sympathisers and members of party "fronts". It dominated the Australian

★ Australia

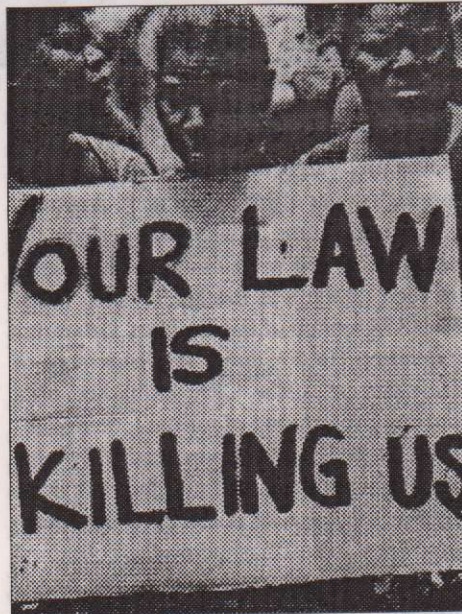
Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) through its control of a number of the largest and most powerful unions. Formed in the early 1920s by a fusion of a number of socialist currents, it was a relatively democratic and open organisation before it was “bolshevised” by a Young Guard of keen young Stalinists. All dissident elements, including Trotskyists, had been expelled by the early 1930s, and the party thereafter was 100% loyal to Stalin. Despite this, the party did make headway in the later 1930s, capturing control of a number of major unions and extending its support via a network of front organisations, including the Unemployed Workers Movement and the Movement Against War and Fascism. Yet the great energy and drive of its cadres could not prevent the debilitating effects of Stalinism on the party. After the high tide of 1945, the membership shrank and the party lost control of a number of key industrial unions to Catholic Actionists and other right wingers, who could point to the undemocratic methods of the party, which rigged union ballots and intimidated opponents. The CPA supported the invasion of Hungary by the USSR in 1956, accelerating the party’s decline.

Showdown

Earlier, in 1949, the party had engineered a showdown with the ALP federal government via the coal miners’ union (by then under CPA control). Because of what was basically an unwinnable sectarian adventure, the coal miners were isolated from the broader labour movement and defeated. The long post-war boom, which saw Australian workers’ living standards rise to almost the highest in the world, further reduced the attractiveness of the party’s message and by the 1960s the party had shrunk to a few thousand members. The party split along the lines of the Sino-Soviet rift in 1963, with a minority of members leaving to found the Maoist CPA-ML (which still exists as a dwindling rump today). After this, a more independent-minded group of cadres led by Laurie Aarons gained control of the party and went so far as to condemn the Warsaw Pact’s 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. This caused the case-hardened old Stalinists to split away to form a number of splinter groups, including the Association of Communist Unity and, eventually, the Socialist Party of Australia.

These events coincided, however, with

a vast wave of radicalisation which spread around the world, including Australia. The Conservative government of the time, led by “Pig Iron Bob” Menzies, committed the country to support for the US in Vietnam and introduced conscription to supply the necessary troops. Opposition to the war gained momentum, with many hundreds of thousands of people marching in the streets, striking and occupying buildings, and hundreds, perhaps thousands of young men deliberately refusing to even register for the conscription ballot. Eventually a



An Aborigine protest

majority of the population opposed the war and in 1972 the ALP was voted into federal government for the first time in 23 years. The CPA was able to capitalise on this mass wave of radicalisation, and was itself influenced by it, as we have seen earlier with the Builders Labourers Federation in NSW. Yet it was outflanked on the left by the growth of a number of far-left organisations, including the Socialist Youth Alliance/Socialist Workers’ League, which later became the Socialist Workers’ Party and then the Democratic Socialist Party. In hindsight it is clear that there was room for much more cooperation between the CPA and the new Trotskyist formations. Clearly, the NSW BLF under CPA-leadership was an amazingly radical union, way ahead of its time, and Jack Munday and the other BLF leaders were no Stalinists. Sadly, the old hostilities remained and the old divisions were maintained. As the wave of radicalisation ebbed, so did the party’s membership and the party retreated from its more left wing positions.

In 1983 the ALP was again voted into

office. The right-wing party leader, Bob Hawke, believed that the ALP government of the early 1970s had been defeated because it was too radical. He was determined not to repeat its “mistakes” and presided over 12 years of relentlessly pro-capitalist ALP government. Under a series of “accords” between the government, business and the ALP-dominated trade unions, wages were effectively frozen and the rank and file were increasingly excluded from decision making in their unions. Whereas Gough Whitlam’s ALP government (1972-75) had been a government of reform, conscious of the need to raise real incomes and the “social wage”, under Hawke real wages plummeted and the incomes of the rich and super-rich grew by leaps and bounds. In 1983 the top ten richest families were worth A\$1,255 million. In 1998 they were worth A\$15,000 million. Party treasurer Paul Keating might have believed his own rhetoric about Australia being an “egalitarian society”, but it is unlikely that magnate Kerry Packer was fooled. His wealth grew over the same period from A\$100 million to A\$5,200 million and is now around A\$6,500 million and rising rapidly. As for wages, they made up 63.5 per cent of GDP in 1974-75 and only 51.1 per cent in 1988-89.

Massive transfer

This massive transfer of wealth to the rich and super rich was accompanied by widespread privatisation of state assets, including banks and airlines. Even the so-called “Left” in the party has abandoned any vision of redistribution of wealth and socialism. According to party “theoretician” Mark Latham, public sector deregulation and winding back state intervention was a good thing. Latham claims that the structural inequalities derived from class are no longer a problem. We should understand that society is divided between the “information-rich” and the “information-poor” and strive for “the socialisation of knowledge” rather than the public ownership of the means of production, he says.

And this despite all the evidence that Australia is one of the most unequal, class-ridden societies in the developed world. Trade unions which stood against the “accords” were marginalised and even smashed, as happened to the Pilots Federation when it placed overtime bans in support of a wage claim outside of accord

guidelines.

Similarly, the BLF was outlawed and crushed by an alliance of employers, ALP governments and rival unions. Understandably, union membership fell dramatically over the 13 years of federal ALP government, so that by the early 1990s less than 30% of the workforce was unionised. Although it is quite possible that the ALP will win the next federal elections (which are due at the latest in two years time), there is no evidence to suggest that the rightward drift of the party has been arrested. The party will find itself in office by default, given the almost-unbelievably reactionary nature of the current Conservative coalition government.

The ALP was elected to the state government of Victoria last year and although it has carried out some reforms, it sided with the owners of the state's privatised electricity industry against the workers. The government invoked essential services legislation passed by its conservative predecessors to threaten the workers with massive individual fines and sequestration of their union's assets if they did not resume work. Yet the industrial action was provoked by the company as part of its drive to introduce widespread casual labour in the industry, and even a government-appointed mediator slammed the bosses for their refusal to negotiate in good faith. The same government recently moved to open up new areas of Australia's rapidly diminishing rain forest to logging. Further, it went back on previous policy and has decided to leave a dangerous toxic chemical dump in the middle of Melbourne's mainly working class western suburbs.

Rightwards drift

It is an indication of the rightwards drift of the Communist Party of Australia that it had, through some still influential union officials, supported and even drafted the accords implemented by the Hawke ALP government! By 1991 the party was generally regarded as being irrelevant and much of its membership — and certainly its leadership — had given up on any vision of socialism (a state of affairs which was of course accelerated by the collapse of the Soviet Union).

Although it made half-hearted attempts to form a "new left party", it voted to dissolve itself in 1991 and many of its cadres simply dropped out of political activity or

drifted into the ALP.

The field was thus left open to the far left, so the Stalinist rump parties, but none of them has been able to fill the vacuum left by the implosion of the CPA. Perhaps the largest left party is the Democratic Socialist Party, which was the Australian affiliate of the Fourth International until 1985. The DSP, however, has never been able to gain serious influence in the trade unions and it is regarded with suspicion by many of the activists in the progressive mass movements as a result of its predatory methods of operation and its less than democratic internal style. Many of its members are young and dedicated, and in *Green Left Weekly*, it has a fairly lively newspaper, but it has a high membership turnover and with around 300 members it is scarcely larger than it was 20 years ago. Perhaps the DSP's largest rival is the International Socialist Organisation, with around 150 members nationally. The ISO has had a number of splits in recent years and is considerably weaker as a result. The other left organisations (including the Stalinist rumps) are much smaller. One of them is the Socialist Party, which is affiliated to the Committee for a Workers International and was until recently called the Militant Socialist Organisation.

Divided left

The Australian left, therefore, seems smaller and more divided than it has ever been. Part of this, as elsewhere in the world, stems from the effects of the breakup of "really existing socialism" in the Soviet bloc, and the widespread perception that socialism is an out-of-date dogma that can never work.

And yet there are some optimistic signs too. Union membership might have declined, along with wages and living standards, but despite the most ferocious attacks by neo-liberal governments, the Australian working class has not been given the knock-out blow that the conservatives would like.

In 1998 the federal government conspired with employers and the army to bring in scab labour and lock out a large part of the country's dockers, or "wharfies" as they're known here. The aim was to inflict a historic defeat on what has always been a cornerstone of the militant workers movement. Hundreds of thousands of people rallied to the union and the bosses and the government lost, in that the union

remained intact.

The MUA has traditionally been a left by the amalgamation of a number of smaller unions, most importantly the Waterside Workers' Federation and the Seamen's Union, both of which had been bastions of the Communist Party; indeed the WWF was moulded out of a series of weak provincial unions into a powerful national union by the CPA's legendary "Big Jim" Healy in the 1930s and 40s.

After the CPA split over the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, many of the union's officials went with the new pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia (SPA) and this current maintains a strong influence in the union today. The MUA and its predecessors have always been willing to come to the assistance of other workers in struggle; whether those workers were Australian or from overseas. This tradition of solidarity paid off in 1998 and huge numbers of workers turned out to repay their debts and support the MUA. This outpouring of support was profoundly moving and contradicts those pessimists who insist that working class solidarity is a thing of the past. Unionists overseas remembered their support and ensured that the few ships loaded by scab labour could not dock or discharge their cargoes.

Ultra-lefts

Although the bosses and the government obtained a series of court injunctions barring pickets from entering a cordon sanitaire of 250 metres around the docks, these measures were ignored and the ports were sealed up behind barricades of welded railway lines. Although a very small minority of ultra-lefts spent their time sniping at the unions leadership during the dispute, the revolutionary left by and large stood shoulder to shoulder with the wharfies on the picket lines, organised meetings and collections, and publicised the MUA's case. What is less edifying was the settlement of the dispute, which saw the wharfies give away pay and conditions.

This led to rifts within the union; basically between Stalinists organised in MUSAA (Maritime Union Socialist Activities Alliance) and a militant rank-and-file opposition. The opposition managed to gain 48% of the vote in the 1999 MUA elections and might indeed gain a majority the next time round.

State elections last year in NSW and Victoria saw left wing parties pick up sig-

★ Australia / Pakistan

nificant votes. The Progressive Labour Party (PLP, a broad left party) won 54,000 votes in the NSW upper house elections and some Green MPs were elected on its preferences.

Left pact

Significantly, the left parties and the Greens had agreed for the first time not to stand against each other and thus split the left vote. The PLP also had a formal electoral alliance with the Greens, which meant that each party would campaign for the others candidates. The PLP was founded at a conference in Newcastle in November 1996.

It is the only federally-registered left-wing party in the country and has a membership of around 1,000 and branches in most states. It has a heterogeneous membership, with some members from the old CPA, others from the left of the ALP, and others from a number of Trotskyist currents. (Some members have dual membership with other left wing parties.)

The stated aim of the party is to build a broad organisation in which Social Democrats as well as Marxists can operate and the immediate aim is to challenge the electoral supremacy of the ALP. The party programme is explicitly socialist, although the exact nature of what this means is a compromise between the left and right wings of the party. So, just over three years since the party was founded, how successful has it been?

Unfortunately it is too soon to say! Electorally the party has performed well whenever it has stood candidates, and has almost always retained its deposit and has sometimes had its expenses publicly funded. Yet the party has been riven by at times acrimonious factional disputes almost since its inception, and these might yet still tear the organisation apart.

Early this year, a number of party members came together to organise the Socialist Democracy Caucus, which aims to broaden party democracy and to reaffirm the left wing policies which the right wishes to dilute — the test of the caucus's strength will come at this year's national conference, in June in Sydney. Only then can we tell whether a promising political venture will end up going in the same direction as the Socialist Labour Party in Britain. ★

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Pakistan socialists hold first congress

THE Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) held its first congress in Lahore, April 15th-18th, taking advantage of the relative lull in the repressive conditions under the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf. As a matter of fact, the congress was held in the premises of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, a progressive democratic organisation which had kindly let its modern meeting hall to the LPP for a token rent.

SALAH JABER

THE organisation of the congress was quite impressive: from the dossiers and badges that were distributed to the participants, to the manner in which the proceedings were conducted, to the food. The theatre where the congress took place was packed with some 200 persons (including some children brought by their parents). The elected or designated delegates were 135, representing an organisation of roughly two thousand members (with varying degrees of involvement) spread across the whole territory of Pakistan, with most of them based in the two most populous provinces of Punjab and Sindh. The majority of the delegates were middle-aged male workers or trade-unionists.

On the one hand, this bore witness to the very important roots that the LPP holds in the Pakistani trade-union movement, particularly among railway workers. Many delegates were senior trade-union officers. On the other hand, it pointed to some weakness in the recruitment of youth, although a few young delegates were quite energetic. And above all, to a major weakness in respect to the participation of women. This is hardly a surprise in a country like Pakistan where the downtrodden condition of women common to the whole of the South Asian subcontinent is compounded by the prevalence of Islam in both its traditional and militant fundamentalist forms. The proportion of women among the delegates was quite low, and only one of them took part — only once — in the general political discussions during the four congress days. This brave woman comrade was interrupted repeatedly and

fought back remarkably. The party leadership tried to make up for the low proportion of women by seating a woman comrade among the three members of the presiding committee. But it was clear that much remained to be done on this level, and — although the LPP leadership and some of the party members are undoubtedly committed to improve their record on this issue — this will require very radical and energetic measures.

The present outlook of the party congress is a truthful indication of the nature of the process that led to its creation. The LPP is a very recent organisation indeed: five years ago, its first nucleus included less than ten militants! These comrades were involved with the Trotskyist Committee for a Workers International (CWI) dominated by the British Militant tendency (now the Socialist Party). Some of them had formerly practised "entryism" (the party-building tactic that used to be the brand mark of the Militant tendency) in Benazir Bhutto's bourgeois populist Pakistan People's Party.

They came out of this experience opting for a broad regroupment of radical working-class militants, at the very time when the Militant current in Britain was splitting around the issue of the alternative to entryism in this post-Stalinist era of world history. The small nucleus of LPP founders, led by comrade Farooq Tariq, managed very successfully to regroup a wide array of revolutionary militants, many of them coming from pro-Moscow or pro-Beijing traditions. Those comrades had been disillusioned by the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites, and the

political evolution of China, but remained committed nevertheless to radical class-struggle politics. Such seasoned cadres were able to attract a number of newer militants among the very large layers that are radicalized every day by the appalling conditions under which the overwhelming majority of the Pakistani population live. The bulk of this social resentment is usually channelled and turned in a reactionary direction by the very many fundamentalist groups active in Pakistan. This is all the more true in that the radical left has been particularly weak and inefficient in this country for some decades.

Vacuum on left

The challenge for the LPP is to successfully fill this vacuum on the left. The heterogeneous character of the LPP membership, stemming from the very nature of its formation as a regroupment, was reflected in the debates during the congress. The party leadership did nothing to hide any differences or prevent any discussion from taking place: in that respect, the LPP congress was a lively proof of the deeply democratic character of the party, including the absence of any sort of leader cult in its ranks. The significant number of seasoned cadres among the delegates all behaved as equals, committed to building a "common home" for Pakistani socialist fighters. Thus two debates on the second day of the congress were particularly heated: the debate on revolutionary strategy (the theory of permanent revolution) and the debate on the national question in Pakistan. On the first issue, there are still some tensions in the party between a few militants originating from the Trotskyist CWI and others coming from pro-Moscow or pro-Beijing origins and labelled by the first as "Stalinists". The use of such a label is all the more regrettable in that it should be obvious that no real "Stalinist" would ever adhere to a party like the LPP.

Unquestionably, the political character of the party, as reflected in its weekly *Mazdoor Jeddohud* ("Workers Struggle"), is very clearly revolutionary Marxist. The LPP holds the view that there can be no thorough implementation of the national and democratic tasks in Pakistan, or for that matter any dependent country, under a bourgeois leadership, however progressive it might be. The only road to such an implementation is a revolution of the toiling masses led by the working-class, liber-

ating the country from the dictatorship of world capitalism and its national relays. As Farooq Tariq explained in his intervention on this topic, the key issue is that the LPP unanimously adheres to this strategic conception: whether one calls it "permanent revolution" or not is quite a secondary issue of a historical character. Only sectarians can put a dispute on labels, or on history (the pre-1917 Lenin versus Trotsky type of debate) above the real thing: what strategic view does the party hold for the struggle in Pakistan? The answer to this crucial question was very clearly given on the above line, without being challenged by any comrade.

The discussion on the national question in Pakistan was also heated, in particular on the status of the Muhajir community in Sindh. The fact is that the national question in general is one of the most complex and thorny questions in Marxist theory and politics. The British Militant tendency had a particularly bad record on this issue, whereas the Stalinist tradition on the same issue is certainly no better. There was thus an attempt to deal with this question during the congress with ossified categories and rigid schemas (like the famously inadequate 1913 definition by Stalin) which certainly are no help for a country with such a complex national and ethnic fabric as Pakistan. It is to be hoped that the party will be able to overcome any potential divisions on such an issue which might easily become explosive. The only possible way in which this can be done is to stick to the same flexible and deeply democratic approach that Lenin developed on the national question in the Russian empire, where this issue was still more complex than in Pakistan.

Consensus

Aside from these contentious issues, the debates were relatively serene and built on consensus, a consensus reflected in the main programmatic document submitted to the congress. The discussion on Islamic fundamentalism on the first day showed the deep hatred that progressive Pakistani militants understandably hold for a current which plays an utterly reactionary role in local politics. There was however some exaggeration in the assimilation of Islamic fundamentalism to Fascism, which was corrected during the discussion into the statement that there are some features common to the two currents — a state-

ment which leaves open the assessment of the width of differences between them in each concrete case. Ultimately, tactics with regard to Islamic fundamentalist groups should be built on the concrete analysis of every concrete situation, without any illusions as to the socially reactionary character of this tradition as a whole.

The organisational discussion on the fourth and last day of the congress was also consensual: the party is considering setting up a two-tier organisation. This is a sound idea in a country with such a high level of illiteracy, if one is to preserve a democratic functioning of the network of party cadres (the leading tier). The party journal is presently the only left-wing weekly in Pakistan, and is frequently used and referred to in the national press and in the universities. Its circulation of up to 3,000 still needs to be improved (a motion was adopted banning commercial advertisement from the weekly, in light of the incongruous publishing of a "sexist" ad for a "beauty" product.) The congress was also attended by several militants from other organisations and countries. A particularly warm reception was given to the representatives of the Afghan Labour Revolutionary Organisation.

The third congress day was devoted to a discussion on the issue of international revolutionary currents: the LPP is firmly dedicated to the principle of a revolutionary international organisation, and it is with that in mind that the party leadership had invited the representatives of international currents to present their views. The floor was given on this issue to the Fourth International; to two tendencies originating from a breakaway faction from the FI in 1979, usually referred to as "Morenist": the International Workers League (LIT) and the International Workers Union (UIT, a split from the LIT); to the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) of Australia, which disaffiliated from the FI in 1985; and to German militants who had recently broken away from the CWI. Speaking in the name of the FI, this reporter assured the LPP comrades that the Fourth International, which shares the same open conception of party building upon which the LPP has been founded, will remain committed to an active solidarity with the Pakistani comrades — whatever option they eventually take with regard to their international affiliation when the party is in a position to decide on this matter. ★

Philippine Army launch all-out war in Mindanao

ON April 29th, 2000 the Philippine Armed Forces (AFP) launched an all-out offensive against the forces of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on the southern island of Mindanao. The following report on the escalation of hostilities has been compiled from information provided by supporters of the Revolutionary Workers' Party of the Philippines (RPMP) based in Mindanao.

TRENDS indicate that there will be no let up with the military confrontations between the AFP and the MILF. On April 30th the MILF unilaterally declared an indefinite postponement of its peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), led by President Joseph Estrada.

The previous day, elite AFP troops had launched attacks on the MILF's main camp, Camp Abubakar. In response, the Jihad Revolutionary Command of the MILF issued the activation and operationalization of its Oplan Zero Hour, meaning an all-out military offensive against the Philippine Government, within and even outside of Mindanao.

On the other hand, the GRP-AFP also had their Oplan Phoenix, a military operational plan intended to wipe out the MILF militarily through all out war.

Given the macho image of President Estrada it will be very unlikely that he will call off the offensives, since this would also create widespread demoralization in the ranks of the AFP.

The MILF had already said that once the government attacked their mother camp they would launch synchronized all out war against the armed forces. On May 1st at midnight, two towns in Zamboanga del Sur were bombed, allegedly by the MILF.

The following night, the MILF attacked one of the towns in south Cotabato where the Moro rebel armed groups held the mayor and councillors and two towns in Sultan Kudarat province.

The Philippine National Police and the

Philippine Army have both declared triple red alert in the cities and towns of Mindanao.

Meanwhile, around 38,000 citizen forces geographical units and thousands of Christian Liberation Army (CLA) armed vigilantes, organized by local government and the AFP, are being used to stage attacks on the different MILF stronghold communities. The AFP has distributed 100 M14 long arms in each town in Mindanao to arm the civilians against the MILF and other revolutionary forces.

There is a strong possibility of escalation of the war in Mindanao due to the MILF's close connections to the international Islamic movement. One should not underestimate the reactions and interventions of the Islamic countries, since Hashim Salamat, the Chairman of the MILF, is one of the leaders of the International Islamic Brotherhood Movement and camp Abubakar is considered as the Islamic center of Asia.

Much attention has been given to the activities of the extremist Islamic fundamentalist group "Al Harakatâ Al Islamiya" or as they are notoriously known, the Abu Sayaff.

The MILF leadership has publicly denied any relationship with the group. The Abu Sayaff's aim is the establishment of an Islamic State in Mindanao and the elimination if necessary of all Christians and their vestiges in Mindanao.

This group started as a motley gang of individuals sharing extremist Islamic ideals in early 1993. They gained notoriety through a terror campaign of kidnappings, assassinations and bombings targeting primarily Christian religious missionaries and even ordinary civilians.

Sowing terror

Their attack in Ipil, a dominantly Christian town in Zamboanga del Norte, where they practically razed the whole town to the ground, proved the extent of damage and capacity to sow terror that this group can inflict. Of late, the group has resumed its activities by kidnapping 30 individuals in the island of Basilan, including more than 20 foreigners, to pressure the government.

Supporters of the RPMP have previously exposed the possibility of the government being behind the creation of this group, pointing out five agents of the AFP inside the leadership of the Abu Sayyaf, one of whom became its operations chief.

The RPMP continues to argue that the Abu Sayyaf group exists to muddle the



ALAB-KATIPUNAN

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PEACE FOR MINDANAO!**STOP THE WAR, RESOLVE THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT.**

ALL-OUT war against the Moro people is what the government actually does in its offensive against the MILF. And it is not only the Moro people who suffer but the whole population of Mindanao. On latest count, the number of civilians forced to evacuate their homes has reached 500,000, and the amount of damages to properties has been estimated to reach Php500 million as the fighting continues and becomes more intense between the MILF and the AFP forces (...)

War is not the solution !

Not more than a month ago, President Estrada openly declared an all-out war against the MILF during his high-profile visit to Kauswagan, Lanao Norte. He gave a June 30 deadline to the on-going peace talks, which was seen as a sign of his insincerity to continue with the negotiations. This posturing of the President was a go-signal for militarists, anti-Moro and other elements within the government who have long opposed a peaceful settlement to grab the control of the situation in Mindanao. The conflicts and problems in Mindanao are complex and arduous. One needs to study and fully understand the culture, traditions, politics, life and interests of its people. The Mindanaoans are highly diverse (Moro, lumad and Christians), but each should be accounted for. Hence, in the quest for peace, one needs to persevere and be highly committed. The problem will never be solved by macho posturings, sabre-rattling and, most definitely, never by war (...)

The Problems of Mindanao

Like all the oppressed peoples all over the country, the people of Mindanao have long been submerged in the pits of poverty and oppression. To break free from this deprivation, the Moro people have been waging their struggle for the right to self-determination, a legitimate right that should be fully recognized and promoted. The indigenous people, the Lumad, must in turn be given their right to own their ancestral lands, a sacred right that they have long struggled for. These make up the problems of Mindanao made more complex by the intervention of elements with vested interest — the big landlords and the multinational companies which have forcibly occupied lands in Mindanao and ravaged the ancestral domain of the Moro and Lumad, and destroyed their natural environment. And now, this military solution that the Erap government has affirmed to protect these vested interests will have only contributed to the web of problems in Mindanao (...)

Return to the negotiations!**Demolish the barriers to the road to Peace!**

War claims no victors, only victims. In history, nobody has gained from the destructiveness and inhumanity of war but the profit-hungry capitalists who manufacture war weapons. It is such an irony that in the name of the people war is waged while the first and most tormented victims are the people themselves. Hence, we call for the dismissal of the militarists within the government who only rely on the strength of the armed forces to resolve the problem in Mindanao. Likewise, elements in the government/military with anti-Muslim sentiments must not be given a chance to use religious differences in protecting their own selfish motives (...)

ERADICATE POVERTY, NOT THE PEOPLE!**STOP THE WAR NOW!**

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whole issue of the right to self-determination struggle waged by the MILF. Its extreme version of Islam puts the group in bad light and raises the issue of conflict on the plane of Christian-Muslim animosity. The Christian peoples, as expected, are reacting negatively and they can hardly distinguish the MILF from the Abu Sayyaf. So, at the instigation of the AFP, Christians are forming armed vigilante-type groups whose purpose is to fight against Muslims.

Intensified

Conflicts have intensified because of the existence of such fringe groups that divert the real issue and push the situation to the brink of a religious war. The latest Abu Sayyaf kidnapping has succeeded in attracting the media and occupied center stage of the daily news for more than a week, while the main camps of the MILF have been slowly, silently and covertly surrounded and are now being attacked.

The PRMP argues that the root-cause

of the insurgency in Mindanao is poverty. Most people are drawn to rebellion not because of ideology but due to government neglect and injustices. Even the AFP and the national government have squarely admitted that the solution of Mindanao problem is not military, but socio-economic. However, in practice they have not applied this approach.

The AFP has been using all their war armaments including those left by the Armed Forces of the United States during last January's joint-military exercises. The Estrada administration and its military advisers want war as the ultimate solution to the Mindanao problem.

By May 8-9th Cotabato city had been completely closed, with all highways and the airport under attack from the MILF. General Santos City (the second largest city in Mindanao) was also under attack. The death toll and the number of refugees were rising rapidly. The RPMP has organized a humanitarian response group, converting all its open premises to quickly

respond to the needs of the dislocated women and children. The party's army has been in defensive positioning with some contingents of the MILF Armed Forces.

On May 7th the number of evacuees reached 500,000 in Central Mindanao region alone. The RPMP is calling on progressive forces around the world:

1. to help us raise medicines, funds and materials to the victims of this all-out war against our peoples;

2. to form support groups to campaign against the intervention of the US in Estrada's all-out military offensive against the revolutionary forces and against the peoples of Mindanao;

3. to exert pressures on the international bodies, agencies, international communities and states and on the Estrada government, calling to stop the all-out offensive in Mindanao, let the civilians back to their homelands and provide relief assistance and rehabilitation to the evacuees. ★

Estrada's email addresses are:

erap@erap.com
 erap@ops.gov.ph

NORWAY STRIKES AGAINST GREED

ON May 3rd, 82,000 workers in Norway's private sector went on national strike. This is the biggest strike since World War II. The strike was called against the wishes of the trade union leadership which had agreed to a proposed settlement with employers. Rank and file workers voted overwhelmingly to reject the pact and forced their leadership to call the strike. In the members' referendum there was more than 60% participation, and the result was an impressive 64% voting "no" to the settlement.

Behind the strike is a mood of rejection of what the head of Norway's unions calls a new "culture of greed" permeating management in that country. Obscenely high salaries for corporate bosses, tolerated in most advanced industrial countries, conflict with Norway's long-established social democratic culture. In the last couple of months there have been huge bonuses for managing directors and owners, against a background of several years of moderation in the wage struggle.

In addition to this, these are the last negotiations involving the present 'moderate' LO-chairperson, Yngve Haagenen, who is retiring. The most high-profile opponent of the moderate line is the chairperson of the Transport Workers' Union, Per Østvold. He belongs to the left wing of the reformist Socialist Left Party. The broad trade union opposition is now trying to convince him to stand as candidate for the LO chairmanship after Haagenen.

There are many issues involved in this strike, but some of the most important are:

* Five weeks annual holiday has been promised for 19 years and it should now be introduced gradually beginning from next year. But many workers are tired of waiting, and in Denmark recently there was a general strike demanding six weeks annual holiday.

* The proposed deal involved extending the tariff period from two to three years, meaning effectively taking power away from the rank and file.

* LO did not succeed in forcing the employers to pay for educational reform so that workers can upgrade their talents.

By Tuesday May 5th around 100,000 workers were out. The strike is still only affecting the private sector but looks set to spread. Both Danish and German industrial unions have voiced their solidarity. ★

Information provided by Bjarke Friborg and Eric Lee. LabourStart has comprehensive coverage of the strike with many links to background articles — see <http://www.labourstart.org/norway/>

THANK YOU

for your continued support for *International Viewpoint* in the form of donations to our fund drive. Thanks are due in particular this month to J.M. in Ireland and to supporters of *October Review* in Hong Kong who have made a substantial donation. With support like this we hope we can continue to produce *International Viewpoint* on a regular basis, but please keep the contributions to our solidarity fund rolling in to the address given on the subs form below:
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The editors

Global capital and global struggles: **Strategies, Alliances, Alternatives:** 10am-6pm, Saturday-Sunday 1st-2nd July, 2000 University of London Union (ULU), Malet St, London WC1. New networks of struggles are posing a serious threat to neoliberal globalization. This conference aims to involve intellectuals and activists in debate on global capital's strategies today, as well as counter-strategies and alternatives. Sponsored by the Conference of Socialist Economists (CSE). More details on CSE webpage, www.gn.apc.org/cse

France 1995: Turning Point or Tremor. 9-10th June, London. Organised by PSA French Politics and Policy Specialist Group and the French Department of King's College, London. The impact of the December 1995 strikes in France. Speakers: Stephen Bouquin (Université de Bruxelles), Catherine Lévy (CNRS), René Mouriaux (Cévipof), Pierre Cours-Salies (Université d'Evry), Christophe Aguiton (SUD), Daniel Bensaïd (Université de Paris XIII), Alex Callinicos (University of York), Frédéric Lebaron (Collège de France) Jim Wolfreys (King's College London), Philippe Marlière (University College London), Stéphane Rozès (IEP Paris/ CSA opinion), Stéphane Beaud (Université de Nantes), Eustache Kouvélakis (University of Wolverhampton).

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