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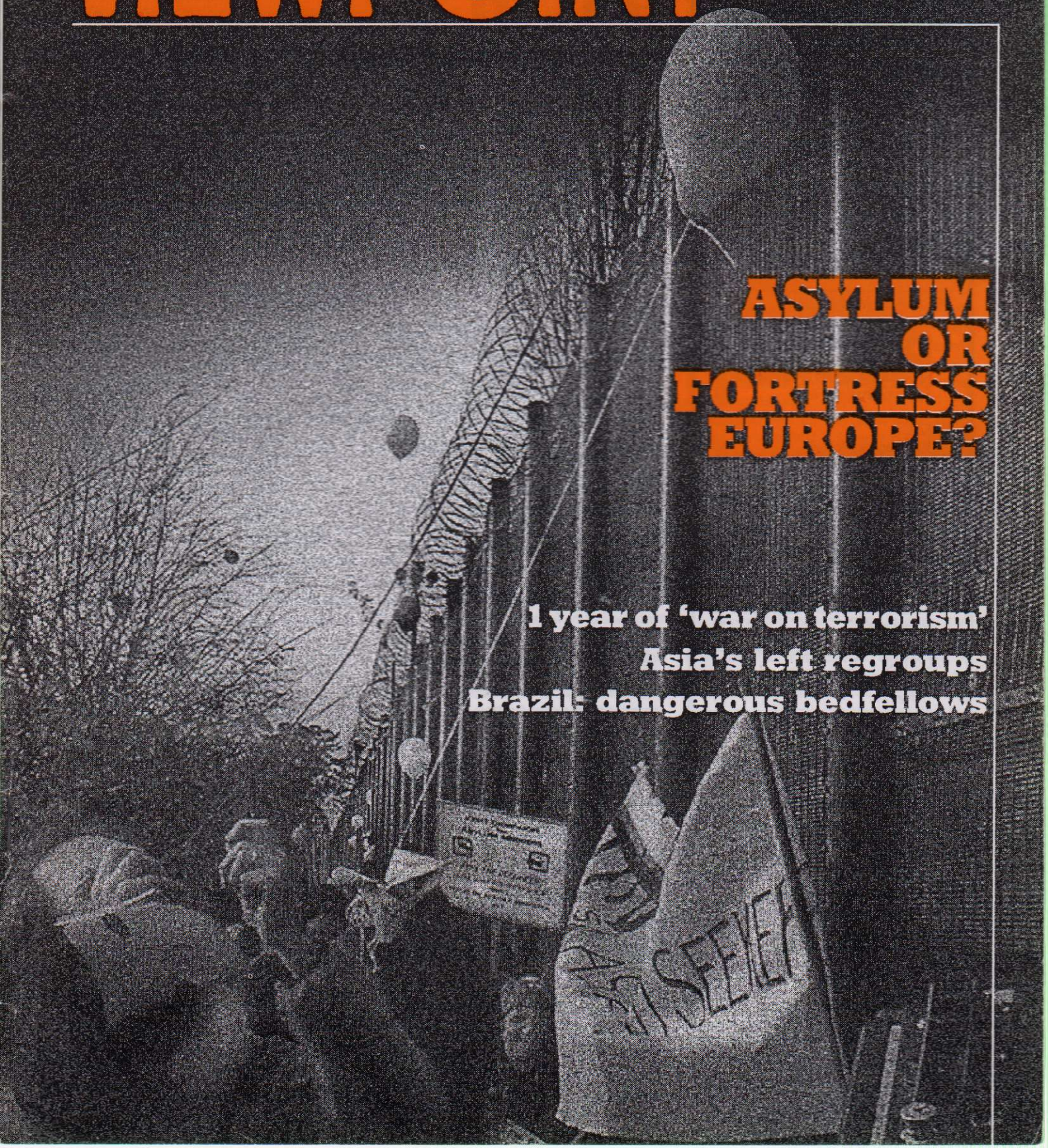
INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT



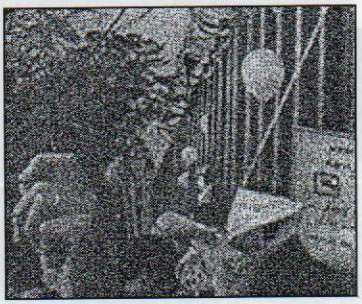
ASYLUM OR FORTRESS EUROPE?

1 year of 'war on terrorism'

Asia's left regroups

Brazil: dangerous bedfellows

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT



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To our readers...

With this edition of *International Viewpoint* we mark the anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon carried out on September 11, 2001. Phil Hearse analyzes the US administration's use of the intervening year to launch "a military-political offensive whose central aim was to forcefully extend the hegemony of US capitalism and the American state worldwide, while dealing sharp blows against all the Bush administration's perceived enemies and rivals, centrally third world liberation movements, the global justice movement, domestic political rivals and America's political-economic rival states in Europe." As *IV* goes to press, there seems little doubt about the eventuality of a US assault on Iraq although there is some debate about the timing and indeed the pretext. Hearse argues that "the war on terrorism depends on the Iraq criterion... What Bush and his advisors offer us is not a decisive war to defeat the 'axis of evil', but a new paradigm of how the American empire is to keep its dominance from now on: permanent war. Defeating this barbaric prospect means maximizing the anti-war mobilization worldwide".

In an article written some months ago, Daniel Bensaid examines the complicity of many French intellectuals with the imperial crusade in Afghanistan and the criminal policy of the Sharon government in Palestine. While some of the figures discussed may not be well known outside France, their methodology - combining a rhetorical defence of modernity and reason with a practical abnegation of critical thought in the face of imperialist brute force – will be familiar to all and we can expect to see a great deal more such doublethink among sectors of the liberal intelligentsia as the assault on Iraq unfolds.

The Islamophobia and general atmosphere of fear generated by the attacks in the US have contributed to a further crackdown on the already very limited rights of immigrant workers and asylum seekers in the advanced capitalist countries. Terry Conway surveys the current scene, and we also feature reports on the situation of immigrants in Spain and Holland.

As was noted in the last issue of IV, the process of social polarization and radicalization in Latin America has actually intensified since September 11, despite the accentuation of the US imperialist offensive on the continent. In this context the left faces some difficult tests. In particular, as presidential elections approach in Brazil this autumn the Workers' Party (PT) is reacting to its lead in the polls by moving sharply to the right, leading to deep discontent within the party. We publish here an interview with Raul Pont, a leading spokesperson for the PT left.

Among the biggest losers in the post 9/11 period have been the Palestinian people. Ariel Sharon has successfully managed to conflate Israel's war on the Palestinians with the 'war on terror' and the last year has seen an unprecedented degradation of living standards and a deep dislocation of social life in the occupied territories. The disarray and frustration on the ground is now considerable: Ayshah Handal, Julien Salingue and Pierre Yves Salingue offer a contribution to the debate on the way forward now.

The introductory article to this issue notes that: "Bush's team... have no doubt where the biggest single potential future threat to the United States capitalism lies: China". Roland Lew reports on recent developments in the People's Republic, where an increasing openness to the international market economy has led to persistent social crisis. This has until recently been largely a rural phenomenon, but market reforms are now hitting workers, particularly those in the old bastions of heavy industry in the north of the country. Here, Lew notes, there has been significant workers' agitation following massive layoffs, with a revival of the slogans and imagery of the Mao period.

Finally, in our review section Paul le Blanc assesses a new book by US scholar August Nimtz which analyzes the relationship between theory and practice in the work of Marx and Engels, and in particular reinstates the centrality of their role as political activists rather than simply 'thinkers'.

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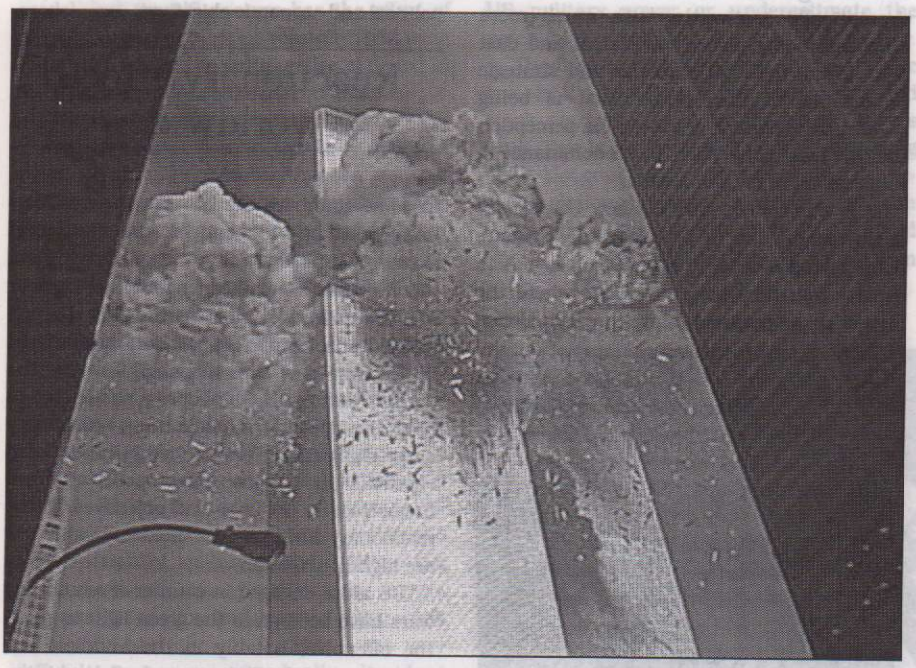
Year Zero: twelve months of the 'war on terrorism'

PHIL HEARSE



On February 26, 1993 Islamist terrorists detonated a bomb in an underground car park of the New York Twin Towers, resulting in six deaths and hundreds of injuries. The bombers watched from across the Hudson river, but the buildings did not collapse as they had hoped.

Writing about this event one year before September 11, Paul Rogers, Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University, commented: "If that attack had had its intended effect the results would have been calamitous, not just for the city of New York, but for the United States as a whole." But it would not, argued Rogers, have led the United States to any fundamental rethink of its relations with the third world. "A more likely result would have been a massive and violent military reaction against any groups anywhere in the Middle East thought to have had even the slightest connection with the attack."[1]

And so it turned out. But the US military response to the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had much more behind it than imperial hubris – although there was plenty of that. Bush and the recycled Reaganite team around him launched a military-political offensive whose central aim was to forcefully extend the hegemony of US capitalism and the American state worldwide, while dealing sharp blows against all the Bush administration's perceived enemies and rivals: centrally, third world liberation movements, the global justice movement, domestic political rivals and America's political-economic rival states in Europe. Any account of the year since September 11 must answer the question: to what extent has this offensive succeeded? And what does this show us about the character of the Bush administration, its geopolitical thinking, and its long-term aims?

The war on terrorism, we should remember, was originally launched under the banner of capturing and punishing the perpetrators of the attack. At a military level the war on Afghanistan, launched on 5 October, seemed to result in an overwhelming victory with minimal casualties – and it could hardly have been otherwise, given the vast quantities of firepower used and total US air superiority. 'Regime change' has indeed been achieved in Afghanistan, although the Taliban has been replaced with a government whose writ hardly runs outside Kabul, as the country reverts to ethnic warfare and control by regional warlords. The United States doesn't give a fig about that and has left 'nation building' to the Europeans. The collapse of the Taliban in Kabul in December 2001 led to a celebration of 'victory' by Bush and his international supporters, but of course judged by the yardstick of actually combating terrorism – ie actually eliminating Bin Laden, dismantling al-Qaida, or addressing the real causes of terrorism – it was a failure. If that doesn't unduly bother the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz-Rice team, then that's because for them terrorism of the al-Qaida variety is a small problem and defeating it is an entirely secondary objective.

'Axis of Evil'

December 2001 also saw the first significant public opposition in Europe to US actions which went beyond the anti-war movement and the left; this was centred on a barrage of criticism of the US treatment of Taliban and al-Qaida prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Rumsfeld's curt dismissal of the Geneva Convention, and the widespread suspicion among European governments that prisoners were being tortured.

Relations with the European states really hit the fan with Bush's January 2002 'axis of evil' State of the Union speech. This speech represents the central public programmatic declaration of the objectives of the United States. As Peter Gowan points out, "The speech was designed to commit all the forces domestically and internationally grouped in Bush's coalition against terrorism to an entirely new set of strategic objectives, namely, to commit them to support the right of the US to take pre-emptive military action to attack and overthrow the regimes of Iraq, Iran and North Korea and other states deemed to be hostile to the United States and alleged by it to be developing weapons of mass destruction.... The speech also made it patently clear that the Bush administration was committing itself to a military-political drive against a wide range of Muslim and Arab forces in the Middle East, mainly linked together not by al-Qaida but by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Four of the five 'terrorist' organisations he identified were linked to that conflict and so were two of the three states – Iran and Iraq. The third state, North Korea, was also linked to Iran through the fact it was allegedly selling Iran medium range missiles. Iran in turn is singled out for its support to Hizbollah and for its alleged supply of arms to the Palestinian authority".[2]

Bush threw down a challenge to all those European states that might hesitate at this incredible new doctrine of pre-emptive military strikes, "Some governments will be timid in the face of terror. And make no mistake about it: if they do not act, America will."

The 'Axis of Evil' speech takes us to the heart of what is new in the objectives and methods of the Bush team, as opposed to previous

administrations. The key members of Bush's team, nearly all of whom served under Reagan[3], are committed to the idea that the political conditions have been created for the widespread use of military force, and that military force can be easily translated into reinforced American political and economic dominance worldwide. In caricatured accounts of the US approach, unthinking militarism is assumed as a constant, but this is not the case. For example, former national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, hardly a bleeding-heart liberal, downplays the role of US military force in his 1997 international relations classic *The Grand Chessboard*.[4] Brzezinski argues "...America is too democratic at home to be autocratic abroad. This limits the use of America's power, especially its capacity for military intimi-dation. Never before has a populist democracy *(sic)* attained international domination. But the pursuit of power is not a goal that commands public passion, except in conditions of sudden threat or challenge to the public's sense of domestic well-being. The economic self-denial (that is, defence spending) and human sacrifice (casualties even among professional soldiers) required in the effort are uncongenial to democratic instincts. Democracy is inimical to imperial mobilization."[5] *(my emphasis)*

In the era of the Axis of Evil, this seems like an argument from a bygone age. Brzezinski could of course argue that his approach couldn't possibly factor in an event like September 11, which is precisely the "sudden threat or challenge" that could create an alternative scenario.

Nonetheless, Brzezinski's general approach is to stress that US hegemony depends on a bundle of advantages, of which (especially latent) military might is just one factor. These include economic dominance, technological supremacy, the attractiveness of the US political model, the magnetic attraction – especially for the young – of US popular culture, military power (vitally control of the oceans) and overall the demonstrable success and attractiveness of the US 'society model', which especially mobilises the imaginations of the most dynamic, creative and ambitious people worldwide.[6] The actual use of US military power will be, for Brzezinski, a declining factor in the post-Soviet world. On the contrary "maneuver, diplomacy, coalition building, co-optation, and the very deliberate deployment of one's political assets have become the key ingredients of the successful exercise of geostrategic power..."[7] Bush's new warriors have thrown such ideas in the dustbin with a resounding clang.

World dominance objectives

All participants in debates among US defence intellectuals agree that the key to US hegemony is its capacity to dominate 'Eurasia' – the landmass of Europe and Asia, including the Middle East to the south, China and Japan as the pivots of the east, and Western Europe constituting the opposite edge. This area holds the vast majority of the world's economic, natural and population resources and hugely outweighs the Americas in every field. America's dominance relies on the fact that the US outguns every single potential Eurasian competitor, and political disunity amongst potential Eurasian alliances (so far) hobbles anti-US competition. What emphases do the Bush team now put on military-political objectives to keep Eurasia subjugated?

First, the view held by Brzezinski and others that Western Europe remains under US tutelage is treated with extreme suspicion. Second, traditional views of what constitutes the strategic core of Eurasia have shifted dramatically eastwards, with much more emphasis being placed on central and east Asia. Third, the vital economic and strategic importance of the Middle East is being reaffirmed, including of course the perception that the main challengers to US dominance in that region are the Europeans.

It is this context that the new US military deployments have to be understood. Bush's team includes a large number of east Asia experts and they have no doubt where the biggest single potential future threat to United

States capitalism lies: China. New US military bases in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan complement the increased US commitment to South Korea and Taiwan, and of course the sending of 10,000 troops to the Philippines are aimed at reinforcing the US's Asian presence and surrounding China, hoping to disrupt future attempts by China to make itself the leader of any east Asian political alliances.

US policy in the Middle East, especially uncritical support for Sharon's permanent war against the Palestinians, the drive to launch a war to unseat Saddam in Iraq, and increased threats against Iran serve to disrupt European political influence in the regions, reducing EU initiatives on Palestine to a pathetic farce of impotent pleading and throwing a spanner in the works (hopefully) of European economic links with Iraq and Iran.

On top of this Bush has scored a major success in using the war on terrorism to threaten and bribe the sinister Putin regime in Russia, giving US support for the war in Chechnya and promises of future political and economic benefits, in exchange for the abandonment of Russian objections to star wars and the expansion of NATO eastwards. This represents a total capsizal of expectations of Russian resistance to US European military, political and economic objectives.

Reactionary effects worldwide

In some countries the US war on terror has been looked on with bemusement, as a typical excess of Yankee crudity, but one having not much domestic significance for either right or left. The failure of most parts of the French political spectrum to get particularly animated by the war is a case in point. However the truth is that the Bush offensive has tended to have the effect of strengthening reactionary and rightwing forces everywhere, and especially those which have openly attached themselves to US aims and objectives. These reactionary effects are manifold and only a few are highlighted here:-

US allies engaged in counter-revolutionary wars have been given the green light to go on the offensive, notably in the Middle East, Colombia and the Philippines. In Colombia ex-president Pastrana relaunched the war against the left-wing FARC guerrillas, and he has been succeeded by the even more right wing Uribe Velez, a perfect representative of neoliberal warmongering, who will pursue this war with vast amounts of American aid and covert special forces backup. In the Philippines the dispatch of 10,000 US 'advisors' has as a central objective the re-establishment of a major US presence in that country; but it will also fuel armed actions against Islamist rebels.

The major victims of counter-revolutionary war have of course been the Palestinians, with the traditional State Department round of peace negotiations sacrificed to total support for Israel.

The war on terrorism has deepened the hold of racism and xenophobia, particularly in Western Europe. Making Bin Laden public enemy number one, and the fact that the enemy is portrayed as mainly Islamic, has strengthened popular stereotypes which go along the lines of 'Muslim=Asylum Seeker=Criminal=Terrorist'. A recent survey in Italy showed 40% of people saying immigrants were a threat to public order and safety, and this in a country which is mainly a

transit point for asylum seekers, not their final destination. Xenophobic reaction had obvious negative consequences in the success of the Pym Fortuyn list in the Netherlands, the score of Le Pen in the French presidentials, minor successes for the British National Party and indeed in the near total anti-asylum seeker consensus in the British media and official politics.

A potential, but not yet hardened, pro-US axis has emerged in Europe around the most right wing governmental leaders, notably Berlusconi in Italy, Aznar in Spain and Blair in Britain. The pro-US tilt of their governments is much more marked than any in Paris or Berlin. Of course all the governments concerned are committed to the neo-liberal model, but the US posture has the effect of strengthening the most aggressively right wing of them, those at the cutting edge of trying to force back workers' rights and conditions.

The most significant reactionary effects of course have been within the United States itself. We should remember that a mammoth global justice demonstration was planned in Washington for the beginning of October 2001, and this was immediate scuttled by the September 11 attack. The US global justice movement, while not dead, has had difficulty raising its head in similarly significant numbers since. What followed September 11 was a reactionary mobilisation on a scale not seen since the darkest days of McCarthyism and the Korean war in the early 1950s. It is difficult to imagine the scale of this from the outside; the wave of nationalist patriotism, whipped up with the participation of leading public figures from every walk of life – politicians, media personalities, film and sports stars, rock musicians and church leaders – was very difficult to oppose. Gradually dissident voices have emerged, but just as in the days of the 1950s witch-hunts, public figures know that they will be vilified and stepping out of line will wreck their careers. The ability of the US radical movement to break out of this situation will be a decisive element in whether the Bush offensive is successful.

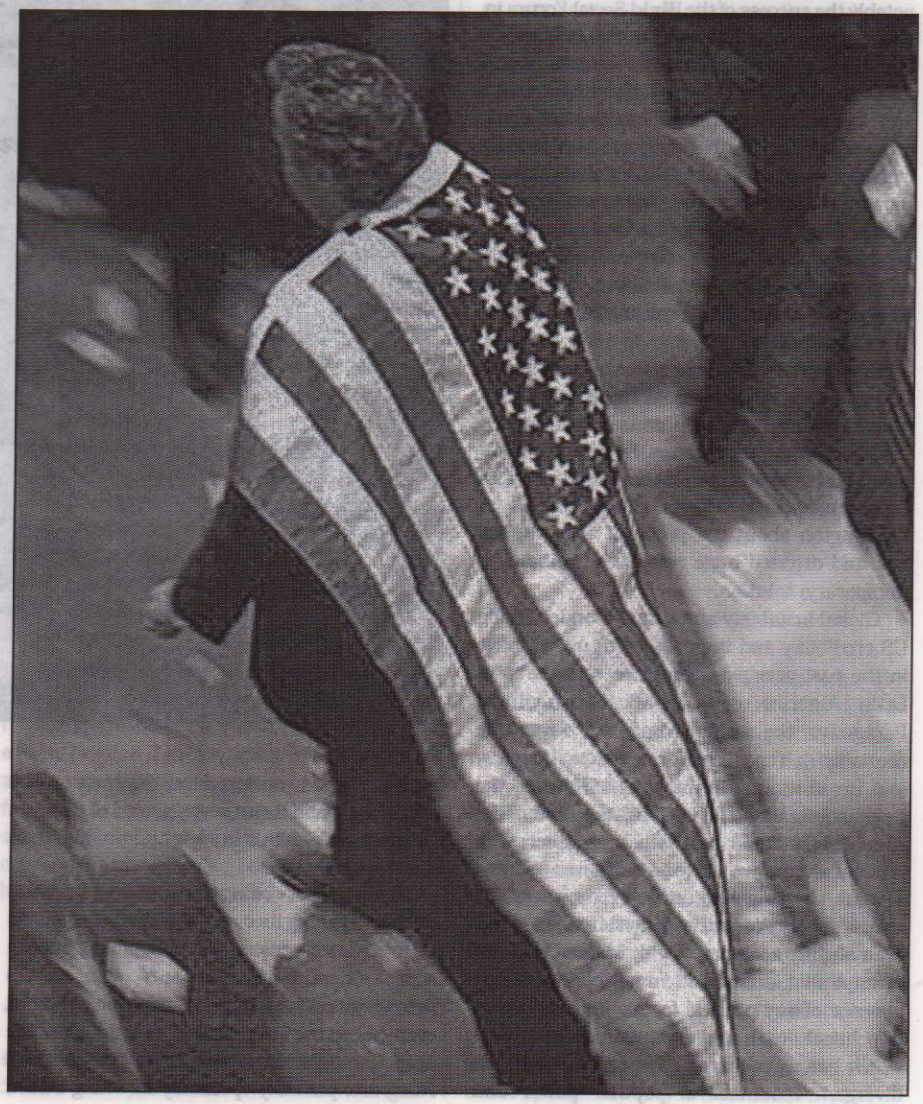
On top of the surfeit of imperialist violence and the reactionary offensive has been the war on human and civil rights. Numerous instances of this could be quoted, but perhaps the most symbolic have been in the United States itself. Nearly one year on, hundreds of people are still detained without trial and the whereabouts of many is unknown. Not content with ditching the Geneva convention and resorting to torture in Guantanamo, the US now abrogates to itself the right to arrest, imprison without trial, torture or otherwise dispose of anyone in the world it suspects of involvement with what it defines as terrorism.

Barriers to US success

What are the barriers to total US success in this enterprise of recasting world politics through the use and threat of military violence? In my view the fundamental dilemma can be explained like this: in attempting to take a spectacular initiative which hits at so many rivals simultaneously, the Bush administration of necessity deepens the antagonism of an array of governmental and non-governmental forces worldwide, which separately and in alliance can defeat the whole enterprise. For the other side of the coin has to be seen; if the whole thing collapses in fiasco, the negative consequences for US capitalism will be on the scale of – and probably much bigger – than its defeat in Vietnam. It is a big political mistake in this crucial period to overemphasise the efficacy of US military power or underestimate the potential of opposition.

The first barrier to success, and a gigantic one, is the spectacular corporate crisis and stock market collapse in the United States itself. This is one more stage in the unraveling of the 'dot.com boom', a massive crisis of over-accumulation of capital, which started with the financial blow-outs in Asia in 1997 and Russia in 1998. The stock market has been going down for more than two years and no one can say if the end is in sight. Crucial to the ideological effects of this are the realisation by millions that at the centre of the operations of finance capital is fraud (whether it is illegal fraud or not is besides the point). Millions in the US have been defrauded of their savings or will see the value of their pensions disappear or collapse. Assumptions of the attractiveness of the US 'society model' are going to be sorely tested by these events. This will be compounded by the close links of many at the top of the Bush administration with big business; this is a constant in the US politics, but the personal business history of Bush and Cheney is becoming, to say the least, embarrassing. When Bush says "The American people could lose faith in our free enterprise system", something serious is happening. Renewed energy in trying to get the war on Iraq underway could well be linked to Republican fears of being punished for the economic disarray in the November mid-term elections. For while the US Democrats have largely supported the war on terrorism, they have been quick to pick up the theme of corporate corruption.

US stock trader in protective clothing



The second danger for the Bush team lies in the response to an attack on Iraq by its European 'allies'. On the one hand, this problem is probably made more manageable by right-wing victories in European elections. But the imponderable is the extent of anti-war mobilisations and public sentiment. In this context, we have to note that the fear of many that the global justice movement would collapse in the face of the US anti-terrorist offensive has not been realised. On the contrary: the global justice movement helped build, and indeed merged with, an anti-war movement on a scale not seen since Vietnam.

Preparations for the Iraq War 2 are causing important friction with European governments. Bush's new warriors are correct in doubting previous orthodoxies about the political subordination of Europe. The reason for this is ironic. As outlined at length in an important recent article by Peter Gowan[8], the collapse of the Soviet Union both immensely increased the relative strength of the United States and simultaneously undermined the structures of its political domination of Europe, ie NATO as a response to the Soviet threat.

Since September 11 there have been giant global justice and anti-war mobilisations, most notably the success of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and the monster 600,000-strong Barcelona demonstration. The centres of the anti-war movement during the Afghanistan attack were Italy and Britain. Post-September 11 crowing in the North American and British right-wing press that the global justice movement was finished has been repudiated by events. The scene is being set for an enormous outpouring of anti-war sentiment if Iraq is savaged again. As we noted above, only in the United States has the global justice movement been decisively set back.

Finally, the war on terrorism takes places – and deepens – international instability which can have unpredictable consequences. For example, terrible problems for the US have been caused by the conflict between India and Pakistan, which caused near panic in Washington about the prospect of a nuclear war and diverted huge resources to finding a (temporary) solution.

Global instability and turmoil, undermining US credibility and the neo-liberal model, have in the past year particularly been centered in Latin America, with political turmoil in Paraguay, the collapse of the Argentine economy, a repeat performance in Uruguay and Brazil waiting in the wings. However, the huge mobilizations and self-organization of the Argentine masses has failed to generate a popular alternative at the level of government, a serious challenge by the left for power. The reason for this is hardly a mystery for anyone even slightly acquainted with Marxist theories of capitalist crisis and mass politics – the absence of any political force with a modicum of political vision and revolutionary sentiment which has a real mass base and can lead the divergent instances of popular power and mobilization towards a unified quest to conquer political power.

A new stage: October war?

Almost certainly detailed plans and a preliminary schedule for the Iraq war have been drawn up by the US in concert with the British government. The international media is rife with rumours that the bombs will start falling again in October, and this date has the logic that it will be in the wake of the national commemorations for September 11 in which the war against terrorism will be re-affirmed and national unity of purpose (hopefully) rekindled; and it will be before the November mid-term elections for a third of the seats in the House and Senate, hopefully boosting Bush's flagging ratings.

In fact Bush, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and the rest have now talked themselves into a position where not to have a war to replace Saddam would be seen as a major defeat, and in effect undermine the credibility of the doctrine of pre-emptive strikes against rogue states. The war on terrorism depends on the Iraq criterion. If it can't even get rid of Saddam Hussein after all this huffing and puffing, then it is next to useless.

At the time of writing (early August) the US is close to rejecting its own weapons inspectors as an irrelevance, sensing that Saddam might even accept them back – a sure sign of US determination to go to war, if necessary without even bothering to construct a half-believable case about 'weapons of mass destruction'. Rumours, probably spread by Downing Street, that Tony Blair publicly supports war, while in secret he is trying to dissuade George Bush, are probably irrelevant, even in the unlikely event they are true. Mr Blair has his uses for Bush, but determining US strategy is not one of them.

We now face the prospect of another major outburst of imperialist violence, tens of thousands more deaths and another outburst of political reaction to accompany it. What Bush and his advisors offer us is not a decisive war to defeat the 'axis of evil', but a new paradigm of how the American empire is to keep its dominance from now on: permanent war. Defeating this barbaric prospect means maximising the anti-war mobilisation worldwide. □

NOTES

1 *Losing Control*, Paul Rogers, Pluto Press 2000, p 118.

2 *Western Europe in the Face of the Bush campaign*, Peter Gowan, *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, issue 71 pp 6-7.

3 Especially the 'military men': Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld and Cheney. In the US, contrary to popular myth, the military is subordinate to politics and business, and has been ever since World War 2 showed that the military couldn't organize a war and had to be bailed out by business people and administrators who had expertise in logistics, planning and procurement. Defence intellectuals rarely are serving officers, and often have stronger links with academia or business.

4 Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, Basic Books, 1997.

5 Brzezinski, op cit pp 35-6.

6 Brzezinski, op cit pp 25-7

7 Brzezinski, op cit p 36

8 Gowan, op cit.

Daniel Bensaïd

Operation 'Bullshit Unlimited'

1 Only yesterday, French intellectuals overflowed with compassion. From Bosnia to Chechnya, by way of Kosovo, on every front of the new world disorder. Their silence before the imperial crusade in Afghanistan and before the criminal policy of the Sharon government in Palestine is all the more deafening. This inglorious resignation is not, alas, unrelated to the relative weakness of the anti-war mobilizations in France, compared with the demonstrations that have taken place since 7 October 2002 in most big European countries.

It seals an ideological debacle which began at the end of the 1970s with the rise in media influence of the 'new philosophy'. Already, these intellectuals had begun to swallow hard, to bid farewell to the anti-colonialism of yesteryear, to leap to the defence of anti-totalitarianism in the name of virtuous Western democracy. This mass conversion has not taken place on the same scale in Britain or in Italy. The test of the war in Afghanistan allows us to measure the extent of the damage and the consequences of this capitulation of critical thought, perfectly summed up by the leitmotiv of Bernard-Henri Lévy [the most high profile of the 1970s 'new philosophers' – ed.]: to seek to understand, is to begin to justify. For fear of justifying, one should then not attempt to understand. From that, it follows that there is no longer anything to understand. Why is it, asked the subtle Pascal, that a lame mind annoys us while a lame person does not? Because, he replied, a lame person knows that they are lame, while a lame mind does not.

The first shocking thing about this resignation from reason is the manner in which it resigns itself to stupefaction before an event which is unthinkable given that it is deemed to be without causes, antecedents or consequences, like a pure miracle emerging from historic nothingness. The horror of the image, repeated on a loop, tetanises the intelligence. By different paths, Claude Lanzmann [Filmmaker and editor of the magazine Les Temps Modernes, founded by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Lanzmann is best know outside France for a purported 'oral history of the Holocaust', the documentary film Shoah (1985). Other achievements include the film Tsahal (1994), a eulogy to the Israeli army – ed.] and Jean Baudrillard [social philosopher and 'hyperrealist' – ed.] arrive at a similar conclusion on this point. For the first, 'the radical novelty of the event' annuls all previous categories of political understanding. For the second, 'the absolute event', the 'pure event' defies 'not only a moral, but any form of interpretation'. Balzac, nonetheless, was aware that 'the absolute event', which was explained by theological miracle rather than secular history, did not exist in politics. There is still a before and after, causes and consequences. The fetishism of the event involves, then, a suppression of historical intelligibility, necessary to its depoliticization in favour of a hypertrophy of the symbolic.

2 This space from which politics has been expelled then becomes then a suitable place for abstractions, delusions or hypostases. There are no longer real interests that confront each other and effective contradictions that express themselves, but shadows and spectres. The shadow of Democracy, singular and with a capital D, combats the spectre of Terrorism, singular and with a capital T. The distinguished economist François Rachline sums up the new century thus: 'The 21st century opens with a new totalitarianism: terrorism.' Not so new as that, if one takes the trouble to reread the speeches of US leaders. Since Ronald Reagan, they have unceasingly harped on the new anti-terrorist crusade, preparing thus a replacement for a Communist 'evil empire' on the verge of collapse. It was necessary to find new pretexts for the maintenance of military alliances and the resumption of the arms race. Anti-terrorism took over from anti-totalitarianism, the one and indivisible civilization remaining identified with market democracy. Yet, the scholarly studies are definite: 'Terrorism and reprisals, although spectacular, are only secondary actors from the point of view of their number of victims.

The structural violence which is at the basis of a good number of war and acts of terrorism acts slowly: its victims die little by little, often as a consequence of infectious disease.' Impersonal, often invisible, this structural violence has no director nor commander, but it is no less murderous and stems from inequality and social injustice. Thus Aijaz Ahmad, author of the brilliant book Classes, nations, literature, writes: "The terrorism that torments the United States is what happens when the Communist left and secular anti-colonialist nationalism have been defeated, whereas the problems created by imperialist domination are more acute than ever. Hatred takes the place of revolutionary ideologies. Privatized violence and vengeance take the place of national liberation struggles. Millenarian would-be martyrs replace organized revolutionaries. Unreason grows stronger when reason is monopolized by imperialism and destroyed in its revolutionary forms."

3 The world's rulers win out twice over. They put reason on their side and cast out those who resist them into the fires of madness and myth. Wars waged in the name of Humanity with a capital H (on this point, Karl Schmitt was correct) no longer know an enemy. They draw a definitive frontier between human and inhuman. The 'other' is no longer a part of humanity, but a beast expelled from the human race. It is significant that the caricatures of Milosevic (showing him with the features of a pig) played on the theme of bestialization, while the weekly newspapers speak, in the rhetoric of hunting, of the 'tracking' of Bin Laden. This imperial monopoly on the representation of the species is heavy with consequences:

war is no longer a political conflict, but an ethical war (or a holy one) in the name of absolute Good; rights are lost in morality; without declared objective proportioned relationship between its ends and its means, war becomes infinite and unlimited. Narcissistic Western imperialism thus awards itself an inexhaustible credit of good conscience; in the manner of Bush – unblushingly saying in October 2001, 'I know how good we are' – it is charged with administering the divine will on earth.

4 It is not, then, surprising to hear Berlusconi take up in his own way the theme of the clash of civilizations. Nor is it astonishing to find it taken up, albeit in a more sophisticated manner, by one of the servile intellects of Les Temps Modernes. For Robert Redeker [a philosophy teacher and a member of the editorial board of the aforementioned journal], the 113 signatories of an appeal against the imperial war seek to 'blur the divide which has occurred' as a result of the critique of totalitarianism, between the intellectual and the militant: 'Islam is today the faith of the oppressed as Communism was yesterday, and contemporary Islamophilia justifies itself by the same cast of mind that justified Sovietophilia yesterday'. We, who have never been Sovietophiles but anti-Stalinist and internationalists, have no reason to be either Islamophiles or Islamophobes, inasmuch as we know Islam to be as plural as Christianity or Judaism. The logic of Bush (whoever is not with me is my enemy!) is a poor logic of the excluded middle: whoever opposes the empire flirts with Islamic fundamentalism! Carried away by his fervour, Redeker continues: ' No ideology is any more retrograde than Islam in relation to capitalism, of which the Twin Towers in their majestic beauty were the symbol'. He adds that 'the Muslim religion is a barbarizing regression.' Aesthetics are here harmonized with a politics that sees the Twin Towers as 'new towers of Babel', symbols of the 'crossbreeding of othernesses' (sic)! To the terrorist quest of the absolute, Redeker opposes a modest 'logic of the preferable' reconciling himself at low cost with the dominant order. The mother of all capitulations, this logic, which is none other than that of the lesser evil, is often only the shortest road to the worst.

5 For distinguished service to intellectual cretinism during wartime, Monique Canto-Sperber, a specialist in moral philosophy (!) merits a special mention. When a builder puts up a crooked wall, they risk dismissal for a professional misdemeanour. A director of research at the CNRS [France's prestigious National Centre for Scientific Research – ed.] is not exposed to the same penalties. Happily for her. While the sleuths of the FBI try in vain to disentangle the skein of the terrorist networks and their financial circuits, she reveals on page one of Le Monde, three days before the beginning of the bombing of Afghanistan, that she had traced the trail of Bin Laden back to Trotsky and Saint-Just. She has indeed discovered that, in a 1938 pamphlet entitled 'Their Morals and Ours', Trotsky had furnished the 'justification of terrorism' in the name of the 'absolute character of the end pursued and of indifference to the means'. In fact, Trotsky said exactly the opposite: 'The end which justifies the means raises immediately the question: and what justifies the end?' For the end 'also needs justification'.

Claude Lanzmann

6 This demand also returns like a boomerang on the cheerleaders of the imperial crusade. What exactly is their end? Bin Laden, who was only yesterday their means in the struggle against Communism, the Taliban, oil, the new world order, the eradication of a terrorism that they have themselves armed? Do all these noble ethical ends justify the most ignoble military means, carpet-bombing with fragmentation bombs, the 'daisy cutter bomb', uranium enriched weapons and the terrorist weapon par excellence (to the extent that it erodes any distinction between combatant and civilians) represented by nuclear weapons. Carried away by lyrical enthusiasm for the crusade of the Good, Alain Minc, only recently intoxicated by the blessings of commodity globalization, asks: 'Would it have been necessary, in the name of respect for the civilian population, that the British not bomb Dresden or the Americans Hiroshima, allowing the Second World War to continue?' Who wishes the end, wishes the means! Nobody could ever demonstrate that Hiroshima was the only possible way of ending the war, while it is certain that this bomb would inaugurate a new era in the escalation of state terrorism. Undoubtedly, if religious fundamentalisms exist, there exists henceforth a fundamentalism of the market and Alain Minc is its mullah.

7 Those who oppose the imperial Holy Alliance and its Afghan crusade can only be motivated by the characteristic pathology of the left intellectual: anti-Americanism combined with an underhand anti-Semitism camouflaged as anti-Zionism. On this point, there is a distressed chorus of disapproval, from Jacques Julliard [a journalist – ed] to Alain Finkielkraut [a philosopher – ed] The first complains that 'since the glorious episode of the Dreyfus affair, French intellectuals have systematically chosen the camp of the enemies of liberty'. So supporting the Algerian liberation struggle or the movement against the war in Vietnam, is placing oneself in the camp of the enemies of liberty? Anti-Americanism, for Julliard, has become a safe investment for the intellectual left after the collapse of Marxism. If you want examples of French anti-Americanism, it is necessary rather to look for them in the French nationalist tradition, in its Gaullist and Stalinist variants. Marxist intellectuals worthy of the name think in terms of political categories. They do not combat 'the

Americans' as people, but US imperialism; in the same way that they fight European imperialism and there own colonial wars. If there is no 'anti-Americanism', there is on the other hand a servile and zealous 'Americanism', exemplified by Jean-Marie Colombani [editor of Le Monde – ed] headlining on page one of Le Monde: 'We are all Americans!' It is not astonishing if this imbecilic Americanism should generate an 'anti-Americanism' which would be the anti-imperialism of imbeciles.

8 As to Finkielkraut – this is becoming a habit – he would not miss such a good chance to accuse the perpetrators of the attacks of hating the West not because of what it does wrong but because of its best features: 'the civilization of men by women and the link with Israel'. You have to rub your eyes. As if the rights won by women were a present from the West and not the fruit of their own struggles! And as if the Zionist state, founded on confessional discrimination and military occupation, was the crown of civilization (which, moreover, would say a lot about the civilization in question)! Unlike anti-Semitism, which is a racialization of politics in the epoch of imperialism, anti-Zionism is a political position, considering that a Jewish state, based on confessional legitimacy, will lead the Jews of Israel straight to a new disaster. Whereas they were supposed to find security there, it is already the place in the world where Jews feel most threatened. And Sharon's headlong flight towards escalation on the pretext of security, far from calming this anguish, only aggravates it. The amalgam between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism ends up, paradoxically, in feeding a real anti-Semitism by accrediting the idea that a good Jew is necessarily a Zionist.

9 Grafting the events of September 11 with his own campaign against modern art, Jean Clair [an art critic –ed.] adds a cultural dimension to the controversy. The surrealists, through their systematic denigration of Western values, become in his view the spiritual fathers of Bin Laden: 'The French intelligentsia went very early and very far in the prefiguration of what happened on September 11'. Breton, Bin Laden, Mullah Omar, the same struggle? This evokes irresistibly the crusade against decadent art.

10 The luxuriance of foolish quotations on the war almost led us to overlook the inevitable sermon by Alain Touraine [director of the School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris – ed], as sociologist of armed action. Here there is a problem of (binary) logic: 'One cannot condemn the attack of September 11 without supporting the American action in Afghanistan'. There is then, only one possible and imaginable action. A single (and military) meaning of history, in sum? In other words, if I don't like Jerusalem artichokes, I must adore turnips. No 'third way', except for Blair and Schröder of course. One does not expect Touraine to be so flatly determinist. His learned sociology of action involves then a distinction between the question of terrorism and that of world poverty: the war comes first, UN intervention will follow – later – to deal with humanitarian needs.

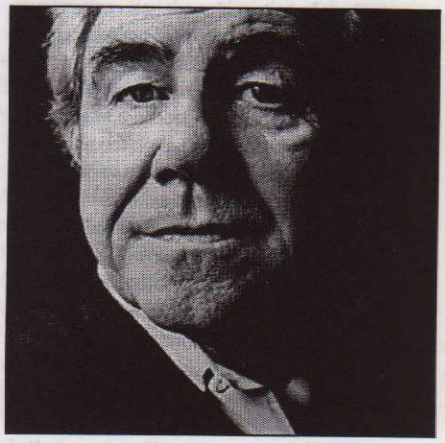
11 An 'unlimited justice' and a 'war without end' calls forth an equally unlimited stupidity. Many of the authors of the Black Book of Communism have united their efforts in the circumstances to launch, in Le Monde, an appeal: 'This war is ours! We believe that faced with difficulties today and perhaps with defeats tomorrow [beware of the court martial for defeatism, fainthearts!] it is necessary to develop in France as in other countries a movement of support to the soldiers who defend our liberties and our security.' Why not a support committee chaired by General Aussaresses, with Bigeard as general secretary [Aussaresses and Bigeard are prominent military figures who have been implicated in war crimes carried out during the war in Algeria – ed]?

POSTSCRIPT

1 While Claude Lanzmann bemoans the inability of those who oppose the imperial war to 'face the radical novelty of the event' one is on the contrary struck by the tragic repetition afflicting the servile intellects of the Grand Coalition. Each intervention is for them a remake. The day before yesterday, Saddam was Hitler Yesterday, it was Milosevic. Today, it's Bin Laden. Hitler serves thus as a historic pretext for any action of the international police force, present and future. What is revealed is precisely an inability to grasp the singularity of the event and the novelty of the situation.

2 Imagine the chorus of humanitarian indignation if, a half century from now, the Kosovar or Afghan refugees were still confined in the refugee camps? Yet this is the fate of the Palestinian refugees expelled from their land in 1948. More than 37 years ago the territories of the West Bank and Gaza were qualified as 'occupied' by UN resolutions. There is, then, in these territories an army of occupation and a legitimate resistance – in the eyes of international law – to this occupation. Yet the French intellectuals, so often ready to flare up for Bosnia or Chechnya, remain quiet. They are even disposed, if reasons of Empire oblige it, to join an alliance where they are shoulder to shoulder with the butcher of Chechnya and the perpetrators of massacre of Tien An-Men. The salvation of the West is well worth this traffic in ethical indulgences. So much the worse if humanitarian sensibility becomes paralyzed on one side and if the children of Bethlehem or Ramallah weigh less in the scales of 'infinite justice' than the victims of the World Trade Center. □

Jean Baudrillard



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Claude Lanzmann, Sans ambiguïté, Le Monde, November 6, 2001. Alain Minc, Le terrorisme de l'esprit, Le Monde, November 7, 2001.

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INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT 343 SEPTEMBER 2002

MIGRATION: COMPLETE CONTROL

TERRY CONWAY

As the last issue of IV made clear, immigration was a central topic of discussion at the European Council meeting in Seville on June 21-22, 2002 - on both sides of the barricades.

The governments of the European Union want to develop common policies that aim to give them complete control of those who can enter the continent - even if this means that thousands will die elsewhere because of war, torture or starvation. They plan to use their navies and armies to police this Fortress.

For those who manage to slip through their defences and are caught, the punishment is increasingly draconian. People whose only 'crime' is to flee the worst ravages of neoliberalism are imprisoned in camps and detention centres. People are taken in the middle of the night and put on planes in secret so that protestors cannot prevent this inhumanity.

Those who escape even this inner defence are also condemned. Without rights, they are left to eke out a desperate existence, subject to poverty, to extreme insecurity at work (because their work is clandestine) and to racism in every sphere of life.

Those who hold up capitalist globalization as the model of a world without inequality, without want, without classes are the very ones who also show in practice that this is no more than a mirage. When people want to come to Europe, they say that we are full up, there is no room at the inn or the table....

Even though the Seville summit did not reach final agreement on all the punitive measures it considered, it did make some moves in that direction. At any rate, legislation and practices are becoming increasingly harmonized in each member state (towards the worst that already exists, of course).

For the anti-globalization movement in Europe, defence of the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers has become an increasing focus - even if it isn't given the consistent priority that those active in the anti-racist movement think is necessary.

The No Borders camp at Strasbourg from July 21-28, 2002 saw 2,000 people opposed to capitalist globalization and its repressive arsenal come together from all over Europe. Strasbourg is the site of one of the key elements of fortress Europe: the Schengen system of information (SIS) which organizes the recording of information on immigrants on a European scale.

Demonstrators took action against hotels belonging to the Accor group - which is involved, together with the police in the expulsion of

immigrants - and subsequently there was massive police repression. The chief of police also made an exception decision to ban any form of demonstration, placing the city centre under a state of siege for the rest of the week. No Borders nonetheless succeeded in organizing some other events that passed off without incident. This camp was another example of developing co-ordination on a European level and is not the first - or the last - of these actions.

Developments like this, together with the huge demonstration of migrant workers in Italy in the spring and the church occupations during the Spanish EU presidency must be built on and generalized, as well as the more visible mobilizations of French youth against Le Pen.

The appeal of the Madrid Conference of the anti-capitalist left (see IV 342) made the fight against racism and immigration controls one of its central themes and the conference decided that fighting around these questions should be a common campaign of the organizations involved. This reflected both the offensive of the established order but also the growing resistance.

The appeal of a number of French immigrant and anti-racist organizations in relation to the forthcoming European Social Forum (see box) should also be supported - both in its demand that these issues are given greater priority by the anti-globalization movement as a whole and in their attempt to increase the involvement of organizations of immigrants and their supporters in the ESF and the wider movement.

The appeal itself also reflects the increasing self-organization of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Of course the experience in France is well known through the militant organization of the sans papiers who were able to wring at least some concessions from the state. However, these dynamics are not confined to one country - in Germany, for example, the increasingly important caravan movement is based on self organization.

In Britain, things lag behind at this level, but at least much of the increasingly united movement understands the need to give voice to those who are most directly affected. The tactics of fighting deportations must always be determined by those directly affected, while those working from the outside against immigration detention have been inspired many times by those who have taken up the only weapon left to them, the hunger strike, with such courage.

Today we are dealing with different forms of racism - both racism directed against those who have been in the country concerned all their lives (and often for several generations) and those who are newly arrived and often have no legal status. For both the extreme right and the traditional parties one of the sharpest cutting edges of their offensive is against asylum seekers and migrants - this is where increasingly restrictive laws are proposed, but also where street attacks and other hate crimes are focused.

There are also other targets of racism today that must be mentioned. In the wake of the fall of the Berlin wall, the Roma communities have not only been subject to increasing persecution within Eastern Europe, but have been treated in a particular pernicious way when they have fled westwards. This has combined with racism directed at Gypsy communities and individuals who supposedly have the protection of EU citizenship.

Then, in the wake of September 11, we have seen a major rise in Islamophobia. This phenomenon, which of course first surfaced in a major way during the Gulf war, has a crude functionality - it is a major ideological weapon in justifying war and is itself fed by it. At the most concrete level, we have seen the imprisonment without charge or trial of thousands of people, not only in the US but in virtually all European countries. The parallels with immigration detainees are striking.

There have also been street attacks and the manipulation by the far right of these questions. For example, the British National Party undoubtedly played on Islamophobia in its strong election campaigns in the North West of England in May 2002.

Those who migrated some time ago also suffer from these reactionary moves. When someone throws a firebomb at a house or beats someone up on the street because they are black, or speak a different language or look "foreign" they don't stop to ask the people if they have papers or where they were born.

But despite this reality, the response of some organizations of more settled communities has not been to throw themselves into the fight for asylum rights but rather to try even harder to become integrated into the 'host' community - saying that this has nothing to do with us. This is particularly true of some organizations which had been offered some crumbs from the imperialist table during a more settled political and economic period during the 1980s and 1990s and whose leadership is now desperate not to lose their privileges again.

Of course there are other black organizations and community organizations of peoples who have lived in the advanced countries for a long time which put forward militant politics, who work to fight racist attacks, against the rise of the far right and to defend asylum seekers and 'illegal' workers.

Post-war migration patterns

Western Europe saw a huge upturn in immigration during the post-war boom as the need for labour increased - as did the desire to get it at the cheapest possible rate. The pattern varied from country to country.

Britain, France and the Netherlands could relatively easily make use of labour from their colonies or former colonies. Other European countries did not have this access and therefore had to set up more developed labour recruitment systems to bring in temporary workers - who were allowed to stay only as long as their labour was needed.

These arrangements existed in countries such as Switzerland, Belgium and Sweden but the best known - and most developed was the German "Guest-worker" system. Some of these "guest" workers came from the countries of the European periphery - from Spain, Portugal and Italy, from Yugoslavia or Turkey and others from further afield - with the pattern shifting over time.

The existence of these two systems had a different impact on the ability of those coming to Europe to organize. Workers who came to the 'host' countries for only short periods of time, who often lived in special accommodation and were isolated economically, socially and politically from others in the society in which they lived had less ability to organize collectively than for example Commonwealth immigrants coming to Britain who formally had full rights - for example the right to vote and to work - even though they were subjected to many racist policies and practices.

Questions of immigration are not issues only in Europe. Though Canada, the USA and Australia were all created as capitalist countries through immigration - and the subjugation of the First nations, stealing their land and resources - there too this phase of capitalist globalization is one that demands strict border controls.

Some of the most dramatic stories both of right wing policies on asylum and resistance against them over the last year have come from Australia - from the horrendous treatment of the Tampa refugees in August 2001 (they were refused the right to land on the Australian territory of Christmas Island) to the heartrending story of the Baktiyari brothers, who escaped from Woomera detention centre, sought and were denied protection from the British consulate and are now back in Woomera. Australia has also been the site of many protests- both from those in mandatory detentions in the camps and by supporters outside. m

It is interesting to look briefly at the history of immigration policy in Australia. The government initiated a mass immigration programme after 1945, aiming to increase their population of 7.5 million people for both economic and strategic reasons. The initial target was 70,000 people a year - but with 10 Britons to every 'foreigner'. It was only when it became clear that the targets for British migration could not be met, that these were shifted to include other Europeans.

Initially all non-European immigration was forbidden - the White Australia policy that was developed in the nineteenth century remained militantly in place. Asian immigration in particular was seen as a threat to Australia's identity as a 'European' nation. However, this began to change in the 1960s and 1970s with the removal of some discriminatory restrictions. By the 1990s about half of all new immigrants to Australia came from Asia. In 1994, the estimated Asian born population was 826,000 - 4.6 per cent of the total population.

It is beyond the scope of this article to consider in any great detail the processes of migration within the underdeveloped countries. However, migration cannot be understood only as an issue of the North. In fact, the greatest movements of population take place within the countries of the South.

For example, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics for 2001 show that of the top 10 countries which received refugees during that year, none are in the advanced capitalist world. In 2001, Pakistan received 199,900 Afghani refugees - with very little assistance from international agencies or countries in the developed world who since September 11 have purported to care so much about the people of Afghanistan.

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT 343 SEPTEMBER 2002

HOLLAND: ASYLUM POLICY DEAD AND BURIED

JURGEN DE WIT

Supposedly, the idea behind policies towards asylum seekers is some small, even token degree of compassion towards those forced to leave their countries because of circumstances beyond their control. But the new right-wing Balkenende government in the Netherlands (made up of Christian Democrats, Liberals and right-wing populists) is taking the existing asylum policy, which was already in intensive care and carrying it to its grave.

Under the previous government (made up Social Democrats, liberals and Social Liberals) asylum policy was already directed towards kicking people out. They were proud that the number of asylum requests fell drastically (from 44,000 in 2000 to 33,000 in 2001, according to the Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics in January 2002). The legislation had become stricter and stricter over the years and reached a temporary nadir in 2001 with the new Foreigners Law.

Anyone who thought that it couldn't get worse has now been disappointed. The new plans defy the imagination. In the run-up to the May 15, 2002 parliamentary elections, there was already a competition under way among the various parties about who had the strictest asylum policy.

This was particularly the responsibility of the Pim Fortuyn List, which made crime, immigrants and refugees the focus of the election. Fortuyn himself wanted to close the Dutch borders to new refugees. Everyone was just supposed to get asylum in their own region.... However, he also said that those who have already been in the Netherlands for years but have not yet got asylum status could hypothetically count on a general amnesty and thus be legalized.

When the negotiations to form the new government took place and "Pim's heirs" brought this up, there was a little hope among asylum seekers and the organizations that defend them. However, it soon became clear that this was a vain hope.

For it was the first part of Fortuyn's proposals that were taken up: refugees must be taken care of in their own region. And that's what's there, in black and white, in the Strategic Accord that was agreed as the basis for the new coalition government.

What it says is that Asylum seekers without papers must prove their identity immediately and also explain why they didn't apply for asylum somewhere else. If you arrive at Schiphol (the airport for Amsterdam) without papers, then you can just forget it. Of course, people who are fleeing from persecution don't first collect their papers and then go take their seats on a plane.

The previous rule, according to which asylum seekers got residence permits after waiting three years for their applications to be processed, is being abolished. Appeals after rejection of an asylum application are also a thing of the past.

Being illegal is being made punishable, and expelling 'illegals' is to be accelerated. The next step may be to go after people and organizations who defend 'illegals' as well, because in principle you are then complicit in a criminal offense. The government agreement already says that municipalities may not offer any compensatory housing for asylum seekers who have exhausted their appeals, although no punishment for doing so is indicated so far.

'Illegals' are thus to be repatriated to their country of origin. Governments that refuse to take them back will be ineligible for development aid - a proposal that was made at the Seville summit by Aznar for European wide application but not agreed this time round at least.

For the Netherlands, however, this blackmail tactic is not so effective, since Dutch development aid has been limited to about 20 countries and many refugees come from places that aren't even considered for development aid.

So there are hard times ahead for refugees who come to the Netherlands and for organizations that defend their interests. And the right-wing government is going on the offensive in other areas too: immigrants, the environment, employment schemes, development aid...

Fortunately, it is dawning on organizations that are active in these areas that it is necessary to act together against the government's plans. A coalition called 'Turn the Tide' has been established in which social organizations and a number of opposition parties have come together. Discussion days and rallies are taking shape. The first important appointment is Budget Day (September 17), the day on which the government announces its budget plans.

Continued from previous page

This reality should be no surprise, because these are the very countries that pay the greatest price for capitalist globalization. Given that most people who leave their homes do so with virtually no resources as well as with the hope and expectation that they will return as soon as possible, then on both counts they will travel the smallest distance possible. This is important for all activists to take on board because these realities are completely ignored by the politicians and the media hacks who talk about the advanced capitalist countries as being full.

In a world where there is more and more movement of capital making profits from even plant or animal genes, from air, from water, any free movement of people is completely forbidden. These are the values of the world which the anti-capitalist left is working to change. Our anger at this inhumanity is one of the things which fuels our declaration that another world is not only possible but absolutely necessary. This world that we are working to build is one without borders, in which no one will be illegal and in which every person will have full rights. □

FORTRESS DENMARK

It's really too early to make any kind of qualified assessment of the longer term effects of the new laws on Foreigners and Refugees that came into force in Denmark on July 1, 2002. July is the holiday month in Denmark, most people and the political establishment are off to the beach with their buckets and spades and the newspapers are full of stories about Elvis being sighted (or the Danish equivalent thereof).

For now one can at least see that the first effects of the increasingly shrill xenophobic tone in Denmark has been a dramatic fall in the number of people seeking asylum here. This has already saved quite a lot of money and the establishment are quietly patting themselves on the back. Unfortunately, the whole package of reforms hardly took stage centre in the political debate. The social democrats (and even the left wing SF to an extent) silently agreed that 'something had to be done', even if they 'deplored' the tone adopted by the Liberal/Conservative regime and their cheerleaders on the extreme right. The social democrats are actually probably quite grateful that the right has grasped the nettle they were toying with whilst in government. They would certainly have put together a package that was less unpalatable for the unions (refugees working for their reduced benefits plus) and probably for the employers too - the Danish employers' organization has been icily cool over such solutions from the Liberal populists.

Protests were and are confined largely to the 'usual suspects' (Enhedslisten, AFA and so on) plus those who work with or have some insights into being refugees. The union of social workers annoyed the minister by encouraging its members to protest and a useful initiative called '7 years' (after the minimum time it will take to acquire citizenship and full legal equality) has been launched.

It's probably most useful to make an assessment of the reforms in-line with the overall strategy and thinking of the government. The ruling parties still retain a slim majority of support in recent polls despite a spectacular inability to meet any of their extravagant pre-election promises on welfare and taxation (except for the very rich). They have degraded a few environmental standards and promised longer jail sentences but these few swallows have made for a wet and windy summer. Their first attempts to structurally weaken the Danish trade unions have received a miserable reception from the employers who would rather 'stick with the devil they know'- the Danish negotiating system which guarantees a low level of disruption at the cost of reasonable wages and a high level of institutional union recognition. Really, the only area where the government have delivered is being nastier to foreigners, and even here strains have arisen.

Firstly, the balance within the governing coalition has tilted even more to the Liberals. The Conservatives and especially the Danish Peoples' Party have fallen in the polls. The DPP are perceived to have sold their social profile far too cheaply for influence on immigration - this, while not a non-issue to their supporters, is only a part of their appeal as a party which 'stands up for the little Dane'. The DPP will probably now re-maneuver themselves to a more critical, welfare-orientated populism, forcing the government to the centre and away from the bloc-politics of the last 9 months.

The second and more long-term effect is that this xenophobic binge has obscured any debate on the need for attracting foreign workers. Despite unemployment, there are massive bottlenecks in the Danish economy where foreign workers are needed. Unfortunately, these are often in areas that are not very well represented amongst refugees, which Denmark is so bad at absorbing. Foreigners are always welcome, so long as they are roughly the right colour, approximately the right religion and arrive on Denmark's shores with an adequate grasp of the Danish language and culture. More enlightened sectors of the Danish bourgeoisie are beginning to realize a more nuanced debate is necessary but can they shut their government up?

MW

TO IMMIGRANT AND IMMIGRANT SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATIONS:

APPEAL FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM FLORENCE 7-10TH NOVEMBER 2002

ASSOCIATIONS, TRADE UNIONS AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE started to prepare the European Social Forum which will take place in November 2002 in Florence, Italy, following on from the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre.

The European Social Forum is based on three major themes: neo-liberalism and globalization; war and militarization; democracy, citizenship and social rights. In this framework, the immigrants movements in Europe are directly concerned, precisely because the European Union has made control of immigration one of the foundation stones of its policy, with the closing of its borders.

The EU is currently preparing a new set of anti-immigration measures.

Following the electoral breakthrough of the far right and populist parties in several countries, the heads of government from Spain and Great Britain agreed on new measures for border control and the 15 countries of the European Union made immigration the central question of the Seville summit, aiming to achieve a hardening of their policy.

The presence of foreigners in Europe is accepted on the basis of draconian conditions that are difficult to meet. This creates a situation of precarity and marginalization for hundreds of thousands of immigrants who are condemned to earn their living in the black market. Demands for asylum are arbitrarily rejected, women's independence is rarely recognized, the right to join families is sometimes restricted. Police powers are constantly growing and the confusion between immigrants and delinquents accepted by leading figures in the European Union.

With the pretext of the fight against terrorism, Europe is hardening up and the ministers for home affairs of the 15 are discussing introducing a joint border police. The Italian parliament has voted for the stocking of fingerprints of foreigners

SPAIN: NO LEGAL WAY IN

The first ever Immigration Act in Spain was passed in 1985. Before that, the big waves of migration had either been outwards (first to the ex-colonies in Latin America, then into exile following the defeat of the Republic in the Civil War and finally in search of work in Europe) or internal (with hundreds of thousands moving from rural Andalusia to work in the factories of Catalonia).

Even as late as the mid-1990s, the foreign population was relatively small and contained a majority of EC-nationals. As workers started to arrive in bigger numbers from Morocco, West Africa, South America and the Philippines, they had little trouble finding jobs, even if poorly paid and in bad conditions, but huge problems coping with the Kafkaesque requirements for becoming - and staying - 'legal' imposed on them by the 1985 Act.

Despite certain changes (for the worse) the basic situation remains that people are expected to obtain an employment contract while still in their country of origin, produce this at the Spanish embassy to apply for a visa and only then come to take up their job, which is supposed to have been kept open for them for however long this process may last. Of course, this is not how the labour market functions and everyone knows it.

In the real world, with legal entry into the country virtually impossible, whole sectors of the fruit-growing and construction industries, for instance, have thrived on employing migrant workers who officially don't exist and therefore have no recognized rights. Never the less, combined pressure from immigrants and their supporters has forced the government to concede several amnesties, known as 'special regularization processes', for those who have managed to get in.

Charged with guarding the European Union's southern flank against 'illegal' immigrants, the Spanish government has obliged by reinforcing its coastal and airport controls and building massive walls around Ceuta and Melilla, its two North African enclaves. This does not prevent access - new immigrants continue to come in all the time - but does make it considerably more dangerous and lucrative for the 'mafias'. Countless hundreds have been drowned braving the currents of the Straits of Gibraltar or attempting the route to the Canary Islands in boats that are hardly seaworthy. There has been little difference between the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the Popular Party (PP) on this question.

Until fairly recently, migrant workers' main problems stemmed from state and institutional racism in the form of police harassment and the enormous obstacles in the way of obtaining permits. Immigration was not a major political issue and overt anti-immigrant racism (as opposed to that against Spanish gypsies) was generally absent from society at large.

However, a new, tougher Immigration Act was passed at the end of the PP's previous term of government and yet another, still tougher, one almost immediately upon its return to office. This, the focus on the 'immigration problem' at the Seville summit at the close of its EU presidency and openly blaming (illegal) immigrants for a sharp rise in crime, sent out a clear signal on what was considered legitimate. Racist outbreaks and simmering conflicts have become more frequent. The climate has changed.

When hundreds of immigrants occupied first one church, followed by another ten, in the centre of Barcelona in January 2000, they stirred up a tremendous surge of sympathy. Their determination and tenacity, together with the active support of several sections of society, managed to wring 'papers' from the government for practically all those concerned as well as opening the door for thousands of others.

Unfortunately, the occupation of a university in Seville, on the eve of the EU summit there, by over 400 migrant workers also demanding 'papers' did not meet with the same response, even though the government has been under more social pressure (including a general strike) than at any time since it first came to power, and so did not have the same success.

Rifts in the anti-racist movement will have to be healed, the global justice movement will have to be convinced of the need to become more involved, new alliances forged with the workers' movement and co-ordination sought with others across Europe if resistance is to be effective in the future.

BA 28.7.02

Continued from previous page

asking for residence permits, a potential danger.

During the ESF, there will be a forum 'Migrants against Fortress Europe'.

We will discuss the following subjects: freedom of movement and residence; the right to asylum; citizenship; independence of immigrant women; equal rights. On each of these points, we will seek to formulate joint demands which would encourage Europe-wide mobilizations.

In addition, we ask that questions relating to immigration, freedom of movement, the rights of migrant, immigrant and foreign men and women are discussed in all the themes because they are relevant to all of them.

To make the importance of these questions relating to immigration more visible we ask that the word 'Immigration' be added to the title of Theme III.

WE CALL ON YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN THE PREPARATION OF THE ESF AND TO PARTICIPATE IN IT.

FIRST SIGNATORIES:

Association citoyenne des originaires de Turquie (ACORT), Association des Marocains en France (AMF), ASECA, Association de solidarité avec les femmes algériennes démocrates (ASFAD), Coordination nationale des Sans Papiers (CNSP), DROITS DEVANT !, Fédération des associations franco-africaines de développement (FAFRAD), Fédération des associations de solidarité avec les travailleurs immigrés (FASTI), Fédération des Tunisiens pour une citoyenneté des deux rives (FTCR), Groupe d'information et de soutien des travailleurs immigrés (GISTI), Pour une véritable citoyenneté européenne (PVCE), Réseau pour l'autonomie juridique des femmes immigrées et réfugiées (RAJFIRE), Service national pastoral des migrants (SNPM), Parti communiste français (PCF), Union des juifs pour la paix et la justice (UJPJ).

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Guilty until proved necessary. Holding room at the Tijuana border crossing – the world's busiest

BRAZIL: PRINCIPLES FLOUTED

DANIEL BENSAID

Brazil's Workers' Party (PT) has, in the course of the past 20 years, developed a politics of class independence while accumulating a quantity of experiences in social struggles and municipal government, notably through 'participatory democracy'. These founding principles are being flouted in the run-up to the country's presidential elections.

The PT was born out of the wave of big engineering strikes in Brazil in 1979-1980. It was the combined result of the massive industrialization of the 1970s, which created one of the most concentrated industrial working classes in the world (particularly in the suburbs of Sao Paulo) and democratic resistance to the dictatorship (in particular, its attempt to control the trade union movement through a labour code inspired by the legislation of Mussolini's Italy). The establishment of the PT marked a cultural and historical break with the political traditions of a country largely dominated by the Church, the army and populism.

In its first electoral contests, in the early 1980s, the PT only gained 3% of the votes as a national average, with a peak of 10% in the state of Sao Paulo, linked to the particular strength of the workers' movement there and to the influence of its leader, Luiz Inacio da Silva, known as 'Lula'. This was, however, the point of departure for an experience of class independence on a national scale in a country the size of a continent, where the army and church had for a long time constituted the only really centralized forces.

Born out of an impetuous growth of the urban and rural mass movement, the PT implanted itself and developed through the 1980s to the point of being poised to win the 1989 presidential election. This progress was made on the basis of an energetic commitment to popular struggles. The PT's founding platform, without defining a programme or a precise strategic project, reflected the experience of recent struggles, expressed a strong class sentiment ('worker, vote for a worker') and a firm attachment to class political independence against all the populist compromises linking capital and labour in the name of the national interest. On the other hand, this mass but pluralist party was characterized by open debates on the conception of socialism, informed by international experiences (the influence of the Cuban revolution) and the experience of the different radical left currents (of Maoist, Trotskyist or Castroite origin) who had been involved in the formation of the PT. The recognition of currents, the presentation of conflicting motions and resolutions at party congresses, the representation of minorities in the leadership bodies have allowed, until now, albeit at the price of tensions and conflicts, the maintenance of the unity of the party; the legitimacy of the historic kernel of trade union leaders has helped the party avoid fragmentation.

In its 20 years of existence, the PT has accumulated experience in social struggles, the institutions and municipal leadership. It has twice won the municipal elections in the biggest city (Sao Paulo) and has governed for four terms in the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre. In a country where social inequality is brutal, the PT has not escaped phenomena of cooption or corruption (which led to it losing control of the municipality of Sao Paulo after its first term). It is, then, interesting to note that, contrary to the image given by the reformist currents, it is in Porto Alegre, where the party is at its most leftwing and radical, that its legitimacy remains the most solid. The experience of the 'participatory budget' seeks to develop forms of direct democracy and a sort of duality of power between the legal institutions and the citizens. Also, in organizing the two first World Social Forums, (in 2001 and 2002), Porto Alegre has in a way become the world capital of resistance to capitalist globalization.

With this autumn's elections the PT is approaching what is probably the sternest test of its history. The erosion of the political élites, the crisis which is shaking Latin America, the reorganization of relations between Mercosur[1] and Uruguay and the project of the Free Trade Area of the Americas opens a period of turbulence. Some months before the elections, Lula is leading the polls with around 40%, while the right's candidate is enmeshed in financial scandal. Fascinated by the possibility of victory, the PT leadership is already reassuring the bourgeoisie

through an alliance with the Liberal Party, guarantees to the employers' organization, reassurances to the IMF on the debt question and strengthened links with international social democracy[2]. There is no doubt that this course, contrary to the founding principles of the party, will lead to deep discontent and sharpened internal polarization, as already seen. □

1 *The customs union between Argentina, Brazil, andParaguay.*

2 *The PT has adopted José Alencar, a big textiles boss and leader of the Liberal Party, as candidate for vice- president. This will in fact do nothing to calm the dominant classes at a time when the socio-economic crisis originating in Argentina threatens to spread to Brazil and Uruguay. However, it could disarm the masses who are faced with attacks from the employers and landowners.*

ABOVE MST activists

BELOW Government troops arrest MST activists

PT left criticizes alliance with right

Ernesto Herrera

The alliance of Brazil's Workers' Party (PT) with the conservative and evangelical Partido Liberal (PL) and with a sector of the Partido Movimiento Democratico de Brazil (PMBD) has generated deep internal debate in the party and strong resistance from its militants.

On Sunday June 23, 2002, a large majority of delegates at the PL's convention endorsed the proposal of a joint ticket with the PT. The PL's senator, a textile executive, Jose Alencar, is the Vice-Presidential candidate and the PT's Jose Inacio Lula da Silva will be the Presidential candidate in October's national elections.

In the midst of Brazil's economic crisis and the sabotage induced by the "financial markets" and the lack of foreign investment, Lula and the majority of the PT's leadership are hoping the presence of Alencar on the presidential ticket will reduce the combined opposition of big business, the United States and the international creditors' organizations to a possible PT government in October.

Inside the left of the PT, the criticisms of this electoral strategy have become louder. The new strategy – which originates from the centre-right in the party - calls into question the PT's established programme of 'breaking' with neoliberalism, a policy around which the party came into existence. The critics of the new leadership policy are mindful that in a number of Brazilian states, the PL is allied with the worst enemies of the PT and in some areas, state leaderships think of the PL as being an "undesirable ally".

In addition, the critics say that the agreements with Alencar will have negative programmatic consequences in key areas such as the PT's policy of rejection of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (a treaty which has the support of Alencar), for the party's policy on agrarian reform (Alencar has opposed the land occupations carried out by the Moviemiento Sem Terra (MST)) and payment of Brazil's external debt.

On April 6, the Rio Grande do Sul state meeting of the PT came out categorically against the majority leadership's position for alliances with the PL and a sector of the PMBD. The meeting stated: "The national conjuncture, marked by the economic crises, the deepening of social impoverishment and the split in the conservative camp, raises the possibility that the PT can lead a broad movement of the masses through which it can win control of the Federal and several state governments. But such a possibility is conditional upon a tactic that transforms electoral differences with other parties into a debate about contrasting policies in a great mobilization that will polarize the country and put into motion millions of workers, youth, unemployed and all those involved in social struggles. Our alliances and our electoral tactic must be consistent with this objective."

In essence, the declaration was a demonstration and open repudiation by the PT rank and file "all over the country to the direction being taken in the negotiations, that contradicted the resolutions of the last National Meeting and which compromised our debate about political hegemony." The declaration concluded by demanding: "No to the policies of an alliance of classes. For the defence of our programmatic unity. No to alliances with the PL and the PMDB. For a broad discussion among party supporters around a programme for national and state governments."

Raul Pont (see accompanying interview) considers such an alliance a "waste of time".

Luciana Genero, a state deputy and a militant in the tendency, Movimiento de Izquierda Socialista, is of the opinion that "bringing the PL or the dissidents of the PMDB into the PT is like bringing your enemies into your own trenches." And Pedro Roque Grazziotin, state deputy and a member of the tendency, Articulacion de Izquirda, says, "At a national level, to please some people who are not in our camp, we're taking a step backwards. The unity of our political project is fundamental."

The debate and the resistance in the party to this new course are not limited to the electoral alliance with the PL and sections of the PMDB. It also raises for discussion the party's existing programme and which policies to implement - in the event of the PT forming the government – to deal with the external debt. In this context, many leaders of the PT's left have expressed criticisms of the policies put forward on this matter by Lula and his tendency. □

"An Alliance with the PL and PMDB is a waste of time"

Interview with Raul Pont

Raul Pont is a founder of the PT, a member of its national leadership, a federal ex-deputy, an ex-prefect (mayor) of Porto Alegre and a militant in the Tendencia Democracia Socialista. He is an arch-enemy of Brazil's right-wing bourgeoisie and an important driving force behind the democratic Participatory Budget. A candidate for state deputy, he is one of the more important politicians in the PT's socialist left. The following interview, by the Porto Alegre daily, Zero Hora, appeared on Sunday June 23, 2002.

Q Are you in agreement with the new orientation of the PT leadership on the need to negotiate the external debt rather than to stop paying it, a position the party defended in the electoral campaign in 1994?

A The position approved in Recife (12th national meeting of the PT, December, 2001) kept much of the programme of the party. It noted the need to carry out an audit by the government so that we might know the exact size of external debt, the composition of which the Central Bank will not reveal to the Congress and of which Congress has no details...

The new thesis triumphed because today, the largest part of the debt is in the private and not the public sector. The other question is that the external part of this public debt is small. The larger problem is the internal debt, which does not involve dollars, and whether or not to buy bonds and the problem of interest rates. If in 1994, the defence of non-payment of the debt had a very simplistic and generic quality to it, now I understand that the definitions are more precise.

Q And when the P.T. defended not paying, did it not know then that the greatest part of the debt was private and not public?

A With today's thinking, no. The debt changed a lot, and the foreign indebtedness of the Federal Government diminished because of the existence of the deficit and there are no new investments in the economy. Parallel to this, the government has a high income, which gives it an enormous surplus. Our criticism is that the government assigns this money to pay the servicing of the public debt, which grows greater each day...

When we used to say 'don't pay the debt', it was much more within the feeling of a call for a moratorium, of warning that the country would be placed in danger with so much money going towards servicing the debt. To call for not paying was the simplification of a slogan that indicated that public resources must go to other ends. The Recife meeting concluded that we ran the risk of excessive flag-waving, without much depth or content. That's why the party decided to put forward the call for an audit of the external debt and the call for its re-negotiation, to reduce the impact that the thesis of non-payment was causing.

Q Did this thesis of negotiation change the point of view of the PT about the International Monetary Fund (IMF)?

A The IMF continues being what it always has been: an agency of the US government. There is no single international organism, a United Nations Organization for finance, for example. The IMF is an agency of US policy and it's no use trying to sweeten the pill. It's enough to see what's happening in Argentina, where the country is bankrupt and the IMF is imposing new demands. What they want is to liquidate MERCOSUR so they can impose the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) upon us...

An electoral victory for the PT will not allow it to turn its back on the world. But it's essential to make clear that it's one thing to negotiate with a responsible institution, but quite another to negotiate with an agency of US policy. If a government led by Lula remains hostage to the IMF, it won't be able to bring forward the policies that the country needs and that we have been saying we will implement. If we remain hostage to the IMF, we'll not be able to bring forward a change in the profile of the debt, a change in the role of the state with incentives for economic activities to back the internal market, a change to better redistribute incomes and to permit the states and the municipalities to make their own financial arrangements. The IMF is opposed to all this which the country urgently needs. If we remain a hostage to their orientation, we won't be able change anything.

Q Are you in agreement with the policy of an alliance with the PL and with the policy of rapprochement with the dissidents of the PMDB? Aren't there comrades of yours who don't want to even talk to them?

A At no time or instance was it decided in the meeting that the alliances would have to be with the PL or with the PMDB.

I include myself in the list of the discontented. For me, talking about alliances with the PL and the PMDB is a waste of time. It would be more useful if Lula backed up Brazil's mayors, as it would be like a new federal relation with the municipalities that today are only allowed a ridiculous portion of the taxes collected. We must change this. If the states today have serious problems with the Federation, I believe that we should be saying we're going to change all that. We must tell the population how we're thinking about constructing the public budget. This is most important. We suggested amendments in Recife, but nobody in Lula's campaign is thinking about this.

Q Do you think Lula's behaviour is troubling to PT militants, here in Rio Grande do Sul where the party has a different profile than in the rest of the country?

A Not only here. Petitions are circulating. There have been declarations by municipal and state leaderships. Here in this state, we approved a document with a position opposed to any alliance with the PL and the PMDB. Throughout the country there's a large number of members who wish to see the PT going in another direction.

Q If the decision to make an alliance with the PL is adopted, do you think it will damage the PT?

A It could have very serious consequences. We saw this during the campaign in Sao Paulo, at the time of the second election of Luiza Erundina. Many militants of the PT didn't feel very enthusiastic about the way the campaign was run. In our case, when the militants don't go into the streets, it's difficult to carry a campaign.

Introduction and interview translated by Jess MacKenzie and Ernest Tate

Argentina: left faces elections

Jean-Philippe Divès

In the context of an ongoing process of crisis and mobilization that has continued in Argentina since the revolutionary days of December 2001, the anti-capitalist left is faced with considerable challenges. It must also surmount its own limitations.

The violent police repression of a 'corte de ruta' (road block) on June 26 outside Buenos Aires, with the firing of live ammunition and the killing in cold blood of two young unemployed piqueteros, led to massive popular indignation and a sharp deepening of the political crisis. Interim president Duhalde threw in the sponge and announced presidential and legislative elections for March 30, 2003.

Faced with a comatose Radical Party and a divided and weakened Peronist party, the polls now show progress for the two main opposition figures: Elisa Carrio, the leader of the 'centre left' who advocates a humanized capitalism shorn of its neoliberal excesses, with the support of sectors of the Church and one of the three main union federations, the CTA; and Luis Zamora, the only national deputy the demonstrators really consider as one of theirs, and who defends an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist orientation. Numerically weak, the movement launched last year by Zamora is however only a very minority component of what is called in Argentina 'the left'. This left is mainly Trotskyist, the remainder consisting of a small Castroist CP which says it favours socialist revolution, a Maoist organization (the PCR) which is fairly strong in the piquetero movement and the Humanist Party, which has a ecologist, feminist and anti-neoliberal profile.

The Trotskyist far left is the main organized political force and works inside the popular assemblies, the piquetero movement, class struggle trade union formations and unions outside the control of the bureaucracies.

It is however very divided, with four organizations with a nationwide presence: the Partido Obrero (PO), Movimiento socialista de trabajadores (MST), Partido de trabajadores por el socialismo (PTS), Movimiento al socialismo (MAS)) and a large number of smaller groups. This division is accompanied by exacerbated rivalries, self-proclamatory conceptions and manipulatory attitudes to the mass movement (practices which are also employed by other left formations, it should be said). Thus Trotskyists in general are perceived in a contradictory way: positively and with respect for their role in the struggles and self-organization, negatively and with mistrust for their tendency to substitute themselves for the autonomous movement using 'apparatus methods', a term commonly used and debated in the popular assemblies. Add to this the tendency of a certain kind of Trotskyism to overestimate its own reality as 'vanguard party', the relationship of forces and the immediate revolutionary potentialities. This was notably reflected at the last meeting of the National Piquetero Bloc (June 22- 23, 2002), the left wing of the unemployed movement, with the adoption of a resolution claiming that 'the question of power is on the agenda' (against a minority position that the immediate task was to win the majority of workers to a perspective of power), rejecting unity of action with the reformists and defending in general an ultra-left orientation.

These traits render improbable the appearance of a political alternative by the simple growth or even addition of the existing organizations. While his mass recognition allows him to play a key role, Luis Zamora has until now declined any responsibility for taking the initiative for the formation of a new political force. There is nonetheless an urgent necessity for a broad anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist political movement, unitary and democratic, capable of offering a positive response to the cry of rejection 'Que se vayan todos'! ['out with all of them']. It is to be hoped that revolutionary Marxist militants and currents can help them advance in this road, placing their experience at the service of the autonomous organization of workers and unemployed, and above all its political centralization.

Asia Pacific:

The convergence of resistance to capitalist globalization is giving birth to a new internationalism of social movements. The second 'Asia Pacific International Solidarity Conference' (APISC), held on March 29-April 1st of this year in Sydney, shows that this question is also an issue for militant political parties.

The Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) of Australia initiated these regional meetings; the first was held in Sydney in 1998. They reflect a long experience of Asian solidarity work in Australia (particularly in relation to East Timor, Indonesia and the Philippines). Their originality lies in the participation of revolutionary or progressive political parties with diverse histories and ideological references.

The revolutionary movement in Asia and the Pacific remains (and will remain) very pluralist. A desire for political dialogue and practical cooperation has been affirmed, a break with the sectarian traditions which were particularly marked in the 1970s and 1980s. The rise and convergence of social resistance to capitalist globalization now offers the parties concerned the chance to go beyond simple dialogue: they share new common international responsibilities, which should allow them to act together.

To some extent, the diversity of the Asian parties is hardly surprising: Asia is the most diversified continent in the world in terms of languages and cultures, colonial and contemporary history, economic development and social structure. However, there is more to it than that. The big international currents of the workers' and revolutionary movement have been actively present in this immense region, but none has durably ensured its preeminence (despite the temporary success of Maoism). Meanwhile, the new activist generations are increasingly less likely to identify with the references of the previous period.

The conference illustrated this state of affairs. Interparty relations are not yet stabilized in some countries (Malaysia, Burma...) or zones (the south Pacific). However, a dozen parties jointly ensured the continuity of the regional process. Some are of Maoist origin, like the Communist Party Marxist-Leninist – Liberation of India or the organizations that have emerged from the crisis of the CP in the Philippines. Others refer to Trotskyism, like the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) or the NSSP, the Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International; the Australian DSP itself was until 15 years ago the Australian section of the Fourth International. Others have a national history so specific that it *would be vain to try and pin an international ideological label on them: this is particularly the case of the People's Democratic Party of Indonesia (PRD), the Socialist Party of East Timor, or Power of the Working Class in South Korea.*

A renewal of generations is also palpable. The PRD in particular was built through the renewal of the struggles of youth during the years prior to the fall of the Suharto dictatorship. It is now three decades - a generation! - since the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was drowned in a veritable bloodbath.

The diversity is not only international. From the first APISC in 1998, the Philippine delegation included several organizations, even if the Socialist Party of the Philippines (SPP) was the

birth of a new internationalism

Pierre Rousset

formation closest to the Australian DSP. At the second conference last April, this was also the case with the Pakistani representation. The presence of movements involved in the liberation struggles of the 'occupied periphery' of the Indonesia was also confirmed. This national or regional pluralism should logically be affirmed still more in the future, in a growing number of countries.

The main difference between the first and second conference relates to the nature of the debates which took place. If in 1998 they were about showing a will for dialogue, a sentiment of solidarity and a hope for cooperation, in 2002 they concerned acting in common across Asia. The internationalization of the process of the social forum has allowed this desire to be incarnated and the progress is qualitative.

The World Social Forum (WSF) obviously involves much broader forces than those represented in Sydney. The conference declared its support for this process and for the Appeal of Social Movements adopted in Porto Alegre in January 2002, for the organization of the WSF of 2004 in India and, in the framework of the Asian Social Forum, for a meeting in the Philippines in spring 2003.

From the beginning, Asian movements have participated in the WSF (like the Focus on the Global South network, the Freedom from Debt Coalition of the Philippines or Thailand's Assembly of the Poor). However, the reference point of 'Porto Alegre' remains abstract or unknown for a large majority of militants in this part of the world. The perspective of holding a WSF in India and the emergence of a regional process changes this and helps build a common identity, based on solidarity, in this continent where 'regional blocs' are unconscious of each other and the dangers of war are very real.

The convergence of resistance to capitalist globalization offers a framework for a new internationalism of the social movements. The Sydney conference showed that political parties are also part of this process. Of course, all this remains fragile, in particular taking into account the political situation in many Asian countries (repressive crackdowns in the name of the 'anti-terrorist struggle'). Nonetheless, the experience is already far enough advanced to draw significant lessons, whatever happens in the future.

South Korea: power of the working class

Pierre Rousset

The South Korean workers' movement played a very important role in the resistance to the military dictatorship, a stance for which it paid a heavy price. The dynamism of the KCTU trade union federation is partly attributable to this heritage. However, unlike in the Philippines for example, no militant political party was able to establish itself on a nationwide basis before the 1990s. The violence of the anti-Communist repression is not the only cause of this. The geopolitical situation of the peninsula (near to the USSR, China and Japan), the terrible war of 1950-1953, the partition of the country, the installation in the South of US troops have obviously had lasting consequences. Seoul became a key player in the cordon sanitaire Washington threw around China.

The problem is more general and does not only concern the revolutionary movement: the military régime had built a vacuum around itself. In emerging from dictatorship, there was no live tradition of political pluralism, even in the bourgeois or classically reformist sense. New parties had to be established, but in a very particular conjuncture: the accession to democracy, symbolized by the election as president of the moderate former dissident Kim Daejung, took place under US control and as capitalist globalization began to impose its law. How then to build a traditional social democracy at a time when this latter is transforming itself, even in Europe, into social liberalism? A part of the old democratic opposition to the military régime is moreover now tempted by the constitution of a 'modern' bourgeois liberal party, and resigned to finding itself in the company of the heirs of the dictatorship and in frontal opposition to the workers' movement.

A wing of the KCTU is now trying to respond to the political challenge by supporting the constitution of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), a fairly broad organization but hardly capable of imposing itself at the electoral level despite its trade union support.

Some far left forces are also regrouping. Power of the Working Class (PWC) groups together dispersed militants nuclei from the era of the military régime, with programmatically Marxist reference points which are diverse but non-Stalinist and which bases itself on the class struggle tradition forged from the bloody crushing of the Kwangju uprising in 1980. This tradition is distinct from the National Front current, dominant at the time of the dictatorship and quite close to the conceptions (alliance with Kim Daejung in the context of a movement of liberation...) of the North Korean Communist Party. Although it has grown, PWC remains a numerically modest group, but with a real trade union implantation and an active role in the movement of resistance to neoliberal globalization (in particular the fight against South Korea's signing a regional free trade agreement with the USA). It does not at this stage contest elections. Its strength comes first and foremost from its roots: PWC represents one of the most militant traditions inherited from the founding experience of the years of struggle against the dictatorship and for the workers' movement's right to exist.

Philippines

Pierre Rousset

Following the Second World War, the revolutionary process in south east Asia was long dominated by developments in Indonesia and Vietnam. However, after the bloody crushing of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1965 and a decade later the historic victory (although achieved in very difficult conditions) of the Vietnamese resistance, it was in the Philippines that the continuity of struggle was affirmed with the most constancy.

From 1975 to 1985, the Phillipine revolutionary movement was dominated by the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines. The imposition of martial law in 1972 ended the initial pluralism of the far left: the PKP (a CP which had become pro-Soviet) capitulated. As for the anti-Stalinist Marxist currents (including a small Trotskyist group which disappeared without leaving any trace), they proved incapable of maintaining their activities. Despite heavy losses, the CPP organized, essentially alone, the mass resistance to the Marcos dictatorship and a dynamic guerilla struggle. It thus won a lasting hegemony. This hegemony fissured in 1985-1986, when the dictatorship collapsed at the time of the presidential election, under the convergent pressure of an immense democratic mobilization and a military rebellion. The CPP leadership did not believe that the régime could be overthrown according to a strategic schema that was so far from its dogma of the encirclement of the cities by the countryside. In the new conjuncture, some personalities and minority currents of the radical left (independent Marxists, Christian socialists) enlarged the field of their activities. The divergences inside the Maoist party intensified until the expulsion and splits of 1992. The pluralism of the far left was revived.

The crisis of the Maoist movement posed Philippine militants deep seated problems, as the world situation was transformed. They showed the need to integrate the experience of other countries and enter into dialogue with various revolutionary organizations. A very new approach for the groups that had split from the CPP. Thus, the regional structure of Manila-Rizal (the capital) grew closer to the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) of Australia. That of the central Mindanao (in the south of the archipelago), which took the name of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (RPM-M), established links with the Fourth International, inside of which it enjoys permanent observer status.

The political and organizational link established between the Fourth International and the RPM-M is an opportunity. With a thousand members at a stage when it has not yet gained legality, the RPM-M is a socially implanted organization, capable of acting on all terrains (mass mobilization, electoral campaign, clandestinity). It is also a test for the Fourth International: it must integrate a party with different traditions, bearer of the heritage of a militant generation which cut its teeth in the Philippines under the dictatorship, in the framework of a difficult guerilla struggle. One does not become Trotskyist in the European fashion in a country where this reference has no concrete historic reality. Thus the RPM-M defined itself, like the other CPP splits, as Marxist-Leninist (ML), to mark its rupture with the old orientation (the CPP identifying itself with 'Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought'). Whereas in Europe, the acronym 'ML' was appropriated by the Maoists!

Moreover, the process of establishing a new revolutionary party on the national scale is far from over. The RPM-M has attempted a fusion with other organizations originating from the CPP, in the centre and north of the country. This was a failure, in part because of the complexity of the political situation. The South lives in a latent state of war between the army and the Muslim forces. Armed groups proliferate (among them those of the CPP, which sometimes assassinates its former comrades). It is hard in these conditions to sign a peace agreement with the government which is not a capitulation. One wing of the unified organization accepted such an agreement, which the RPM-M in Mindanao rightly rejected. The fusion was then aborted. A new attempt at fusion is underway, between forces originating from the split of the CPP in the capital and close in particular to the DSP of Australia – an attempt that our comrades in Mindanao are following sympathetically, without wishing to involve themselves too quickly. Thus, even in a country where the Fourth International has consolidated links with an organization like the RPM-M, the question of revolutionary regroupment, in the context of a vast and long process of political recomposition, continues to be posed. □

The swearing in of Gloria Arroyo

Palestine: What future for the national liberation movement?

AYSHAH HANDAL, JULIEN SALINGUE, PIERRE-YVES SALINGUE*

After almost two years of confrontation, the Palestinian people have suffered a new defeat, with thousands of dead and wounded, thousands taken prisoner, an unprecedented degradation of its living standards and a deep dislocation of its social life. Accompanied by an immense feeling of frustration and a deep bitterness concerning the conditions that governed the lifting of Israel's siege of Arafat in Ramallah, which have been seen by the immense majority of the Palestinian people as an unacceptable compromise and an insult to the combatants and victims of this new uprising [1].

This new defeat calls for a collective reflection that can draw appropriate lessons for future political action. For this defeat is also that of a generation which, while combative and sometimes heroic, had no political strategy and was incapable of offering the Palestinian masses the perspectives for mobilization which were indispensable, given the political bankruptcy of all components of the Palestinian national movement.

The disarray and frustration of these militants is now considerable. However, we are convinced that they are ready to engage in reflection and pursue action. This text is intended as a contribution to this process.

From the Oslo trap to the reoccupation of the Territories

Imposed by US imperialism after the Gulf War and the crushing of the Iraqi people, the Washington peace agreements were a concentrated application to the 'Arab world' of the new world order.

The 'peace process' involved the normalization of the relations of the Arab world with the Zionist state through its submission to the imperialist order and required the existence of a political representation which was sufficiently legitimate in the eyes of the Palestinian people to make it accept the substitution of a partial autonomy under Israeli control for its historic national demands. Far from being the 'peace of the brave' proclaimed by Arafat, the Washington agreement of September 1993 turned out to be a fool's bargain for the Palestinians.

The famous 'peace process' has unilaterally served the unchanged Zionist projects of territorial conquest and led to a constant degradation of living conditions for the great majority of Palestinians. The pursuit of colonization with its inherent litany of expropriations, destructions of houses and fields, the construction of fortified towns protected by military camps, linked by roads which isolate the villages and prevent peasants from reaching their fields, the closures which prevent workers from reaching their workplaces and deprive them of resources, the grabbing of Palestinian land and water in particular, all amounted to violence against the Palestinians; a violence that the Palestinian authority excused by saying that 'everything will be settled at the final negotiations'.

To this violence was added the arrogance of a privileged layer who did not suffer the torments of the occupation (who, for example, could freely move about the territories, avoiding the multiple Israeli controls), the development of a bureaucracy linked to the PA apparatus, the development of phenomena of corruption and scandals sometimes revealing open and structural collaboration with the occupier, the total absence of democracy in decision taking, the irresponsibility of and impunity guaranteed to those close to the networks of power and so on. Far from being the polar opposite of the interminable negotiations, far from being 'an abandonment of the peace process', the events of the past 18 months, including in its exacerbated form the reoccupation of Palestinian towns, is the outcome of it.

The political bankruptcy of the Palestinian leadership and the absence of any serious alternative on the part of the organized political forces, notably 'the Palestinian left' [2] have allowed the putting in place of all the conditions facilitating the passage to a brutal and massive repression by

the Israeli government of national unity.

The situation opened after September 11 has allowed this government to move onto a higher gear. The military reoccupation of the areas under 'Palestinian autonomy' in late March-early April, 2002 did not come out of the blue. It was preceded by bombardments, 'targeted' assassinations of militants, killings of civilians, partial reoccupations of neighbourhoods, towns and refugee camps. It came after an intensification of the policy of closures of Palestinian towns and limitations on the right to movement leading in practice to its suppression.

Contrary to what many have said, Sharon had a strategy, which he has implemented with the necessary help of the Labour Party. Considering that the developments throughout 2001 invalidated the basic hypothesis of Oslo, namely the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to put an end to national aspirations and contain Palestinian frustration and anger in limits compatible with the security of the state of Israel, he drew the conclusion that it was necessary to profoundly redraw the map before resuming negotiations.

The common basis of the different possible scenarios was a major defeat of the Palestinian people, the crushing of its aspiration to national rights that had forcefully reemerged with the new uprising beginning in September 2000. This meant repression and mass terror, massive destruction with the aim of eradicating the material base necessary to the credibility of an independent state, the creation of a governmental vacuum through the political neutralization of the Palestinian Authority and, finally, through the destruction of the armed groups, many of which are outside the direct control of the Palestinian Authority.

In this offensive, Sharon capitalized on the errors of Arafat, who was incapable of ending his double game of pursuit of negotiations and militarization of the intifada, notably through the intermediary of Fatah. Now, because they think that the Palestinians will have to accept whatever is signed by their 'legitimate representatives', the US has taken on the responsibility of imposing a political solution that will be obviously anything but the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. It involves putting an end to the Oslo process, drawing the lessons of its weakness and taking into consideration the new relationship of forces after the recent action of Israeli 'military pacification'.

The objective is to neutralize the Israeli-Palestinian front for at least long enough for imperialism to pursue the offensive it is preparing in the Middle East and in particular against Iraq. The political commitment to a solution 'taking into account the right of the Palestinians to a state' is indispensable to the participation, or at least the neutrality of the Arab allies in the coalition against terrorism. The framework should naturally allow Israel to pursue its projects, starting with the integration of the principal settlements into Israeli territory.

This road of separation does not exclude the option of expulsion of the Palestinians, initially encouraging it and then provoking it on a larger scale if a favourable situation emerges. It is about making the lives of Palestinians 'unlivable', to close any horizon, to show that there is no possible future, to block any possibility of professional realization and social promotion, in short to create a continuous flux of candidates for permanent exile[3]. Those who cannot or will not leave will be cantoned in isolated and controlled zones.

On the directly political level, we see the establishment of a new protectorate under US hegemony with an 'international' facade. Closed and isolated zones, granted a limited autonomy in the West Bank and remaining under security control with perhaps a status of partial autonomy evolving more rapidly in Gaza (the provisional state?).
How did we get to this after 18 months of resistance and thousands of dead, wounded, imprisoned, not to mention the destruction?

The national movement during the Oslo years

It can be said that with the Oslo accords the Israelis and the US succeeded in marginalizing the PLO to the profit of the PA[4]. Thus the PLO, which represented the Palestinians living in the occupied territories and in the diaspora, became a reference without political or decision-making role; these were confiscated by Arafat and the small group around him, some originating from the PLO and some not, who constituted the PA.

The PA's political programme was fixed by Oslo: to negotiate with Israel (with the promise that this would lead to an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital), ensure the security of the state of Israel against any attack from Palestinians and assume responsibility for the management of everyday life for the Palestinians in the autonomous zones.

In reality the concerns of the Palestinians were different: the right to self-determination, the frontiers of the independent and sovereign state, the settlements, Jerusalem, the right of return of the refugees, the liberation of the political prisoners.

The political groups of the Palestinian left, opposed to the Oslo process, rapidly decided that Oslo was 'a fact that had to be dealt with'. They belonged to the PLO and justified their attitude by their will to not be cut off from the process led by the PA. The PFLP, DFLP and PPP[5] did not hesitate to get involved in the political game structured by the PA, without going so far as to participate in its political leadership.

Hamas took care to preserve its independence from the Authority, developing its political programme around two dimensions: firstly, a dimension of national liberation, resisting the Israeli occupation through armed struggle and secondly a social dimension of education of the people through the Islamic religion: 'Islam is the solution'.

The weakness of the organizations of the Palestinian left is evident from all the polls (support is around 5 %) and this bears out the observations one can make on the ground: the weakness of organized cortèges, the absence of public profile, absence of distribution of a militant press. It is sad to say and hard to believe but these parties now exist mainly through the distribution of communiqués and by their websites!

How can we explain this degradation of the situation for organizations that had experienced a real development in the course of the first intifada? The expectations of the Palestinian people were not changed by Oslo. In the autonomous zones, the corruption and incompetence of the PA were

notorious. However, these problems hardly concerned the political currents. Thus, a considerable gap grew between the Palestinian people and the political organizations of the Palestinian left. The leaderships of the political parties acted only in reaction to the initiatives of the PA and Arafat. This distancing of the links with popular concerns can be measured through the practice that these organizations have shared with the PA in the construction and bureaucratic administration of mass movements.

Take the case of the trade unions, of which the most important is the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU). After Oslo unification was imposed with quotas of representation of the four main political currents: Fatah, the PFLP, DFLP and the PPP. At all levels, the general secretaries belong to Fatah, while the others content themselves with

participation in the designated leadership bodies. Fatah is dominant while the other currents, and notably the PPP, which had a tradition of trade unionism, have seen their influence considerably decrease since this 'unification' from above. The PGFTU is, then, entirely under the hegemony of Fatah. The democratic process inside the union is non-existent and activity is limited to settling individual situations of conflict between employers and wage earners.

The situation of the movement for defence of women's rights is also instructive. The Palestinian Women's General Federation was formed after Oslo. It was the result of the cooption of all the women's committees belonging to the different political organizations. Other women's organizations have been converted into NGOs, in conformity with programmes decided by foreign financers who have transformed the organizations into providers of services and women into passive beneficiaries. This has widened the gap between the mass of women and the co-opted leadership of the movement. The student movement, which was a veritable nursery of political cadres, notably in the 1980s, has also been significantly weakened.

Such is the reality of the 'mass organizations' in Palestine, a weakness due on the one hand to their dependence on the political parties and on the other to their dependence on the PA and foreign donors who have paid millions of dollars in subsidies to create a passive network of dependent beneficiaries and not a movement of actors fighting for their rights.

Because of the absence of development of real mass organizations, the political forces have reduced their action to a social activism, trying to respond to the demands stemming from everyday problems, deserting the terrain of the political struggle and allowing a corrupt Authority to corral the national struggle in the impasse of endless negotiations with Israel. Such a situation has encouraged the people to seek individual solutions to their problems by approaching the best placed parties; this is most often Fatah, sometimes through the intervention of Arafat himself, since he concentrates in himself the essential powers, notably that of the signing of cheques!

For these same reasons the population was encouraged to seek protection and power inside their 'tribes' and families to the detriment of all independence, or to fall back into the isolation of religion. Women were particularly affected by this phenomenon, which threatened the conquests of the first intifada.

The uprising of September 2000

The uprising of September 2000 was not the sign of a conscious and organized break with the policy of submission and capitulation imposed by the PA. This spontaneous uprising of an exasperated population was above all the result of a frustration and political disarray rooted in its concrete existence. This exasperation was perceptible well before Sharon's provocation in September 2000.

The uprising was the sole means the Palestinian people had to compensate for the bankruptcy of the Palestinian leadership, whose strategy has progressively led to a situation of total political and material dependence on US imperialism, Israel and the most reactionary Arab régimes. If it revealed the maintenance of a popular will to attain the historic objectives of the independence struggle, this uprising also revealed the impotence of those who should have channeled this energy and combativity into a programme, a strategy and objectives renewed in the light of the experience of the Oslo years.

The two dominant political currents were able to recuperate the popular uprising, wasting again the energies of a new generation. Raising forceful but vain slogans like 'the Intifada until victory' (Fatah) or 'killing the Jews will weaken the state of Israel' (Hamas) and practicing the sole road of armed struggle, increasingly reduced to bombings, these two currents have prevented the construction of a democratic mass alternative to the Authority. They have succeeded thanks to the absence of any alternative, the Palestinian masses being compelled to choose between armed struggle and capitulation! This uprising has been left without perspectives and instrumentalised. The PA, (Arafat and cronies mainly), the nationalist and the Islamic political forces, the groups around this or that local leader have encouraged the development of armed minority actions; and this in the greatest disorder and without any collective democratic debate[6]. The bankruptcy of the left organizations is explained firstly by a complete inability to analyze the relation of forces and its recent evolutions.

The organizations and currents of the national and the Islamic movements are as one on this subject. Any halfway serious analysis of the reality of the state of forces, the consequences of confrontations, the real impact of the Israeli occupation and repression on the people is systematically avoided. Even when they describe quite faithfully – in order to very legitimately denounce them – the various attacks and destructions visited on the Palestinian civil populations, the appeals of these organizations invariably end in the reaffirmation of the 'invincible determination' of the Palestinian masses. The rhetoric of the unbreakable resistance of the people is transformed, sometimes into a veritable blindness[7].

The suicide bombing are also systematically instrumentalized, with the help of the satellite television chains owned by Arab billionaires which broadcast videos of martyrs, devoid of any political message[8] and transform acts of political despair into heroic victory. For sure, the rhetoric of the invincibility of the just cause serves primarily to avoid dealing with the responsibilities for the defeats and tragedies of the Palestinian people.

The appeals for 'resistance to the Israeli offensive by all means', launched in the days before the treacherous agreement allowing Arafat's 'liberation' from Ramallah, without any serious analysis of the resources available, the appeals for demonstrations when curfews had been imposed on Palestinian towns[9], none of this can be reduced to an isolated incompetence. It is necessary to have never shared the terror which grips the people of the camps and villages when the helicopters attack and when the tanks pull up inside inhabited zones, crushing all in their path, to realize the imbecilic nature of the discourse of the 'invincibility of the struggle of the united people'. Alternatively, you need to have an interest in denying reality for fear of having account to settle, like Arafat who after his fine words on 'Jeningrad' did not dare to go to the camp at Jenin!

Denying the gravity of the blows suffered and their consequences for the consciousness and capacity of struggle of the Palestinian people one avoids facing up to a key moment of any strategy of struggle: drawing the lessons of the phase just finished and looking to the future. Today the unavoidable question is: What balance sheet should be made of the strategies and leaders who have exposed an unarmed people to the brutal and massive aggression of the enemy army? What balance sheet should be made of the leaders who decide to foist a

confrontation on the civil population, who they have lulled for years with songs of peace, without the least preparation and the least means of defence?

Incapable of channeling the inevitable desires for 'revenge' that stem from the killings of political leaders and militants, incapable of mastering the dynamic that was unleashed, following a perfectly established plan, by the various Israeli attacks and incursions against the refugee camps from October 2001 to February 2002, the PFLP and the DFLP and Fatah have shown their total incapacity to develop an alternative to the catastrophic line of the PA. Each refuses to face the central problem of forms of struggle in the current situation of the relation of forces and notably the question of the pertinence of armed actions and particularly attacks on civilians which have allowed Israel to draw the Palestinians into the trap of a total confrontation.

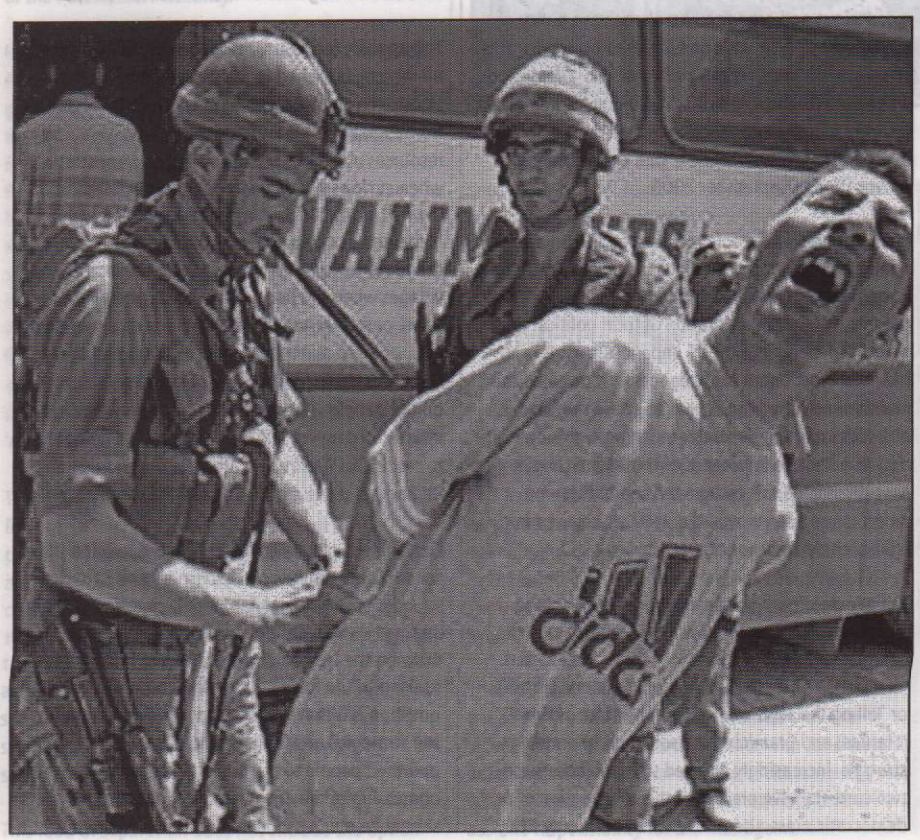
A new phase

To say that the entire framework put in place since the declaration of principles and through the Oslo years is now bankrupt is indispensable. However, it is not enough, for the question of what new strategy to implement is obviously posed.

There is a strong temptation for some to return to the past, draw a negative balance sheet of the Oslo phase, renounce the PA and try to revive the PLO. The affair could be simple because in fact the PLO no longer exists. Marginalized by Oslo and the PA, 'the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people' is no more than an empty shell, carefully conserved by those who think they might still need it. Like Arafat, who revives the corpse to make it seem like he is reforming his mode of government. Like the leadership of the PPP, for whom the PLO provides a cover for its open collaboration with the PA (the PPP is in the government). Thus, in an appeal issued in May 2002 the PPP's Political Bureau proposed, after a long inventory of the weaknesses of 'the leadership', that the PLO and particularly its executive committee be reactivated. The PFLP also regrets the paralysis of the PLO and denounces any attempt at marginalization of this 'conquest of all Palestinians'.

The PFLP does not participate in the PA. It has even refused to benefit from any of the 'advantages' linked to the establishment of partial Palestinian autonomy, declining, for example, to solicit from Israel the right to return to the occupied territories for its exiled political cadres. Still, while not participating in the PA, qualified as the 'product of Oslo' by Abu Ali Mustapha in May 2000, the PFLP does not wish either to be outside the political game set up by Oslo. In these conditions, the PLO is a useful alibi: when the leaders of the PFLP meet Arafat, they can say that they are meeting the president of the Executive Committee of the PLO!

In Palestine, many militants and former militants are aware of the responsibilities of the PLO in the engagement of the national movement on the catastrophic road of Oslo. Many also experience the reality of its current situation: marginalized in the years of negotiation, the PLO has been totally non-existent over the last 18 months and notably in the recent months of the Israeli offensive. Yet it is not easy to turn the page and envisage the pursuit of the struggle 'without the PLO'.



The difficulty is all the more real in that the militants of the Palestinian left wage their combat in a great isolation, far from the debates and actions which have progressively allowed the actors in the struggle against capitalist globalization to renew the link with the broken thread of anti-imperialism and struggles of social liberation. For many of them the fall of the USSR remains the central explanation of the rut into which their struggle has fallen since the Gulf War. References to the old Nasserite populist nationalism and a Stalinized and dogmatic 'Marxism-Leninism' are insufficient for grasping the meaning of the rising tide of the Islamic nationalism of Hamas or understanding the relations of complementarity between the Zionist state and the general expansion of capitalism.

The pathetic spectacle of Arafat demanding US redemption shows how dramatic an error it was for the PLO leadership to subject its fate to US arbitrage. The total unconditional support given by US governments to Israel stems from the link uniting the undisputed leader of world imperialism to the colonial power invested with a key political-military role in the defence of the interests of capitalist globalization in this region.

The necessary appraisal of this dimension will recognize the will of the Arab and Palestinian bourgeoisies to integrate themselves in the framework of capitalist globalization, albeit in subaltern position.

The growing evidence of the impasse represented by calls for 'justice and respect for the law' and the endless appeals for the intervention of the 'international community' indicate the return of the anti-capitalist social dimension of the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people. This dimension will be reinforced by the aggravation of the crisis of Israeli society, where the rapid development of social inequality can only indefinitely be masked by the scapegoat of the 'terrorist danger'.

The programmatic refoundation that the national liberation movement requires must necessarily approach the central question of implementing a strategy favoring the rupture of Israeli workers with the chauvinist ethnic-religious nationalism which dominates their society today. Taking account of the place occupied by the Palestinians in the Israeli proletariat, this demands that any new project of national liberation integrates fully their role as 'second front' inside Israel itself.

The same clear affirmation of the anti-imperialist dimension of their struggle could allow the Palestinians to transform the spontaneous sentiment of the Arab street and favor its insertion *in the struggle against imperialism and war. Today* the symbol of the frustration of the Arab masses, support for the struggle of the Palestinians can be transformed into a vector of anti-imperialist awakening and a motor of action against the submission of the Arab régimes to capitalist globalization and against their policy of insertion in

the world capitalist order. Embodying the confrontation between imperialism and the Arab peoples of the region, the struggle of the Palestinian people could thus favor the coming together of the mobilizations developing in the Arab countries with the movement against capitalist globalization.

By challenging the social order and the autocratic regimes, a Palestinian left could combat Islamicism and contest its pretensions to incarnate anti-imperialism and the struggle for independence. An open collective democratic debate, without preconditions, is now a necessity. The tragic outcome of the Oslo 'peace process' has revealed the strategic impasse of the Palestinian national movement. If they want to bar the road to the growth of the Islamic forces and avoid a new disaster the militants of the left must analyze the reasons for popular disaffection, understand the crisis of legitimacy of the PLO and engage in a strategic and organizational refoundation. Only democratic discussion will allow the framework of this necessary recomposition to develop, the important thing today is to begin, without prejudices and taboos.

And now?

While Arafat thought that the development of violent actions would exert pressure on the US and Israel, the transformation of the uprising into minority armed actions led it onto a terrain where the relationship of forces was totally in the favour of the Israelis. Far from seeing its margin of maneuver enlarged, the Palestinian leadership is increasingly captive to the Israeli and US demands. This is borne out by the current parodies of political reform and the organization of elections under constraint.

Beyond their grotesque character – the PA refusing to apply the decision of the court of justice to free [PFLP leader] Saadat two days after Arafat's speech on the necessary separation of powers, for example – we must understand the political meaning of these new submissions of Arafat to the Israeli and US demands. The fact that the new government is essentially a carbon copy of the preceding one[10] should not hide the growing submission to these demands in the field of security (repression of resistance to the occupation) and finance (control of the use of the funds granted to the PA).

What can elections mean in the absence of democratically debated national political programmes and thus the absence of possible choices for the people? The PA's acceptance in advance that Palestinians living outside the occupied territories are excluded from this vote is a prefiguration of the capitulations to come, notably concerning the right of return of the refugees. How, moreover, can a people vote when it is under occupation, confronted with permanent military repression, subject to constraints which stop it fulfilling the basic acts of everyday life?

What counts today is to respond simultaneously to the challenge that the US and Israel have thrown down and the frustration and bitterness provoked by defeat. Participation in the elections under conditions set by the occupier and its international supporters will not allow the necessary renewal of political action inside the Palestinian community. The lesson should be drawn of the integration of the Palestinian political forces in the 'peace process' and the subsequent political dilution and loss of efficacy which the parties integrated in the 'Oslo current' suffered.

The only elections envisageable would be elections capable of providing the bases of a new legitimacy, free elections which could allow the Palestinian people as a whole to discuss and define the fundamental bases of the emergency programme needed to resolve the key problems of everyday life and face the continuing colonial aggression according to democratically decided modalities and forms of struggle. Beyond this, the election of a new constituent assembly would allow the discussion indispensable to the elaboration of a new political programme expressing the objectives and the means of social and national liberation proposed to all Palestinians wherever they are today.

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* *Ayshah Handal is a Palestinian feminist and political activist. Julien Salingue and Pierre-Yves Salingue are members of the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR – French section of the Fourth International). They visited the occupied territories for several months in 2001 and 2002.*

1 *We refer here to the imprisonment under US-British control of the PFLP militants in Jericho, arrested after a farcical trial held in Ramallah in the presidential palace besieged by the Israeli army and the green light given by Arafat to the exiling of 13 militants hiding in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.*

2 *The only attempts to rectify the situation were made by individuals who, while respectable, were without solid links with the Palestinian masses, like the appeal of the 20 in late 1999 (see IV 326).*

3 *Some sources indicate the departure of 150,000 Palestinians since September 2000.*

4 *PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization. PA: Palestinian Authority.*

5 *PPP: Palestinian People's Party; PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.*

6 *In Bethlehem we witnessed numerous situations witnessing to the arbitrary and individualist nature of decisions to carry out armed operations, against the Gilo settlement or during different occupations by the Israeli army in October 2001, March and April 2002.*

7 *Thus in a recent interview (May 22, 2002) with the newspaper Al Bayan, PFLP leader Leila Khaled says that 'Sharon and his army foundered on the barricades of Jenin'.*

8 *In recent months these have been exclusively centered on a discourse of revenge and no longer even mention the political objectives of national liberation.*

9 *As in Bethlehem where, when the town was under curfew, members of the committee of organization of the intifada called for the women and children of the camps to demonstrate at the Church of the Nativity which was surrounded by the Israeli army, at the very moment that the governor of Bethlehem called on Christians and Muslims to go and pray before the PA buildings destroyed by Israeli planes!*

10 *Involving generally the same collaborators and corrupt ministers, like Jamil Tarifi, minister of civil affairs, head of a public works company who has made a fortune building the roads linking the settlements on the West Bank.*

Morocco/Spain: the isle of discord

FREDERIC ADAOUI

On July 11, 2002 a small band of Moroccan troops occupied a rocky, uninhabited island in the Straits of Gibraltar, sparking a conflict with Spain. The island is known as Perejil (Parsley) by the Spanish and Leïla by Moroccans.

After two weeks of standoff, the Bush administration, concerned at this conflict between its most faithful allies in the western Mediterranean, brought the game to an end with the withdrawal of the Spanish soldiers who had expelled the Moroccans from the island.

The little island has become the symbol of the remaining Spanish enclaves in North Africa, last relics of the empire (Morocco also claims sovereignty over other enclaves such as Ceuta, Melila and so on). Its symbolic reoccupation by ten Moroccan police officers allowed the Aznar government to use methods that had been thought reserved for the Basque country. Morocco is already stigmatized and considered as the main source of illegal immigration and the drugs trade in the region, but remains a key pivot of US imperialism in the area, particularly after September 11. The occupation of the island might then seem mysterious, but several factors lie behind it. While tension with Spain is always a factor, there are also internal questions at play. Firstly, the landing on the island coincided with the marriage, amid great pomp, of the 'sovereign'. Three days of feudal feasting with a progressive veneer – the first public marriage of a monarch from this dynasty – supposedly to symbolize the alliance of a 'popular monarchy with its monarchist people'. The occupation was intended to rally public opinion behind the palace.

The situation in the Western Sahara was undoubtedly also a factor, with Morocco wishing to stress its inviolable character. Spain remains attached to the UN plan for the future of the region (involving a referendum on self-determination), but there is no majority support for this inside the EU and the UN plan has in any case been effectively buried by the US mission led by James Baker, envisaging autonomy for the area within the framework of the monarchy and postponing any referendum to the medium term.

However, the perspective of an end to the conflict carries certain dangers for the security apparatus, inasmuch as the conflict in the Sahara has served to justify the maintenance of a military force of 200,000 men. The army enjoys a position of strength within Moroccan society; it alone can contain popular uprisings or riots and the lack of legitimacy of the political establishment allows them to interfere increasingly in everyday life. The government, then, is seeking an external outlet for its internal bankruptcy, combined with a forced legitimization of the role of the military. Not a week goes by without the discovery (or rediscovery) of enemies: Polisario Front, Algeria, Spain... not to mention South Africa and the African Union whose very essence seems to threaten 'national integrity'! (according to the newspaper Maroc Hebdo). Throw in a more immediate problem: on the eve of elections, did the ruling USFP hope that, through warlike rhetoric, it could counter the growing influence of the Islamicists who multiply their shows of strength at each demonstration of support for Palestine?

1 *Former Spanish colony invaded by Morocco. The Polisario Front is fighting for its independence.*

BELOW: Moroccans migrating to Spain

Turkey: coalition falls apart

A general election in Turkey seems likely in November, against a background of political and economic crisis. IV's correspondent in Turkey, Erdal Tan, spoke to Masis Kürkçügil, a member of the leadership of the ÖDP [1] on the origins of this crisis.

Q What is the background to the current situation?

A The current government, a coalition of the nationalist and populist left in the DSP, the fascists of the MHP and the liberals of the ANAP, has run out of steam, undermined by economic crisis and divergences over the process of joining the European Union (EU).

With the economic crisis of February 2001, per capita income fell. The government survived only in the absence of a credible alternative and had to 'import' a saviour from outside, Kemal Dervis, deputy director of the World Bank. His programme for recovery, supported by the IMF and the bourgeoisie, has stopped the hemorrhage but increased unemployment, inequality and the foreign debt.

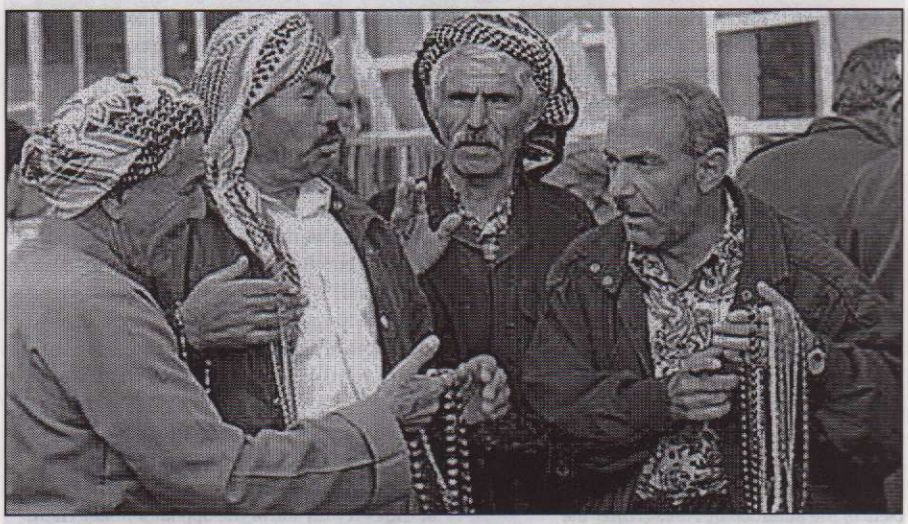
The government parties then fell back on politicians' rhetoric to seek a margin of maneuver and defend their identity. Anap took up the cause of democratic reforms for EU membership; in reaction, the MHP dropped its 'moderate' profile (adopted to please the bourgeoisie and the army) and returned to its classic ultra nationalist discourse. Suddenly, the DSP was in the very uncomfortable position of holding the balance. This continued to the spring, but collapsed when it became clear that the state of health of Prime Minister Ecevit (78 years old and suffering from Parkinson's disease) rendered him incapable of continuing in the role of arbiter.

The subsequent political paralysis led the bourgeoisie, concerned to convince the EU to open negotiations for entry from next year to try to obtain, with the support of the media and the army, a change of Prime Minister and the departure of the MHP from the coalition; the latter is opposed to joining the EU.

Q Why was this not possible?

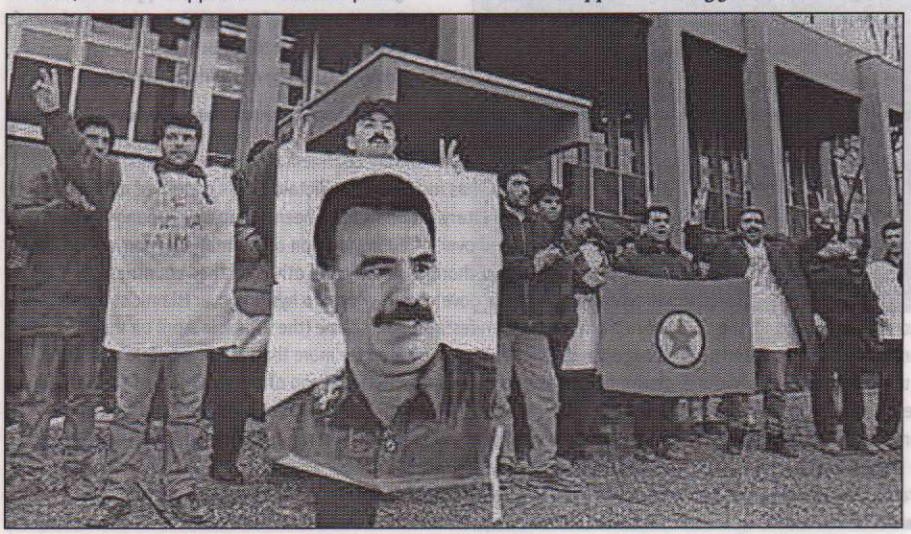
A Even sick and totally isolated, Bülent Ecevit refused to give up power and has total control of his party. The troika, made up of Cem (ex-foreign minister), Özkan (former right hand man of Ecevit) and Dervis (economic bigwig) tried to convince Ecevit to give up, but in vain. Threatened with being eliminated by Ecevit, they preferred to form a new social democratic party, The New Turkey Party, bringing with them half the parliamentary group. The government has thus lost its majority and what little political legitimacy it had.

Seeing that it was a maneuver to eliminate them from the government, the MHP called for elections. This was supported by the opposition,



ABOVE: "No cameras when we're busy..." – group of Kurds bargaining

BELOW: Supporters' rally for the PKK



Parliament has been recalled for an extraordinary meeting and the electoral process now seems irreversible.

Q And now?

A With the parties divided and split on left and right and the current electoral law, more than half the electorate could be deprived of parliamentary representation and a single party could grab effective control with hardly 20% of the votes... so it's likely to be a mess! □

NOTES

1 The Party of Freedom and Solidarity, a political regroupment in which the Turkish section of the Fourth International participates.

Tunisia: the democratic opposition

In a referendum held on Sunday May 26, 2002, Tunisian President Zine el Abidine ben Ali, in power since 1987, won the right to run for re-election in 2004 and 2009. Under key changes approved in the plebiscite, which drew a 99.52 percent 'yes' vote according to the régime, presidential term limits were removed and the age limit for a presidential candidate was raised from 70 to 75. Ben Ali, 65, therefore now has two more chances to stand for office after his third term expires in 2004. The Tunisian regime has long been accused by international human rights organisations of suppressing political and press freedoms.

Sadri Khiari is a founder member of the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (CNLT) and part of the leadership of Raid (Attac Tunisia). He has been forbidden to leave Tunisia for the past ten years. Here he expresses his personal view of the situation in Tunisia after the referendum. This interview was carried out by Charlotte Daix for the French revolutionary socialist newspaper, 'Rouge'.

Q What is the state of the democratic opposition?

A Crushed by repression, the opposition had progressively disappeared since the early 1990s until the setting up of the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (CNLT) in December 1998 and the hunger strike by the journalist Taoufik Ben Brik.

Since then, despite the persecutions, associations and parties have been set up, others have found a second breath, declarations and publications have been circulated clandestinely or on the web, public meetings have been held, others forcibly dispersed. These initiatives still only involve a few people, but the number of participants continues to grow.

The referendum which allowed Ben Ali to modify the Constitution – which forbade him from running as a candidate in the elections of 2004 – led to a politicization and even a radicalization of the discourse of the democratic opposition. The question of human rights remains central but the challenging of the regime and its institutions takes on more and more prominence. Thus the demand for a constituent assembly is now broadly shared. If the convergences are strong inside of the opposition, divergences continue to exist. There are two lines:

charfism[1] which presents itself as opposed to the Islamicists, privileges the search for channels of negotiation with the regime, relying on an internal evolution of the latter, with a little push from the Europeans;

marzoukism[2] has a clearer perspective of rupture with the current regime, considering that it is possible to find points of agreement with the Islamicist movement in the struggle against the dictatorship without falling under its hegemony.

Other currents claim to represent a third way but in truth whatever they think they are polarized along one or the other of these lines. The unification of democrats that some call for can only happen today on a somewhat *charfist* basis.

Q Is the repression still as strong?

A Yes, arrests, tortures, trials, beatings in broad daylight, persecutions of all sorts are part of the everyday life of the oppositionists. There are today nearly a thousand political prisoners. Some, like the Islamicist leader Ali Laaridh, have been held in isolation for 12 years. They have all been condemned to long years in prison following farcical trials, like Hamma Hammami, the spokesperson of the PCOT[3]. Last week, the most well known of the 'cyber democrats', Zouhayer Yahiaoui, known as Ettounsi, was arrested. He could be imprisoned for years. The goal of the operation is to stop the internet becoming a space of contestation, which it is already for a growing layer of youth which radicalizes through online forums.

Q What are the links between the trade union movement and the democratic movement?

A At the same time as the rebirth of the democratic opposition a movement of anti-bureaucratic opposition appeared inside the UGTT, the sole trade union federation, until now strictly controlled by the regime. This dissidence has opened breaches inside the trade union apparatus and oppositionists are now represented in some bodies, including the executive bureau. However, their margin of maneuver remains weak.

Outside of the far left - very active but muddled and often sectarian towards the democrats - the opposition concerns itself very little with the trade union movement and more generally economic and social questions. Such an attitude does not favor the overcoming of the opposition's major handicap, the weakness of popular opposition.

Over the past three years, there have been riots by school students and unemployed youth in the south of the country and some strikes here and there but without any effect of accumulation. Discontent is growing in nearly all layers of the population but cannot yet express itself in an active manner or organize itself. We need to act so that the social tensions which are on the horizon, due to the current serious economic problems, lead to a real popular mobilization. 'Raid' is trying to stress the capital importance of two things from the point of view of the struggle against the dictatorship:

- the social question, which is increasingly acute with the progress of economic liberalization;
- the insertion of the opposition and the trade union movement in the dynamic of international struggle embodied in the movement against neoliberal globalization.

1 *From the name of Mohamed Charfi, former minister of Ben Ali who went over to the opposition.*

2 *From the name of Moncef Marzouki, president of the Congress for the Republic.*

3 *Communist Party of Tunisian Workers.*

Tunisia: hunger strike

Radhia Nasraoui, a human rights activist and a lawyer well known for defending prisoners of conscience in Tunisia, has been on hunger strike since June 26, 2002.

The strike is a protest against restrictions on her right to visit her husband, the Tunisian oppositionist Hamma Hammami, who was sentenced to 3 years and 2 months in prison in March 2002 after 4 years spent underground.

The hunger strike has been supported by all the independent associations in Tunis and several of the opposition parties. A campaign of solidarity has also been launched in France. An estimated 1,000 political prisoners are languishing in Tunisia's jails; some of them, like Ali Laraïdh, the leader of the Islamicist Party, have been in solitary confinement for twelve years.

The 'war against terror' has increased the dictatorship's margin of manoeuvre; since September 11, military tribunals have been set up to try young Tunisians who have been handed over, often in violation of international conventions on human rights, by the authorities in Italy and other 'brother' countries.

Nonetheless, while the government whips up hysteria over Islamicist terror, when the first real manifestation of it came (the attack in April on the synagogue in Djerba), they hesitated for more than 10 days before admitting that it had been a terrorist incident. It is a sign of the weakness of the Ben Ali regime and its inability to deal with crisis situations. All the more reason to demonstrate our solidarity with Radhia Nasraoui and demand the right to life, citizenship and liberty in Tunisia.

Olfa Tlili

Send messages of support to: nasraouira@netcourrier.com

China: rebellion in the rust belt

ROLAND LEW*

The Peoples Republic of China (PRC) has joined the WTO (World Trade Organization), not without difficulty and after 15 years of determined effort by a regime which is described as post-Maoist but which is in fact anti-Maoist in its social and economic logic. The next congress of the CCP will be held in the autumn. It is supposed to draw a balance sheet of the Deng Xiaoping years and organize the succession, or the appearance of succession, to the direct heirs of Deng around Jiang Zemin.

The congress should also review the economic evolution of a country which is increasingly open to the international market economy (or rather ratify agreements made by the leadership) as well as the progress of privatization. All this in a context of persistent social crisis which, having affected broad sectors of the peasantry, is now hitting workers, particularly those in the state-owned sector of the economy, almost everywhere but most particularly in the old bastions of heavy industry in the north of the country and in the oilfields of Daqing. In Liaoyang, capital of Liaoning, and in Daqing, there has been significant workers' agitation following massive layoffs[1].

Social crisis and WTO entry

In December 2001, the PRC officially joined the WTO. For the régime, it was the victorious outcome of a long battle. For the so-called international community and above all for world capitalism, it was good news, with the prospect of a China more solidly tied to the market and the constraining laws of capitalism, under the leadership of the WTO

policeman. For the so-called reformist current of the CCP it promised economic benefits and the culmination of the new course which had begun modestly at the end of the 1970s and since then has completely transformed the economy and the social nature of the 'Communist regime' established by Mao in 1949.

And the people? Many promises have been made to them. They should, they have repeatedly been told, benefit from the effects of the new economic policies, including in terms of jobs. Consumers, for their part, were to enjoy better and cheaper access (because of lower customs duties) to the consumer products of the industrialized countries, considered to be of better quality and thus more prestigious for those who can get hold of them.

While these happy days are awaited, the social crisis continues and deepens. Social agitation has reached explosive levels in some northern regions of the country. The prerequisite of China's integration in the world economy is a gigantic restructuring of the economy and, since the mid-1990s, the state sector in particular. This latter had until then constituted a pillar of the régime of 'actually existing socialism' – a socialism which was largely non-existent but reasonably favorable to the workers' living conditions – and accounted for the brunt of the industrial sector. The restructuring led to a new extension of the private or semi-private sector, and to massive layoffs, open or disguised, of state sector workers.

Heavy industry in China has been significantly concentrated in the northeast, in the three provinces of the former Manchuria, occupied by Japan from the early 1930s. The Japanese authorities transformed these regions into zones of heavy industry to meet their war needs. In 1949, the Chinese Communists inherited this potential; in fact, it was the only heavy industry they had at their disposal. The new Maoist regime set up heavy industrial factories in other regions (or in Shanghai, before 1949 rather dominated by light industry). The northeast would remain, however, the main centre of Chinese heavy industry, in particular the province of Liaoning and its capital Liaoyang. Liaoning was for some decades the only province of the country that was not in its majority agricultural.

It was in this part of the country that the Chinese would discover their first significant oilfield at Daqing, in the province of Heilongjiang, which for a long time provided a welcome self-sufficiency in the strategic area of oil. The oilfield of Daqing, established in a very voluntarist manner by the regime in the early 1960s, became one of the big Maoist projects; it was supposed to illustrate the precepts of the Great Helmsman, the Chinese road to socialism, starting from nothing. A little like the steel town Magnitogorsk in the USSR, constructed in the middle of nowhere in the early 1930s and the incarnation of the 'socialist' city of heavy industry in the Stalinist mould. Daqing was to demonstrate a capacity for self-sufficiency, to bear out the Maoist precept of 'relying on one's one strength'. It was also intended to ensure self-sufficiency in oil for a country largely turned in on itself and living by its own means, including in terms of food resources. Up to 200,000 people worked at Daqing. It was one of the big symbols of Maoism, the pride of the country, which had in a few years freed 'socialist China' from the fear of having to depend for its energy needs on an external world which was hostile to it.

Whether Daqing was as self-sufficient as the régime claimed remains to be seen. Other experiences in China, which were equally famous for having admirably put into practice this Maoist self-sufficiency, have been revealed as very illusory. Whatever the truth, the oil sector and Daqing in particular constituted the apple of the régime's eye and a sector which was well protected.

Even in the years after Mao's death (1976) the oil lobby was strongly represented in the summit of the party and government; it was a power to be reckoned with. However, the logic of the market and of capitalism (private and state) have changed the situation and overturned the relationship of forces.

Workers' explosions in Liaoyang and Daqing

The most serious workers' explosions of recent years have taken place in Liaoyang and Daquing where the effects of the

restructuring of the state sector have been most keenly felt.

The northeast has become the Chinese 'rust-belt', covered with obsolete factories which are unprofitable according to the current economic logic, and in the face of international and indeed national competition. Liaoyang, with a population of 1.8 million inhabitants, is the capital of the province of Liaoning, which two or three decades ago had the highest standard of living per inhabitant of any Chinese province (not counting the three big cities, Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin, which have the status of provinces), and the highest rate of urbanization. This city is now ravaged by unemployment, which affects between 60% and 80% of workers in the state sector. A disaster which is all the more serious in that nothing, or very little, has been done to prepare for this collapse, establish alternative industry or respond to the problem of social protection of workers peremptorily thrown out of work.

Hence the explosion of a revolt which for many represents a revolt of despair. Nonetheless one can also hope that it represent the real beginning of a significant independent workers' movement.

The reasons for an explosion

Tens of thousands of acts of workers' opposition of every kind have taken place nationwide – some official sources speak of more than a quarter of a million 'incidents' at work for 2001, growing constantly from one year to another. The surprise is that the revolt is not clearer and sharper. The worst frustration stems from the rapid devaluation of workers' symbolic and real status. China has never been a 'workers' state' in the sense of being a state of the workers but undoubtedly the condition of workers in state-owned enterprises in the cities was not bad in comparison with the past and also with the living conditions of the peasants. It was a protected status, envied by the rural majority, and increasingly so to the extent that the country made economic progress, even if the wages paid were modest and dependence on the enterprise authorities, themselves subject to the 'Communist regime', was total. All this was situated in an economic logic that was generally much less decentralized than the Maoist discourse implied.

Today the worker in the state sector is subject to mass layoffs, sometimes without warning; officially, 25 million have been laid off since 1998. The worker, the supposed master of the country in the Maoist epoch, is viewed with contempt by the old elites, now reconverted, and this is still more true of the burgeoning new social elites, openly and even aggressively capitalist. Workers do not always receive the payments due to them when they are laid off and prior to this, the payment of their wages is often late. Unemployed, they might not necessarily receive the often modest unemployment benefit, or might have to wait many long months to get it.

Worse still, social security (pensions, unemployment pay, health care, housing) depends to a great extent on the enterprises, as has been the case since the beginning of the PRC. The central regime's stated desire to establish a national or at least regional social security system has not yet yielded significant results. However, the enterprise does not have the means to ensure this social security, or often does not want to. In any case, some enterprises have ceased their activity or have merged with others and no longer recognize their old obligations.

Clockwise from top left:
Building workers on lunch break
Jiang Zemin
Jiang Zemin speaking at Harvard
Factory workers in hostel

All this is accompanied by rampant illegality. The theft of goods, the monopolizing of public assets by local managers, associated with private entrepreneurs, all this is seen by everyone. Corruption is generalized, as any Chinese person knows. Social inequality grows apace. The new privileged, often former cadres and heads of enterprises, flaunt their wealth with a rare insolence. In Liaoyang, where poverty is evident everywhere, one finds (as everywhere in urban China) luxury cars, gleaming shops, bars for the rich. There is a kind of triumphalist desire on the part of the nouveau riche to flaunt their prosperity and bad taste, to humiliate the poor. This is the new China, that of the CCP, which now officially exalts the entrepreneurs as the new motor force of 'socialist' China! Not astonishing, then, that cynicism is prevalent. Corruption and gangsterism are found at all the levels of the city hierarchy. The head of the party in the city of Liaoyang is openly hated by the people.

Undeniably, if one reflects soberly on the manner in which tens of millions of workers are treated, one can understand the breadth of social tension and be astonished that it does not lead to a general revolt. For the moment, the people are unhappy or worse in both town and country, but retain from the distant past, and also the years of social atomization induced by Maoism, a great capacity to endure, adapt, find ways to survive with stoicism and often a lot of decency. However there is also, sometimes, banditry, delinquency or despair.

In China today agitation is widespread. However, as often in the past, it is first and foremost to remind the masters of the day of their former obligations rather than to challenge their legitimacy. This is a big difficulty in the constitution of organized forces of opposition, and in particular a workers' movement capable of a real independence of action and demands. It is true that experience is lacking in China. A little – less than what was believed for a long time – in the mid-1920s through the influence of the early CCP. A little again, outside of the Communist and nationalist parties, in Shanghai, around 1946-1947. Very little in the Maoist and post-Maoist period, and often against the regime, which harshly represses any sign of workers' independence.

From Daqing to Liaoyang: the forms of workers' protest

In Liaoyang and Daqing, the will to struggle was shown in the spring of this year, but on the basis perhaps of exasperation, indeed despair. In Daqing, agitation began on March 1, 2002. Tens of thousands of workers went onto the streets, to defend their threatened jobs or obtain layoff payments that had not arrived, but also in defence of their social security which had also been threatened. The regime did all it could to isolate the movement and ensure that it was not reported in the national media. There were as many as 50,000 people on the streets and some people were wounded in clashes with the paramilitary police. The local authorities even claimed that the movement was infiltrated by the banned and persecuted 'Fanlun Gong' religious group, a way of frightening the workers, discrediting their action and justifying a severe repression. The action of the demonstrators was led independently from the official structures: the workers chose their own delegates.

The movement in Daqing influenced the action in Liaoyang, a town situated nearly 600 kms from Beijing. Revived, rather than influenced, one might say, because this city, which is fast becoming an industrial desert, had already experienced some agitation in spring 2000.

On March 11 of this year 5,000 workers, most of whom had been laid off from state enterprises, made their way to the municipal headquarters (as is often the case in periods of agitation). They demanded the payment of unemployment benefit due to them, sometimes for as much as two years, while denouncing corruption and the embezzlement of the money owed to them. They, too, elected delegates. The movement spread and on March 18, 2002 30,000 workers from 20 factories in the city demonstrated to demand the liberation of their leader, Yao Fuxin. Yao, a 53-year-old worker from the state iron alloy factory who had been arrested the evening before by plain-clothes police. On March 19, 2002 there were again 10,000 to 20,000 people demonstrating with banners, slogans and portraits of Mao.

On the banners were slogans like: 'To steal the money of the retired is a crime'. Slogans of this type, like the portraits of Mao and the petitioning of the municipal authority, are characteristic of workers' demands today: they are a reminder of obligations, promises or conquests from Mao's time, and those contained in the implicit contract between the régime and the workers, namely social protection and the guarantee of work for life in exchange for the workers' allegiance to the régime.

On March 20, 2002 a significant deployment of police, assisted by soldiers, proceeded to arrest the three other leaders of the movement. This arrest followed a demonstration of 10,000 people who shouted, among other things, 'the people are hungry and want work'; the city authorities rejected

dialogue with the demonstrators and forcibly evacuated a group of about a thousand demonstrators who occupied the administrative buildings. In the following days, hundreds of workers demanded the liberation of their detained leaders. On March 28, 2002 500-600 workers went again to the town hall and asked the authorities to free their representatives. In total, five workers' representatives were still imprisoned at the end of May. An international campaign was launched for their liberation[2]. The tenacity of the demonstrators and their will, as shown in Daqing, to freely elect their representatives and protect them from repression, reveal a new maturity of workers' action, an orientation towards an autonomous workers 'structure' (it is too soon to speak of a union).

However many aspects of the workers' action reveal the old traits, respect, allegiance, or in any case fear of the authorities, the representatives of the régime. The workers, from this point of view, do not behave differently – or let's say not completely differently – from the traditional Chinese, or the peasant of today. If the regime is not popular and even held in contempt, particularly for its corruption and scorn for the people, it is still the incarnation of the ruler who must be handled carefully. Even if one thinks of them as thieves and exploiters, it is in a very long peasant tradition to recall reciprocal duties rather than to prepare a struggle to reject an illegitimate regime. It is also possible that the acts of allegiance mask a real mockery, a turning of the slogans and rules of the régime against itself, a way of setting it in contradiction with its proclaimed principles. However, this prudence reveals a weakness in relation to the regime; the painful absence of an independent organization and a conception independent from the empty discourse of the régime, the 'Chinese socialism' which nobody believes in any more. The class confrontation is implicit, de facto, rather than conscious and desired. Nonetheless, real progress towards a greater workers' autonomy has been made. How much? At what speed? With what impact on the regions and sectors characteristic of current economic development, where the new Chinese working class is being forged? These are the key questions of the current period. □

NOTES

PHOTO: Zhurong stockmarket

1 *I would like to thank Marie Holzman for having generously shared with me her documentation and thinking on the strikes analyzed in this text. She has written a more detailed study which will appear in the revue Politique Internationale (Paris) in autumn of 2002.*

2 *See* China Labour Bulletin, *publ Hong Kong.*

* *Roland Lew teaches at the Free University of Brussels.*

MARX AND ENGELS: DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARIES

PAUL LE BLANC

Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough, by August H Nimtz Jr (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 377 pages; $71.50 hb, $24.95 pb

August Nimtz tells us his book's three central themes are: **1** Marx and Engels "were the leading protagonists in the democratic movement in the nineteenth century"; **2** "they were first and foremost political activists, and not simply 'thinkers'"; **3** their practical political experience was central to shaping their theories. An African-American scholar who has previously published *Islam and Politics in East Africa*, Nimtz is a professor of political science at the University of Minnesota. An association with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the United States is suggested in the footnotes of this volume. But the value of his work transcends organizational boundaries, and some of the insights in his book are rooted in a familiarity with on-the-ground politics consistent with the experience of Marx and Engels.

A blend of revolutionary theory and action

Nimtz honors Hal Draper's "insufficiently heralded work on Marx and Engels". Draper's four fat volumes *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (published by Monthly Review Press) plus his three-volume Marx-Engels glossary, register, and chronicle, as well as Richard N. Hunt's two-volume *Political Ideas of Marx and Engels* broke much of the ground that Nimtz covers. But here, in a single volume of 300 clearly written and well-documented pages, we get a survey of much previous scholarship but, more important, a survey of the writings (including the correspondence) and the political activities of the two revolutionaries.

An initial chapter on the context and beginnings of Marx and Engels's revolutionary partnership is followed by three chapters on their involvement with the Communist League and the revolutionary upsurge of 1848-49. Next comes a fine chapter comparing the thought and political activity of Marx with that of liberalism's intellectual hero, Alexis de Tocqueville. Another chapter shows that the long 'lull' in the class struggle, stretching from 1850 to 1861, was one in which Marx and Engels remained engaged in practical and organizational work – which formed an important prelude to their involvement in the International Working Men's Association (the First International of 1864-1876), to which Nimtz devotes three more chapters. The final chapter focuses on Engels's political work in the years between Marx's death and his own.

One could use this as a guidebook for the 50-volume Marx-Engels *Collected Works*, and also as a political biography worth setting beside David Riazanov's classic *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*. More than this, it offers a challenge for those drawn to the spirit of Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach – that the point for revolutionaries is not simply to understand the world but to change it. Nimtz is not content merely to reproduce the ideas of his two subjects. He interacts with them and offers interesting ideas and interpretations.

There is a refreshing rejection of Lenin-bashing as he emphasizes an elemental and multi-faceted continuity between Marx, Engels, and the Russian revolutionary. He also is severe in his rejection of the kind of 'class-baiting' that some working-class activists indulged when disagreeing with some of Marx's ideas. (We are all inconsistent, of course, and Nimtz himself does some class-baiting of those 'petty-bourgeois' academics – such as the late pro-Marx but anti-Lenin Richard Hunt – who disagree with Nimtz's own interpretations.) One of the best features of the book is the many times he draws our attention to Marx-Engels quotations and ideas with which most readers are unfamiliar. For example, he points out that the young Engels was inspired by the Seminole Indians' resistance to 'White European encroachment' in 1830s Florida, commenting that both Engels and Marx were confident in "the ability of the oppressed to overcome their oppression". He touches on points of relevance to national liberation, anti-racist, and women's liberation struggles. He also very usefully traces the importance of the peasantry and the centrality of the worker-peasant alliance in the thought of Marx and Engels.

More than this, the relationship between capitalism and democracy, according to Nimtz, is illuminated by the fact that "the 'self-organization of the working class' in the second half of the nineteenth century was responsible for the democratic breakthrough, that is, the institution of 'universal suffrage,' and the acquisition of civil liberties." In this he cites the important 1992 study *Capitalist Development and Democracy* by Dietrich Rueschmeyer, Evelyne Stephens and John Stephens (though equally relevant is Geoff Eley's just-published *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*).

Essential in the thrust of working-class democracy, Nimtz documents, were the intellectual and practical-political labors of Marx and Engels in the Communist League, in the 1848 upsurge, during the quiescent interlude that followed, and then in the years of the First International and the Paris Commune. The serious-minded political work (not just theorizing) of Marx and Engels for twenty years before the First International's founding in 1864, we are shown, was essential in enabling them to play a central role in its development. And Nimtz is especially good in conveying a sense of the crucial importance of the First International in the larger political developments of the 1860s and 1870s, and particularly in the development of the labor movements of Europe and North America.

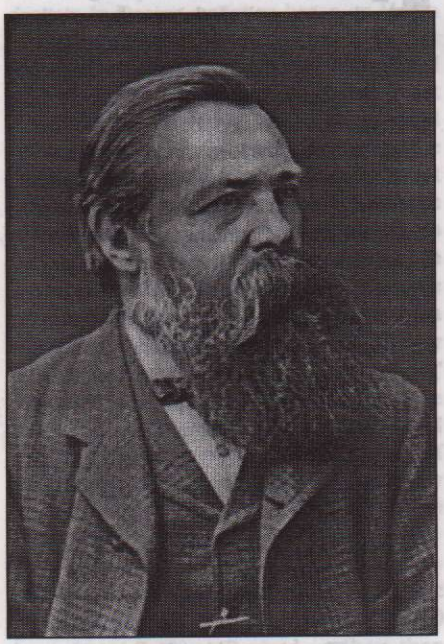
Class, revolutionary transition, democracy

Yet the book also provides some less positive surprises. There is an odd and recurring fuzziness around the basic Marxist concept of class. The term 'working class' is defined as "employed manual labor outside of agriculture". This dramatically narrows what one finds in the Communist Manifesto and Capital: the working class consists of those making their living through the sale of their ability to labor. Nimtz also uses the term middle class quite loosely – sometimes seemingly to imply that it is similar to 'petty bourgeois' or perhaps to 'non-manual' employees. In the Europe of Marx and Engels, however, the term referred to the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class (the upper class being the landowning aristocracy).

At times this confusion seems to intrude into Nimtz's discussion of practical political

questions. While more than once he stresses the importance in Marx's and Engels's strategic thinking of the need for a workers and peasants alliance, there are times – especially referring to the tumultuous revolutionary events of 1848 – when he speaks of a broader 'people's alliance' that would include workers, peasants, the petty-bourgeoisie (one assumes this means small shop-keepers, artisans, and craftsmen), and 'sections of the middle class'. This multi-class coalition, Nimtz makes clear, is to bring into being a multi-class government. Such conceptions have been utilized, since the 1930s, by Stalinists and reformists to rationalize class-collaborationist (and ultimately disastrous) 'People's Front' efforts.

That this is not Nimtz's intention is clear from much else in his book – for example, his subdued but explicit criticism of aspects of Marx's 1848 activities, his explicit rejection of both Stalinism and reformism, and his useful emphasis that the key political texts of Marx and Engels are the Communist Manifesto, their 1850 *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League*, Marx's 1864 *Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association*, and Marx's 1871 classic *The Civil War in France*.



Taken together, these four works provide a clearly revolutionary working-class orientation. More consistent with these texts and with what Marx writes in Capital are later Marxist analyses that Nimtz ignores – by Ernest Mandel, Harry Braverman, and others – indicating that a process of 'proletarianization' has been making more and more sectors of the labor force (among agricultural laborers, service workers, so-called 'professionals', and so on) part of a working class embracing the great majority of the people in more and more countries throughout the world. Nimtz's drift into 'multi-class' strategic conceptions might be overcome with greater clarity on the question of class.

Perhaps worse is his double bungling of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Marx and Engels saw as political rule by the working class, what many now call a workers' state. The term 'dictatorship' is not meant to imply rule by a small group, but rather the fact that – in the structure and policies of the new revolutionary state – the 'cards are stacked' in favor of the working class, just as, even in the most democratic republic today, they are stacked in favor of the capitalist class. Revolutionary socialists often point to the short-lived Paris Commune of 1871 as a positive example.

In 1891 Engels commented: "Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Marx, in *The Civil War in France*, described it as follows: "The Commune was formed of municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class." Far from being the instrument of a single revolutionary party, the Commune's elected representatives were from several different parties. A more descriptive term for the regime favored by Marx and Engels would be workers' democracy.

Nimtz disagrees.

First of all, he denies that a workers state can co-exist with a capitalist economy. Nimtz uncharacteristically criticizes Engels for asserting that the Paris Commune (which did not have time to eliminate capitalism) was an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat (workers' rule). "Engels may well have overstated the case of the Commune to score points," Nimtz insists, adding "it seems reasonable to conclude" that Marx would have preferred to view the Paris Commune as "the dictatorship of the people's alliance, that is, an alliance of the proletariat and its allies ..." In his footnotes, he cites an article by US SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters that elaborates the concept of 'workers and farmers government' – which asserts that a workers' state cannot exist until the capitalist economy is eliminated through revolutionary nationaliz-ations, that revolutionary regimes that have not yet done this should be called workers' and farmers' governments.

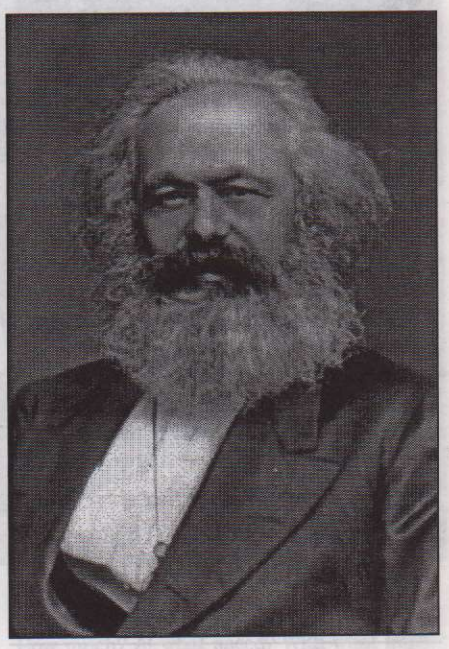
One can only assume that Nimtz would also reject the standard interpretation offered by Lenin in 1919: "'Soviet power' is the second historical step, or stage, in the development of the proletarian dictatorship. The first step was the Paris Commune. The brilliant analysis of its nature and the significance given by Marx in his *The Civil War in France* showed that the Commune has created a new type of state, a proletarian state." Contrary to Nimtz's convolutions, it would seem that Lenin and Engels were accurately representing the views of Marx that, quite simply, a workers' state must first come to power in order to initiate the process of eliminating capitalism.

Nimtz also throws a question mark over the democratic content of the notion of workers' rule. After all, he asserts, the Communist Manifesto calls for 'despotic' policies. This may be utilized to offer a 'Marxist' rationalization for undemocratic policies of 'revolutionary' regimes, but it seems inconsistent with the Manifesto's embrace of "the proletarian movement [as] the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority".

It is illuminating, therefore, to turn to the actual passage where Marx and Engels use that word. They tell us that "the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy". They tell us that the working class will use this political supremacy to "wrest by degrees" control and ownership of the economy from the capitalists.

They elaborate:

"Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are



unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production."

The 'despotic' inroads are not directed against democratic structures – they are, in fact, designed to utilize the political democracy achieved by the working class for the purpose of creating economic democracy: socialism. Nimtz's questioning of the centrality of democracy in the revolutionary transition period brings him uncomfortably close both to Stalinist and to anti-Communist interpretations of Marx. Once we push past such theoretical tangles, we see that the realities confirm Nimtz's own central assertion in this book that Marx and Engels

were "the leading protagonists of the democratic movement" of their time.

Revolutionary organization

Fortunately, such theoretical tangles do not intrude into most of this study. Somewhat more intrusive is the way Nimtz discusses the organizational question – he makes reference to the "Marx-Engels team" and "the Marx party" so frequently, and in such varied contexts, that confusion is inevitable – especially since "the Marx-Engels team" appears to be simply another way of saying "Marx and Engels", and what is meant by party is more often than not referring "to a political tendency and not an organized current" (and can include sometimes just Marx and Engels, sometimes those who agree with the basic ideas of the Manifesto, sometimes old friends from the stormy days of 1848, sometimes those who agree with Marx and Engels inside the First International).

But as Marx's biographer Franz Mehring put it, "their supporters, as Marx himself admitted, did not represent a party." Nimtz prefers a different way of putting it – that, more often than not, "the party was still not convinced that circumstances required an organized formation". Nimtz all too often seems to be straining to make the political activity of Marx and Engels equate with his own conception of Leninism. He demonstrates quite well that the logic of Marx's practical work is consistent with the logic of his theoretical work. It can be argued, without any need for straining, that both are consistent with the theory and practice of Lenin. But there are new elements that Lenin himself developed – it is not necessary to expect Marx and Engels to have done everything!

The direction in which Nimtz is going seems, however, entirely valid. Marx's detractors and even some of his partisans generally miss a key aspect of what he was doing. To the extent that they look at his practical political activity at all – especially his conflicts with others inside the labor and socialist movements – they tend to see a tactless, impatient and argumentative ego, somehow lining up and manipulating various pals, more often than not hurling polemics and mobilizing cliques that were "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

What Nimtz is able to highlight is a much more consistent, coherent, principled mode of operation on the part of a numerically fluctuating current of co-thinkers. It has political meaning. There is a correspondence between analysis, strategy, tactics. What Marx and Engels and their various comrades hoped to accomplish was related to how they functioned – even without an organization – and they were able to have a profound impact in the broader organizations and movements of which they were part. Such efforts contributed to the later crystallization of socialist workers parties in a number of countries. More work needs to be done – by activists no less than scholars – to understand all of this more clearly. As part of that effort, Nimtz has provided a valuable contribution. □

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT FACES A CASH CRUNCH:

OUR MOST URGENT APPEAL OF THE YEAR

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT now faces the most serious financial situation of the year. We don't have the money to pay for this issue because of the slow payment of invoices. We need the help of our distributors to ensure we can publish the next issue by collecting in as much as possible in September. Please send us payment for any issues you have sold, preferably before 20th September.

We're getting there....

There's some good news this month. The last issue of the magazine got to readers much more quickly than the issue before. The July-August issue, which was completed in the last week of July, arrived with most readers in Europe and North America around the second weekend in August. This is still much slower than we want, but it represents less than one half of the time it took the last issue to get to readers. We need more readers to tell us when the magazine arrives by emailing the arrival date, and their location, to me at by616@hotmail.com

.... but the deficit is choking us

However, the summer is always a time when supporters have other priorities. Many of our readers are busy organising for the Fourth International's youth camp, for activities in the new college year, or for a well-earned rest! As a result, our income is often low in August. After last month's appeal, income in August was much higher than normal – but it was still not enough to cover move than three-fifths of our expenditure. As a result, the magazine's deficit is close to 4000 euros. This amount is large enough to call the production of the next issue into question, because the entire deficit comes out of the pockets of the volunteers who produce and distribute the magazine.

As mentioned in last month's issue, our distributors in The Netherlands are working towards a major payment, and we have also been told to expect a similar contribution from comrades in Japan. Our production team will use the next week to focus on our largest unpaid invoices. However, the distribution of IV is much less concentrated: every distributor can help us by paying for outstanding issues of the magazine.

As always, we love to hear ideas, comments and (most valuable of all) criticisms that will help us to make IV more like the magazine we want it to be. Please email your ideas to us at international_viewpoint@compuserve.com

DC

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