

INTERNATIONAL



VIEWPOINT

Enough.

USA:
opposition to
the war

**Fourth
International
world
congress**

**Latin America
strikes back**

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT



COVER: remains of the desperate Iraqi flight to Basra at the end of the last Gulf war

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LETTER TO READERS

Whatever the final pretext, the unleashing of a US-led assault on Iraq now seems imminent: here, we publish the viewpoints of US socialists on the impact of the war drive on the domestic political scene and the emergence of a movement of opposition to the coming war among American trades unionists.

As this issue is being sent out the Fourth International's world congress will meet in Europe, bringing together hundreds of revolutionary socialists from five continents to assess the tasks of Marxists in the coming years. Penelope Duggan introduces the discussion at a congress meeting in a world situation which has changed dramatically since it was initially planned.

The new wave of radicalization in Latin America continues to deepen: our next issue will contain coverage of the challenges facing the new Lula government in Brazil. In this issue we focus on developments in Venezuela, Ecuador and Argentina. We print a declaration by the Fourth International which characterizes the current 'general strike' as "part of the counter-revolutionary strategy to overthrow the legitimate democratic government of Chávez and to crush the process of self-organization and self-defence among workers, students, and the people".

Since our last issue, the victory of populist colonel Lucio Gutiérrez in the Ecuadorian presidential elections has been confirmed - in this issue Fernando Lopez Romero analyzes this breakthrough in the historical context of Ecuador over the last two decades.

IV continues its in-depth coverage of the Argentine revolt with a lengthy photo-essay by a leading US author on the Latin American region, James Cockroft, who argues that "what is taking place is nothing less than the fight for a second revolution for independence".

Future issues of IV will carry extensive coverage of the coming World Social Forum in Porto Alegre - here we carry a brief report on the recent Asian Social Forum held in India, described as "a landmark event, an exhilarating beginning".

The triumph of the Islamist AKP party in Turkey was seen by some more excitable bourgeois journalists as another manifestation of the 'fundamentalist danger', but, as Turkish journalist Yeter Dursun argues here, the threat is rather that the AKP attains a durable grip on power as a pole of bourgeois and pro-imperialist stability - in a situation where the Turkish left is a long way from constituting a credible alternative pole of attraction.

In our review section, Michael Löwy examines the legacy of Che Guevara and his search for "a distinct model of socialism, radically opposed in many respects to the 'actually existing' bureaucratic caricature".

Finally we carry an appeal for support for a victim of the 'war on terror' - Theologos Psaradellis, a courageous opponent of the regime of the Greek colonels and a former far left activist who has been imprisoned and falsely accused of involvement in the shadowy November 19 grouping.

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USA: war and the Democrats' panic

We publish here the editorial from the January issue of the US journal *Against the Current*



The reason for the Democrats' latest debacle in the 2002 midterm elections is obvious: Ralph Nader. It must be. Hasn't Ralph been blamed for almost everything else?

On a more serious level, in a country evenly polarized between two capitalist parties, representing the center-right (Democrats) and hard right (Republicans) with their subordinate factions (respectively, the liberals and the extreme social-religious conservatives) in tow, a small electoral swing produces sharply magnified results.

That's what occurred in November, 2002: a small numerical shift that has given the Republican Party and Bush administration firm control of both houses of Congress and the leverage to carry through their agenda of war, 'homeland security' and tax giveaways to the wealthy, even if much of this package is disliked by a majority of the

population. Why? The key factors are generally well-known and not too complex.

- September 11, 2001 transformed George W. Bush's image from illegitimate usurper and international flyweight to organizer of the world crusade against terror. Call it Osama bin Laden's gift from one fundamentalism to another.
- A carefully planned and meticulously implemented war psychosis against Iraq has worked greatly to the advantage of the incumbent Republican administration. This fits the historic pattern in which war and rumor of war benefits incumbents in general, and Republicans more so.

- The Democrats had nothing coherent to say on the questions uppermost in most voters' minds: the war drive, terrorism, the economy, rampant corporate crime. This lack of any meaningful message is both reflected in, and further exacerbated by, the fact that the national Democratic Party has no credible leading figure.
- Turnout was remarkably low even by the apathetic standards of normal midterm U.S. elections.



Looking a little more at this last factor in particular offers further insight into what appears to be an uneven but long-term swing toward the Republican Party. This has little if anything to do with any mass turn toward social or political conservatism, we believe, but much more with the two parties' relation to their base. The plain fact is that the core voting base of the Republican Party is far happier with and motivated by their party's politics than the Democratic Party's core voters are with theirs. This reality is not often openly discussed, least of all by the Democratic leadership, because much of it has to do with race.

The single most loyal and unswerving Democratic voting block is the African American community. To a slightly lesser degree, Latino voters also fall firmly into the Democratic camp, along with urban working-class voters from all racial and ethnic groups; but what is absolutely clear is that Democratic victory on the national level and in large states depends critically on an overwhelming Black vote.

It is a striking fact that the African American vote remains overwhelmingly Democratic, despite Republican efforts to make inroads. It's not hard to see why: Can you say 'Trent Lott?'¹ And the central question is hardly Lott's personal segregationist nostalgia; it's the demonstrated commitment of the entire southern-led Republican leadership to social policies and judicial doctrines that preserve white supremacy.

Despite the facade created by the prominence of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, despite the growth of a prosperous

Black middle class and professional sector that might be attracted by so-called 'fiscal conservatism,' the Black Republican voting base remains tiny and relatively fixed; the real variation affecting any close election is the African American turnout.

What do these voters get in exchange for their unswerving loyalty? A quick glance at the most recent Democratic administration gives the answer: precious little. Eight years of Clinton-Gore, overwhelmingly and

presidential contest.

An examination of the second (and overlapping) major Democratic voting base, the trade union movement, yields similar results. The Republican party, on the other hand, has its rock-solid core constituencies among white voters in the South and the religious right. (This doesn't mean southern whites are reactionaries en masse, of course; we are speaking here in statistical terms, not characterizing

the logical vehicle for such a candidacy at this political juncture is the Green Party

enthusiastically supported by the African American vote, yielded horrible increases in Black incarceration, largely for victimless drug offenses; the destruction of welfare; the most draconian 'anti-crime' bill in many decades, even though actual crime rates were falling, mainly to pander to media-driven paranoia among white people over mythical out-of-control Black criminality. (In passing, we highly recommend Michael Moore's brilliant new documentary 'Bowling for Columbine' for a disturbing exploration of this latter theme.)

Undeniably, Black people get one benefit from Democratic victories: keeping the Republicans out. This is ultimately inadequate to inspire a massive turnout in the absence of the all-consuming symbolism of an ideologically charged

anyone's politics on the basis of their ethnicity or region.)

It must be said that these voters get much better returns on their political investment. To be sure, the Republicans in power cannot deliver on the full program of the religious right and the racists: school prayer, an open assault on Islam, official Nativism and assaults on immigrants and Spanish-speaking communities, outlawing abortion, restoration of doctrinal white supremacy. Tilting too far in those directions would be politically suicidal in both the domestic and international arenas. Nonetheless, the Republicans on the national and state levels are able to deliver important parts of the hard-right agenda: huge rollbacks in affirmative action, bilingual education and immigrant

Marine commandos training for invasion of Basra



rights; vast expansion of military spending; sharp restrictions on reproductive freedom; imposing ever-more-brutal requirements on people receiving ever-shrinking welfare benefits.

Under Bush in particular, environmental destruction has become almost a civic duty. All this in addition to tax cuts for the wealthy, corporate welfare, maintaining an anti-union environment and—perhaps most ominously—packing the courts with reactionary judicial cadres.

Generally speaking, Democratic resistance to all this is, to put it generously, less than vigorous. And the result is fairly predictable: the Republican base turns out to vote in larger measure than its relatively demoralized Democratic counterpart.

The Homeland Security State

Defeat in turn produces defeatism. The electoral outcome has produced an atmosphere of jubilation in the administration camp, a feeling of mandate for war and an expectation of rapid and joyous triumph over Iraq; among liberals and the left the dominant mood is depression and panic.

The immediate short-term prospects indeed appear bleak. We have entered the era of the Homeland Security State, comprising one part bureaucratic boondoggle, one part Big Brother, one part permanent low-level state of emergency designed to keep the population in constant expectant fear of terrorism, and one part unlimited expansion of the apparatus of high-tech war without end.

The Republican administration has a mission. As we have analyzed in previous issues of this magazine, it is a mission of US world domination, driven not only by crude material and strategic imperialist interests but also by a quasi-messianic ideology, fraught with extreme danger for our society and for the planet; but like it or not, it is a mission that generates unity and team spirit among the administration and its backers.

The Democrats, in contrast, at this point have no mission, no message, no unity. Within a two-year electoral cycle a lot of things can happen, but when a political party's top-rated leadership contender until his December 15 dropout was Al Gore—well, you get the idea.

As for the highly touted selection of Nancy Pelosi as Democratic House leader, this relative liberal is distinguished by her expertise in fundraising more than any

Where does this leave the left? Much of the liberal-left press these days seems consumed with the problem of what can be done to rescue the Democratic Party from its own conservatism, timidity and incompetence. We believe this question has a simple enough answer: Nothing.

Fantasy vs. Reality

The Democratic Party is what it is, a party ultimately responsible to and funded by

the urgent task of the moment is building our social movements from the ground up

big corporate capital, continually forced to betray and demoralize the very working class, African American and other core voters on whom it depends to win power. Given this reality, the Democrats in their 'centrist' opportunism have positioned themselves as a permanent junior party that will win power nationally only when the Republican agenda crashes and burns economically or militarily. The Democratic Leadership Council is firmly in control of this rotting mess, and the idea that 'the progressive wing of the party' is going to recapture it is fantasy.

For our part, we found the most encouraging electoral result in November to be the more than five percent vote in California for the Green Party campaign of Peter Camejo and Donna Warren. More than achieving a respectable vote total, this campaign developed important contacts with diverse constituencies from the Mexican, Pakistani and other communities heavily impacted by the anti-immigrant climate yet usually off the political radar screen.

This result is only a beginning, but it suggests a way forward toward an authentic new and independent politics. It is also noteworthy that a number of voices in the African American movement, of which Donna Warren is one, are advocating that the Black community turn toward the Green Party and claim it as their own.

By contrast, a truly pathetic post-electoral expression of progressive cut-and-run panic was the argument presented by Ronnie Dugger, urging Ralph Nader and the Greens to forswear in advance a presidential campaign in 2004: "The Bush disaster, compounded now by the meltdown of the Democratic Party on November 5, is an emergency. We cannot afford another division in our ranks that will bring about the election of George W Bush in 2004." (*The*

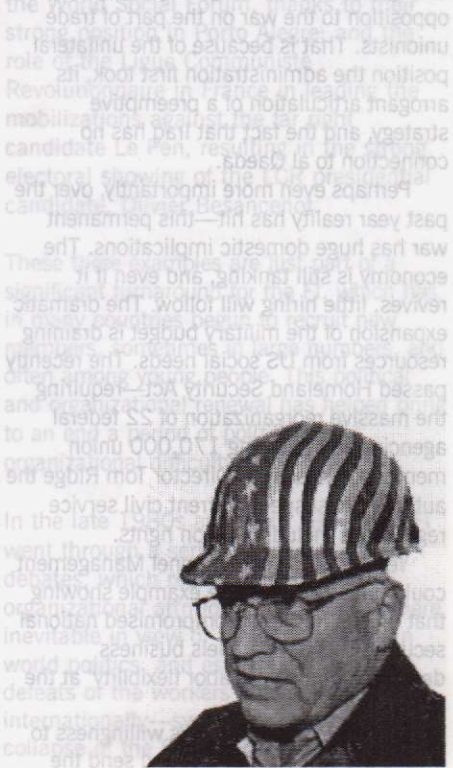
Nation 2 December 2002) Dugger proposes instead "an undertaking by the liberals, progressives and populists of the country . . . to converge behind the nomination of a progressive Democratic candidate for President." Right.

We'd like to offer our own suggestion for a unified progressive candidacy in 2004. Clearly, the logical vehicle for such a candidacy at this political juncture is the

Green Party (whether this means another Nader campaign or a new candidate). In any case, it is reasonable to propose that the Democratic Party, inasmuch as it stands for nothing, run no presidential candidate so as not to divide the progressive Green vote. This makes more sense, and has a slightly better practical possibility of being implemented, than Dugger's proposal.

In the meantime, with a hideous war perhaps only weeks away and the potential for an economic meltdown ever present, the urgent task of the moment is building our social movements from the ground up. □

1 Lott recently resigned as Senate Republican leader after remarks he had made praising the segregationist 1948 Presidential campaign of Strom Thurmond.



Right after 9/11 New York City Labor Against War (NYCLAW) formed around a petition calling for just and effective responses, which meant no war, justice not vengeance, defense of civil liberties/opposition to racism and aid for the needy not the greedy. It has been signed by over 1,400 trade unionists.

Similar committees sprang up in Albany, NY, the San Francisco/Oakland Bay area, Detroit, Portland, Seattle and Washington, DC. They took up a variety of tasks, including training sessions in how trade unionists could raise these issues with coworkers and organizing labor contingents—even if small—at anti-war demonstrations.

These committees also made the point that the dramatic increase in the military budget was at the expense of social needs. Additionally, swift passage of the US Patriot Act set back labor's demand that the federal law making it illegal for an undocumented worker to hold a job be repealed.

After 9/11, Congress passed legislation requiring those who screen passenger luggage at the airport to be citizens. Over 800 screeners at the San Francisco airport—many of whom had worked five-ten years there, and who had won a union contract with higher wages and benefits only two years ago—faced being fired because they were not citizens. Along with immigrant rights organizations and SEIU Local 790, the Bay Area committee protested this unnecessary restriction, pointing out that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was unwilling even to 'fast track' the screeners' applications.

Bush's drive toward war against Iraq has seen greater questioning or outright opposition to the war on the part of trade unionists. That is because of the unilateral position the administration first took, its arrogant articulation of a preemptive strategy, and the fact that Iraq has no connection to al Qaeda.

Perhaps even more importantly, over the past year reality has hit—this permanent war has huge domestic implications. The economy is still tanking, and even if it revives, little hiring will follow. The dramatic expansion of the military budget is draining resources from US social needs. The recently passed Homeland Security Act—requiring the massive reorganization of 22 federal agencies and affecting 170,000 union members—has given Director Tom Ridge the authority to suspend current civil service regulations including union rights.

Yet the Office of Personnel Management could not cite one single example showing that unions had ever compromised national security. This act parallels business demands for greater 'labor flexibility' at the workplace.

Finally, President Bush's willingness to invoke the Taft-Hartley Act and send the

US labor against the war

DIANNE FEELEY, MEMBER OF EDITORIAL BOARD OF 'AGAINST THE CURRENT'

International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) back to work indicated his determination to intervene in labor disputes. Currently the ILWU is voting on whether to accept the employer group's offer; but had they not come to a tentative resolution, the Bush administration was discussing other legislation that could have been used to bludgeon the union into settling. This is clearly a warning to other unions: militant action in defense of workers' rights will be treated by the administration as harmful to the economy and to the battle against terrorism.

Over the late summer and early fall, a number of labor bodies passed resolutions opposing the war in Iraq. The UE and AFSCME are the first national unions to oppose the war, but the 100,000 California teachers' union and Teamsters Local 705—the second largest Teamster local in the country—also passed strong statements. A number of Central Labor Councils have also endorsed specific antiwar demonstrations or voiced their opposition to a war in Iraq. More important than the text of the resolutions—or even their actual passage—is how they reflect discussions in offices, factory floors and union halls.

The combination of some small steps of labor opposition against the war with Bush's targeting of Iraq, led to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's October 7th letter to members of Congress. The letter asserts that debate over war is needed, and that evidence and considerations must be presented before declaring war. True, it basically instructs US policymakers in how they should go about getting consensus, but the letter's importance is that it provides a lot more political space within the union movement to raise questions and debate the Bush scenario.

This questioning at the top is a factor in giving radical labor activists some time and space to illustrate how war is used to attack the US working class. Passage of the Homeland Security Act and the US Patriot Act have set a political framework that reinforces racial profiling and a variety of

anti-immigrant practices, including a dramatic rise in workplace INS raids.

This moment is also an opportunity to confront US foreign policy. We can point to the double standards that exist:

- According to Bush it's bad for Iraq to have weapons of mass destruction, but fine for Israel.
- Although Bush doesn't talk about it, essentially it was okay for the United States to have given Iraq biological weapons when Saddam Hussein was the friend of past administrations; but now the Bush administration has the right to police the country. Of course the media fails to note that many of Hussein's crimes took place when he was Washington's favorite.

And it's also a chance to talk about how US policy in the Middle East is driven by oil.

In the auto plant where I work, many workers have served in the Military—not just Vietnam era workers who were subject to the draft, but many younger workers who enlisted in order to get some skills. Some are still in the reserves. So when there is talk of war, it is very close to the bone. My coworkers often raise the idea that we must do everything to keep our soldiers from being in a war. Even veterans of past wars have spoken up to say they distrust the pro-war propaganda they hear.

In Detroit our Labor Committee for Peace and Justice is working with the Detroit Coalition of Labor Union Women to pull together a forum in February: 'Why Labor Should Oppose the Coming War.' Our perspective also includes organizing a workshop, directed toward labor activists, whenever teach-ins are organized by some of the larger local antiwar coalitions.

As the Detroit Labor Committee for Peace and Justice points out in its leaflet against the coming war in Iraq: if we don't trust Bush's domestic policies because we see how destructive they are for our needs, why should we trust his foreign policy? □

In February the Fourth International's world congress will meet in Europe, bringing together hundreds of revolutionary socialists from five continents to assess the tasks of Marxists in the coming years. The congress meets in a world situation which has changed dramatically since the conference was planned just a few years ago, a change which has sharply impacted on the role and profile of the Fourth International itself. Briefly, the following factors sum up this change:



Fourth International: a changed situation

PENELOPE DUGGAN*

■ The collapse of the 1990s 'dot.com' economic bubble in the US and other advanced countries, and the slide of the world economy towards the worst recession since 1974-5. This turnaround was anticipated by the economic collapse in Asia in 1997, and the financial blow-out in Russia in 1998.

■ Linked to these processes, developing economic crisis and even financial collapse in a series of third world countries, particularly in Latin America, where the economic and social catastrophe in Argentina has been followed by one in Uruguay, and may soon be repeated in Brazil.

■ The response to this by the ruling class internationally in trying to deepen 'neoliberalization'—attacks on workers conditions and welfare rights—something impacting particularly strongly in Europe (for example in Italy and the UK), but also in the United States.

■ Bitter counter-offensives launched by the working class and the oppressed against these attacks, noticeable particularly in the present wave of workers' struggles in many European countries, and again in the huge mobilizations against the destruction of living standards in Argentina.

■ The growth of the mass movement against neoliberal globalization, starting with Seattle at the end of 1999, and culminating with the 90,000-strong World Social Forum and the 60,000-strong European Social Forum, both in 2002. In several countries this mass movement has fed into a powerful anti-war movement. Without doubt this movement has been decisive in changing the situation of the left internationally.

■ The effects of September 2001 on world politics, particularly in the launching of the US 'war on terrorism', an attempt to reorganize world politics to the right under US leadership.

■ The accession to government of a number of left-inclined or populist governments in Latin America (Venezuela, Brazil), representing a massive rejection of neoliberalism continent-wide.

These developments have substantially changed the place of the Fourth International. In the last three years militants from its sections have found themselves centrally involved in decisive mobilizations, often in leadership positions.

Particularly noteworthy has been the role of the Italian comrades of the Bandiera Rossa current in the Party of Communist Refoundation, many of whom played a vital role in the mobilisations for the Genoa demonstrations and the Florence-based European Social Forum; the role of the Brazilian comrades in developing the influence of the Brazilian Workers' Party, including their decisive enabling role in the World Social Forum, thanks to their strong position in Porto Alegre; and the role of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire in France in leading the mobilizations against the far right candidate Le Pen, resulting in the strong electoral showing of the LCR presidential candidate, Olivier Besancenot.

These three examples are just part of a significant turnaround for the FI, which has in many countries begun to recruit new members, sometimes in large numbers, and often among young people. This political and organizational renewal has helped bring to an end a period of political and organizational difficulty.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the FI went through a series of sharp internal debates, which resulted in some organizational attrition. Such debates were inevitable in view of the huge change in world politics, and especially the giant defeats of the workers movement internationally—symbolized by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the launching

of the first Gulf war by the US, and the electoral rout of the Sandinistas.

In the situation of widespread demoralization and pessimism in the workers' movement and the Left—something already dramatically receding—it was difficult for any political trend rooted in the real world to maintain its bearings against the twin dangers of demoralized collapse on the one hand, and the wishful thinking of rote sectarianism on the other.

If the FI has been able to steer through that period, it was above all by maintaining its openness to the mass movement, its insistence on the efficacy of the united front, and its championing of the mass movements of the oppressed. This was at a time when the usefulness of this approach was not always obvious, and when closed-in sectarian propagandism of the *Lutte Ouvrière* type sometimes seemed more effective. Once the mass anti-globalization movement developed, the relationship of forces in the revolutionary left began to change.

Key axes of debate

Despite the changes referred to above, the key documents for the world congress reject any short-term euphoria and locate the present period in the light of the giant historical changes which have taken place, notably the rise to power of neoliberalism, the historic defeats of the workers' movement, the collapse of Stalinism and the abject ideological and political collapse of social democracy. The document on 'The role and tasks of the Fourth International' insists that the rebuilding of the workers and popular movements, and of the political Left, is only beginning and that we face a prolonged battle.

"The historical mutation of the workers and social movements has only reached an initial phase. We face a long period of rebuilding. The turn in the world situation has broken a prevailing sense of political powerlessness and fatalism in activist circles. Failing a historical, emblematic event resulting in a spectacular upheaval in the international situation, the reorganization of the anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist social movement will take the form of a series of social and political experiences, which can reunify the exploited and oppressed layers, today fragmented and divided, around social choices and choices of demands; reconstitute the militant teams and militant cadre in the social movements; and develop a 'transitional' anti-capitalist programme with global implications on the basis of capitalism's current contradictions and the activity of the exploited and oppressed classes."

Moreover: "We find ourselves in a new, very particular situation. The working class is still in a position of weakness, on the defensive, but the radical left is recovering and regaining the political initiative on a grand scale. Its goal is to affirm a bold, anti-capitalist, social and political left that aims at influencing and orienting struggles and mobilisations." The document makes a further series of key judgements:

- That it is vital to fuse together the different elements of the opposition to neoliberal globalization, most notably the global justice movement and the trade union struggles against austerity and neoliberal 'modernization'.

As the document puts it: "The movement against capitalist globalization is a strong lever in the renewal of the workers' and social movements, and the development of a new emancipatory perspective. From the start of the new cycle, militant, radical forces (political, social, trade-union, civic and intellectual) outside the control of the traditional workers' movement bureaucracies have been playing an integral role and even taken the initiative...A fusion has become possible between a new, young generation, bearing a re-politicization and a new radicalism, and activists who are still active from the experienced generations of the 1968 and 1985-95 cycles.

- That the centre of the renewal of the left is the fight to build broad anti-capitalist parties:

"Our goal is to form proletarian parties that are anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecologist and feminist; are broad, pluralistic and representative are deeply attached to the social question and steadfastly put forth the immediate demands and social aspirations of the world of labour; express workers' militancy, women's desire for emancipation, the youth revolt and international solidarity, and take up the fight against all forms of injustice; base their strategy on the extra parliamentary struggle and the proletariat's self-activity and self-organization; and take a clear stand for expropriation of capital and (democratic, self-managed) socialism."

- That a decisive pivot between the global justice movement and the new left formations which have emerged—like Communist Refoundation and the Scottish Socialist party—is the fight for militant, class struggle trade unionism. It is the terrain of the direct working class struggle against neo-liberalism that the essential background for a resurgence of the social movements and the

emergence of militant left parties and alliances is created. The document declares, "The Fourth International will pay increased attention to the world of labour."

Programmatic renewal

The Congress will mark an important stage in a long process of programmatic renewal which the Fourth International has been undertaking since the mid-1980s. The starting point of this process of reflection has been that the foundation programme of the movement—the 1938 'transitional programme'—could not possibly answer all the questions posed all the questions posed by 60 years of historical development, the emergence of new social movements and other innovative political movements not foreseen in the 1930s, and indeed the results of decades of research from within the Marxist and other progressive movements. Indeed this process had already started with the adoption in 1979 of a major programmatic resolution on 'Socialist revolution and women's liberation' which stated the FI's commitment to the necessity of building an autonomous women's movement before, during and after the revolutionary process, and the adoption in 1985 of a resolution on 'Socialist democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat' affirming the necessity and desirability of pluralist expression of the oppressed and exploited. The programmatic resolutions proposed at this congress are 'Ecology and socialism' which attempts to lay out a revolutionary Marxist analysis of the causes of ecological disaster and a long-term programme for defence of the environment. A resolution 'On lesbian and gay liberation' building on the gains of the 1979 resolution affirms the indissolubility of free expression of sexuality and human emancipation. In all these cases the FI's commitment is not simply a programmatic one but a commitment to actively build the movements.

Congress documents also reflect a discussion that has been going on for about 15 years on the role of the Fourth International itself. On the one hand there is widespread agreement that the ambitions and claims of the International at the time of its foundation—that it was, or would soon become, the 'world party of socialist revolution' and indeed it was the only authentically revolutionary current—cannot be sustained today. Congress documents set the task of the FI as helping to bring into existence a 'mass revolutionary international', which could only be composed of much more diverse political forces than the FI itself. On the other hand it is clear that the usefulness of the FI as a grouping of active organizations, grouped around central programmatic reference

points and with a wealth of experiences in the mass movements internationally, has been vindicated in the last few years, especially in the development of the global justice movement, but also in playing a role, sometimes a vital role, in the creation of broad left formations which can help to overcome the crisis of political representation of the working class and the oppressed—thus demonstrating a continuing need to strengthen this grouping that is in no way counterposed to the battle to create broader formations.

Moreover, it is important to remember that the current stage of the dramatic emergence of the global justice movement and the re-building of the workers

and in Asia, South Korea and Indonesia, experienced mass movements and major workers' struggles.

The strike movement against the Juppe government in France (winter 1995) was the first sign of this change. With the European March of the unemployed, casualized and excluded to Amsterdam (June 1997), there began to be a change in the state of mind of activist layers in France and the rest of Europe. Other direct initiatives, already underway, such as the campaign for cancelling the third world debt, certain very radical peasant movements (Brazil, India...) added to this. The confrontation in Seattle in November 1999, opened the road to the 'movement

the imperialist war in Afghanistan. It was also one of the sources of political and organizational support for the Palestinian people, crushed by the Israeli state."

The direct 'parent' of the post-Seattle global justice movement was the decade-long campaign against third world debt, with successive mobilisations at G7, IMF and World Bank conference. Throughout this it was the sections of the Fourth International which were often the backbone of these mobilisations, at a time when other far left forces were simply not interested.

The FI is a significant factor in the evolution in a host of movements, alliances and movements worldwide, and the very



movement and the left, does not come out of nothing and did not simply start with Seattle. As the document on the World Situation explains:

"This turning point did not come out of thin air. It was the result of an accumulation of discontents, rising consciousness, a new spirit of solidarity, and major struggles, albeit ones that all ended in impasses, setbacks or defeats: in the US, the long pilots' and UPS strikes; in Europe, national or sectoral general strikes in Britain (the miners, 1984-85), Denmark (1986 general strike), Belgium (in 1986, then in public services in 1987, a general strike in 1993, a protracted teachers' strike spread over two years), Spanish state (general strikes in the early 1990s) and Italy (1992 and 1994). In Latin America Ecuador, Brazil and Bolivia,

against globalization' which came together in Porto Alegre in the first World Social Forum, moved by a radical, internationalist and potentially anti-capitalist spirit, carried by a new generation. This spirit of radical internationalism on a feminist basis was also clearly expressed by the 2000 World March for Women, the preparation of which predated Seattle.

In Genoa, for the first time, this movement was able to combine with radical sectors of the mass trade-union movement in a direct confrontation with the government and its neo-liberal policies. Then it once again was broadened and strengthened. After the 11th September it was able, in specific forms depending on the country, to transform itself rapidly into an anti-war movement with hundreds of thousands of demonstrators throughout the world against

existence of important structures, for example the regular conferences of the European anti-capitalist left, is due to the conscious activity of the Fourth International. As the document on the role and tasks of the FI puts it: "the situation of the FI, as an organisation, can be defined as:

- an international organisation of revolutionaries based on the method of the Transitional Programme and the strategy and tactics flowing from it;
- an unrivalled body of programmatic references, collective and individual political experiences with a capacity for elaboration and reflection particularly on issues such women's oppression, gay and lesbian oppression, issues which have been little developed by other revolutionary currents, with sections in

several countries based on the needs of the working class of the region;

- an organisation which respects the autonomy of the mass movements and their democracy and which practices pluralism of tendencies within it;
- and thus a living tool... The fact that we have preserved this structure and that it is undoubtedly the only international grouping of its kind is a precious asset in the new political period as new activist generations emerge."

New challenges

While saluting the new wave of struggles and noting the vital role of the global justice movement, the conference documents are extremely sober in their assessment of the world situation. Not only is neoliberalism still the dominant ideology and practice in the main capitalist states, but to this decades-long assaults on the conditions of working people has now been added the threat of permanent imperialist war. Militants of the movement face a whole host of

responsibilities in the post-conference situation, notably:

- Building the broadest possible anti-war movement against the war drive of imperialism.
- Continuing the fight to create new anti-capitalist parties and to build those which already exist.
- Helping to rebuild the workers' movement and to fight for class struggle trade unionism, putting revolutionary marxists at the centre of the massive round of workers struggles developing.
- Arming the mass movement to confront social catastrophe in Latin America, and especially preparing the giant political struggles which are certain in Brazil after the election of Lula as president.
- Continuing the development of the global justice movement, and helping to build the strongest possible solidarity between movements in the 'North' and 'South' through the World Social Forum and the associated continent-based forums.

- Aiding the rebuilding of the mass movements of the oppressed – of women, lesbians and gay men, indigenous peoples and others – which will re-emerge with renewed force in the next period.

This is a massive agenda, and a massive set of responsibilities. Conference documents note that to do that—with all the international, as well as national, tasks it implies it is necessary to strengthen the organisation and co-ordination of the FI in the next period. And on a national level "our main problem is not in general sectarianism, but a kind of political and organisational behaviour that undervalues or dilutes revolutionary Marxist organization." To carry out its giant agenda the Fourth International aims to strengthen its international organization, strengthen the profile of its sections and ensure that (something already happening in numerous countries) the radicalization of young people results in a renewal of its leadership and cadre. □

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Venezuela: Declaration of the Fourth International

- Halt the coup of the right and imperialism
- No to Gaviria and the trap of the OAS
- Active solidarity with the struggle of the workers and people of Venezuela

1 The rightist escalation initiated with the 'general strike' and deepened with what is now being called the 'final battle' is part of the counter-revolutionary strategy to overthrow the legitimate democratic government of Chávez and to crush the process of self-organization and self-defence among workers, students, and the people.

This escalation assumes a criminal character due to the continuous murders of political and social activists, the provocations of fascist groups, and the sabotage of oil production, initiated in early December by the PDVSA [the state oil company -ed] mafias and the corrupt leaders of the CTV [the trade union federation allied with the traditional governing parties -ed].

With the support of the media, particularly television, the bourgeoisie's destabilizing operation aims at political manipulation, fear, economic chaos, and the division of the military who until now have supported the government of Chávez.

2 The same Bush administration that is preparing a new genocide against Iraq is playing a decisive role in this counter-revolutionary escalation. Not only through its open political and financial support for the coup participants, but also through the servile instrument of the OAS [Organization of American States -ed] pushing—with the complicity of most of the neoliberal governments of the region, the European Union, and the Carter Foundation—a 'diplomatic' intervention with the objective of ending the democratic government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The declarations by Richard Boucher, spokesperson of the US State Department, leave no room for doubt: "we have emphasized the importance of the mission of the Secretary General of the OAS, Caesar Gaviria, and that two parties should cooperate with him to resolve their political differences". In the language of imperialist interests, that 'cooperation' can only be understood as blackmailing the Venezuelan government into accepting a 'democratic dialogue' as a precursor to its political capitulation.

The 'mission' of Caesar Gaviria—former president of Colombia, executor of the counter-insurgency, promoter of the paramilitary groups and responsible for the systematic violation of human rights in his country—must be thoroughly denounced and condemned.

The OAS seeks to go down the road of its 'democratic charter', which the imperialist-big business counter-revolution did not achieve on April 11, 2002. Therefore, as the left and Bolivarian popular organizations have affirmed, there can be no 'dialogue' with the right wing coup participants and big business.

3 In Venezuela a decisive anti-imperialist battle is being fought. Beyond the limitations and hesitations of the Chávez government, the Bolivarian people has taken to the streets, deepening a process of rupture with the bourgeoisie and taking measures to disrupt the coup operation. It is not

only the democratic destiny of the country which is at stake, but also the relationship of forces with imperialism in the region.

After the electoral victories of Lula in Brazil, and Gutiérrez in Ecuador, the prolongation of the 'argentinazo' as a process of popular rebellion, the growth of the anti-neoliberal resistance of the social movements, and the continental rejection both to Plan Colombia and the recolonizing project of the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), the United States is trying to create a 'preventive' wall against the winds of change blowing through South America.

The defeat of the Chávez government and the crushing of the radical movement of people and workers that is developing is becoming a priority in Washington's counter-revolutionary strategy. The survival of the Chávez government—and the dynamic of class struggle that has developed—does not fit in with the regional control that Plan Colombia and the FTAA imply for the Pentagon and the State Department.

At the same time, a victory for the coup and imperialist interests in Venezuela, would still more reduce the political and economic room for manoeuvre of governments like those of Lula and Gutiérrez, increase the unfavorable conditions for the armed insurgency in Colombia, and reinforce the blockade against Cuba.



4 It is in this context that internationalist solidarity with the popular struggle in Venezuela must be broad, active and militant. The struggle of the workers and students, class conscious trade unions and popular organizations, Bolivarian circles and parties of the left in Venezuela, is the struggle of the Latin American peoples against the governing elites, neoliberalism, the IMF, the World Bank, the InterAmerican Development Bank, and the foreign debt. It is a democratic struggle for sovereignty and the right of the peoples to decide their own destiny. It is an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle. The forces of the Fourth International are part of this struggle. Promoting in various countries public activities of solidarity, demonstrations, street marches, and political declarations. Participating and supporting unconditionally campaigns of action and protest organized by democratic, anti-imperialist and revolutionary movements and currents.

January 4, 2003 United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Ecuador: the challenges for the new government

FERNANDO LOPEZ ROMERO*



The victory of Lucio Gutiérrez and the role of the organized popular sectors

The triumph of Lucio Gutiérrez has put the demands of the popular movement to the fore and must be analyzed in the historical context of Ecuador over the last two decades. From the 1980s onwards, when the end of the oil boom and the project of industrialization through import substitution forcefully promoted by the military governments of the 1970s, Ecuador has been systematically subjected to the blackmail of the foreign debt, the deepening of unequal exchange and the radical policies of structural adjustment from the late 1980s onwards under the programmatic dictates of the Washington Consensus. The results have been devastating: the Ecuadorian economy has been weakened in the context of the Andean area; an increasing ecological deterioration has taken place in all regions of the country; unemployment has grown, as have migration from the countryside to the cities, the concentration of land ownership, and the presence of transnational companies in areas like service industries, food, oil and telecommunications. The state's role as provider of services and guarantor of social rights has been reduced to a minimum, with the areas most affected being those of education and health.

The crisis deepened in the 1990s. Since 1995 the Ecuadorian economy has not emerged from a deep recession caused by policies that raised the value of the currency with interest rates that at times reached almost 100%, and which opened Ecuadorian markets to foreign manufactured products, ruining thousands of artisans and small industries. The ultra-neoliberal policies in favor of financial capital created the conditions for the serious banking crisis of the late 1990s, which led to the military and popular uprising of January 21, 2000 that overthrew the neoliberal government of Jamil Mahuad. The banking fraud impoverished and ruined hundreds of

thousands of small and medium savers and caused the flight of more than a million and a half people, especially to Spain. This has deepened the discontent of the majority of the populations, and has been translated into despair and anger.

The Pachakutik Movement of Plurinational Unity New Country and the January 21 Patriotic Society, supported by the Democratic Popular Movement, were and are, along with the most important forces of the popular movement: the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE); the National



Federation of Indigenous, Peasant and Black Organizations (FENOCIN); the Ecuadorian Federation of Free Trade Union Organizations (CEOLS); the National Union of Educators (UNE); the affiliates of Seguro Campesino and finally the National Federation of Indigenous Evangelicals (FEINE), supported a candidacy that harnessed the popular rejection of the political system and neoliberal policies. This meant that in the first round a united front was constituted as an electoral force that won support from workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, small traders, former military, artisans, unemployed, teachers, university students, public and private employees, and small proprietors in the countryside and the city.

The electoral Program has as central elements support for production rather than the corrupt banks, for honest industrialists rather than dishonest ones, and opposition to corruption and the system of political parties, without clearly approaching crucial questions like the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the foreign debt. This vote is also a reflection of the crisis in Argentina, the rise of the

popular movement in Brazil, Peru and Bolivia and concern over Plan Colombia.

The election results reveal the continuity of the democratic struggles which have taken place since the 'No' victory in the plebiscite on privatization and political reform in November 1995; the growth of Pachakutik; the overthrow of the government of Abdalá Bucaram in February 1997; the fight for the constituent assembly in 1998; and the overthrow of the Mahuad government in January 2000.

The vote for Gutiérrez is also the expression of a layer of popular and indigenous leaders, who do not follow in an unrestricted way a military caudillo, but see in the conjuncture an alternative of power.

The influence and authority that the military still have in Ecuadorian society have been capitalized on by Gutiérrez. Nationalism is a significant ingredient in the consciousness of important sectors of a population that yearns for a strong leadership. This was a vote of indignation vote, a vote against the conditions of life, a vote of protest against the political system. It reflects the radicalization of important sectors of urban and rural youth that enter for the first time in the political life of the country. With a significant vote in the most important cities, Gutiérrez gained the majority of his support in the peripheral areas of the country, especially in the central provinces of the Sierra where the indigenous peasantry is strong, and in Amazonía. This victory comes within the framework of important electoral victories and advances in Latin America like those of the MAS in Bolivia, or the PT in Brazil.

A scenario of contradictions and conflicts

The new government will face complex and difficult economic, political and social conditions. There is a set of interlinked problems.

The financial sector and the big exporters and importers support a neoliberal free trade programme. In spite of the moderation Gutiérrez's discourse, there are economic groups and political sectors of the right and the center—in the Congress, local government, big business, mass media and the unions—that are prepared to fight a battle to wear him down and box him in.

Right now, the weight of the foreign debt is untenable. Servicing it requires more than half the income of the state, which prevents it from dealing with growing social necessities. Dollarization is exacting an ever higher price from the popular

sectors and for the internal production of goods and services in an economy that incessantly buys more and sells less, that lacks internal and external productive investment and that is characterized by increasing inflation and fiscal difficulties. Dollarization has meant the loss of monetary sovereignty as well as enormous gains for the import sector in consumer goods. The predicted benefits of dollarization, as a mechanism to stop inflation, lower banking interest rates and attract external investment have not been fulfilled. Interest rates border on 20% and inflation on 30%. Only the high price of Ecuadorian oil and the remittances of emigrant workers have sustained dollarization. In the months to come, the export sector will bring pressure to end dollarization, whereas its maintenance benefits importers. However, beyond the concrete interests of the economic groups of the bourgeoisie, a dollarized economy is ultimately untenable if it does not improve exports and external investment.

The fiscal crisis is serious due to a deficit of more than 700 million dollars for December of this year, which means a crisis of payments, that some sectors want to resolve through an increase in the price of gas of domestic use and gasoline, measures that in Ecuador always hit the popular sectors hardest.

The most immediate response is the threat of strike action by more than 100,000 teachers who have not been paid since November.

The application of Plan Colombia and the existence of the US military base at Manta jeopardize the sovereignty of Ecuador and threaten to increasingly involve the armed forces in the imperialist internationalization of the Colombian conflict. In spite of the contradictions between the programmes presented at the first and second rounds of the election, and the change in class composition involved in establishing a government of national unity, the popular organizations maintain their support to the future government. The Pachakutik Movement, which has a perspective of arriving in government by the end of the decade, is sharing responsibility for what it considers to be a transitional government, jockeying for position with business and political sectors. The strategy of Pachakutik is to maintain a government of coalition with business sectors that lacks clear ideological definitions. Pachakutik is against the big monopolistic groups, especially of the coastal region, and will promote policies that favour their peasant and indigenous social base, strengthening the local governments under their control while capturing spaces of resistance within the

State. Within this strategy of fighting for positions in the government, it has stuck strongly to Lucio Gutiérrez and his party. Pachakutik is gambling its future as a political project.

The Ecuadorian indigenous movement, trade unions, popular sectors and peasants are going to share government with economic groups that have drawn closer to Gutiérrez before and after the elections. We can point to the presence of the economist Mauricio Pozo as economic adviser—he is very close to the IMF, the Bank of Pichincha and the PROINCO group, that has interests in the Sierra in particular and has capital close to 3,000 million dollars.

Much closer to Gutiérrez is the banker Mario Canessa, of the Bolivariano Bank, linked to banana export sectors that represent about 500 million dollars. Canessa could become Minister of Economy and is connected to economic groups like that of the Quirola family which owns the Bank of Machala, exporting shrimps and bananas, and the Wong family which is also involved in the banana export trade and represents capital of about 250 million dollars. Another economic adviser is Guillermo Lasso of the Bank of Guayaquil, a key figure in the Mahuad government. Also involved are the Grupo Carrera Drouet and the Maspons and Dunn families, who account for about 1,000 million dollars. These are importers linked to the Noboa Corporation, the most powerful economic group in Ecuador, worth about 2,000 million dollars and headed by Alvaro Noboa, the losing candidate in the last elections.

The Febres Cordero group, owned by the family of the rightist ex-president Leon Febres Cordero, is keeping its distance. This Group represents about 600 million dollars and the greatest influence on the Social Christian Party, the biggest political party in Ecuador.

The challenges for the popular movement

The coming weeks and months will be ones of intense expectation and social mobilization. The main body of the popular movement has decided to grant the new government initial support and time.

The bourgeoisie is divided. There are sectors that are prepared to cogovern, whereas others hope for an easing of the situation through the approaches Gutiérrez has made to the international financial bodies, and the governments of the US, neighbouring states and Spain and Germany, as well as his calls

for dialogue with all sectors. The greatest initial opposition will be concentrated in Congress.

Among the popular classes, we aim to bring about a joining between the spontaneous consciousness of the masses and the organized sectors. The challenge is how to deepen, develop and give continuity to a situation of the struggle for government and of political and economic crisis. The people have developed a consciousness of the necessity and possibility of political changes that finish with the old system and a rejection of neoliberalism that is potentially anti-



capitalist. It is fundamental to connect with the level of present consciousness and advance it, to link the immediate and present demands with those that fundamentally question exploitation, domination and oppression.

The central elements of this program are those that allow an extension of the democracy from the popular sectors; that confront the FTAA and Plan Colombia; the dictatorship of financial capital and neoliberal policies; that place in the centre demands to end structural adjustment, the nonpayment of the foreign debt, the closure of the US military base at Manta; and the struggle for water, land and natural resources. All this should harness the self-organization, expression and independence of the popular sectors. That is what is at stake. □

* Fernando López Romero is a member of the national leadership of the Corriente Democrática Socialista, Ecuadorian Section of the Fourth International.

thousands of small and medium savers and caused the flight of more than a million and a half people, especially to Spain. This has deepened the discontent of the populations, and has been translated into deepening anger. The Pachakutik Movement, the Plurinational Unity New Country and the January 21 Patriotic Movement, and the Democratic Popular Movement, and are, along with the most important forces of the popular movement: the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE); the National

The victory of Lucio Gutiérrez



Ecuadorian Federation of Free Trade Union Organizations (FEOT), the National Union of Educators (UNE), the affiliates of Seguro Campesino and finally the National Federation of Indigenous Evangelicals (FENI), supported a candidacy that harnessed the popular rejection of the political system and neoliberal policies. This meant that in the first round a united front was constituted as an electoral force that won support from workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, small traders, former military, artisans, unemployed, teachers, university students, public and private employees and small proprietors in the countryside and the city. The electoral program has as central elements support for production rather than the corrupt bank's financial system. Industrialists rather than the export mass system of political parties, without clearly approaching crucial questions like the foreign debt. This vote is also a reflection of the crisis in Argentina, the rise of the

The Argentinazo one year on

JAMES D. COCKCROFT*

“Without workers a factory does not function. But without bosses, yes, it functions—and very well indeed! With all the other comrades we are going to demonstrate that the nation functions with the hands of working people and not with the thieving hands of the politicians.”—Raúl Godoy, worker at the worker-controlled factory Cerámicas Zanón and secretary-general of the ceramics workers union’.

On November 21, 2002, I concluded my hour-long interview with three woman workers at Brukman Confecciones, an historic worker-controlled textile factory in Buenos Aires’ Neighborhood Eleven. Realizing the threat their example posed to the capitalist system, I asked: “Are you afraid?” “No,” they responded with broad smiles. “I was afraid at first,” one added, referring to the scary night of December 18, 2001, when she and 19 others of the 115-person workforce, mostly women, stayed overnight in the owner-abandoned factory in order to preserve their jobs. “But after we consolidated our self-organization, I was no longer afraid.”

Prior to that night, the Brukman brothers had run off with the workers’ last three months of salaries and contributions to pension, unemployment, and health funds to stash them in foreign banks or in real estate. This is a common practice by Argentina’s once affluent capitalists during the present depression.

The workers, whose numbers soon grew to 54 (of whom 10 were men), did not trust the garment workers union SOIVA, which was backing the Brukmans’ request for a declaration of bankruptcy liquidation. Through internal democratic assemblies, they organized a worker-controlled factory—from purchase of inputs to production, wages, and sales—and had it up and running in a month’s time. They even created classes to convert unemployed workers into skilled operators and started hiring them at wages like their own.

Twelve hundred kilometers to the southwest, a similar approach had become standard practice among 300 workers at the worker-controlled Zanón ceramics factory in Neuquén’s industrial park, a large modern factory that once had produced porcelain products for the national and international markets. Backed by leftist parties and several other organizations, workers at Zanón, Brukman, and other

seized factories now spearhead a national anti-capitalist movement, joined by workers seizing idle urban and rural lands.

These workers have placed production for social use above the ‘normal’ markets and production goals of their former bosses. As one woman told me, “the capitalist system is what ruined us. We prefer to sell here at our own store. The neighborhood people and others come here to buy the clothes we make. We want to produce sheets for the hospitals too, for the people, you know?”

Some 150 of Argentina’s 1,200 factories in bankrupt liquidation have been “recuperated” by 13,000 of their workers and are producing again, either as cooperatives or as 100-percent worker-controlled establishments like Zanón and Brukman. According to ‘The Wall Street Journal’, some financially strapped provincial governments have decided to encourage the trend in order to reactivate businesses shut down by the economic crisis. In the cases of some of the occupied factories, the federal government pays the rent and promises not to evict workers for one or two years.

The ‘Journal’ does not mention that the governments are trying to coopt the growing workers’ movement, while simultaneously attacking its anti-capitalist wing led by workers at Zanón, Brukman, and other workplaces. These include: Pepsico Snacks (US); the industrial bakery co-op Aguante (ex-Bakery Five); the Chilavert Printing Press; Ghelco Foods; the Río Turbio coal mines; Junín Clinic of Córdoba; Tiger Supermarket in Rosario; and Frigorífico Fricader (meatpacking plant in Río Negro).

I visited the Grissinópolis bakery, occupied by sixteen workers since early June 2002, and interviewed a woman leader there as well as a Zanón worker also present to build solidarity. A typical poster stated: “Jaque al patrón, todo el poder al peón”—“Screw [literally checkmate] the boss, all power to the worker.” I also visited the

Nov 14th 2002: weekly Thursday march, Plaza de Mayo of Mothers of May Plaza.

The banner reads "Resistance and fight against state terrorism!" The march was joined by 2000 delegates to the first National Congress on Mental Health and Human rights, convened by Universidad Popular de Madres de Plaza de Mayo



Nov 16th 2002: potbanger mural commemorating fallen comrades.

"Neither dictatorships nor corrupt politicians will do us in: for a people's participatory democracy", in Chacarita neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, a few blocks from the worker-controlled Grissinopoli factory



Nov 16th 2002: entrance to the worker-controlled Grissinopoli factory, in the Chacarita neighbourhood of Buenos Aires



Nov 16th 2002: Eduardo Lucita of 'Economists of the Left' being served a grilled chorizo outside the worker-controlled Grissinopoli factory



Nov 16th 2002: interior of the worker-controlled Grissinopoli factory



metallurgical and plastics factory IMPA, where 300 workers have introduced workers' control and express the same attitude.

The 'Wall Street Journal' does note that Argentina's "economic contraction" is "twice as severe as the one experienced during the great Depression" and that "Neither the government nor the Bush administration has offered significant ideas about how to revive Latin America's third-largest economy. Instead, Argentina has been saved, for now, by the resourcefulness of hundreds of grass-roots leaders in schools, factories and neighborhood associations".²

I asked the women at Brukman: "What if you are attacked by the repressive forces?" They broke into a ripple of confident laughter. "Don't worry," one replied, "we are self-organized."

Three days later, in a pre-dawn Sunday raid, hundreds of Federal Police, some not in uniform, others hooded, with no judicial order, used axes to break through the Brukman factory doors. Armed with machine guns and cellular phones and backed up by assault vehicles, fire engines, moving vans, and civilian cars, they beat up the reduced night-shift staff and hauled six off to jail, including a nine-year-old daughter of a worker. From the street, Jacobo and Mario Brukman looked on approvingly, joined by several of their smiling former employees.

Children of the workers, including a three-year-old, rushed to establish an 'encampment' in front of the factory. One asked his mother in a taxi rushing to the scene, "Why are you crying out to the neighbors?" She replied, "Because it's our jobs, how I get the money to feed you when we go shopping these Sundays. Now they want to take away our work." The child then began yelling out the car window: "Neighbors, neighbors, come help us!"

Actually, help was already underway. Hundreds of workers, students, unemployed, and neighborhood residents rose up as one to defend the factory and remove the police, just as they had done once before—on March 16, 2002, when they had turned back the police's first attempted eviction of the workers. By 11:30, the workers were back in their factory, cleaning up smashed machines and lockers. The police had known exactly where to search, remove, and destroy. Workers could not find a computer that contained the design for making molds or another computer's hard disc or the documents held in a safe of the factory's secretariat.

By early afternoon, movement lawyers had gained the release of all the prisoners. Said the nine-year old girl: "I wasn't afraid, only angry."

A worker spokeswoman, Celia, told a press conference: "We demand expropriation of the company, with machinery and everything. Not with machinery simply in trusteeship. We must be guaranteed a minimum salary because the clothing we make is expensive and sales can go down [Brukman workers formerly had produced a dozen leading world labels, including Cristian Dior and Ralph Lauren]. That's why we also demand a subsidy of 150,000 pesos to produce things more accessible to the public...."

"Isn't that leftist?" someone asked. "If to be leftist is to want a decent salary for genuine work, to keep one's source of work and maintain that source for many more who come after us, then more than half of Argentina is leftist." When asked if this was how she always spoke, Celia replied no, that prior to the takeover of Brukman, her normal way of speaking had been

things like "What am I going to cook?"³

Women like those at Brukman have played a central role in the struggle to create 'a new Argentina,' both before and after the 'Argentinazo' (the popular uprising of December 19 and 20, 2001 that quickly got rid of four successive presidents). Since 1995, women have been in the front lines of the still expanding piquetero movement—organizations representing newly laid-off workers and millions of unemployed people from urban 'villas de miseria' (slums)—known for their daring roadblocks. Without the piqueteros, there would have been no Argentinazo.

Women from the neighborhoods of Argentina's working and middle classes have been very active in the 'popular assemblies' that continue implementing measures of material aid for the unemployed and worker-controlled enterprises, including hospitals and clinics experiencing staff cutbacks or facing shutdown. With 25 percent of the workforce unemployed and more layoffs threatened, the popular assemblies play a major role in the daily life of entire neighborhoods, setting up community kitchens, daycare facilities, health clinics, cultural centers, community organic gardens, and barter markets. They represent a notable continuation of human solidarity across class lines that first appeared during the Argentinazo when enraged elements of the middle classes who had seen their bank accounts frozen and devalued joined the six-year-old series of marches of the piqueteros shouting "Piquete y cacerola, la lucha es una sola" ("Unemployed and pot-banger, the fight is one and the same").

The widely respected Madres de Plaza de Mayo (and the abuelas, or grandmothers), who blocked the mounted police during the Argentinazo, also have played a major role. Their fearlessness is contagious. Ever since the torture and disappearance of an estimated 30,000 men, women, and children during the US-backed "dirty war" of the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, they have kept human rights issues in the forefront of all social struggles.

In addition, women's caucuses and commissions have sprung up in diverse social sectors. The three-day 17th National Meeting of Women held in Salta in August 2002 brought together women in struggle from all walks of life, including Brukman workers who declared:

"We women are the ones with a double workday...we receive lower wages for the same work that men do, we endure sexual harassment...we have less access to education. We are the ones who die from clandestine abortions or during pregnancy or child-birth because of inadequate health care, the ones most affected by malnutrition and AIDS. Since December [2001], however, something has changed in our country and in spite of our situation we have shown that we have the power and the courage to come out fighting decisively. With the same decisiveness we want to take on the task of coordinating the different sectors in struggle."⁴

Several other developments struck me during my two-week visit to Argentina, including:

☆ A continuation of the gradual economic genocide generated by 27 years of neo-liberalism's privatizations, IMF-sponsored "austerity programs," dollarization, and

corruption.

★ *Elaboration:* The nation's average wage has fallen from first to last place in Latin America. Of 38 million Argentines, 60 percent live below the poverty line; 10 million are destitute. More than a third of all households are headed by women. In a country where giant agribusinesses export tons of foodstuffs, one of every five children suffers malnutrition, from which a hundred die each month. To the feminization of poverty we must add the infantilization of poverty. Meanwhile, during the first eleven months of 2002 Argentina used up 4.5 billion dollars of the nation's scarce foreign reserves to pay off the illegitimate foreign debt. It recently had to default on an \$805 million loan installment owed the World Bank, saying it could resume payment only when the IMF restored its credit line suspended in 2001.

☆ An extreme debilitation of the political system with its clientelist labor-union structures, in part because the IMF-imposed privatization of state enterprises, government corruption, non-payment of taxes, and payments on the foreign debt have left the government with little money for social programs.

★ *Elaboration:* There is a marked falling out among the thieves, that is, the bourgeoisie, the politicians, and the labor bureaucrats. Even within bourgeois sectors—financial, industrial, commercial, agrarian—there occurs fierce infighting. A 'nationalist bourgeoisie' does not exist. Major Argentine capitalists and their technocrats in government have long since rushed to embrace foreign capital, converting the nation into the IMF's 'model student'—until the economic collapse of 2001-2002. The resultant economic crisis and fractionalization of the PJ, UCR, Frepaso, and other political organizations has contributed to the acceleration of public discontent with all political parties except some leftist ones.⁵

Meanwhile, the major labor confederations have divided time and again. Their leaders regularly mouth pro-worker rhetoric and even organize protest strikes and rallies. At the same time, however, most of them collaborate with the bourgeoisie and IMF in the rejection of workers' demands and the extension of privatization and austerity measures, adding to rank-and-file worker resentment. President Eduardo Duhalde's social relief program for the unemployed consists of a paltry 150 pesos a month (40 euros or dollars). It reaches less than half the unemployed—and only after much of it has been siphoned off in the corrupt PJ patronage chain involved in its delivery.

☆ An expansion in the piquetero movements and their uniting with neighborhood assemblies and other labor struggles (especially those among teachers, miners, health, food, and transport workers, and workers running seized factories).

★ *Elaboration:* With support from some of the left-wing parties, there have emerged regional alliances uniting piqueteros with segments of the working and middle classes into 'coordinadoras,' such as the Coordinating Committee of Alto Valle (Neuquén and Río Negro, sparked by the Zanón workers). These coordinadoras help supersede the bureaucratized trade-union structures held in such disrepute. The coordinadora in Alto Valle is anti-IMF, anti-capitalist, opposed to bourgeois elections, and for non-payment of the foreign debt. It looks toward a general strike or national workers' assembly "to impose a way out that is favorable to workers and the people."⁶

Nov 16th 2002:
Grissinopoli worker
speaking at the opening
of the third-floor
cultural centre of this
worker-controlled factory
in the Chacarita
neighbourhood of
Buenos Aires



Nov 16th 2002:
at the opening ceremony
of the cultural centre,
a mother of Plaza de
Mayo, and a visiting
worker from the Zanón
factory, listen to testimony
about fallen comrades



Nov 17th 2002:
entrance to the cultural
centre of the worker-
controlled metallurgical
and plastics (IMPA)
factory, in Buenos Aires



Nov 17th 2002:
one of two simultaneous
discussion meetings, held
in the IMPA factory's
cultural centre



Nov 16th 2002:
interior of the worker-
controlled Grissinopoli
factory



☆ A general agreement on the need to maintain the democratic and pluralistic character of the social movements and alliances, seen as necessary for building a powerful unified struggle.

★ *Elaboration:* To be sure, there often emerge two (or more) distinct approaches within any given sector or organization, but neither seems willing to break completely with the other. For example, the factory takeover movement has a reformist co-op wing that does not call for immediate rejection of capitalist ownership. This co-op wing has strength inside the MNER (National Movement of Recuperated Enterprises) and is backed by the Catholic Church's Pastoral Social, various PJ members, and one of three major labor-union groups, the CTA (Federation of Argentine Workers).

On the other hand, a growing number of occupied workplaces advocate direct workers' control, with proposed state or municipal expropriation to guarantee it. This camp includes not only workers like those at Brukman, Zanón, and the re-nationalized coal mines at Río Turbio, but also many of the self-organized factories currently using co-op forms. This workers' control wing has the active support of leftist parties and organizations, including the EDI (Economists of the Left, active in helping workers plan production for social consumption), the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, and a recent substantial CTA split-off group called Syndicalist Current (CS).

The co-op wing, defined broadly, still has a majority influence among the hundreds of worker-organized enterprises, but it is seen by the workers' control wing as trapped in self-exploitation and destined to drown in a capitalist sea. Yet the two wings maintain a dynamic dialogue.

☆ A certain political and ideological fragmentation almost inevitable in the early phases of so many different popular movements.

★ *Elaboration:* This has led people to ask how the massive unity behind the negative slogan of "Get rid of all of them [politicians], let not a single one remain!" can be transformed into a positive program for replacing bourgeois state power with a genuine working people's administration. Throughout the land, people debate alternatives to capitalism, as well as what tactics to use, innovate, or discard. For example, I attended a sub-regional Buenos Aires assembly of delegates from assemblies and organizations planning direct actions for the first anniversary of the Argentinazo. An intense debate occurred on a resolution to declare publicly there would be no violence by demonstrators. The overwhelming majority of delegates opted against the proposal on the grounds that it was not only a concession to the 'violence-baiting' lies of the mass media but an insult to all those who had died at the hands of state-sponsored violence in the struggles of the past 40 years.

☆ The multi-generational character of grass-roots social movements and important role of young people, even children, in their maintenance, defense, and expansion.

★ *Elaboration:* Initially, the only consistent youth presence in the popular resistance movements was among the unemployed. In recent months, students and young teachers at all levels of schooling have become much more active. In various neighborhoods youths are participating in literacy campaigns and collective gardens (mainly organic) and eateries.

During my visit in November a group of sociology students were occupying the rector's office at the University of Buenos Aires. Their demands were: autonomy for the sociology career program; budget increases; more classroom space; an end to

political persecution; and scholarships for the needy. Political and cultural meetings I attended normally involved three generations of Argentines, each of which was listening and learning from the others, reflecting a genuine solidarity.

On November 8, three hundred children from Misiones province on the border with Paraguay and Brazil, organized by the CTA-affiliated Movement of Children of the People, arrived in Buenos Aires after a lengthy 'March for Life and Against Hunger.' Accompanying them were members of HIJOS (children of the disappeared) and other groups.

☆ A rise in anti-capitalist sentiment behind the unifying slogan of "Get rid of all of them, let not a single one remain."

★ *Elaboration:* The slogan increasingly means throw out not only the politicians but also the corrupt labor bureaucrats and capitalism as well. Most Argentines may still think of themselves as 'Peronists' (a habit born of 60 years of political history glorifying Juan and Evita Perón) but they readily see through the kleptocracy of the PJ/UCR/Frepaso system of corporatist clientelism. They distrust the endless false promises of 'jobs' and 'improvements in the economy.' As one Argentine quipped to me, "Guard your wallet, in case you meet a politician or a trade-union bureaucrat."

☆ The number of hard-core committed activists, always a minority, seems to be holding steady, if not increasing, while demands are becoming more inclusive and revolutionary.

★ *Elaboration:* One day after two piqueteros were killed on June 26, 2002, there was a huge outpouring of street demonstrations. In August, a mobilization of labor and popular forces drew 80,000 in Buenos Aires alone. That same month, at a little-publicized four-day Argentina Social Forum, 10,000 persons showed up to call for defeating US imperialism's attempt to annex or re-colonize Latin America through the proposed FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) and US military control. The United States has been constructing several military bases all over Latin America. It has poured huge sums of money, armaments, and personnel into Plan Colombia, Plan Puebla-Panamá, Plan Dignidad in Bolivia, Operation Cabañas 2001 in Argentina, the Regional Andean Initiative, and similar operations that constitute FTAA's military arm.

In early September, at the worker-controlled Brukman factory, the Second National Meeting of Occupied Factories and Companies in Struggle drew 2000 delegates from workplaces, neighborhood assemblies, piquetero organizations, and student, teacher, and professional groups. They set up a National Strike Fund to aid all workers in struggle. Under the banner "Si nos tocan a una, nos tocan a todos" ("An injury to one is an injury to all"), they passed resolutions of unity with neighborhood assemblies and piquetero movements across the country.

As in the First National Meeting held at Brukman in April with less than half the number of delegates, they called for breaking the labor unions' truces with the government and replacing the unions' leadership with people who would fight for public works programs and the indexation of wages and retirement plans in line with the costs of minimal everyday needs. They called for

equal pay for equal work; decriminalization of abortion; full reproductive and sexual rights; and provision of free contraceptives in hospitals and clinics. They also defended the rights of people with disabilities and of immigrant workers. The militant, anti-capitalist REDI (Disability Rights Network) has been active at many public rallies. For decades Argentine employers have been hiring and firing hundreds of thousands of Paraguayans and Bolivians with no respect for their human rights.

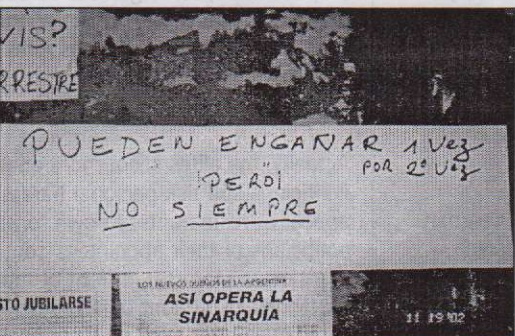
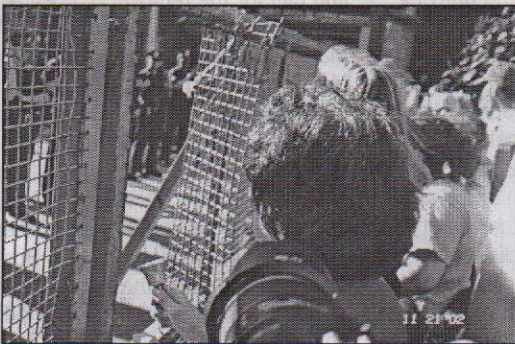
Finally, on December 20, the first anniversary of the Argentinazo, up to 100,000 people streamed into Buenos Aires' Plaza de Mayo to honor fallen comrades and call for the removal of President Duhalde. Many had walked many miles as part of the National Piquetero March that brought together such groups as the Movimiento Barrios de Pie (barefoot neighborhoods movement), el Bloque Piquetero Nacional, el Movimiento Independiente de Jubilados y Desocupados (pensioners and unemployed), Polo Obrero (piquetero arm of the Trotskyist Partido Obrero), and the Coordinadora Aníbal Verón (unemployed workers). Other organizations dispersed their actions around Buenos Aires' many neighborhoods and the nation's cities and towns in order to make police repression more difficult. Consequently, untold numbers marched and protested throughout the nation.

☆ An elimination of the culture of fear that had been created during the years of the military dictatorship's dirty war (1976-1983) and persisted until the year leading up to the Argentinazo.

★ *Elaboration:* It is obvious that the Argentinazo, despite a savage repression taking the lives of 33 people, has radically changed everything. People in the streets, neighborhoods, and workplaces have generated broad dynamic movements for creating 'a new Argentina,' one freed from the culture of fear, whether of the forces of repression or, in the case of the middle classes, of the unemployed (despite rising crime rates). For example, when authorities ordered trains carrying cartoneros (impoverished, self-organized cardboard collectors and recyclers claiming the right to go through city refuse) not to stop in one 'classy' Buenos Aires neighborhood, the residents there blocked the tracks until the order was revoked.

Actually, the elites seem more afraid than the masses. Politicians still risk personal harassment when they appear at restaurants. Known torturers and unpopular politicians or their appointees continue to face escraches (loud mass protests) in front of their homes. Noisy escraches also haunt banks, stock markets, and utility companies after each new currency devaluation or IMF-imposed hike in utility prices.

Some police and soldiers are bold enough to say they intend to refuse any orders to repress popular protests. More than 500 police in Buenos Aires, following the example set by the police union of Curaçao (Brazil), are trying to form a union based on the premise that police must not obey orders to repress social, political, religious, or human rights activities. The police recently laid down their arms rather than obey an order to remove 200 tons of wool from the Lavalán de Avellaneda factory, occupied by workers with whom they verbally declared their solidarity. Nonetheless, these multiple movements have faced intensified state



harassment and repression, as Argentina's bourgeoisie scrambles to set up and win national elections in April 2003 in hopes of putting back together again the fallen edifice of a capitalism dominated by national monopolies allied with US and European imperialism's big banks and corporations.

This raises questions about the fragility of elections and what the Argentine military and imperialism will do, especially the dominant US imperialism. Voting is obligatory in Argentina, and the majority of votes cast in the last election, two months before the Argentinazo, were either leftist (25%) or blank, swear words, or nullified. Since then, new elections have been announced, cancelled, and postponed.

Leading the polls among presidential candidates is 'none of the above.' Three candidates vie for second place: two Peronists of the PJ and the very religious Catholic Elisa Carrió of the virtually divided centrist and 'socialist' Assembly for a Republic of Equals (ARI). All three run on populist platforms opposed to corruption but in favor of private property, the market, and 'free competition,' in other words, 'capitalism,' a word little in favor these days. Former Trotskyist and ex-political prisoner Luis Zamora of the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist AL (Self-Determination and Freedom) once led the polls but has now declared he will not run, using a Zapatista-style argument that 'taking power' is not what he or his organization is about.

Many activists are calling for a boycott of elections. Some favor voting for one of the many Trotskyist, Communist, and anarchist-oriented leftist and socialist parties or groups, or even ARI's Carrió. If a first round of elections is actually held, a second round between the two candidates obtaining the most votes will follow ('none of the above' or nullified votes may win both rounds).

The unpopular Armed Forces remain well armed to intervene, as they have done so often in the past. Yet most members of Argentina's military and police are aware of how difficult it would be to control hundreds of thousands of protesters in the streets, among whom are some of their own relatives who have fallen into the ranks of the poor or unemployed. Meanwhile, police and paramilitary goon-squads—mercenaries hired by the bosses and union bureaucrats—carry out Argentina's stepped-up repression. Also, death squads like the notorious 'Triple A' have reappeared.

In November, Carlos Menem, who as president in the 1990s had pardoned and freed the leaders of the dirty war, called for a state of siege and assignment of public security duties to the military. *7 President Duhalde loudly criticized Menem for this—then raised the possibility of reforming the Internal Security Law that prohibits the military from intervening in internal affairs.

The US military is present and ever more threatening, in not just Argentina but all Latin America. 'United States Space Command Vision for 2020,' released to the press in June 2002, discusses plans to intervene in Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Panamá and Peru, that is, 'failed States' whose 'viability' would depend on US 'aid.' This is a doctrine readily applicable to Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia and other countries. In 2002, Green Beret instructors and elite US army units specializing in freeing hostages arrived in Buenos Aires to train special groups of Argentina's Federal Police. To the northwest, in Salta, Green Berets operate with no authorization from the Argentine Congress. On the island of Tolhuin in Tierra del Fuego a US military base is being set up to conduct "nuclear studies with peaceful goals."

The remote 'tri-border area' of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, where a small Arab population resides, is crawling with CIA personnel and US military in the hypocritical 'war on terrorism,' an echo of the 'war on drugs' used in Plan Colombia to militarize a situation and use the army instead of the police to put down popular movements. Actually, this asserts imperialist pressure on the progressive movements in all three countries, plus Uruguay, Bolivia, and Peru, where leftist movements and/or presidential candidates have been gaining strength and blocking the IMF's and US Treasury Department's remaining privatization plans.

Congressmen in Washington speak of a Latin American 'axis of evil': Presidents Castro (Cuba), Chávez (Venezuela), Lula da Silva (Brazil), and Gutiérrez (Ecuador), even though the last three have assured the IMF and Washington they will honor economic commitments made by the prior presidents (all neo-liberals). *8

Argentina is a perfect example of how imperialism's neo-liberal economic programs have dismantled or debilitated the nation state, drying up the spaces for so-called 'progressivism' or 'nationalism.' The failure of the De la Rúa center-left Alliance, 1999-2001, reflected that. In Argentina, as in the rest of Latin America, traditional class structures are nowhere to be found. The working classes are fractured by different levels of unionization and wages (lower each year), rising unemployment, and the flexibilization and precariousness of work. Most of the middle classes are racing toward the poverty line or already have fallen below it. Peasants are often proletarians, immigrant labor is widespread, slavery is being reintroduced, sex trade in women and children is booming, and most people, facing poverty, unemployment, or unavailability of jobs, work long days and nights in the 'informal economy.'

This helps explain the alliances between the unemployed and the working and middle classes that have sprung up in Argentina. Chaotic and uneven, they are opening the doors to potentially revolutionary changes unimaginable in the 1990s. They still lack detailed, cohesive programs, although an articulate minority of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist activists are, when not arguing with one another, trying to come up with them. However, most employed and unionized workers are not fully involved in the popular movements yet, and the Duhalde government's limited social welfare program does rein in some of the unemployed.

One might say that the old Argentina is falling while the new one has barely begun to walk—but in a manner that clearly shows the failures of capitalism and does pose the great challenges ahead. Argentine activists are busily planting the seeds of what can grow into an original participatory socialism—or be crushed under the iron heel of military fascism or US economic and military intervention. What is taking place is nothing less than the fight for a second revolution for independence about which so many Argentines and Latin Americans speak today, 'the second revolution for economic independence' (the first revolution having been for political independence in the 19th century).⁹ Class polarization is intensifying and self-organization is spreading, but there are not yet enough cohesive coalitions with a common vision capable of organizing all the popular forces newly committed to the fight for a different economy and society.

Besides a military coup or direct US annexation or occupation, there are only two likely possibilities in Argentina's future. On the one hand, an economic genocide may continue, managed by a corrupted kleptocratic capitalism and a state beholden to imperialism practicing increased repression. On the other hand, more factory occupations, nationwide strikes, protests, and national assemblies may take place, leading to a participatory democratic socialism based on expropriation of capitalist enterprises to be managed and controlled by working people themselves.

In both cases imperialism seems to be considering the possibility of converting Argentina into an economic protectorate of sorts, through direct and indirect military intervention. Therefore, the need for internationalist solidarity is manifest. Whether that can be developed beyond the types of regional social forums held in conjunction with the World Social Forum in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Florence, and other cities remains to be seen. □

- 1 'Nuestra Lucha', Nov 8, 2002, p 3. For background on Zanón and Argentina's other worker-controlled factories, see IV October 2002, pp. 28-32; 'Against the Current', November/December 2002, pp. 27-29; and Eduardo Lucita, "Fábricas ocupadas y gestión obrera en Argentina: ocupar, resistir, producir," 'Revista Cuadernos del Sur' [http://www.geocities.com/economistas_de_izquierda/producir1]
- 2 "Self-reliance helps Argentines endure nation's economic pain," by Matt Moffett, 'Wall Street Journal', December 20, 2002.
- 3 CORREO DE PRENSA DE LA IV INTERNACIONAL 'Boletín Electrónico No. 485 – América Latina y el Caribe', Dec. 10, 2002, [germain@chasque.net], reprint of article by María Moreno in 'Página 12' supplement.
- 4 'Nuestra Lucha', Aug. 27, 2002, p 12.
- 5 PJ – Partido Justicialista (or Peronists); UCR – Unión Cívica Radical (or Radicals); Frepaso – a centre-left coalition which put Fernando de la Rúa in office in 1999. Leftist parties and groups include: PC (Communist Party); MST (Socialist Workers Movement); IU (United Left, basically PC and MST); CCC (Combative Classist Current, rooted in Maoists who earlier broke with PC and now seek an alliance with select capitalist sectors); PO (Worker Party, Trotskyist); MAS (Movement to Socialism, Trotskyist); Por Masas (Trotskyist); UMS (Unión de Militantes Socialistas, Trotskyist); PTS (Workers for Socialist Party); LSR (Revolutionary Socialist League); MTD (Movement of Unemployed Workers); Socialismo Libertario (a non-party of the international current Utopia Socialista, feminist, anarchist, and neo-Trotskyist); various locals of the ATE (Association of State Workers) and other union federations, e.g., railroad, transport, shipyard, telephone, electrical, construction, education, and other workers.
- 6 'Nuestra Lucha', November 8, 2002, supplement on First Regional Plenary of Coordinadora del Alto Valle.
- 7 Menem apparently thought this might improve his trailing position in the presidential election polls by winning over those elements of the middle classes who were participating less in the neighborhood assemblies or might be nostalgic for the more prosperous days of his 1990s' administration. His idea was widely rejected, however, and he did not gain in the polls.
- 8 Ernesto Herrera, "Entre el 'argentínazo' y el 'efecto Lula,'" 'América del Sur', December 26, 2002; 'La Jornada', Sept. 1, 2002; James D. Cockcroft, "El imperialismo estadounidense en América Latina y los movimientos de resistencia y su inter-

nacionalización," in press for journal of Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias of Mexico's National University (UNAM, Ciencias y Humanidades, 2003).

- 9 James D. Cockcroft, *'Latin America: History, Politics, and US Policy'* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/International Thomson Publishing, Second edition, 1998), pp. 673-674.

* James Cockcroft spent two weeks in Argentina in mid-November, invited to present a lecture on the challenge of imperialism to Latin America at the Popular University of Mothers of May Plaza's first International Congress on Mental Health and Human Rights. An online professor for the State University of New York and a Fellow at the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam, he is the author of 35 books, including *'Mexico's Hope: An Encounter with Politics and History'* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1999) and *'Latin America: History, Politics, and US Policy'* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/International Thomson Publishing, Second edition, 1998), both translated into Spanish and published in 2001 by Mexico City's *siglo veintiuno* editores.



Neighbourhood assembly in the Parque Centenario, Buenos Aires. We include this photo despite its bad quality to show the extent of regular popular involvement in the Assemblies

All other photos for this article were taken by the author

Asian Social Forum: a great movement is born

PRAFUL BIDWAI *

The first Asian Social Forum (ASF)—just concluded—saw a unique confluence of grassroots social movements, people's organizations, and radical NGOs, which interrogate globalization and counterpose equality, human rights and justice to the shop-worn agendas of transnational big business

Even for a city of contrasts (consider Nizamshahi or information technology vs abject poverty or child labour), what Hyderabad witnessed this past week was unparalleled: on the one hand, a 'global partnership' summit of the Confederation of Indian Industry caucusing in a five-star hotel; and on the other, the Asian Social Forum, with 15,000 activists from all over the continent celebrating the spirit of solidarity in the Nizam College grounds.

The first event was dominated by a select group of dark-suited business potentates, foreign officials and Indian ministers from L.K. Advani downwards. The second was a riot of colours and a melange: of grassroots campaigners on livelihood issues and human rights, environmentalists and feminists, trade unionists and seed-conserving peasants, people's science-movement and healthcare activists, peaceniks and anti-displacement campaigners, writers and social scientists, radical theatre-people and filmmakers.

The first group came from leading corporations in India and the West, known for their successful brands and fat profit-lines; the second from the North-east, Asia and Afghanistan, Palestine and Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, as well as India. It comprised people known for their work against foreign military bases and occupation, for freedom from debt, for the right to food and free speech, for human security.

It is a telling commentary that when 400 volunteers from the second group peacefully picketed the venue of the first, they were arrested by the police of India's most business and IT-savvy chief minister.

The ASF began with a plenary addressed

by firebrand activist Medha Patkar and ended with one presided over by former President K.R. Narayanan. Between the two were eight major conferences, 160 seminars, 164 workshops, scores of cultural events—and countless processions, demonstrations and tableaux. This sums up the awesome range and scope of the ASF and its rainbow-coalition character better than anything else.

The common theme running through these was grassroots democracy, the fight against exclusion, the imperatives of equality, global justice, human emancipation and people-(not profit)-centred development. In one line, the message was: the anti-globalization movement is here, and for real!

The ASF is part of the great global justice movement that began at Seattle in 1999, and took an organized expression through the World Social Forum's meetings in Porto Alegre, Brazil, with the slogan, "another world is possible!"

The global justice movement is one of the most spectacular mass mobilizations of our times. The WSF is a powerful forum of interaction between social activists and the liberal-progressive intelligentsia. The movement has shaken the leaders of global capital and its managerial institutions (the World Bank, IMF, G-8, OECD, etc).

But the ASF's own roots lie in the Asian soil, in the numerous movements which have grown over the past quarter-century or more in the continent—for survival with dignity, for peace, gender equality, decentralization, for direct democracy, Dalit rights, for ecologically sound development and social liberation. These movements have reshaped societies from South Korea to Nepal, geopolitics from the

Persian Gulf to the Malacca Straits and development policies from Japan to the Philippines.

India occupies a special place here. As the great historian EP Thompson would say, India has witnessed an avalanche of people's movements and civil society

happen to be among the staunchest and best-known critics of Islamabad's hawkish policies—a point that couldn't have been missed by New Delhi's own hawks!

A valid criticism of the ASF programme is that it was far too India-(or India-Pakistan)-centric. Another is that the ASF workshops

organizations and its 'New Social Movements', a dialogue between them and movements from the rest of Asia, a forum to evolve common analysis and strategy, and a high-energy cultural intercourse that took on the appearance of a gigantic mela, a week-long festival celebrating some of the greatest causes of our times.



Globalisation at its finest: slave boys rescued from a Bihar village and a life of 21-hour work days, imprisoned in a single room, tortured if they slept; and now in the care of a Bombay council home

initiatives like few other countries have. India is also the site of especially lively, organic, two-way interaction between popular movements and the radical intelligentsia.

However, there was a disproportionate number of Indians at this 'Asian' event: only 780 of the 14,426 registered participants came from abroad. One reason for this is that New Delhi cussedly delayed granting visas to hundreds of delegates. The worst example of this was the systematic deletion (by Advani himself) of well-known Pakistani activists' names from the almost-approved list, including Asma Jehangir, Pervez Hoodbhoy, IA Rahman and AH Nayyar. Ironically, they

were so physically dispersed (which Indian city can accommodate 15,000 people in multiple conference centres located close to one another?) as to lack connectedness and a centre of gravity. Yet, the ASF was a tremendous learning process.

It is hard to summarize the rich diversity of its deliberations—stretching from the sharing of experiences of different struggles against neoliberal economics and privatization of natural resources, and for the defence of livelihoods, to drawing up alternative perspectives and programmes.

The ASF uniquely offered four platforms: the first-ever large-scale interaction between India's established mass

The ASF was a landmark event, an exhilarating beginning. It needs to be followed up—both through further dissemination of its core-ideas to grassroots levels, and laterally, through replication elsewhere, even as the Porto Alegre process maintains its own integrity and distinct identity. One sign of a great social movement is the variety of messages and appeals it contains, and the many organizational forms it can assume. Going by that criterion, the movement against unequal globalization, and for a just world, has a great future—not least in Asia. □

* This article first appeared in 'The Hindustan Times' of Friday, January 10, 2003.

Turkey: in search of lost stability

YETER DURSUN*

“We have committed suicide”: this comment by the outgoing prime minister, Bülent Ecevit, aptly sums up the situation following the Turkish parliamentary elections of November 3rd, 2002. On that day, all the traditional parliamentary parties were rejected at the ballot box, in elections that they themselves had called two years earlier than necessary, without any real debate and with a tone of bravado.

Rejection of the political class

Ecevit did however add that his party could have won if the elections had taken place at the scheduled time, in 2004, thus demonstrating that he had understood nothing of what had happened! The political blindness shown by one of the veteran traditional leaders is in itself a patent proof of the complete bankruptcy of the Turkish political class. Indeed, what other explanation could there be for a party that won the elections in 1999 with 22% gaining 1.2% this time, losing more than 6 million voters in the space of three years, while its second coalition partner fell from 18% to 8.7% and the third from 13% to 5%, the three of them together losing nearly 12 million voters in total?

Certainly, this tripartite coalition comprising a populist and nationalist ‘left’ (the DSP), the nationalist far right (MHP) and a liberal ‘pro-European’ right, was in power during the great economic crisis of February 2001, which led to a fall of 30% in Turkey’s GDP. Also, by clinging desperately to power, the aged and practically senile Ecevit had contributed to his own downfall, provoking a split in his party last spring, losing half his parliamentary group; its two associates in power continued to squabble over governmental posts; the government itself had lost all coherence; the ‘austerity’ programme dictated by the IMF had put a knife to its throat and so on. Who, then, could be astonished at a political collapse of this kind?

True, but how then can we explain that the two main opposition parties, the SP of Erbakan (the old traditional Islamist leader) and the DYP of Ciller (rightwing conservative, rural and with criminal connections), who gained respectively 15% and 12% of the votes in 1999, had also lost nearly 5 million voters in total, with only 2.5% and 9.5% at these elections? How can we explain also that the ‘Young Party’ (GP), a pseudo-party created from all kinds of fragments two months before the elections by Cem Uzan, the head of a media and telecommunications empire (in short a sort of ‘Turkish Berlusconi’), was able to win more than 7% of the votes for an electoral list made up uniquely of managers and employees of his companies (on the basis of a demagogic populist-nationalist discourse).

‘Total rejection’ of the traditional parties

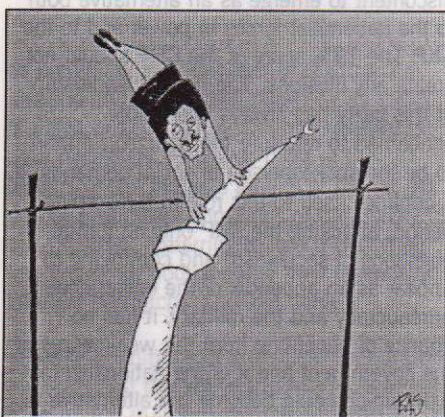
Without lingering on this phenomenon of ‘total rejection’ of the outgoing political class it would be totally illusory to try to understand and comment on the success of the AKP’ led by Tayyip Erdogan.¹ All abstract analyses on the ‘nature of this party’ and all speculation on its ‘real intentions’ are beside the point if not placed in the context of a reflection on this political process.

In the first place, it would be useful to recall the chronic crisis and the instability of the Turkish political system since the end of the 1980s (which had been dominated by the ANAP of Turgut Özal). The following decade was marked by rivalries and quarrels among the leaders of the traditional parties, divided into four rival groupings: the ANAP and the DYP on the right, the CHP and DSP on the left. The progressive erosion of these parties, which mutually paralyzed each other, allowed the rise in power of the traditional Islamist movement around Erbakan, and subsequently the nationalist far right of the MHP.

In the 15 last years, all these parties have succeeded each other in power in a game of musical chairs, forming rickety, heterogeneous, clientelist, populist and corrupt coalitions. All this has led to an increasingly obvious breakdown of the political world, characterized by: supplementary splits; a total loss of credibility of leaders and parties; a growing depoliticization; an increasing role for the bureaucracy (notably the military) in the management of the country; shameful chaos, waste and pillage; with all of this engendering a morose pessimism inside all the social classes and layers (including the bourgeoisie), but also a deep frustration and an anger directed against the state apparatus (in particular after the 1999 earthquake) and against politicians, with a culminating point in the economic crisis of 2001.

A simple glance at the results of the last five elections shows this evolution: five different parties have won these elections with a different party in second place on very occasion. 1987: the ANAP came first with 36% and the CHP second with 25%; 1991: 27% for the DYP and 24% for the ANAP; 1995: 21% for the RP and 19%

Erbakan, on a wing and a prayer



each for the DYP and the ANAP; 1999: 22% and 18% for the winning DSP/MHP ticket; 2002: 34% for the AKP and 19% for the CHP. Behind this apparent lack of coherence in voting behaviour there is an implacable logic: to 'punish' the parties in power and replace them by every possible and imaginable alternative.

New elements

While following this same logic of 'punishment/substitution', the elections of November 3, 2002 nonetheless marked a signal change in at least four decisive areas, which could indicate a radical turn over the next decade:

■ Until now the classic equilibrium of 30-35% in total for the left and 65-70% for the right seemed to be maintained, giving the impression that the old schemas and political fidelities had basically not changed very much. Today the total vote for all the left parties is barely 23%. In other words, the CHP of Baykal gained only half the 6.3 million voters lost by Ecevit's DSP. That could reflect deep social changes over the last 20 years.

■ Until 2002, the score of the two biggest parties fell constantly in relation to the scores of the winners of the preceding election, indicating a vote of defiance and reaction, rather than of confidence in the new parties. Today, if the score of the CHP can be analyzed in this framework (despite an increase of 11%, it did less well than the DSP in 1999), the same is not true for Erdogan's AKP, which obtained the highest score of any party since 1987, a result which broadly exceeds the absolute record vote for the political family from which it originates. This, then, was a vote of 'confidence and hope' if not yet unstinting support.

■ Since 1987, no party has been able to win an absolute majority and govern alone. That is not the case with the AKP, which is close to the two thirds majority which would allow it to change the Constitution (assuming the support of four of the nine independent deputies, all of whom are on the right) It is a genuine 'revolution' in the Turkish political world, which explains the cries of joy from the bourgeoisie and the media, who are delighted at the chance of returning to the stability lost since the death of Özal.

■ For the first time, more than half the electorate is not represented in Parliament: because of the threshold of 10% of the national vote needed to enter Parliament, only the AKP and the CHP have deputies, with 54% of the votes between them (plus 1% for the independent bodies). Hence 45% of the voters are officially excluded from the parliamentary game. However, if one takes account of the record rate of

abstention (21%) and the 2% of spoiled ballots, the 17 million voters of the AKP and the CHP only represent 41% of the 41.4 million registered voters.

Currently the AKP is enjoying a 'state of grace' and has an astonishing quasi-unanimous support from public opinion and the media. Even the CHP is behaving in a conciliatory fashion (apart from a very small minority of secular Kemalists). However, the situation could very rapidly change with the least economic or political crisis, or the least 'Islamist' turn on the part of the AKP. In other words, its strength today, its complete hegemony in Parliament in a country desperate for political stability and reform, could tomorrow become its main weakness and lead to a total questioning of its democratic legitimacy.

The AKP before a historic opportunity

Taking account of all these elements, the AKP now has a historic opportunity to take a central role in Turkish political life.

Founded three years ago as a split from the classic Islamist party, this party now presents itself as a 'democratic-conservative' party, 'modern' and attuned to globalized capitalism, but with Muslim conservative references. In sum, the founders of the AKP wish to create a kind of 'Muslim democratic' party in Turkey, like the Christian Democratic parties of Western Europe. If it is obvious that this kind of analogy has limits, it is equally clear that objectively the AKP can in no way be defined as a classic Islamist party, still less as fundamentalist.

It is a party with a strong base in the conservative Muslim middle bourgeoisie of central Anatolia, which was previously the classic clientele of the Islamist movement, but which now wishes to widen its horizon. With the current support of the secular big bourgeoisie of Istanbul, the AKP is well placed to reunify the various layers of the Turkish bourgeoisie, divided since the late 1960s. Thanks to its opening to Europe and its current ideological flexibility, the AKP seems also to attract support beyond the conservative intelligentsia, with some liberal intellectuals breaking from the paternalist and authoritarian conservatism of Kemalism.

The AKP also presents itself as the 'party of the poor and disinherited', a party that will finally deliver 'justice', a party that is honest, trustworthy and not corrupt. It has won very broad popular support, from the deprived in the big cities like Istanbul, layers of the poor Anatolian peasantry, and some of the Kurds in the east of the country. In short, a mass cross-class party is being born, with all the advantages

(massive strength) and fragilities (internal tensions) that involves.

The AKP is based on a network of political cadres who have been activists together for nearly 35 years and who have the same political references: Erdogan, Gül and their friends are nearly all of the same generation (in their fifties) and began to work together in the late 1960s in the youth organizations of the Islamist party of Erbakan. They have gone through the same experiences, sharing the same ephemeral successes and the same defeats, but they have also a common experience of management at the level of the main local governments of the country (like Istanbul, a huge town of 10 million inhabitants), and in national government (during the Erbakan-Ciller coalition from 1995 to 1997).

Their break with the old Islamic guard of Erbakan is not a simple quarrel between generations: it is linked to this experience of power. Erdogan and his friends have fully drawn the lessons of the defeat of their historic leader and his coalition government in the face of the army and public opinion in 1995-1997. Moreover, the AKP is no longer limited to a nucleus of former moderate Islamic modernizers; the party has won a series of important cadres from the traditional right.

Its rapid, recent and massive success makes it a heterogeneous party that is still being constructed. It enjoys significant margins of maneuver, or in any case more than its predecessors of the last decade: its main political rivals, the parties and leaders of the traditional right, have entered into deep crisis, discredited, divided and for now excluded from the political game, while the left is also undergoing a huge crisis, whose catastrophic scope it does not yet seem to have recognized.

The bankruptcy of the left

It is indeed significant that neither the social democratic left nor the far left were capable of capitalizing on the huge popular discontent to emerge as an alternative both to the nationalist forces in power and to the AKP. The 19% score of the CHP should not create any illusions. The rightist leadership of this party has always been more concerned to reassure the bourgeoisie than to be the spokesperson of social demands. If it confines itself to this role in the coming period, attacking the AKP only on formal questions of secularism and continuing to appear as an appendix of the enlightened bureaucracy and the military, it has no chance of benefiting from the weaknesses of the government and it is the nationalist far right which could become the alternative to the AKP in the eyes of the popular masses.

As for the far left, it has succumbed once more to its old sectarian demons. The balance sheet drawn by comrade Ufuk Uras, president of the ÖDP, of the defeat of its party is severe, but lucid and justified (see box). Paralyzed for three years by internal disputes among authoritarian apparatchiks, demoralized by its divisions and debates cut off from reality, the ÖDP has finally broken up into several sectarian fragments, losing

could continue to progress at the next elections, gaining both to its right and to its left. In other words, even without working miracles, it would be enough for it to not make too many big mistakes, not to disappoint immediately like all its predecessors. It could establish itself as the main mass party of the Turkish right, like the DP² of the 1950s and the AP³ of the 1960s (both won more than 50% of the

government, it is not at all ruled out that, compared to the outgoing 'ultra neoliberals', the AKP government is seen as the most 'social' of the last 20 years.

Bureaucratic chaos, corruption and waste have wrought enormous havoc with the public finances; the disorganization of the state apparatus has reached an unimaginable level of chronic inefficiency;



its credibility and its capacity of attraction, disappointing the hopes raised by its initial pluralist project. A fundamental renewal is then necessary. However, most of the leaders of the multiple groups of the far left do not even seem conscious of the gravity of the situation, preferring to lord it over their tiny grouping, nourished by their legends of 'Marxist patriarchs' and 'old fighters'

In these conditions of a political vacuum on the right and the left, if the AKP succeeded even a little in improving the situation it

vote) or again the ANAP of the 1980s (45% of the vote).

The debris of neoliberalism

The country has lived through such an economic catastrophe, barely a year and a half ago, that the least improvement would appear as a 'miracle' and would be welcomed by the most deprived. Moreover, with the bitter medicine of the IMF having already been dispensed by the outgoing

civil servants have been demoralized by the partisan and unstable coalitions that have succeeded each other. The least appointment involved arduous bargaining between the coalition parties. Businesses were often obliged to triple their budgets for bribery, for it was sometimes necessary to 'oil' the bureaucratic wheels of three distinct ministries or administrations, each dependent on a different party. A simple improvement in 'administrative efficiency' could then appear as a real revolution and might enable significant budgetary

economies to be made.

Can the AKP do all this? The months to come will decide. In any case, its leaders seem conscious of the problem (and the possibilities that it offers them). Will they have the capacity and the political intelligence? It is interesting to quote here the words of the new 'retrograde Islamist' Prime Minister Abdullah Gül, in the daily 'Hürriyet' (November 25, 2002): 'I have been stupefied to see the state things were in when I took office. Even the office of our party is more modern than the office of the prime minister.. I have just installed the very first computer there...' It is true that Ecevit, his 'secular, modernist and progressive' predecessor, would type all his mail and speeches on his old typewriter.

The bourgeoisie's programme of modernization

The new government has moreover announced a vast project of democratic and anti-bureaucratic reforms as well as economic and social restructurings, with the aim of adapting Turkey to the norms of the EU. This project of global restructuring is precisely the kind of programme of modernization the big bourgeoisie has been demanding for a long time and the AKP will have all necessary support from the employers in implementing it.

For sure, a 'better administrative management' is not enough to seriously deal with all the social and economic problems besetting a country of Turkey's size. Recent history shows that Turkey cannot count too much on European aid to overcome the difficulties of the process of adaptation to EU membership. It is clear that the EU will do still less for Turkey than for the former central and eastern European countries: and not only for reasons of 'economic size', world conjuncture and imperialist will, but also through deep anti-Turkish racism and anti-Muslim sentiment on the part of the European political class (Vedrine, Schmidt and Delors as much as Giscard and Kohl). Not to speak of the hostility or indifference (in the best of the cases) of public opinion, indeed of the European left intelligentsia, which has little sympathy for the fate of a country which 'oppresses the Kurds/massacres the Armenians/is a military dictatorship/or quasi-fundamentalist' and which is moreover so complex, different and difficult to understand. And yet the Turkish bourgeoisie continues to bet everything on European integration. It is true that it does not really have much choice in the current state of the world and its geographic region, given that 2/3 of Turkey's trade is with the EU.

Through all these reforms, the Turkish bourgeoisie hopes to be able to attract investment from international capital: note that the presence of foreign capital in the Turkish economy is astonishingly weak for an industrialized country of this size. It is undoubtedly the archaism of the Turkish state, the relative weakness of its infrastructure, the protectionism which was in force up to the late 1980s and the political instability of the 1990s which are the initial causes of this, and the big Turkish employers now want to change this situation through a reform programme. They believe they are now strong enough to compete with European capital and they need a reliable political personnel that enjoys popular legitimacy and has an electoral base that is sufficiently broad. The AKP is the candidate for this role and the bourgeoisie has decided to go through the experiment.

It is not then surprising that, despite its image or its 'Islamist' past, the AKP has prioritized the problem of European integration, promising notably to resolve finally the question of Cyprus in the framework of the proposals of the UN and to resolve some key problems of 'democratization' and of 'demilitarization'. The crushing electoral defeat of left and right nationalism (DSP + MHP) creates a suitable climate for reforms, but it is still too soon to see how far the AKP will go.

An Islamism adapted to the market?

The AKP is also changing its tune on the thorny question of secularism. Erdogan was using spine chillingly uncompromising Islamist language not so long ago, and there is a 'reactionary' dimension to Turkish Islamism, which found it hard to stomach the republican victory at the beginning of the last century. In addition, in case of defeat in its policy of reforms or a new economic crisis, the AKP could well be tempted to play the Islamic card.

However, one might expect the AKP leadership in the short term to avoid flagrant errors or outrageous provocations in the area of secularism. It underpins the success of its overall project. Nor should one expect a short-term tension between the government and the army – the guarantor of Kemalist principles and secularism. Even if the army distrusts Erdogan and will do not sacrifice its direct political influence and its advantages as a privileged and 'enlightened' bureaucratic caste, it is now too linked to the big bourgeoisie to openly oppose its projects (OYAK, the holding which manages the army's pension funds, is today one of the most powerful capitalist groups in the country!). Nor does it wish to give the

impression of not respecting the verdict of the ballot box.

Moreover, secularism in Turkey is a Jacobin secularism in the French style, and it is primarily this 'over rigid' model that the AKP claims to question, not the principle of secularism itself. Its eventual aim would be to convince the army and big bourgeoisie to establish a 'German' or 'English' secularism; a regime that is very conservative on the moral plane, where a greater place is given to religion in the public arena.

This the true threat today is not a 'fundamentalist danger' in the short term, but rather that the AKP attains a durable grip on power as a pole of bourgeois and pro-imperialist stability. The problem is that in the current state of play it is far from certain that socialism can really become a short-term alternative to this project of bourgeois stabilization and European integration. A catastrophic collapse and economic regression, the rise of an openly fascist or fundamentalist mass movement, or again the emergence of a fairly ferocious military dictatorship and a chaotic civil war seem more serious candidates for this role.

All the more reason for the urgent construction of credible left pole of attraction, genuinely democratic and anchored in real life, more concerned with alternative projects than an abstract discourse dating from a past era. As comrade Ufuk Uras stresses: "The left is in a phase of transition. Either it will renew itself or it will become petrified. It should be said that the fault is essentially ours and not that of the people. Finally, it is a good thing to see that the lessons learnt by heart by the left have proved bankrupt. To those who wish anew to recite those lessons, I wish good luck. However, today, the most revolutionary task is to tear up these lessons learnt by heart and place oneself at the heart of life itself. If the left has entered into a coma, it is not those who put it in that condition who will bring it out again. It is necessary to give way to youth." □

* *Yeter Dursun is an independent journalist in Istanbul.*

- 1 *Party of Justice and Development. The acronym of the party also has a political meaning in that its leaders pronounce it AK Party (instead of saying AKP) since AK in Turkish means both 'white' (thus 'clean', 'not corrupt') and also 'clear' (hence the opposite of obscure, whereas the secularists accuse it of being 'obscurantist').*
- 2 *The Democratic Party, led by Menderes (the prime minister overthrown by the coup of 1960 and hung in 1962).*
- 3 *The Party of Justice, led by Demirel, overthrown first by the coup of 1971, then definitively dissolved after the coup of 1980.*

Some progress for Kurdish nationalists

THE KURDISH NATIONALISTS contested the elections under the rubric of DEHAP; a party of 'substitution' formed in the eventuality of a dissolution by the Constitutional Court of the Party of the Democracy of the People (HADEP, led by Murat Bozlak). The DEHAP lists ran in the form of a 'bloc', a last-minute alliance between the HADEP and two small far left formations: the EMEP (Stalinist, formerly pro-Albanian) and the SDP (a recent split from the ÖDP), the bloc being supported from the exterior by other small groups which had broken with the ÖDP. DEHAP's score (6.2% and nearly 2 million votes) represented real progress in relation to the 4.7% and 1.5 million votes registered by HADEP in 1999.

However, this remains far from the 10% necessary to be represented in Parliament and well below the hopes of the Kurdish nationalist leaders, who claimed they would score more than 10% and even 'come to power', as HADEP president Murat Bozlak imprudently claimed. DEHAP's impact was limited outside the traditional Kurdish nationalist fiefdoms in the south-east. They certainly had some excellent results in the cities where the nationalists have held municipal power since 1999: notable results included a vote of 56% in Diyarbakir, 47% in Batman, 46% in Sirmak, 45% in Hakkari and 40% in Van. The results were less satisfying in the more conservative Kurdish towns like Urfa (19%) or Bingol (22%), where DEHAP was beaten by the AKP. In Gaziantep, the main industrial city of the region, it came third with 8%, far behind the AKP (40%) and the CHP (19%). In some Mediterranean towns like Adana and Mersin, where there is a very strong and recent Kurdish immigration, DEHAP scored around 9%, higher than its national average. In the industrial areas in the west of the country where there is a historically a strong Kurdish presence and a recent immigration, it had a very low score, for example only 4% in Izmir and Kocaeli. In Istanbul, where 'at least' a quarter of the population (10 million inhabitants) are of Kurdish origin (and which is thus the town with the largest Kurdish population), DEHAP scored 287,000 votes (4%), far from the million votes predicted by its leadership; its vote increased by only 0.6%

in relation to 1999. In Ankara, the capital, DEHAP just scraped 2%. Everywhere else, its vote was insignificant (less than 2%).

Yet the political context seemed a priori more favourable than ever: the end of the conflicts in the Kurdish region for the past three years; a climate of reduced tension and liberalization on the main themes of the Kurdish question (suppression of the death penalty, first steps towards the authorization of teaching in the Kurdish language, the broadcast of television programmes in Kurdish, and so on); access to the media (including television); no significant repression of the DEHAP campaign (as the leaders themselves recognized and as demonstrated by the electoral meetings of several hundred thousand people in Istanbul and Diyarbakir); the support of the municipalities in the Kurdish region (controlled for 3 years by HADEP); rejection of the policies of the government; a massive protest vote against the traditional parties across Turkey and so on.

But it is precisely on the political level that the chronic weaknesses of the leadership of the Kurdish national movement are most evident; in particular in the area of political strategy and electoral alliances. The HADEP leadership initially sought an alliance which would enable them to cross the 10% threshold and guarantee the biggest possible number of deputies, without too much concern for the precise politics of its eventual partner: social-democrats of right or left, liberal right and even hard-line Islamist.

Yet if the objective was to be represented in Parliament at any price, nothing stopped HADEP from presenting a series of independent candidates in its regional bastions, with a very strong chance of electing a couple of dozen thanks to its crushing hegemony in some towns (the nine independent right wing deputies were elected in towns in the Kurdish region). However, HADEP suddenly changed course radically, almost giving the impression that it no longer saw its presence in Parliament as being so opportune in the current national and international political conjuncture. Before the elections HADEP had initiated a process of fusion with the SHP (one of the

main factions of Turkish social democracy, which had recently left the CHP), with a view of no longer appearing as an 'ethnic' and 'regional' party. Then, renouncing this project, it sought an electoral alliance with the CHP, then the ANAP and then with the traditional Islamists of Erbakan's SP. The negotiations for a common list with the Islamists broke down because of a dispute over how the number of seats would be shared out. DEHAP then came out in favour of a 'left bloc' with the SHP and the ÖDP. There again negotiations broke down at the last minute. So the HADEP/Emep/SDP bloc was stitched together through a completely opaque and politically incoherent process: while Murat Bozlak said he favoured a US intervention in Iraq and Turkey's entry in the EU his far left collaborators castigated the 'imperialist war' and opposed EU entry!

In an article published in the daily paper 'Radikal' (November 24, 2002) and presented by its author as a 'inside view', Faik Bulut, a well-known researcher and writer of Kurdish origin, regrets that the DEHAP 'is confined to a simple assertion of Kurdish identity, without developing the least concrete project of solution and without making itself the spokesperson of the social and economic demands of the population'; with a regionalist emphasis, even in the big towns in the west of the country.

Bulut indicates that an internal debate is underway inside the Kurdish movement, with a stress on the necessity of renouncing 'ethnic discourse and simplistic nationalism, which do not lead anywhere'. The aim is to create a 'new programme and new cadres for transformation into a party for the whole of Turkey' so as to be able to 'approach all the chronic problems of the country including the Kurdish question, uniquely on the basis of concrete projects'. Recalling that HADEP is the socio-political product of a low intensity war, which lasted for 15 years inside the country, Bulut argues that it is time for a transformation. Stressing that 'internal training and recruitment take place solely on the basis of allegiance to the nucleus of the central leadership', Bulut also denounces the chronic lack of internal democracy, the mistrust of intellectuals, the outrageous manipulations, the lack of political coherence, the 'underhand interventions of certain hidden forces', as well as a certain undertone of blackmail to the violence which predominates in the Kurdish movement; 'it is clear that a radical change of mentality and strategy is needed... If we wish to create our own paradise, for all, we must speak to the living and not to the dead, with the language of the living and not that of the dead'. YD

“The pre-1980 generations and the political identities dating from this period have ceased to be the motor forces of politics”

UFUK URAS

Ufuk Uras, president of the ÖDP (Party of Liberty and Solidarity) announced his resignation from his post in this article, which appeared in the daily 'Cumhuriyet' on November 16, 2002.

“The people have voted for the AKP out of spite and anger against the parties of the centre and against the centrifugal forces. I believe that this structural situation could open the road for the left in the period to come. On condition that it can dare to look at its own face in the mirror. It is clear that we have not succeeded in inspiring confidence among the people. They have preferred to act as if we did not exist. We must cease to hide behind excuses and build a collective consciousness... We have seen that a politics cut off from social

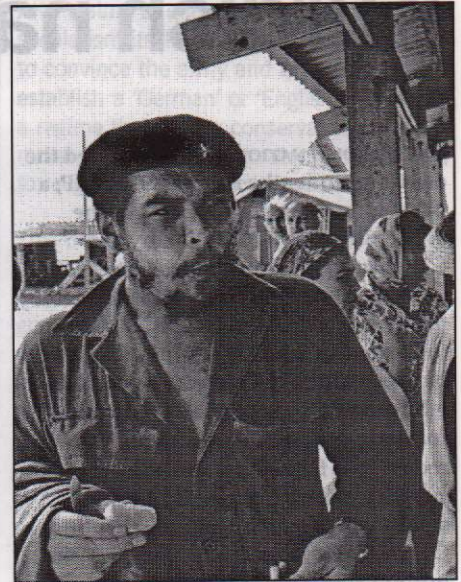
reality is condemned to putrefy. We have to understand that a political revival will only come through the rise of the political dynamism of the social organizations. We are faced with the task of building a left alternative, a left axis, and a left pole of attraction. It is pointless to say “the people have not understood us”. The people are still confronted in the elections with a choice between the plague and cholera, they have chosen what seems to them to be the lesser evil... Today, the pre-1980 generations and the political identities dating from this period have ceased to be the motor forces of the politics. The formulæ of umbrella parties rallying everyone have henceforth no meaning. It is now necessary to defend with determination a politics, which is resolutely in favour of liberties. The left is in a phase of transition. Either it will renew itself or it will become petrified. It should be said that the fault is essentially ours and not that of the people. Finally, it is a good thing to see that the lessons learnt by heart by the left have proved bankrupt. To those who wish anew to recite those lessons, I wish good luck. But today, the most revolutionary task is to tear up these lessons learnt by heart and place oneself at the heart of life itself. If the left has entered into a coma, it is not those who put it in that condition who will bring it out again. It is necessary to give way to youth. It is necessary also to renew the ÖDP fundamentally... For this reason I have decided to fold my umbrella and go into retirement.”

Obituary:

NECDET SARA (1958-2002)

Necdet Sara has died due to heart failure at the age of 44. He joined the Turkish section of the Fourth International just before the coup of 1980. During the military dictatorship, Necdet belonged to a small clandestine group. At the beginning of the period of ‘normalization’ in 1985, he became the legal founder of the publishers ‘Yazin Yayincilik’, which published the revolutionary Marxist classics (including books by Ernest Mandel and Leon Trotsky). In 1986, he played a key role in the publication of ‘Ilk Adim’ the first legal socialist magazine of this period. In 1988, he became the editor of ‘Yeniyo’l’ (the organ of the Turkish section of the FI). He also took an active part in the electoral campaigns of the far left in 1987 and 1989. Although he ceased to be a formal member of the section in 1992, following a political disagreement, Necdet never abandoned his convictions or his activism: he pursued them under other forms and in other frameworks, particularly as a journalist who was known and respected for the quality of his professional work, whether in print or on television.

impression of not respecting the verdict of the ballot box.



“Neither imitation nor copy”

Che Guevara: in search of a new socialism

From the annual lecture presented by Michael Löwy to the Fondazione Ernesto Che Guevara (Italy, June 15-17, 2001)

In an article published in 1928, José Carlos Mariátegui, the true founder of Latin American Marxism, wrote: "Of course, we do not want socialism in Latin America to be an imitation or a copy. It must be a heroic creation. We must inspire Indo-American socialism with our own reality, our own language. That is a mission worthy of a new generation!" His warning went unheard. In that same year the Latin American communist movement fell under the influence of the Stalinist paradigm, which for close to a half century imposed on it an imitation and copy of the ideology of the Soviet bureaucracy and its so-called 'actually existing socialism'.

We do not know whether Che was acquainted with Mariátegui's article. He may have read it, for his companion, Hilda Gadea, loaned him Mariátegui's writings in the years preceding the Cuban revolution. Whatever the case, much of his political thought and practice, especially in the 1960s, can be said to have been aimed at emerging from the impasse to which the servile imitation of the Soviet model had led in Eastern Europe. His ideas on the construction of socialism are an attempt at 'heroic creation' of something new, the search—interrupted and incomplete—for a distinct model of socialism, radically opposed in many respects to the 'actually existing' bureaucratic caricature.

From 1959 to 1967, Che's thought evolved considerably. He distanced himself ever further from his initial illusions concerning Soviet or Soviet-style socialism—that is, from the Stalinist version of Marxism. In a 1965 letter to a Cuban friend, he harshly criticized the 'ideological tailism' that was manifested in Cuba by the publication of Soviet manuals for instruction in Marxism. These manuals, 'Soviet bricks' to use his expression, "have the disadvantage of not letting you think: the Party has already done it for you and you have to digest it²." Still more explicit,

especially in his post-1963 writings, is his rejection of the 'imitation and copy' and his search for an alternative model, his attempt to formulate another path toward socialism, one that is more radical, more egalitarian, more fraternal, more human, and more consistent with the communist ethic.

Che's death in October 1967 interrupted a process of independent political maturation and intellectual development. His work is not a closed system, a polished system of thought with an answer to everything. On many questions, such as planning, the struggle against bureaucracy and so on, his thinking remains incomplete³.

The driving force behind this quest for a new road—over and above the specific economic issues—was the conviction that socialism is meaningless and consequently cannot triumph unless it holds out the offer of a civilization, a social ethic, a model of society that is totally antagonistic to the values of petty individualism, unfettered egoism, competition, the war of all against all that is characteristic of capitalist civilization, this world in which 'man eats man'.

The construction of socialism is inseparable from certain moral values, in contrast to the 'economistic' conceptions of Stalin, Krushchev and their successors, who consider only the 'development of the productive forces'. In a famous interview with the journalist Jean Daniel, in July 1963, Che was already developing an implicit critique of 'actually existing socialism': "Economic socialism without a communist morale does not interest me. We are fighting poverty, but at the same time alienation.... If communism is dissociated from consciousness, it may be a method of distribution but it is no longer a revolutionary morality⁴."

If socialism claims to fight capitalism and conquer it on its own ground, that of

productivism and consumption, using the weapons of capitalism—the commodity form, competition, self-centred individualism—it is doomed to failure. It cannot be said that Che anticipated the dismantlement of the USSR, but in a way he did have the intuition that a 'socialist' system that does not tolerate differences, that does not embody new values, that attempts to imitate its adversary, that has no ambitions but to 'catch up to and surpass' the production of the imperialist metropolises, has no future.

Socialism, for Che, represented the historical project of a new society based on values of equality, solidarity, collectivism, revolutionary altruism, free discussion and mass participation. His increasing criticisms of 'actually existing socialism', like his practice as a leader and his thinking about



the Cuban experience, were inspired by this communist utopia, in the sense given this concept by Ernst Bloch⁵.

Three things express in concrete terms this aspiration of Guevara and his search for a new path: the discussion on the methods of economic management, the question of the free expression of differences and the perspective of socialist democracy. The first clearly occupied a central place in Che's thinking, while the other two, which are closely related, are much less developed, with some lacunae and contradictions. But they are ever-present in his concerns and his political practice.

1 The methods of economic management

This refers to the famous discussion in 1963-64 concerning various aspects of planning, in which he found himself in opposition to supporters of the Soviet model: the Minister of Foreign Trade, Alberto Mora, and the director of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, who were supported by the well-known French Marxist economist Charles Bettelheim.

The positions of Ernesto Guevara—which were supported by the Belgian Marxist economist (and Fourth International leader) Ernest Mandel—constituted a radical critique, initially implicit and later explicit, of ‘actually existing socialism’. The main aspects of the East European model opposed by Che were⁶:

- the law of value as an objective law of the economies in transition to socialism, a thesis of Stalin upheld at the time by Charles Bettelheim;
- the commodity as the basis of the system of production;
- competition (between enterprises or between workers) as a factor in increasing productivity;
- individual rather than collective incentives and distribution methods;
- economic privileges of managers and administrators; and
- market criteria in the economic relations among socialist countries.

In his famous ‘Speech in Algiers’ in February 1965, Ernesto Guevara called on

“cannot exist without a change in consciousness to a new fraternal attitude toward humanity, not only within the societies which are building or have built socialism, but also on a world scale toward all peoples suffering from imperialist oppression”⁷.

In his March 1965 essay, ‘Socialism and Man in Cuba’, analyzing the models for building socialism that were applied in Eastern Europe, Che rejected the conception that claimed to “conquer capitalism with its own fetishes”. “The pipe dream that socialism can be achieved with the help of the dull instruments bequeathed to us by capitalism (the commodity as the economic cell, profitability, individual material interest as a lever and so on) can lead into a blind alley.... To build communism it is necessary, simultaneous with the new material foundations, to build the new man.”⁸

One of the major dangers in the model imported from the countries of Eastern Europe was the increase in social inequality

the director’s remuneration for managing.”⁹ Basically, the debate was a confrontation between an ‘economistic’ view, which considered the economic sphere as an autonomous system governed by its own laws like the law of value or the laws of the market, and a political conception of socialism, in which economic decisions concerning production priorities, prices and so on are governed by social, ethical and political criteria.

Che’s economic proposals—planning in opposition to market forces, the budgetary finance system, collective or ‘moral’ incentives—were attempts to find a model for building socialism based on these criteria, and thus differing from the Soviet model.

It should be added that Guevara did not successfully develop a clear idea of the nature of the Stalinist bureaucratic system. In my opinion, he was mistaken in tracing the origin of the problems and limitations of the Soviet experience to the NEP rather than the Stalinist Thermidor.¹⁰

2 Freedom of discussion

In the economic discussion of 1963-64, an important political aspect that is worth noting is the very fact of the discussion, that is, the position that the public expression of disagreements is normal in the process of building socialism, or the legitimization of a certain democratic pluralism within the revolution.

This problematic was only implicit in the economic debate. Guevara never developed it explicitly or systematically, and he certainly did not link it with the question of democracy in planning. But he did adopt, on several occasions during the 1960s, a favourable attitude toward freedom of discussion within the revolutionary camp and toward respect for a plurality of opinions.

An interesting example may be found in his conduct in regard to the Cuban Trotskyists, whose analyses he did not agree with at all (he criticized them harshly on more than one occasion). In 1961, in a discussion with the North American left-wing intellectual Maurice Zeitlin, Guevara denounced the destruction by the Cuban police of the printing plates for Trotsky’s ‘Permanent Revolution’ as “an error” that “should not have been done”. And a few years later, shortly before leaving Cuba in 1965, he managed to free the Cuban Trotskyist leader Roberto Acosta Hechevarria from prison, taking leave of him with a fraternal greeting: “Acosta, you can’t kill ideas with blows.”¹¹ The clearest example is his reply, in a 1964



Che in the Cuban delegation to the United Nations

the countries claiming to be socialist to “put an end to their implicit complicity with the exploiting countries of the West” as expressed in the unequal exchange relationships they were carrying on with peoples engaged in struggle against imperialism. Socialism, in Che’s view,

and the formation of a privileged layer of technocrats and bureaucrats: in this system of remuneration, “it is the directors who always earn more. Just look at the recent proposal in the German Democratic Republic; the importance assigned to management by the director, or what’s more



report to his comrades in the Ministry of Industry, to the charge of 'Trotskyism' leveled against him by some Soviets: "In this regard, I think that either we have the capacity to destroy contrary opinions with arguments or we should let them be expressed.... It is not possible to destroy opinions by force, because that blocks any free development of intelligence. There is much that is worthwhile in Trotsky's thinking, although it seems to me that his fundamental conceptions were wrong and his later action mistaken."¹²



It is no accident, therefore, that Guevara's most explicit defence of freedom of expression and most direct criticism of Stalinist authoritarianism was manifested in the field of art. In his famous essay 'Socialism and Man in Cuba' (1965), he denounced Soviet-style 'socialist realism' as

the imposition of a single form of art: "the kind of 'art' functionaries understand". With this method, he emphasized, "True artistic inquiry ends" and "a straitjacket" is put "on the artistic expression of the man who is being born...."¹³

3 Socialist democracy

Although Che never managed to elaborate a finished theory of the role of democracy in the socialist transition—perhaps the major gap in his work—he rejected the authoritarian and dictatorial conceptions that did so much damage to socialism during the 20th century. To those who claim "to educate the people" from above, a false doctrine already criticized by Marx in the Theses on Feuerbach ("who will educate the educator?"), Che answered in a speech in 1960: "The first recipe for educating the people is to bring them into the revolution. Never assume that by educating the people they will learn, by education alone, with a despotic government on their backs, how to conquer their rights. Teach them, first and foremost,

to conquer their rights and when they are represented in government they will effortlessly learn whatever is taught to them and much more." Or in other words: the only emancipatory pedagogy is the self-education of the people through their own revolutionary practice, or as Marx put it in

The German Ideology, "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice."¹⁴ Along the same lines are some critical notes from 1966 concerning a Soviet political economy manual that contain this blunt formula: "Stalin's great historical crime was to have depreciated communist education and instituted the unfettered cult of authority."¹⁵

The major limitation lies in the insufficiency of his thinking about the relationship between democracy and planning. His arguments in defence of planning and in opposition to market categories are extremely important and acquire new relevance in light of the neoliberal vulgate that now dominates with its 'market religion'. But they leave aside the key political question: Who does the planning? Who determines the major options in the economic plan? Who determines the production and consumption priorities? Without a genuine democracy—that is, without (a) political pluralism; (b) free discussion of priorities; and (c) free choice for the population between the various economic propositions and platforms that are being debated—planning is inevitably transformed into a bureaucratic and authoritarian system of 'dictatorship over needs' (as is amply demonstrated by the history of the former Soviet Union). In other words, the economic problems of the transition to socialism are inseparable from the nature of the political system. The Cuban experience over the last three decades reveals, as well, the negative consequences of the absence of democratic socialist institutions, although Cuba has managed to avoid the worst bureaucratic and totalitarian aberrations of the other states of supposed 'actually existing socialism'.

This debate is related to the problem of the revolution's institutions. Guevara rejected bourgeois democracy, but—notwithstanding his anti-bureaucratic and egalitarian sensibility—he was far from having a clear vision of socialist democracy. In 'Socialism and Man in Cuba', he acknowledges that the revolutionary state may make mistakes, thereby provoking a negative reaction among the masses and forcing the state to make a correction: the example he cites is the sectarian policy of the party under the leadership of Anibal Escalante in 1961-62. But, he notes, "Clearly this mechanism is not adequate for insuring a succession of judicious measures. A more structured connection with the masses is needed...." At first, he seems to be satisfied with a vague "dialectical unity" between the leaders and the masses. But a few pages later he confesses that the problem is far from an adequate resolution that would

allow effective democratic control: "This institutionalization of the revolution has not yet been achieved. We are looking for something new...." ¹⁶

We know that, in the final years of his life, Ernesto Guevara had gone a long way in distancing himself from the Soviet model, in his rejection of the 'imitation and copy' of 'actually existing socialism'. But a good part of his final writings have remained unpublished for inexplicable reasons. Among these documents is a radical critique of the Manual of Political Economy of the Academy of Sciences in the USSR, written in 1966. In an article published in 1996, Carlos Tablada, the author of an important book on Che's economic thought, cites some paragraphs from this document, to which he had access but was not authorized to publish in full. One such paragraph is extremely interesting, for it shows that in his final political thoughts, Guevara came close to the idea of socialist democracy: a democratic planning process in which the people themselves, the workers, 'the masses', to use his terminology, will make the major economic decisions: "In contradiction with a conception of the plan as an economic decision by the masses, conscious of the peoples' interests, we are offered a placebo, in which only the economic factors determine the collective fate. This is a mechanistic, non-Marxist technique. The masses must be able to direct their fate, to decide which share of production will be assigned respectively to accumulation and consumption. Economic technique must operate within the limits of this information and the consciousness of the masses must ensure its implementation." ¹⁷

In October 1967, the assassins' bullets of the CIA and its Bolivian allies interrupted this work of 'heroic creation' of a new revolutionary socialism and a new democratic communism. □



* Michael Löwy is author of many books, including *La Pensée de Che Guevara* [The Marxism of Che Guevara], *La théorie de la révolution chez le jeune Marx, Dialectique et révolution, Marxisme et théologie de la libération* [Marxism and Liberation Theology], *Patries ou Planète?* [Fatherland or Mother Earth?], *Nationalismes et internationalismes de Marx à nos jours, La guerre des dieux* [The War of Gods: Religion and Politics in Latin America], *Michael Löwy is Research Director in Sociology at the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research) in Paris. This contribution, presented at the annual lecture of the Fondazione Ernesto Che Guevara (Italy, June 15-17, 2001), was published in an abridged version by the Swiss monthly Solidarités, No 15, October 10, 2002, from which this translation has in large part been taken. The translation is by Richard Fidler.*

- 1 José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930). One of the major Marxist thinkers of Latin America. He is primarily known for his *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* (1928) (University of Texas, Austin, 1971). Michael Löwy's quotation is taken from a September 1928 article originally published in the journal *Amauta* (JC Mariátegui, 'Aniversario y balance', in *Ideología y Política*, Lima, Biblioteca Amauta, 1971, p 249).
- 2 Letter from Che to a Cuban friend (1965). This letter is one of Che's documents that remain unpublished, including in Cuba. Carlos Tablada quotes from it in his article 'Le marxisme d'Ernesto (Che) Guevara', *Alternatives Sud*, vol. III, 1996, 2, p 168. See also, by the same author, *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism* (Pathfinder Press, 1992) and *Cuba, quelle transition?* (L'Harmattan, 2001).
- 3 Fernando Martínez Heredia correctly notes that "... there are even some positive aspects to the incomplete nature of Che's thinking. The great thinker is there, points to some problems and some approaches, shows some possibilities, and demands that his comrades think, study, and combine practice and theory. It becomes impossible, once one really comes to terms with his thought, to dogmatize it and transform it into a speculative bastion or a receptacle of slogans." ('Che, el socialismo y el comunismo', in: *Pensar el Che, Centro de estudios sobre América, Editorial José Martí, Havana, 1989, vol. II, p. 30.*) See also the book by Fernando Martínez Heredia, with the same title: *Che, el socialismo y el comunismo*, Havana, Casa de las Américas prize, 1989.
- 4 L'Express, July 25, 1963, p 9.
- 5 Ernst Bloch (1885-1977). A German philosopher and sociologist, exiled to the

United States in 1935, he became a professor at Karl Marx University in Leipzig in 1949, and at the University of Tübingen after going over to the West in 1961. From The Spirit of Utopia (1918) to The Principle of Hope (1954-59), this unorthodox Marxist sought to restore to socialism its secular messianic dimension. Recommended reading in regard to Bloch: L'utopie concrète d'Ernst Bloch, une biographie (Éditions Kimé, Paris 2001), and the comment on it by Raphaël Ramuz, assistant professor at the University of Lausanne, at www.remue.net/litt/bloch01.html. [Ed]

- 6 In the context of this article I am unable to present in greater detail this economic discussion; I addressed it in the 2nd chapter of my book *The Marxism of Che Guevara*.
- 7 Ernesto Che Guevara, *Œuvres 1957-1967, Tome 2*, Paris, François Maspero, 1971, p 574. English version URL is at: <http://www.chehasta.narod.ru/eaasia.htm>
- 8 Ernesto Che Guevara, *ibid*, pp 371-372. [For an English version, see: <http://chehasta.narod.ru/socman.htm>.]
- 9 Ernesto Che Guevara, *Le plan et les hommes, in Œuvres 1957-1967, Tome 6, Textes inédits*, Paris, Maspero, 1972, p. 90.
- 10 This concept is very clear in the essay on political economy that Che wrote in 1966, from which Carlos Tablada quotes certain extracts in his article *Le marxisme d'Ernesto (Che) Guevara*. Janette Habel rightly observes that Guevara put "too much emphasis, in the economic criticism of Stalinist deformations, on the weight of market relations and not enough on the police and repressive nature of the Soviet political system". (J Habel, preface to M Löwy, *La pensée de Che Guevara*, Paris, Syllepse, 1997, p 11)
- 11 Interview with Maurice Zeitlin, in RE Bonachea and NP Valdes (ed), *Che: Selected Works of Ernesto Guevara*, MIT Press, 1969, p 391, and *An Interview with Roberto Acosta Hechevarria*, in Gary Tennant, *The Hidden Pearl of the Caribbean: Trotskyism in Cuba*, London, Porcupine Press, 2000, p 246. According to Roberto Acosta, Guevara told him that at some point in the future Trotskyist publications would be legal in Cuba (p 249).
- 12 Che Guevara, *Il piano e gli uomini, Il Manifesto*, n° 7, December, 1969, p 37 [in French in *Œuvres*, Tome 6].
- 13 E Guevara, *Œuvres 1957-1967, Tome 2*, p 379.
- 14 E Guevara, *ibid*, p 87.
- 15 Quoted by Juan Antonio Blanco in his book, *Tercer Milenio, una visión alternativa de la posmodernidad*, Havana, Centro Felix Varela, 1996, p 56.
- 16 E Guevara, *ibid*, Tome 2, pp 369, 375.
- 17 Carlos Tablada, *Le marxisme d'Ernesto (Che) Guevara*, p 173.

Greece: No to the new McCarthyism!

APPEAL

Some months ago the Greek police arrested several people who were accused of being members of the terrorist 'November 17' group. We have no sympathy for the narrow nationalist ideology of this group and still less for its methods, the assassination of political adversaries (parliamentarians, industrialists or right wing journalists). However, in a context of attacks on civil liberties in Europe in the name of the fight against 'terrorism', we think it is urgent to reaffirm that nothing justifies the undermining of the democratic principles of justice.

We declare our concern at the atmosphere of witch-hunt created by the dominant media and judicial practices which could compromise everyone's right to a fair trial. We are alarmed at this climate where armed resistance to the dictatorship of the colonels (1967-74) is accused of having 'prepared the ground' for terrorism; those politically exiled in Paris at the time of the dictatorship are victimized; the accused are deprived of the rights enjoyed by other prisoners; their lawyers are exposed to public condemnation; and working class militants who fought the dictatorship of the colonels and who are known for their differences with 'November 17' are arbitrarily imprisoned on the sole evidence of 'repentants' - a practice which has done great harm in Italy and which is tending to be generalized across Europe through anti-terrorist legislation.

■ Théologos Psaradellis, a former Trotskyist activist, tortured and twice imprisoned under the dictatorship of the colonels, twice escaped - passing through France in 1971 - has been accused of participation in 'November 17' - which he denies - and held in prison since July 2002, despite the critical state of his health and the absence of any evidence. The sole crime for which he is, by his own admission, responsible - participation in a 'political' hold-up (which left nobody dead or wounded) in the early 1980s - has not been claimed by any terrorist group.

■ Yannis Serifis, an anti-dictatorship activist and a respected libertarian trades unionist, became well-known at the end of the 1970s when accused of 'terrorism' and of murder. He was acquitted, following a sensational trial, thanks to a powerful international mobilization and the precious assistance of human rights organizations. Like Psaradellis, he has never hidden his opposition to the ideology and methods of 'November 17'. His arrest was publicly denounced by his former lawyer, E. Yannopoulos, a former minister of justice.

The arrest and continued imprisonment of these two* activists, without the least proof of their 'terrorist' involvement, are entirely unjustified. That is why we add our voices to all those, like the Network for Political and Civil Liberties in Greece, who demand their immediate liberation.

Théologos Psaradellis, a courageous opponent of the regime of the colonels and a former supporter of the Organization of Internationalist Communists of Greece (OKDE - Greek section of the Fourth International) has been arrested by the Greek security services and accused of involvement in the 'November 17' (17N) group. This group emerged in the 1970s, targeting torturers and CIA agents close to the dictatorship, which won it a certain popularity. Evolving subsequently towards a sectarian and chauvinist 'Marxism-Leninism', 17N became isolated.

Psaradellis denies any participation in 17N and shares neither its nationalist ideology nor its methods. He admits to having participated in 1986 in a bank robbery that left neither dead nor wounded. Theo explains that he was drawn into this action by another activist (who subsequently died in a car accident)

with the goal of financing the publication of the works of Pandelis Poulipoulos, the founder of Greek Trotskyism. "My ideology", he said in his deposition, "does not forbid the expropriation of banks, but it condemns, politically and morally, the assassination of political adversaries."

Theo stresses that he now believes this action as an error and that his Trotskyist comrades had neither approved it nor known of it. No proof exists of the participation of Psaradellis in '17N'. Some supporters of this group, hoping to benefit from privileges accorded by anti-terrorist laws to 'repentant' informers, claimed that he was a member - claims that have subsequently been publicly retracted.

We print here an appeal for the release of Psaradellis and of Yannis Serifis, a respected trades unionist known for his fight against the dictatorship who has also been accused by the police of being a member of N17.

INITIAL SIGNATORIES

Tariq Ali, Etienne Balibar, Daniel Bensaïd, Denis Berger, Rony Brauman, Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, Christine Daure-Serfaty, Harlem Desir, Marcel-Francis Kahn, Alain Krivine, Michael Löwy, François Maspero, Gilles Perrault, Michèle Riot-Sarcey, Yves Salesses, Catherine Samary, Léon Schwartzberg, Abraham Serfaty, Enzo Traverso, Petr Uhl, Eléni Varikas, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Jean Ziegler.

* Thanks to the campaign of protest, Yannis Serifis was freed on December 31, 2002) on 30,000 euros bail, but will be tried like the others accused.

Send financial support to

For Théologos Psaradellis
Hubert KRIVINE CCP 5 622 63 L Paris
91 rue Damrémont 75018 PARIS
For Yannis Serifis to
Dina Serifis (address to follow)

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This month, International Viewpoint (IV) took two further steps online. First, our comrades in Norway have helped the magazine into the best possible online location – internationalviewpoint.org. You can look up the other editions of the magazine at inprekorr.de (German) and inprecor.org (French).

Second, as a six-month experiment International Viewpoint will offer a new way of accepting payments. PayPal is the easiest and cheapest way for small organisations to accept payments online. Readers with Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express card can now send the magazine payments and donations online in US Dollars, Canadian Dollars, Euros, Pounds Sterling, and Yen.

You will need an email address to register at www.paypal.com. At that website, click on 'send money' and you can send payments to us at 100666.1443@compuserve.com. This site can also allow us for the first time to email invoices to subscribers and distributors. Send us your email address if this is how you would like your next invoice. If enough people like PayPal, we'll develop this system into a more effective way of accepting payments online.

Last month's column stressed the advances that International Viewpoint's finances made in 2002. Hopefully that wasn't the reason why last month was also one of the magazine's worst ever for sales payments! With the lowest income since the relaunch of the magazine, December's results bumped up the annual deficit by 28%!

Now that the final account is closed for the year, IV faces a huge "working capital" problem. The magazine's sales grew by more than half in the second part of 2002, but this means costs grow. As our sales income has increased, donations to the magazine have actually fallen. IV's annual deficit for 2002 was around half the value of the invoices for the October, November and December-January issues that are still unpaid. As the volume of each issue grows, so the amount of money needed to pay for issues to be produced in advance of payment also grows. The more people read the magazine, the more a burden the magazine places on finances. If IV had regular payments then the production would be easier, the magazine would be more regular, and sales could also rise as the arrival of each issue became more predictable.

The magazine's problem is irregular and late payment, rather than low sales. Each month needs roughly even annual income. But in five months in 2002 the income was less than half of the monthly average! In four other months it was almost double! This makes IV's finances – and production – very volatile. Time that we want to spend on the magazine is spent begging for payments. So, please pay us what you can – and please do tell us what you think of our offering a PayPal payment option.

As always, our readers help by telling how effective our distribution is. Special thanks to Berlin and Toronto readers who joined this loyal band of informers! To join the club (and get a special greeting card from the IV team next December) email a note to by618@hotmail.com with your location to say when each magazine arrives. DC

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