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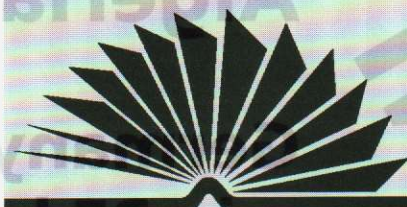
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by Tony Smith

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◆ The author goes on to show how a socialist economy based on grassroots participation and democratic coordination could match the dynamism of lean production, and keep lean production's broken promises of cooperation and harmony.

Tony Smith is professor of philosophy at Iowa State University in the U.S.A. and an advisory editor of the magazine *Against the Current*

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Obituary

Lou Guohua

(Lou Kuohua) alias Zi Chun, Yi Ding, Shao Yuan, Ze Cheng, who died on 8 March.

by Wang Fanxi

Lou Guohua joined the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1927. Two years later he also joined the country's first Trotskyist organisation, "Womende hua" (Our Word). A delegate to the 1931 founding conference of the Left Opposition in the CCP, Lou Guohua was arrested (along with almost all the newly-elected Executive Committee) by Chiang Kai-Shek's political police. Freed from prison in 1935, he continued his work in the Shanghai Trotskyist movement, and fled to Hong Kong when the Maoist army arrived in 1949. He weathered the repression of the late 50s, when Hong Kong's Trotskyists were deported, and our literature suppressed. He founded the "Sincere Press" (Xinda chubanshe) publishing house, which published over a dozen titles.

It was mainly through his contacts and influence that those Hong Kong youth who inclined to Anarchism in the 1970s, and gathered round the "Seventies Society (Qiling niandai) were won to Trotskyism. He was one of the leading members of the Revolutionary Marxist League they formed.

Lou was a professional revolutionary, but also a revolutionary with a profession. That is not to say he was an amateur or part-time revolutionary, but simply that he always had a job at the same time as working for the revolution.

All genuinely revolutionary organisations in poor countries have known hardship that comrades in the developed countries, and even young Chinese radicals in Hong Kong today find hard to imagine. The Chinese Trotskyist movement had known particular hardship. There were no donations, no dues, and no contributions whatsoever. Lou Guohua was a one-man fund raiser for Chinese Trotskyism. He was exceedingly frugal, and saved from his income (he usually worked as a salaried accountant) to help other comrades.

For example, when comrade Li Cailian died in the winter of 1938, it was Lou who paid for her burial. Almost every member of the earlier generations of our comrades was in one way or another his beneficiary.

Lou was also a brilliant author of the Chinese Trotskyist movement. He showed how China's Maoist authorities puffed up Lu Xun in order to obscure Chen Duxiu, modern China's best-known essayist and writer. Chen founded the CCP in 1921, but became a 'non-person' in 1931, because he was also the father of Chinese Trotskyism. Lou exposed the 1938 Maoist slander of Chen as an agent of Japan, which was comparable to Stalin's slander of Trotsky as a Hitler agent.

Both Lou's theses have been confirmed by new materials published in China.

Lou leaves a wife, a daughter and three sons. A supporter of the Fourth International until his death, he died loved and respected by the younger generation of Hong Kong radicals.

We will not forget him ★

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Signs of a Hot Spring in France

Auto producer Renault declares profits up 350%, and proposes a wage increase of 2.5 % Managers of Crédit lyonnais bank squander billions of francs of public funds, and then propose 2,500 redundancies !

Sooner or latter, exasperation with the bosses had to combine with a favourable political situation to produce a growth in social unrest. Dominique Mezzi reports.

WE ARE SEEING A SHARP INCREASE in the number of wage-based strikes in small and medium-sized enterprises, strikes to protect public service at the railway company (SNCF), the electricity utility (EDF) and the Post Office. Employees of the regional airline Air Inter have struck to protect jobs. Social movements to protest against marginalisation and exclusion in society, to house the homeless, or to protect the retirement pension are all increasingly dynamic. And the effect of all these struggles is cumulative.

The great unexpected element of this presidential campaign is that all the candidates have been placed under popular control. All of them have had to take a position on the most pressing social questions. And the dynamic of a competitive election, under this pressure, has exploded the "sensible" consensus common to the whole political elite throughout the 1980s.

We shouldn't expect that left-wing political consciousness will evolve as quickly as the combative spirit of working people grows, in some kind of mechanical relationship. In fact, one of the aspects of the political struggle on the right in this election is precisely to determine which of the conservative candidates can best win the trust of the people for real change. And, frankly, the Socialist Party candidate Leonel Jospin is much less convincing than either of them.

At the same time, the business elite is struggling to prevent the mass of corruption scandals casting a shadow over the image of big business as a whole. The president of the employers' federation (CNPF) Jean Gandois now calls on entrepreneurs to make their companies "corporate citizens." His warning to his colleagues that it would be "a

provocation" to refuse salary increases in present conditions has been seized and used against Renault boss Louis Schweitzer by his own workers.

Of course, the bosses are only trying to help the capitalist machine regain coherence and start moving forward again. The more far-sighted of them see the instability of a system which allows private companies to be highly profitable, but creates "problem parts of town" which threaten to explode.

Faced with increasing demands for increased wages and creation of jobs, the bosses slogan is 'flexibility.' "No point in improving productivity inside the plant, if

The unexpected element of this presidential campaign is that all the candidates... have had to take a position on the most pressing social questions. The dynamic of a competitive election, under this pressure, has exploded the "sensible" consensus common to the whole political elite throughout the 1980s.

it is immediately eroded by external factors," warns CNPF representative Denis Kessler (Le Monde, 29 March 1995). Current negotiations between the bosses' federation and the main trades unions show the limits of the employers' strategy for solving the current crisis. "There will be no generalised reduction of working hours in this company" warns Arnauld Leenhard, Director of the UIMM group. Instead, he threatens to stop calculating working hours on a weekly basis. No more right to a weekend, unless it's in your [new] contract!

So the bosses more or less know what they want. What about the unions? Pressure from the rank and file has forced the unions to unite on a local level in most



of the strikes under way at the moment. But at the top, it took the bosses' federation to bring the leaders of the trade union federations around one table. And the result is that the CNPF sets the agenda for the meeting. The unions did not meet beforehand to discuss strategy. They certainly didn't organise any public meetings to help draw up a common list of demands. Nor did they organise any debates in the enterprises on strike.

And yet, possible areas of convergence of workers' demands exist. The CFDT trades union federation adopted the call for a 32 hour week at its congress in March. Militants in the [Communist-dominated] CGT federation are debating a similar proposition. And the leader of the third federation (FO) has called for a 30 hour week by the year 2000.

A second element of the new consensus is the demand for an "across the board" 1,500 FFr (\$US 200) monthly salary increase for all workers. All the local trades union representatives in companies on strike have had to adopt this slogan, spontaneously produced by workers in the various enterprises.

But despite all this, we still lack a common project, a list of inalienable social rights and demands for the transformation of society. Such a project is the only way to give the various anti-capitalist struggles a coherence, and to orient them against the right. ★

This article formed the 30 March 1995 editorial of the French weekly Rouge (2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil-sous-Bois, France, fax 48 70 42 22

The presidential elections

The first round of the presidential elections will be fought between the current prime minister Edouard Balladur and the Mayor of Paris Jaques Chirac. Both are members of the Regroupment

for the Republic (RPR), France's major conservative party. After 14 years of Socialist Party president Francois Mitterand, the left is discredited and divided.

by Christian Piquet

Since the end of 1994 social exclusion has been at the heart of the electoral campaign. In the search for votes, both conservative candidates have pointed the finger at 'groups of financiers' and 'the bourgeois districts,' and called for solidarity with 'those citizens marginalised and excluded'¹.

The Socialist Party, the instigator of policies which pushed unemployment up to 3 million, and condemned a further 10 million people to life in insecurity on the edge of poverty² could hardly disagree. Indeed, they were encouraged by public opinion polls to take a position further to the left than either Chirac or Balladur.

The country is on the verge of an explosion and none of the parties which have served as the standard bearers of liberalism over the past 20 years will be able to ignore it. As the editor of one of the right-wing daily newspapers commented, 'nowadays, wealth is less fascinating than it used to be... Even the Members of Parliament have understood this virtuous evolution of public opinion.'³

Political Disturbance

The Maastricht agreement on capitalist integration of Europe is being ripped to shreds. As the director of Figaro recently wrote: 'Even though the Maastricht Treaty has been adopted by the 12 nations, it will neither deepen nor enlarge Europe. It is null, void and irrelevant. At a time of mounting unemployment, the new Balkan war and the democratisation of the former 'people's democracies', Europe expected something other than a two hundred page hotchpotch of jargon.'⁴ This is a remarkable turn-around in a country where, only two years ago, an overwhelming majority of the political elite was pro-Maastricht.

The new consensus seems to be for a two tier European Union, centred around a hard core of France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. But this presupposes close links with Germany, on which the French economy is proving itself more

and more dependent. The debate divides the wealthy and reflects the difficulties encountered by French capitalism in a context of fierce competition. Some right-wing leaders and the main industrial employers' organisations show a clear preference for a protectionist economic policy, with nationalist overtones.

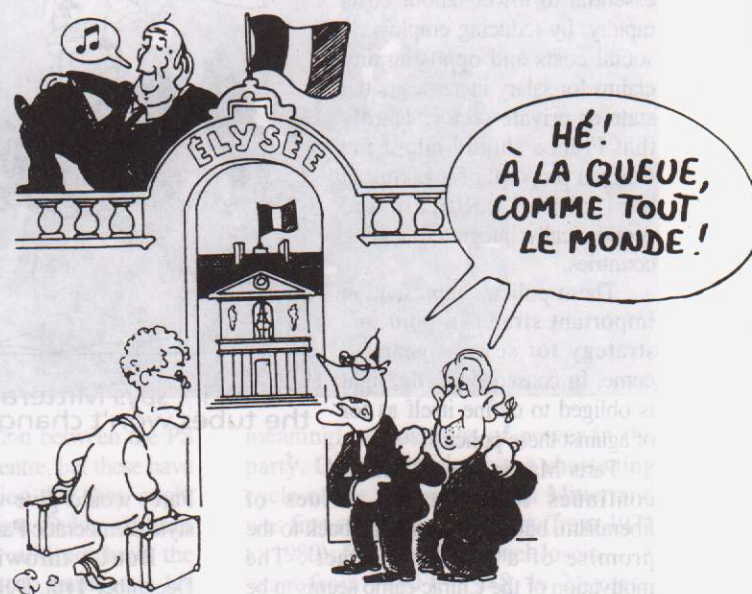
Another result of the long term social crisis is the progressive draining of the base of support for the traditional parties. Their growing distance from the people combined with their inability to meet the challenges of the depression has deprived them of any real influence in the drawing up of programmes, largely confined to groups of experts. Party policy is increasingly based on a short-term analysis of opinion poll results. The result of this long process is that the two most popular presidential candidates are both men with a reputation for independence from their party's administrative bodies.

A Moral Disturbance.

Corruption is now widespread in political and economic life. While the crisis has not yet as deep as in Italy, three ministers from the Balladur government have already been forced to resign. One of them is now behind bars, in the company of assorted politicians of lesser standing and a number of big bosses. The charges concern false accounting on public procurement tenders and fictitious invoices from Party-controlled consulting companies, thanks to which the dominant structures in the Socialist and conservative parties collected bribes from industrialists in exchange for approval of local and

national government procurement contracts. This corruption blossomed after 1992, when a law on decentralisation and deregulation set up more-or-less artificial regions, not controlled by parliament, and with colossal sums of money under their control.

According to political scientist Yves



"Get to the back of the queue!" (Chirac and Balladur to Socialist Party candidate L. Jospin)

Meny, 'Unlike the Italian system of local government in which the executive is weak and divided, dependent on the central apparatus and thus vulnerable, the elite of French local government make up the backbone of the system... The local executive sees itself increasingly as entrepreneur - more concerned with results than with observing standard methods and practices. The obsessive search for efficiency, the lack of any division of power at a local level, the concentration of power and resources, all this obscure the fact that democracy can not be reduced to an election every five or six years'⁵.

A Cyclone on the Right

The candidacy of the current Prime Minister Edouard Balladur seems to answer the need to reorganise the

France: Presidential elections

reactionary camp. He is supported by the core of the French Union for Democracy (UDF), a confederation of Liberal and Christian Democratic movements founded by ex-president Valerie Giscard D'Estaing and a sundry collection of members of the more right wing Regroupment for the Republic (RPR).

The theme around which these movements came together has been perfectly summarised in the report of a commission headed by Alain Minc and presented by the state Planning Commission⁶. This report sets out three great ideas. Firstly that it is impossible to return to the policy of a strong Franc and competitive disinflation so central to Socialist Party policies since 1983. Secondly that it is essential to lower labour costs rapidly, by reducing employers' social costs and opposing any claims for salary increases in the state or private sector. Thirdly that France should adopt the German proposal of a European hard core of political and economically integrated leading countries.

These policies represent an important strand in bourgeois strategy for several years to come. In consequence, the right is obliged to define itself as for or against these policies.

Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac continues to vaunt the virtues of liberalism, but also wants to go back to the promise of a 'social contract'. The motivation of the Chirac camp seems to be to reestablish the RPR as the dominant force on the fractured French right, and to return to the populist policies which built real grass root support for the RPR in the 1950s and 60s.

If Chirac fails to rally a credible opposition to the conservative liberal Balladur project, a radical, nationalist and protectionist Right could emerge. Among those poised to lead the 'hard' right are Charles Pasqua, the Interior Minister, who sees himself in the populist tradition of original Gaullism, or the aristocrat Philippe de Villiers, who's ultra-conservative, Catholic fundamentalist movement won 12.3% of votes in the 1994 European elections, and who can count on the support of one wing of the far-right National Front.

A Field of Ruins on the Left

The disagreement on the right has come so far out into the open because the

left is no longer a serious competitor in the presidential race. And yet, until 11 December 1994, the most popular man for the position, in the eyes of the public, was a Socialist Party leader - retiring leader of the European Commission Jacques Delors. In a recent book⁸, Delors committed himself to the liberal conversion of French social democracy, Delors advocated an alliance between the 'moderate' wing of the Socialist Party and the Christian Democratic movement, on the basis of policies basically similar to those of Balladur. In this scenario the Socialist



"Relax!", says Mitterrand. "Switching the tubes won't change anything!"

Party would give way to an American-style Democratic Party.

But by throwing in the towel on December 11th, Delors confirmed that the conditions for such a possibility do not exist. The new centre that he calls for does not have any adequate social base in a society where crisis has generated widescale exclusion and marginalisation.

Having emerged weak and drained from years of business manoeuvres, the Socialist Party can not afford to cut itself off further from the world of work for fear of losing what is left of its real 'capital'. And in any case, the institutions of France's Fifth Republic tend to create two large, opposed political blocs, and stunt the development of any 'third force'⁹. Delors could have taken the risk, and argued for the complete overhaul of the political structure. But he knew he had no partisans to hand.

The traditional Left is now back at square one. The leaders of the Socialist Party have not proposed any credible programme, and have shown themselves unable to get over the disastrous results of two terms of President Mitterrand. The

party's candidate, Leonel Jospin, is currently third in the polls.

Signs of a split in the socialist party are increasingly evident. One wing of the party might take up the banner of the 'modern Left,' accepting a form of liberalism that it would seek to soften. Michel Rocard has already set the agenda: 'the reality we face is that of a field of ruins. Our chances of winning the next presidential election are currently very weak and everybody knows it. The Socialist Party has long since lost its power to build but has kept its power to destroy. We are responsible: it's our fault. We don't have the truth any more'.

In reaction to this 'new realism,' there could be a growth in the tendency in the Socialist Party, led by the current First Secretary, Henri Emmanuelli, that wants to reinforce a traditional social democratic identity by inviting militants to 'talk socialist'. The crisis could equally give rise to a populism that would be just as devastating for the labour movement. In the European elections of last June the left-populist "Radical" list headed by the businessman Bernard Tapie gathered around 12% of the vote. Now bankrupt and implicated in a large number of scandals Tapie may well have to give up all his election mandates. This has not stopped him claiming to follow the same path: 'The French people want the power that a tiny aristocracy confiscated to be returned to them. If you don't listen to the force of their arguments you could be on the sharp end of the arguments of their force [...] They wanted to exclude me and this is a wonderful political gift because I have no objection to becoming the leader of the excluded'¹⁰.

In the words of Jean-Marie Colombani, director of *Le Monde*: 'Between a divided Right that might make a 'clean sweep' and an orphaned Left open to the risks of adventurists and demagogues, reform might well have to be put off to later, bypassing the presidential election. Given the current state of the country, this would be a serious mistake: the social situation does not allow for delay.'¹¹ ★

Notes

1. Speeches by J.Chirac et E. Balladur respectively.
2. Figures provided by charity organisations.
3. *Le Figaro*, 20 December 1994.
4. Franz-Olivier Giesbert, *La fin d'une époque*, Le Seuil.
5. *Le Monde*, 30 September 1994.
6. *La France de l'An 2000*, published by Odile Jacob.
7. *Inprecor*, September 1994.
8. J. Delors, *L'unité d'un homme*, published by O. Jacob.
9. The alliance between the Socialists and a party from the Right under the Fourth Republic.
10. *Le Monde*, 21 December 1994.
11. *Le Monde*, 13 December 1994.

The Parti socialiste and the Presidential Elections

In the last few years, the French Socialist Party has been more deeply shaken than in any period since 1969-71.

Jacques Kergoat analyses the latest episode in this quake, the socialists' choice of Lionel Jospin as a candidate.

IN MAY 1988, WHEN the party's first secretary, Lionel Jospin, leaves his position, his successor is Laurent Fabius. This does not seem to create any problem: Fabius had made his intentions clear long before, he was in the president's favour, and no other candidate was running. But this was underestimating the opposition and disagreements between the Jospin and Fabius factions. Part of the Jospin-supporters nominate Pierre Mauroy and elect him with a very narrow majority.

Au revoir, Fabius. It will take him two years to take his revenge. But in January 1992, Mauroy, no longer supported by the steering committee, has to resign, and Fabius replaces him.

Does this mark the beginning of a time of stability: Fabius head of the party, and Rocard candidate for the presidency? It may seem so. Indeed, in July of the same year, Rocard is titled "natural candidate" of the Socialist Party. But things turn out differently. The disastrous parliamentary elections of 1993 change the rules of the game again. Fabius must leave, and, in March, Rocard is elected "president of the temporary leadership of the Socialist Party", and in October first secretary. Which leaves barely more than six months: first on the ballot for the European elections, he gets the worst results in the history of the PS, drops his role as "natural candidate", and is removed from the position of first secretary by Henri Emmanuelli.

Pick a candidate ! Any candidate !

Still missing: a candidate for the presidential elections. A replacement solution soon seems to satisfy all: Jacques Delors is finishing in Brussels a European career that the pro-Maastricht socialist party considers to be perfect, he was removed enough from French politics so as not to be involved in scandals or the party's internal conflicts, and, above all, he is ahead in opinion polls. All factions of the PS awaited Delors' decision¹. He makes it public in December. Delors does not wish to run: his suggested programme



would require a coalition between the PS and the parties of the centre, but these have not given any indication that they might agree to such a coalition. Delors deduces that, if elected, he would not have the majority in parliament to implement his policies.

When Lionel Jospin offers to run, the spiral of self-destruction is set off again. The Fabius clique, quietly supportive of Henri Emmanuelli, worry that the presidential campaign could help Jospin win back the party that they have just taken over. The search then begins for a candidate that can create enough of a consensus to make Jospin give up. But those suggested -- Joxe, Badinter -- refuse. Jack Lang accepts, but is not nominated. As a last resort, Emmanuelli decides to run, based on his legitimacy as first secretary. Jospin does not leave the race, and an internal consultation in the party is necessary. To everyone's surprise, Jospin wins, with 2/3 of the votes. Emmanuelli thinks of resigning, but decides to remain as first secretary, at least until after the presidential and municipal electoral campaigns.

Quake after quake, caused by cliques that fight ferociously for increasingly

meaningless positions of power in the party. One is struck by the shortening cycle of the crises: Francois Mitterrand was first secretary for 9 years (from 1971 to 1980), followed by Lionel Jospin — 8 years from 1980 to 1988. In 24 years, there was only one presidential candidate, Francois Mitterrand. Other candidates always dropped out before any membership ballot.

After Mauroy's inauguration, it took only 22 months for his position to be reconsidered at the Rennes general assembly, and 21 more months for him to resign and be replaced by Fabius, 18 months for Rocard to replace Fabius, 15 months for Emmanuelli to remove Fabius, and 8 for Jospin to beat Emmanuelli.

After Mitterrandism

The main reason Jospin's success in the 'primaries' was Henri Emmanuelli's suggestion that the Socialist Party join in a confederation with the "Radicals"³, the party of the business tycoon Bernard Tapie. PS members cast a "moral" vote "against the alliance with Tapie" rather than "for Jospin". This vote demonstrates clearly that the Socialist Party has entered into the post-Mitterrand period. Tapie is

well seen at the presidential palace, and his run in the European elections was pushed by Francois Mitterrand to stop Michel Rocard "in his tracks" as Tapie said. And no one doubts, either, that Henri Emmanuelli was in the president's good books, or, rather, that Jospin no longer was.

The high turnout in the sections, despite calls for abstention by some friends of Jacques Delors (Ségolene Royal), also shows a strong reaction: not to let the choices be imposed by Mitterrand, nor to accept any more of his "tricks".

Two Blocs

This vote also marked the reconstitution of two big blocs in the Socialist Party. On one side the pro-Fabius, pro-Poperen, and the Socialist Left activists, and on the other the pro-Jospin, pro-Mauroy, pro-Rocard, and pro-Chevenement⁴. But two elements complicate the situation.

Firstly, revelations about Mitterrand's past, and his relationship with "collaborators", during and after the war. The first bloc, with Emmanuelli, chose to condemn the campaign against Mitterrand caused by these revelations. The second bloc, led by Lionel Jospin (with the noteworthy exception of the Chevenement-supporters), chose to express its unease and concern.

The second element is the new weight of Jacques Delors, as well as his little political family: Martine Aubry, Francois Hollande and Ségolene Royal.

In fact, however, the existence of these two blocs does not clarify anything on the political level.

The first bloc, with Emmanuelli⁵, speaks to the left: for instance, it forced the party to support the 35-hour week with no decrease in salary. On the other hand, it proposes an alliance to the right, with Tapie's Radicals.

The second bloc⁶ suggests alliances to the left. Through the "assembly of social transformation", which Jean-Christophe Cambadélis initiated, it has turned to the ecologists of Dominique Voynet and the Communists. On questions of political programme, however, this bloc leans right, and often expresses clearly moderate positions: it opposed, as much as it could, the demand for the 35-hour week without wage cut.

So analysis is not simplified. Talk left and ally with the right -- the French working-class movement is used to the various variations of neo-molletism⁷. As for speaking to the right and seeking alliances to the left, the social-democrats

of Germany and northern Europe do so already: Their experience suggests that a good theoretical "Bad-Godesberg" can be combined with making space in the party for a few vocal ecologists. Until now, however, this has not been attempted in France.

These two blocs are not homogenous, far from it. In the first, the capacity to "speak left" is to the credit of the Socialist Left, of Emmanuelli, and, to a lesser extent, to the Poperen-supporters. The Fabius group, despite its doctrinal agility, has never shone by the radical nature of its propositions. And in the second bloc, the capacity to dialogue with the ecologists and the critical left is to the credit of Cambadélis and Jospin. Delors' group, though it does not oppose, has never hidden the fact its interest, in terms of alliances, lies with the Christian democrats. And Rocard was eager, at the last "assembly of social transformation", to support Delors' notion that it is necessary to set up a coalition government with the central parties.

Jospin's programme has so far caused surprise by its extreme moderation and the lack of precision of its propositions. Undoubtedly, Delors' influence and that of his entourage⁸ have played here. Some of the propositions are in open contradiction with the party's programme: on the reduction of the working week, Jospin proposes only a decrease to 37 hours instead of 35.

Recomposition?

What will happen in the party after the presidential elections? If Jospin makes it to the second round of voting⁹, and scores well, he will have the opportunity to set himself forward as head of the Socialist Party, definitely in the midst of pain, but perhaps without any major crisis. Paradoxically, this would limit the perspectives of recomposition -- the "Jospinist" PS would be the ruling partner of any recomposition, which could make many of the rank and file in the smaller organisations hesitate. And once he finds himself at the head of a big party, Jospin may decide that his potential partners do not carry that much weight after all. He might prefer to play at "social democracy for the 1990s" as proposed by journalists¹⁰ and political scientists¹¹ who forget about the crisis and division of trade-unionism, the weakness of the associative sector, and the continued existence of the Communist Party. He could also work on the reconstruction of a Socialist Party that Mitterrand will have left in a worse state than he found it.

Will the ecologists and Communist

then find partners within the first bloc, and in particular within the Socialist Left? For this to happen, it would be necessary for the latter to give up their inclination towards Bernard Tapie, and erase the damaging image of their continuous U-turns. If, on the contrary, Jospin scores poorly, it is probable that the knives will come out and that the crisis will shake the whole Socialist Party. A split is unlikely, but cannot be excluded. But in any case, recomposition¹² would be high on the agenda: a weak Jospin would be less frightening to the ecologists and critical-thinking members of the Communist Party. ★

1. Only Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the head of the Socialist Left, has some objections.

2. Formerly the Movement of left-wing radicals (MRG).

3. Bernard Tapie is currently under a legal procedure that bars him from acting as an elected representative.

4. The friends of Jean-Pierre Chevenement have since left the Socialist Party and established the Citizens' Movement (Mouvement des citoyens). On March 11, however, they announced their support for Lionel Jospin.

5. Now composed of the pro-Fabius, the pro-Poperen, the Socialist Left, and the small pro-Emmanuelli group.

6. Made up of the friends of Cambadélis, the pro-Mauroy, the pro-Rocard, and the true Jospin supporters.

7. Named after Guy Mollet, secretary of the SFIO (future Socialist Party) from 1946 to 1970, who had the reputation of winning his assemblies with left-wing rhetoric, and then implementing right-wing policies.

8. Delors is chairman of Jospin's support committee.

9. We do not consider here the hypotheses that Jospin be elected president. Nonetheless, the conflicts in the right wing make this not entirely impossible.

10. Such as Alain Duhamel in *Libération*, 9 March 1995.

11. Bergougnaux and Manin in their latest book.

12. Could Jacques Chirac's victory make the central parties interested in an "American-style democratic party"? It is not clear that the PS would be able to seize such an opportunity. The forces that are so inclined are in weak positions in both blocs: Fabius behind Emmanuelli, and Rocard and Delors behind Jospin. And one can hardly imagine, given the personal conflicts, how the Fabius, Rocard, and Delors groups could defend this perspective together, which is the only way they could push it through. Unless Lionel Jospin chooses precisely this battle horse for his second round campaign. Surprising behaviour? We have already witnessed, in the history of the French Socialist Party, frequent surprising behaviour...

Unite and fight !

Most strikes at the moment are about wages. It was the same before the 1988 presidential elections. That time, the radicalisation was quite uneven, with big companies disrupted between February and June, growing unrest in small and medium enterprises in the second half of the year, and strikes of nurses, Post-Telecom workers and the Paris mass transit utility (RATP) coming one after another towards the end of the year.

This time there is a cumulation of salary-based strikes in large companies (including Renault), which is sparking a growing number of disputes in a large number of small and medium sized enterprises.

by Jean Dupont

ONE IMPROVEMENT ON 1988 is the popularity, among the strikers, of demands aimed at reducing vulnerability (Alstom), maintaining and creating jobs (Air Inter), and, to a lesser extent, reducing the working week. We can add the struggle to defend the public sector, opposition to some of the directives of the European Union (the railway company SNCF) opposition to privatisation (France Télécom), recognition by qualified health workers of the qualification of nursing-assistants, and the demand for incorporating new and temporary teachers into the unified seniority and grading system. And all this in a context of increased public concern about homelessness and marginalisation, and a growing radicalisation of senior citizens to protect their pensions. In short, we are witnessing a generalisation of strike movements and other protests, in which social questions are at the centre of the political debate.

Why all this activity?

Profits are up considerably, the employers as a class are discredited, and we are in the middle of an election campaign. And all this after years of 'responsible' Socialist Party sermons about the limits of 'realistic' policies. 'Why not take yourself what the election is unlikely to give you?' That is what people are saying.

Young, recently employed workers were the force which sparked the strikes at Alstom and Renault. Technicians from the research division were behind the strike at Renault's Rueil plant. The work force is changing, but the old generation of militants is still in place (the average age of workers in French auto plants is 45). Both ends of the generation chain are

involved in the current strike wave. This may be part of the reason for the unequal intensity of the combative spirit of workers across some of the larger companies.

To what extent will this new combative spirit increase the political consciousness of working people? To be sure, there is no mechanical relationship, and there can be quite different results in different sectors.

But in large state-owned enterprises, the strikes will certainly result in increased support for the left. In the immediate, this means more votes for the Socialist Party candidate in the presidential elections. And this return to the left will be noticeable even among those workers who have been heavily deceived in recent years, and have tended to abstain from all kinds of politics. Some workers will be radicalised enough to vote for Robert Hue (Communist Party candidate) or Arlette Laguiller (Trotskyist, leading member of the Lutte Ouvrière party). Others will vote for Jacques Chirac just to get rid of the aristocratic prime minister Edouard Balladur.

What this means is that, if we want to stabilise the reconstruction of the left-wing sectors of the workers' movement, we need to inject more anti-capitalist elements into the current struggles.

Unity

The rank and file has obliged at least the three main trades union federations to unite at the local level. The work force as a whole is happy with this development. But unity in the middle of a struggle has not meant the democratisation of the unions at the branch level. At the Renault Flins plant, a rank and file strike committee set up by Trotskyists seems to have developed into a very useful "mobilisation committee" as the dispute spreads. Shop stewards, hostile at first, are now neutral or



positive about the committee. In other plants, however, we have to recognise that workers might want trades union unity, but they feel too much debate about politics and the future of the unions would divide the movement.

As for the union leadership, the CGT and CFDT at Renault have been very careful not to propose anything that might spark off a coordinated, simultaneous strike across the group. And yet such a massive strike is not just necessary, but completely possible in the current circumstances. Support for such a strike is growing in the CGT, but only now, one month after the local strikes began. Once again, the CGT "surfs" on a wave of combative spirit, tries to keep the momentum going as long as possible, but does everything to stop things getting out of hand. A tense social situation is good for the Communist Party. A sharp crisis would be threatening for the leadership.

Thinking in the CFDT differs from sector to sector and branch to branch. Shop stewards are active at Renault (especially in the Paris region) divided at the electricity utility (EDF) and mainly inactive at the Post Office. But the recent CFDT congress showed that there is an increasing demand from the base for greater unity with the other federations, including the CGT. As for the FO federation, their shop stewards unite with their colleagues in the other federations when they are obliged to by the rank and file, but the federation as a whole tries very hard not to make this into any kind of general tactic. ★

What should militants do?

★ agitate for a generalised wage increase of 1,000 or 1,500 Francs. Point out that the share of income received by wage earners been cut by 10% over the last 12 years.

★ help improve the coordination of the strikes at the branch level. The Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) is campaigning in all the unions for a mobilisation of all the Renault plants in the Paris region. This kind of activity is necessary before we can hope to organise a strike of the whole Renault group.

★ there is no real dynamic of cooperation between unions representing different professional categories inside the plants on strike. But as the various groups find the limits of isolated action, we can argue for greater unity in the future.

★ the same can be said about the lack of understanding between workers in the industrial, public sector, and civil services sectors of the economy. We must hope that the situation develops in a way that allows us to make realistic and reasonable propositions for greater coordination between strikers in different sectors of the economy, and between the trades unions that represent them.

★ the trades union movement needs a plan of general demands that can increase the consciousness of working people in an anti-capitalist sense. It is incredible that the unions come together nationally only at the initiative of the bosses' federation (CNPF). We should argue for such a plan in all the unions, at all levels.

★ the development of this kind of general plan of demands requires the unions to find and implement new democratic structures and practices, which would include the members in future debates on the union's demands, and on the possibilities of industrial action. The CFDT congress shows that the unions can change. It shows that the leaders of the unions do not represent all the members, and that much greater unity is possible and desired at the local and regional levels of all the unions.

★ It goes without saying that we want the unions to take on board questions of full employment, part time work, reduction of the working week, and so on. The challenge, of course, is to find ways to link the unions to social movements like unemployed persons' associations, women's groups, associations working against marginalisation and homelessness, senior citizens' initiatives and so on.

★ It is time to demand a 35 hour week. After the success of the German metalworkers, we should try to make this into a general demand of the European trades unions and social movements. ★

[JD]

No go at Renault

The Renault group, with 59,000 employees in France, is the symbolic heart of all the great strikes of modern French history. But in recent years, Renault workers have been on the defensive. The wave of strikes in recent weeks could change all that. Danielle Mezzi tested the temperature in three plants.

Billancourt: This is one of the biggest mobilisations ever of the categories employed at the group's headquarters - mainly technicians and managerial staff," says Patrick. "It's a bit of a historic moment. Unity [between the trades union federations] has been rebuilt in only three weeks. And with each new upsurge, there is one more union at the table! The change in mentality is particularly strong among the technicians.

"But what we don't have yet is a set of precise demands for the Renault group as a whole. And we already sense here that, united around a central initiative, people would feel stronger, more radical."

Management at Billancourt is playing for time. Their latest offer is an 0.5% salary increase starting from July, and a further 1% beginning in October. A concession? Not really, warn local militants, who see the offer as an attempt to distract workers from the spontaneous demands for a 1,500 FFfr (\$US 250) monthly increase for all workers. Management knows that such a demand would oblige the unions to work together. And with strong strikes in several plants, the last thing management wants is a set of demands that could result in coordinated strikes, culminating in a national day of action.

Sandouville (6,600 workers): Workers have been locked out for over a

week, after they started threatening to disrupt production for one hour in the middle of each shift. According to local militant Jean-Marie, workers are "ready for something harder, if nothing changes soon... No new workers have been taken on here for years. Many workers' children have been 'employed' in the plant on all kinds of 'training' programmes. This strike is now about having these young workers taken on with proper contracts. I have a 20 year old son, still a "trainee" in the eyes of Renault. If I didn't do something to have him employed properly, how could I look him in the face in the evening?"

"Shortening the working week is important too. In Germany they won a wage increase and a 35 hour week! Why not at Renault too?"

Dimitri (900 workers): "We know profits are up. 'They' would have been cleverer if they had offered us a reasonable increase right from the start... Young workers finish their apprenticeship, start work at a machine, and come home with little more than the minimum wage (SMIC). Immigrant workers too have had enough of being the last in line. In this plant, most workers were born outside France.

"We can win a 35 hour week. But we should take on new workers too: people here want to see their children taken on..."

Head to head at Air Inter

Nine out of 10 air staff and half the ground staff of Air Inter have taken industrial action since March 13. Some 100 strikers finally caught up with company President M. Bernard on March 21. The workers managed to keep their director's attention for three hours, before he was able to excuse himself. Bernard pleaded the poverty of the group. Workers preferred to believe the official chairman's report for 1994, which reported profits of 220 m. FFfr, despite the purchase of two Airbus A330 for cash during the year. The central demand is the suspension of the "social plan" imposed by management in July 1993, and based on a wages freeze, elimination of 600 posts over two years, and increases in compulsory overtime. Workers have also had enough of the unwritten annex to the social plan - the secret restructuring of the company based on the massive use of subcontractors. The plan is to sell off the freight, refreshments, maintenance, and general service divisions, so as to increase the capital reserves of the company, in order to attract new shareholders.

It is also increasingly clear that the profits of Air Inter are being syphoned off to pay the debts of the major shareholders, including the Crédit lyonnais bank. Even so profits rose in the first three months of 1995. So what about the workers? ★

[JD]

★ Air Inter is a private company, mainly owned by Air France, which is scheduled for privatisation.

Corsica: The strike is solid, but who will lead it?

by Serge Vandepoort

Civil servants have been on strike since early February, demanding a 300 FFfr (\$US 50) increase in their transport allowance. The government is so far intransigent on this and other demands related to the high cost-of-living on this French-controlled Mediterranean island. Not surprising, since private sector workers will demand the same subsidy once the government awards it to its own employees.

In mid-March, however, the government offered to sign an agreement with all the trade unions representing the strikers, except for the most radical, the CGT. Divide and rule, clear and simple! And by announcing the concession, and demanding a return to work just before the major unions were due to hold large consultative meetings of the strikers, the government (and union leaders) hoped to isolate militants in the 'moderate' unions too. The concession came at a time when new groups of public sector workers, including teachers, were increasingly ready to join the strike.

At which point, the independentist Corsican National Liberation Front (FNLC) fire-bombed some 40 administrative buildings and offices of the scandle-ridden Crédit Lyonnais bank. The separatist group later claimed to support the "legitimate" demands of the strikers, thought the explosions were of course condemned by all the trades unions on the island except the nationalist Corsican Workers' Union (STC). The tactic of the FNLC seems to be to reassure their social base (small businessmen, doctors, lawyers, architects, craftsmen and shopkeepers) that they still count for something, without directly alienating salaried workers.

Although the main unions deny it completely, the FNLC attacks show that the strike does have a connection to the basic political question in Corsica - the relationship with France. Ever since the strikes of Spring 1989, Corsican workers have had to ask themselves difficult



Prime Minister Edouard Balladur – "Don't panic !"

questions. Why are prices on the island so much higher than in France, when the French government invests so much money on "territorial continuity?" Why is the infrastructure of the island deteriorating so fast? Why are the workers continually asked to make sacrifices, while the debts of farmers and shopkeepers are frozen by special government programmes?

The trade unions are supposed to articulate the solidarity of the working people. But they completely mystify the

political dimension of events on the island. In 1989 trade union bosses benefited from the activities of a nationalist movement which was determined to prevent the workers from dominating the political scene, and terrified that the striking workers would be an independent actor in any negotiations on the island's future status. Are we heading for the same crisis in 1995? Now, more than ever, the lack of an independent political organisation representing the working people of Corsica is deeply, deeply felt. ★

IMF/World Bank: Enough is Enough!

Over 1,200 people participated in the international meeting organised by the Belgian Committee to Abolish Third World Debt (CADTM) in Brussels on 18 March.

Michel Chossudovsky's detailed critique of the United Nation's Copenhagen summit on development is reprinted on page 29. In next month's issue, we hope to reproduce extracts from the speech given by Indian ecologist and feminist Vandana Shiva on the way multinational companies are using intellectual property (copyright) legislation to claim ownership of plants and plant extracts, naturally available in the third world, stripping the majority of the world's population from control over the seed they use, and making them pay for what used to be 'folk' medicines.

The CADTM plans a number of actions between now and the G7 summit of the leading imperialist powers in Paris in July 1996.

For more information contact CADTM,
29 rue Plantin, B-1070 Brussels, Belgium.
tel. (+32) 02/523 4023, fax 522 6427

(French, English, Dutch, Spanish and German spoken)

Turkey: Fascists behind 'Religious' riots

Over the last month Turkey has been admitted into the European Customs Union, and invaded Kurdish-controlled areas of Northern Iraq. Western media portrays the regime as balancing between a savage East and the 'civilised' West. Western leaders say they 'understand' when the

'civil' regime assassinates, bombs, tortures and censures Turks and Kurds who stand in its way. As Cem Yildirim reports, the resurgence of urban violence in Turkey is neither religious nor communalist in origin. Turkish fascism is still very much alive

ON MARCH 12 UNIDENTIFIED MURDERERS raided Gaziosmanpasa, a poor district of Istanbul, killing three local people only meters from an open police station. When local people protested police "inaction," the cops started a massacre: firing from tanks and helicopters, killing 19 and wounding hundreds more. The protests spread around other poor districts of Istanbul and other big cities, met everywhere with police violence. The death toll rose.

The state authority in Gaziosmanpasa and other riot-torn neighbourhoods collapsed. Order was maintained by local anti-fascist committees until there were repressed by the brutal intervention of the army. The ordeal concluded with the funerals of over 30 people killed by the police. At least 50 people remained in police custody.

The international media reported these events as "sectarian violence" — since the victims were predominantly Alawi Moslems, in this predominantly Sunni Moslem country. The incident was falsely reported as the rebellion of an Islamic sect or, even worse, as violence between different Islamic sects. All very compatible with the West's nightmares about the East, but a long way from the truth.

The truth, which the country's urban poor and the people of Turkish Kurdistan know only too well is as follows:

★ The Gaziosmanpasa and Umraniye massacres have nothing to do with religion-motivated sectarian violence; they were fascist attacks on progressive communities.

★ Fascism is the best organized political force within the Turkish state: the two major center-right parties, DYP and ANAP, have strong far-right Ulkucu" factions — a name associated with the youth wing of the fascist National Movement Party, MHP.

★ Fascists hold many key positions within the Turkish state; 70% of parliamentary deputies are of Ulkucu' origin; two thirds of the bloated police force are militants, members or supporters of the MHP, the rest including Islamic fanatics and the members of centre-right parties.

★ While fascist 'entryism' in the state service has always been a phenomenon of

Turkish politics, the large scale 'fascistisation' of the state began in full steam only after the military coup in 1980. This process accelerated with the beginning of the Kurdish guerilla movement in 1984. Militants armed with racist MHP discourse provided an excellent reservoir of recruitment for autonomous and unofficial counter-insurgency units operating mainly in Kurdistan alongside the army. These 'special forces' are responsible for the most ruthless atrocities in Kurdistan, including the systematic torture of civilians and the assassination of over 2,000 Kurdish and pro-Kurdish intellectuals.

In order to turn Turkish Kurdistan into a massive prison through a 'dirty war' the Turkish state needed to create an unprecedented machinery of violence dispersed among the police, army, and the special forces. This machinery is not merely employed for the suppression of the Kurdish revolt, but against any protest from those sectors of society which suffer most from ever-worsening life conditions — the working class and the urban poor in particular. In this sense Turkey has lived a counter-revolution for the last fifteen years.

Turkish and European liberals have preferred to see this same 15 years as a period of 'democratization'. They claim that the governing elite is the best defence not only against the fascist generals, but also against the spectre of a 'fundamentalist' takeover.

This argument is based on the illusion that there is a "dualism" between the pro-democratic, reformist coalition government and "hard liners" in the institutions of the state. In fact, not only do the generals have more say on state affairs than the prime minister of Turkey, but the fact is that this "liberal" government has done nothing to change the balance of forces and is still orchestrated by the "hard liners". There is no 'dualism' in Turkey's elite. The two wings share power in their common interest. ★

This article first appeared in the British publication Socialist Outlook



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Steelworkers win 35 hour week with increased wages!

Bavarian metal workers have taken a decisive step towards reduced working hours across Europe. The best paid and best organised fraction of the European working class has shown the way: it *is* possible to decrease working time while increasing wages!

THOUGH GERMAN TRADE-UNIONISM IS FAR from suffering the weakening that trade unions in other European countries are experiencing, years of attack from business have not left it unscathed. Between 1980 and 1993, the share of wages in the national income dropped from 72% to 68%. In 1985, new legislation made striking more difficult¹. The increase in unemployment and the ideological offensive of the bourgeoisie which followed the absorption of East Germany came at a time when the trade union movement was paralysed and its leaders caught in less and less effective routinism. The result was a drop in activism and a loss in membership of most unions².

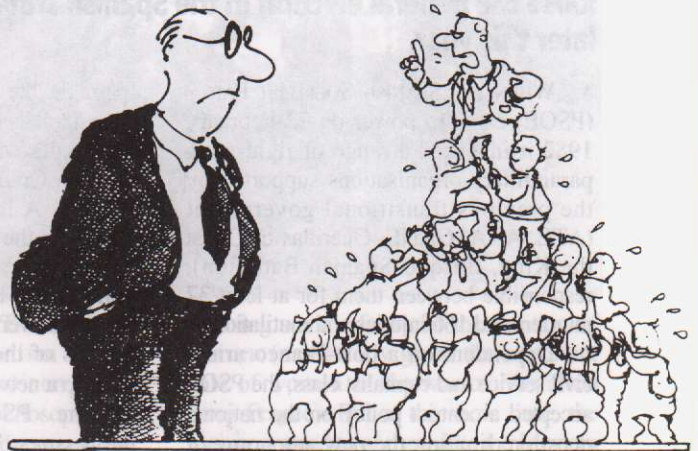
In 1993, at the worse of the recession, business led a intensive campaign for work force flexibility on the theme of maintaining the industrial base and value added in Germany. They pointed to the 2.5% drop in national income and 11% fall in metallurgy production. Increased unemployment -- officially 3.5 million unemployed and 1.5 m. people in training programmes -- put constant pressure on

wage-earners. The effects were soon felt. In the chemical industry, unions accepted the principle that new workers would have lower wages than those fixed by previous collective bargaining. Deregulation also meant the increased flexibility of working hours, and led to a decrease in real wages of about 7 % between 1992 and 1994.

In 1994, as the economic recovery was announced, the captains of the metal industry tried to bring the workers to their knees: they wanted to abolish the leave bonus (50 % extra pay during the six weeks annual leave) and to reduce the end of year bonus. These two measures would have amounted to a 13 % drop in annual wages. This provocation met a strong reaction. 1.5 million workers participated in "warning strikes" (a few hours long), called by the IG Metall trade union, and an overwhelming majority voted for strike action. On the eve of the strike, IG Metall leaders, under threat of a generalised lock-out, signed a convention freezing nominal wages for one year across the sector. This agreement, signed behind the backs of the strikers, had a demoralising effect. IG Metall, the strongest and the most belligerent of the German trade unions, had shown its powerlessness.

The wage gains won on 7 March 1995 do not fully compensate the losses of previous years. And this despite the fact that, in the second semester of 1994 alone, profits rose 22 %, and the labour cost per employee fell 7.5 %. For the most belligerent of the trade-unionists, a better agreement was within our reach, given that 91 % of the employees in question voted in favour of the strike). Furthermore, the success of the struggle is largely due to the change in trade union strategy by the leadership of IG Metall. Taking into

consideration new legislation, the management used a computer programme to avoid the paralysis of the non-striking sectors during a rotating strike. It chose Bavaria, in view of the division of the



local business (many small and medium enterprises with full order books wishing to end the strike as soon as possible). This tactic was effective and popular in the eyes of the public, but limited the autonomous activity of the wage-earners concerned by the demands³, and increased their dependence on the trade union full-timers who led the struggle.

Nevertheless, confidence of German workers in collective action increased, even though the most keen feel let down. The result in Bavaria is an encouragement to fight for all of Europe's workers. ★

Notes

1 The article puts an end to unemployment insurance coverage during technical unemployment caused by a strike. It was passed after a strike by metal workers in 1984 - which had opened the way towards the decrease in working hours - during which an IG Metall-led strike of 57,000 workers, paralysed the work of 155,000 others. Article 166 enables management to counter a limited strike by a massive lock-out, forcing the strike fund to support tens of thousands of workers (or to be accused of lack of solidarity).

2 The main trade union central DGB has lost 2.2 million members since 1992, and now has only 9.8 m. members). The trade unions are also affected by unemployment and the ageing of their members: 35 % of IG Metall members pay the reduced unemployed and retired membership fee, and the union lost 70,000 members in 1994 alone.

3 The strike initially involved only 11,000 workers in 22 companies, later increased to 21,000 in 36 companies. Most IG Metall members did not take part. ★

"The bosses agree to the 35 hour week, an 11 % wage increase over 18 months, and get nothing on flexibility... Not much of an example !"

Jean Gandois, Chairman of the French employers' federation (CNPF), in *l'Humanité*, 28 March

What was obtained

The 7 March agreement covers the next 24 months. It involves an immediate bonus of 150 DM/month,, a 3.4 % increase in wage on 1 May, and another 3.6 % increase on 1 November 1995. The working week will come down to 35 hours on 1 October 1, 1995, and wages increased to maintain weekly earnings at the same level. End-of-year bonuses will be increased from 60 % to 90-100% of the monthly wage), which represents a 4-5 % increase in annual wages. ★

GAL: Spanish State terrorism

by José "Bikila" Iriarte

The recent arrest and extradition of former Guardia Civil General Director Luis Roldan, who fled the country in June 1993 has re-opened the scandal of state sponsorship of the right-wing paramilitary organisation GAL, responsible for murder, intimidation and information gathering in the Basque Country (divided between North Eastern Spain and South Western France). And while the thugs themselves may be fascists, the orders came from the ruling Socialist Party (PSOE) of Filipe Gonzales, who is expected to loose the general election in the Spanish state later this year.



WHEN THE SPANISH SOCIALIST PARTY (PSOE) came to power on 23 February 1982 it inherited a range of right-wing paramilitary organisations supported by the previous transitional government (ATE, AAA, GANE, Guerrillas of Christ the King, Basquo-Spanish Battalion), responsible between them for at least 37 murders and 166 injuries and mutilations.

Dependent on a post-Franco army, civil service and capitalist class, the PSOE accepted a centrist policy on the national question, limiting the new autonomy of the Basque and Catalan regions, and authorising special powers for the security services in the Basque Country. Despite the "vigorous" application of anti-terrorist legislation, the Basque armed liberation organisation ETA was not defeated. The government resolved to deny Basque nationalists their "sanctuary" in the French Basque country — and asked the French (Socialist Party) government to repress more vigorously both refugee activists and French-born Basques. The second element of this request was the formation of GAL (Anti-Terrorist Liberation Group) — a new, harder paramilitary formation.

Spanish police, the French authorities and the residue of France's paramilitary extreme right co-operated to recruit professional criminals, offering them both cash and "material and technical support from the Spanish side". In just three years from 1983-1986, GAL committed at least 28 murders, 2 "disappearances", 30 injuries and mutilations, and several kidnappings. All this on French soil, and without the apparent concern of the French authorities. The ETA network in

Iparalde (the French Basque country) was almost totally destroyed.

All this was particularly heartening for Guardia Civil Director Luis "Algarobo" Roldan. A last-minute convert to the PSOE on the eve of its election victory, Roldan rose from City Counsellor in Zaragoza to become the Delegate of the Central Government in Navarra, one of the regions of the Basque country. Here he built up a network of 'comrades' at the top of the PSOE and among local businessmen. This enabled him to become the first civilian director of the Guardia Civil, a national police body, physically isolated from the population in military-style barracks, and universally hated. Roldan modernised the force and improved its image, attracting a more modern and sophisticated layer of police administrators. He also specialised the Guardia in anti-terrorist activities, investing heavily in armaments, armoured vehicles, and computer networks.

But Roldan's other speciality was buying equipment for the Guardia Civil at

double the market price, in exchange for generous "cash-back" payments to himself and those of his officers he needed to involve in his plans. He even syphoned off part of the money destined for orphans of policemen killed in the anti-ETA war. From rags to riches: by the time the magazine Cambio 16 exposed his corruption, Roldan had accumulated a personal fortune estimated at 4,000 million pesetas in his ten years of public activity.

Roldan fled the country in June 1993. He reemerged 10 months later, with authorities claiming to have extradited him from Laos, which Laotian authorities deny. The scandal of his return has overshadowed the scandal of his paymaster's crime. Who let him escape? Who brought him back? Who will he drag into the mud with him? How can the left exploit this unprecedented crisis in an election year? Watch this space. ★

The author is a member of Zutik, an organisation born from the fusion of the Basque section of the Revolutionary Communist League of the Spanish State (4th International) with the 'post-Maoist' Communist Movement. ★

Corruption

As usual in such scandals, a low-ranking figure or two must be sacrificed to protect the big fish and the politicians. So Police Inspectors Jose Amedo and Michel Dominguez ended up in an open prison. But regular anonymous payments to their families recently dried up, and so Jose Amadeo is now threatening to name names. He claims that he only agreed to carry the can in exchange for lifelong financial support, a quick pardon, and a new identity with police protection. He denies that he and Dominguez acted alone, and is

It is still not clear how large GAL was, and whether it functioned as a loose network or a tightly structured organisation. What is clear, however, is that different sections of the state were feeding funds to the paramilitaries and ensuring them political protection.

These funds did not just serve to repress the Basque armed liberation organisation ETA "whatever the cost." Ex-ministers Barrionuevo and Corcuera have been exposed as the peak of a pyramid of corruption, syphoning off the secret funds into their own pockets. Some modern wars are 'dirty,' some are even 'cold' — but all of them are big business for the lucky bourgeois who administer them! No wonder these kind of operations are so widespread and so long-lasting. ★

Algeria: What can feminists do?

The Algerian women's movement is as old as the country itself. Activists from the war of liberation against French imperialism began organising in the months following independence in 1962 to oppose an Islamic-inspired Family Code that threatened to make adult women the legal charges of their fathers. In 1989-91, women's organisations were virtually alone in taking the fundamentalist threat seriously. *Cahiers du féminisme* recently published this round table with Fatiha, Sanhadja and Leila, three Algerian militants living in Paris, and Adel, a member of the Socialist Workers' Party (PST) in Constantine, Algeria.



Fatiha: The problem for women did not start when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) began to be powerful. It wasn't the FIS that approved the Family Code of 1984, which makes all women into legal minors [subject to their husbands, fathers, or eldest brother]. The violent attacks might be new, but things have always been terrible for women.

Adel: But we ought to distinguish different moments of the last few years. We might be very critical of the Boumediene regime, but during that period there was a massive increase in scolarisation, which extended the mixing

of boys and girls in society. This mixity in education was a mechanism which subverted society as we knew it on a daily basis. True, there was no philosophy, no theory of the role of co-education, nor indeed was the extension of co-education the result of a conscious struggle by women. It was above all the desire of the regime to industrialise the country which led them to modernise and extend the education system. But still, these developments enabled women to start saying "I have a qualification, I want to work now," or "I don't want to get married straight away."

We also began to see a daily mixing of men and women in the street. It didn't become the norm, but it was a real change. Unfortunately, this opening up of education and the world of work for women was not accompanied by a change in mentalities. And the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was able to develop its thesis that "this kind of modernisation is not for us. It is not based on Islamic values. Women should return to the domestic sphere."

Sanhadja: After independence, the Ben Bella government, and then the Boumediene governments, tried to strengthen themselves on two fronts. On the one hand, they tried to link up with the "Communist" countries, which meant

realising some reforms of the position of women (particularly given the important role of women in the war of liberation from France). But at the same time, the regime wanted to accommodate the Moslem currents, which had real support in society. During the colonial period, the struggle against the French Christian colonists and his value system was for many Algerians linked to certain other values, which we associated with Islam. You could see this for example in the activities of the General Union of Moslem Students.

This contradiction was reflected in the post-independence constitution. The first article proclaims Islam as the state religion, and a later article proclaims the equality of the sexes. And in the new, independent Algeria, women were still married by force, particularly in the villages. And many, many girls stopped their studies before the end.

At the same time, reality is more than the state of the legislation. The family code might make me a legal minor throughout my life, but it did not stop me from being an active trade unionist, a feminist, and a revolutionary communist. I suffered state harassment, I was interrogated, but I had the right to exist, and to exercise my identity as a citizen. I would stress the difference between this kind of situation, and life with the

Financial contributions to the women's movement in Algeria can be sent to International Viewpoint, via any of the addresses on page two. Or contact the French solidarity organisation Plurielles Algérie, 21 rue Voltaire, 75011 Paris, France

fundamentalists nowadays. Those men would be ready to burn me alive. They attack women whose only crime is to live alone, or to be teachers, or to have chosen not to wear the hijab (veil)...

We mustn't pretend that both regimes are just as bad. A fundamentalist regime under the FIS would be the worst thing imaginable for Algerian women.

Adel: The culture of the National Liberation Front (FLN) contained elements of Islamic political thought and of Marxism. And in a mass movement struggling against the monster of French imperialism, it was always the logic of national unity which dominated. The internal differences were not taken into account.

Our society is still based around Islam, and around a retrograde conception of social relationships. And so, even though the number of women who entered universities, or took up paid work after independence was very low, this still seemed like a revolution for the mind-set of the average Algerian. And as long as we avoided a debate on the place of religion in society, Islamic fundamentalism remained a potential

force. But at the moment of independence, in 1962, there were no organised fundamentalist currents, just a few personalities and religious leaders, and a few fundamentalist members of the government.

When did the Islamic fundamentalist movement develop into its current form?

Sanadja: The Islamic fundamentalists began attacking barracks to steal weapons in 1977-78. So armed guerilla groups existed before the present wave of state repression of the fundamentalist opposition.

Adel: The war in Afghanistan was an important model for the fundamentalists. A number of their young militants went to fight there. When they came back, preparations were made for an armed struggle, but not in a very organised way. In those days, there were as many "leaders" as guerilla groups!

Nowadays, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) is not really coordinated on a national level. There are lots of autonomous groups of 15-20 guerillas.

The movement is much less organised and structured than the guerilla movement in the war of independence, or if we look at the movements in Latin America. And with the current military offensive of the regime, the guerilla movement is very weak indeed.

The declarations of those guerillas captured by the regime tell us a lot about the internal functioning of the fundamentalist groups. The emir, the leader is all-powerful. He has all the privileges he wants. The others have to obey and to execute his orders. If anyone questions his orders, he is put in quarantine. If he continues, he is executed.

I know quite a few men who were FIS militants before the current wave of repression, and who are now in hiding. They hide from their former comrades because they are not willing to be press-ganged into activities that could cost them their lives. And they hide from the state because, whenever there is an assassination, known sympathisers of the fundamentalists are rounded up by the Military Police.

Leaders of the main fundamentalist and democratic opposition parties met in Rome in January this year and signed a joint declaration supporting a "peaceful and political solution to the crisis" Is there really a moderate or democratic fundamentalist current with which one can negotiate?

Leila: All this talk of dialogue is just so much smoke. There are two clans in Algeria, locked in a struggle. If these two forces start to discuss with each other, what is that supposed to bring to the population?

As for the "moderate" fundamentalists, I remember when the FIS was the major fundamentalist force, and everyone considered the Hamas and Ennahda groups as moderate forces, even though they shared the same social project as the FIS. And today, when the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) dominates the scene, when the fundamentalist attacks become more and more violent, the FIS seems to be a moderate force! Me, I can't see any moderates among Islamic fundamentalists!

Adel: FIS leaders Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj still want to establish a dictatorship. But they now say they are ready to play by the rules of the democratic system to win power. Leila is right to say that dialogue is not really possible between the fundamentalists and the regime. The only way out of the

The Berber movement

The Berber ethnic minority is at the forefront of the struggle for democracy. But there is a constant tension between those who would confine the struggle to matters of cultural identity, and those who would like to extend demands for democracy and development in such a way as to unite all Algerians against the fundamentalists and the regime.

Said Saadi, leader of the Regrouping for Culture and Democracy (RCD) calls for the eradication of the fundamentalists and the FIS. This had led him to support the state of emergency, and call on the army to do the dirty work of crushing the fundamentalists. He has turned himself into a satellite in orbit around a regime which is discredited among the people, and which is directly responsible for the present social and political impasse. The reality is that "the eradication of the FIS" by the army includes the eradication of people in revolt in general, and large numbers of marginalised youth in particular. These are the social base from which the FIS recruits. Politician "eradicators" like Saadi see only the regressive political and ideological nature of fundamentalism, and ignore the issue of the social crisis. This hardly favours the coming together of progressive political forces.

The other mainly-Berber party, the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) is more concerned with social questions, and is more consistent in its support for democratic

demands. So far the FFS has attracted most of those who want to counter the fundamentalists' popular influence without turning to the army. But the FFS policy has other ambiguities. FFS leader Ait Ahmed concentrates his attacks so much on the regime that he presents the FIS as martyrs. A short-term reaction prevails over a more fundamental analysis of the social and political nature of the fundamentalist currents. The result is a catch-all anti-regime front, which inevitably incorporates forces whose claims to democracy cannot be taken seriously.

The Berber movement as a whole has had some victories: it is no longer taboo or "unpatriotic" to discuss the pluri-ethnic and pluri-lingual reality of the country. And a number of bodies, including the trade union confederation UGTA, now recognise and use the Berber language Tamazigh as well as Arabic and French.

A national conference of Berber organisation will probably be held on 13-14 April. This may lead to an upturn in activity. But the sad reality is that, in recent weeks, the movement has seemed weak on the ground. The boycott of Arab-only schools continues in the Berber-speaking region of Kabylie, but without real organisation. And some militants have challenged the tactical wisdom of the boycott now that the fundamentalists are calling on all Moslems to boycott state schools. ★

[correspondents' reports]

impasse is a third perspective: based on a dialogue with the people. We need a democratic dynamic, and in a sense much wider than an electoral campaign.

The democratic forces face two problems: how to work together, and how to overcome the lack of a democratic tradition. The terror of the 1990s has made things even more difficult, by anesthetizing the labour and social movements.

Democratic parties have to do more than say nasty things about the fundamentalists. We have to combine democratic and social demands, to attack the root of the social crisis which has provided such fertile ground for fundamentalism. We have to try to find solutions for the most immediate demands: housing, work, the right to a future.

As for the democratic struggle, the most immediate concerns should be the rights of women, an end to the regime's repressive policies, and the introduction of basic civil liberties and the rights guaranteed by the constitution.

What role do women play in the democratic movements?

Adel: Women were the first group to resist the fundamentalists, back in 1989-91. Unfortunately they were virtually alone in the struggle. As a result, most women's associations are much weaker

Women and Fundamentalism

The March issue of International Viewpoint carried articles on the struggle against fundamentalism in Algeria, France, the United States, and in the immigrant communities

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El Khatwa

The journal of the Algerian Socialist Workers' Party (PST) has resumed publication! For more information contact International Viewpoint or write directly to PST, 27 Blvd Zirout Youcef, Algeria

than a few years ago.

Leila: Various drafts of the family code were being discussed by the government as far back as 1963. Women's associations were formed even then, in order to oppose this kind of legislation.

In the period of liberalisation after 1988, a range of women's associations were formed, but they were characterised by partisan ideological positions, which held them back. And male militants of all the parties have never been interested in women's problems. We have never been a priority for them.

Sanhadja: There are important differences between the women's associations. Some are for the abolition of the Family Code, others for its modification. Some organisations say we must try to transform the way people think. Others say this is a secondary question.

Incidentally, I don't agree that the women's organisations were a failure because of the individual political convictions of their members. The reasons are much more complex. Women in an archaic society are subject to all kinds of pressures. And between 1989 and 1991, the minority of women in the women's movement were alone in their opposition to the regime (over the family code) and the fundamentalists. And this little movement of ours was confronted with a whole range of problems which were not specific to women, and which are still major problems for the whole political sphere in Algeria.

What now?

Leila: A democratic front is of prime importance. But this must be more than just a get-together of the "bosses" of the various organisations. For the time being,

International Women's Day in Algeria

[RO--18 March 1995] "Women spontaneously occupied the city of Algiers on 8 March, went out into the streets, moved around -- the flower sellers sold out of roses -- and met no hostility from the young men in the streets, which is something new. Perhaps this is a new generation of young men. Such resistance in daily life by "ordinary" Algerian women -- rather than only those who have an "European" mentality and way of life -- has been neglected by the media abroad.

"A street theatre "tribunal" was organised by El Raïd (Refusal), a group closely allied to the former Communist Part (Tahadi). Fundamentalist leaders Ali Belhadj and Abassi Madani were sentenced to death by the tribunal. This action got widespread media coverage in France. The problem is that this action claimed that the problem is simply one of religious obscurantism, attacking the enlightened ones, the elite among the women. And the tribunal judged only one side. There are not only 10,000 widows of victims of Islamic fundamentalist violence in this country. There are also 3,500, or 10,000 widows of the victims of the other side. This is the classic approach of the "exterminator" current - we are the modernists, which means the others are the barbarians. They have no right to a defence, or even to live. And so sympathisers of the Islamic Salvation Front are being killed even if they are not armed, and even if they are not politically active any more." ★



the democratic parties seem more concerned with promoting their leaders, or stressing their historic legitimacy than by building a movement around "basic demands" like the struggle against fundamentalist fascism and state repression.

Adel: A social explosion could happen at any moment. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) plan for Algeria has caused a 40% devaluation of the Dinar, budget cuts and the restructuring of enterprises in the state sector. Mass dismissals, and the further collapse of the population's purchasing power can be expected over the coming months. None of this is really new, but it is becoming more and more intense. There have been a number of important strikes recently, and there is a real hope that the social movement will begin to move out of what seemed to be a tragic inertia. But our moments of hope are only justified if we manage to articulate democratic and social demands together.

Leila: Those in power never wanted democracy, or a multi-party system. The present situation is a fantastic opportunity for the regime. They have a great reason to forbid everything that became permitted after the youth of Algeria revolted in 1988.

Adel: International pressure can push

the situation in a positive direction. There should be more demonstrations in favour of democratic reforms and democratic forces, like on 3 December 1994 in Paris. Those abroad should also demand the cancelling of Algeria's foreign debt. Even if the regime is sucking resources out of the country for its own benefit, the abolition of the foreign debt would create much better possibilities for relaunching the economy.

Leila: Abolish the debt, yes. But for

The challenge for Algerian Trotskyists

The Socialist Workers' Party (PST) office in downtown Algiers is still open: no small success given that a number of political parties have no existence beyond the occasional press release. According to PST militant Radouane Osmane, "We continue to hold meetings, intervene in trades unions, and in the Berber cultural movement. In recent mobilisations, such as the teachers' strike, we try to build a third force: against the privatisation programme and against fundamentalism.

"We help animate the broad-based Initiative Association of Social Resistance (AIRS), which includes a number of trades union federations and militants. The vice-president is from the railway workers' federation and the president is a regional union leader from Rouiba. Intellectuals and youth are also involved in the Initiative. There is a base here for long term work.

"In Bougie and Oran an independent youth organisation, "Rage" has addressed the problems of democracy, torture and executions. The PST tries to support all their initiatives in a practical and a political sense. These are young people, with a new experience.

"Parties like ours can only live if they are actively implicated in the struggle for justice and equality among the masses. Yes, the situation is very difficult. But if we do not continue to agitate, we will disappear. For example, the former-Communist Party El Tahadi has now completely adopted the regime's "exterminist" rhetoric towards the Islamic fundamentalists." ★

the benefit of those who have been on top for 34 years already? No way! At the very least, the democratic parties should propose a special commission [to ensure that the resources freed by cancelling the debt be directed into health, education and other social programmes].

Sanhadja: I still put my hope in the women's movement. Women still go to work, they still refuse to wear the veil -

For my cousins in the smaller towns, to speak together, to go out, all this is almost a militant act. And even though the women's demonstrations of 22 March 1994 and the democratic demonstrations of June were completely aimed against the fundamentalists, and ignored the role of the regime, you have to admire the courage of the women who took part. ★

Who's killing whom?

by Radouane Osmane

"Let's put the record straight on the "civil war" casualties... Military and police patrols have sharply reduced the number of fundamentalist attacks in the centre of Algiers. The fundamentalists have now started attacking the working-class neighbourhoods near their strongholds. The headline-grabbing attacks on journalists and former anti-colonial fighters only represent 2% of victims: In fact, three out of four victims are workers. In 1994 1,800 skilled workers were killed, and 500-700 shopkeepers. Only 2% of the fundamentalist's victims are members of state institutions. And the 61 foreigners killed so far (from a total foreign population now down to 8,300) represent a further 2%. And with the fundamentalist strategy being to terrorize neighbourhoods, and wipe out delinquency and drugs dealers, the unemployed have not been spared either.

The newspapers here tend to adapt themselves to an imagined, external, Western set of preconceptions: this leads them to present the fundamentalists as attacking only "liberated" women, foreigners and intellectuals. In fact, society as a whole is being terrorised. The media reduce things to a mass of fundamentalist "terrorists." Some intellectuals who have succeeded in leaving the country, talk in increasingly hysterical terms about Algerian society as a whole from the other side of the Mediterranean. The best refutation of this distortion is the daily resistance of Algerian women, who continue to brave death by going to work in the morning and coming home in the evening.

The second thing to remember is that this "civil war" includes the atrocities committed by the regime. Thousands of fundamentalists were killed in 1994. Not all of them were "terrorists." Most were sympathisers, or civilians killed by the regime for one reason or another, with the blame put on the fundamentalists afterwards.

There is a balance of terror now. Neither side can get the upper hand. Having said this, there is growing disaffection with the fundamentalists in working-class districts. People are more and more critical of random bombings. They inform those under threat, and warn each other about suspicious strangers in the neighbourhood.

The regime is considering a presidential election, but none of the preconditions for a real election exist! Outside the centre of the capital, the security situation is deplorable: democratic freedoms hardly exist. Algerians do not have the right to organise or act politically, and all demonstrations except those in support of the regime are banned. If there is an election, the abstention rate will be very high.

The regime still hopes that an election will give them a new lease of life. Once the positive publicity of an election has run its course abroad, and people have calmed down, the locks will snap shut again. It would be a regime like that of Ben Ali in Tunisia.

The only possible regime candidate at the moment is the incumbent, Liamine Zeroual¹. The armed fundamentalists are not ready to accept a compromise until they have established a balance of forces which gives them the chance of achieving something. Until they think the balance of forces is favourable, they will oppose elections even if some well-known fundamentalist personalities participate. Between now and May there may even be a series of attacks by groups who want to prevent an election. In short, the fundamentalist camp is in disarray. As for the democratic opposition, the FFS has said they will only support a coalition "peace" candidate. The PT say they will not stand. All in all, it won't be easy to get the elections off the ground." ★

1) A last minute agreement may result in the nomination of an "opposition" candidate like F.L.N. General Secretary Abdel Hamid Mehri, a recurring fixture in the governments of the last 30 years, and one of those responsible for the present mess. He thinks he can cosy up to the fundamentalists and thus neutralise them. But he would probably get the thumbs down from the electorate.

Russia's "near abroad"

Since the 1991 "coup," the Yeltsin administration has made it clear that it will not accept any weakening of its influence on the territory of the ex-Soviet Union (except for the Baltic states). Respect for the borders with the Ukraine and Kazakhstan, drawn in the Soviet period, is not automatic ¹.

by Poul Funder Larsen

YELTSIN HAS TRADITIONALLY emphasised economic tactics, exploiting the enormous Russian advantage in resources and markets. Yet there has been no shortage of Russian "peacekeeping" initiatives, covert actions, and open intervention in the "near abroad." The Russian secret service was involved in the toppling of democratically elected governments in Georgia and Azerbaijan. In 1992, the Russian 14th Army in Moldova supported separatists in the Russian-speaking eastern districts. And today in Tadjikistan 24,000 Russian border guards are entrenched in a partisan war with the Islamic opposition. ²

"Russia first" rhetoric in official discourse increases as the economic situation and political climate continues to deteriorate. Yeltsin's speech to the newly elected Russian Duma (parliament) in February 1994 concentrated almost exclusively on "the defence of Russian statehood." He then spent the summer making bellicose statements against Estonia and visiting the border region of Pskov.

In Chechnya, the Moscow-sponsored "Provisional Council" tried to overthrow President Dudayev. When this failed, Moscow stepped up covert actions in Chechnya, until dozens of Russian agents were uncovered and arrested in November following a failed attack on the presidential palace in Grozny. Faced with this disaster, the Russian government launched the invasion of Chechnya. ³

Integration: at what price?

Botched interventions in Chechnya reveal the panic in ruling circles. That panic is based on the belief that current developments in the ex-USSR threaten Russian national interests. Seen from the Kremlin, the past five years have been a period of unbroken retreat: the loss of the East European satellites, demise of the

Today, all the major players in Russian politics support a "Monroe Doctrine" regarding Russian interests in the Community of Independent States (CIS). The Chechnya crisis and the debate it has provoked about the role of the army is a conflict about how to implement this doctrine; not about the goals of foreign policy.



CTK/AP

Warsaw Pact, the independence of first the Baltic republics, and then all the other non-Russian republics. All this resulted in a weakened Russian state and a disorganised Russian army spread over several "international" borders. Most Russians share this view of events, but don't draw the aggressive, imperialist conclusions of Zhirinovskiy or Yeltsin.

The epoch of withdrawal ended when the last remaining troops were pulled out of Germany and the Baltic republics. Chechnya marks the beginning of a new period, characterised by tendencies toward re-integration and regional tensions among the ex-Soviet republics. Economic integration has been reinforced by the creation of a customs union between Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, along with separate bilateral agreements on political cooperation between Russia and these two countries. ⁴

These new arrangements are not evidence of a new spirit of cooperation. This is the reluctant cooperation of economies still suffering from the deformations of bureaucratic planning and the transition to capitalism.

Gross National Product (GNP) in the Ukraine is now lower than in Nigeria. Inflation is 2000% a year, and GNP fell 28% in 1994. With 80% of output exported to CIS states, mainly Russia,

Ukraine has no choice other than strengthening economic ties with Russia. ⁵

Political cooperation has been more difficult for Yeltsin. The CIS never evolved into a serious political entity. According to Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, "a shapeless entity like the CIS has no future. So far not a single decision made has been implemented."⁶ Rather than developing the CIS into a real body, decisions are made on a bilateral basis, with Russia at the centre of the web.

In military and strategic terms, the most immediate problem for Moscow has been stemming the Chechen drive for independence, and controlling the increasingly assertive Association of Mountain People, which groups many of the small nations of the frontier North Caucasus region. But Russia's leaders

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have a strategic interest in the whole post-Soviet space, which is now engulfed in wars, separatist rebellions, and economic collapse. In both Georgia and Azerbaijan Russia has used "divide and rule" tactics: selectively supporting armed rebellions, and supporting pro-Moscow leaders from the old nomenclatura, like Edouard Shevardnadze in Georgia or Aliev in Azerbaijan.

Recent results of this interference have not been fantastic for Russia. At the end of 1994, the supposedly pro-Russian Aliev leadership of Azerbaijan signed a major agreement on exploitation of the Caspian Sea oil fields. Russian interests were given a minor stake, with Western multinationals taking the key positions. One reason for the intense Russian concern with Chechnya is precisely the need to reverse the decline of Russian influence in the whole region.⁷

Next to collapse: the Russian Federation?

The collapse of the Russian Federation is a recurring nightmare for the Russian elite. The shelling of the White House (Russian Parliament) in October 1993 was as much a warning to rebellious regions trying to profit from Yeltsin's weakness as a response to the Moscow opposition.

Several regionalist dynamics are at work in the Russian Federation:

The breakdown of the centre's authority is most acute in regions where non-Russians are a majority—Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan in the North Caucasus, or the Tuva Republic, which forms part of Russia's border with Mongolia. In these regions, the drive towards autonomy, and sometimes independence, is fuelled by national aspirations and not economic interests (though the latter may play a role, as with the oil lobbies in Chechnya).

In some relatively rich regions with a strong Russian population, local leaders see autonomy as a way to ensure direct control of valuable local resources, while reducing their contribution to the central budget. Examples are the diamond-rich Siberian Republic of Yakutia, and the Volga republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.

In the long run, the greatest threat to Moscow may arise when regional economic interests develop into a desire for political autonomy, or even separation. Oil-rich Tatarstan has already made several hesitant moves towards independence. The brutal repression of Chechnya will certainly influence local thinking. ★



Chechnya: Troops Out!

The war in Chechnya is a war against the Chechen people! The "illegitimate" regime of General Dudajev or the struggle against the mafia are only pretexts. The resistance of the Chechen militias against the Russian army has large popular support. This resistance has a real legitimacy.

The nationalism of the Chechen people, whatever form it has, should not be seen as equivalent to Russian imperial chauvinism, on the basis of which attempts are being made to reconstruct a strong, oppressive state in Russia. Once again, we see the proof that a nation which oppresses another cannot itself be free. Measures taken recently against the freedom of the press in Russia are testimony to this.

The complicity of the Western powers with those responsible for the invasion is flagrant. Their hypocrisy is clear if we only compare the way they encouraged the dismantling of the Yugoslav Federation with the arguments they use to justify Russian control over Chechnya.

The cowardly silence of the "responsible" left towards this crisis is just as bad. The only ray of hope in this dirty war is the resistance developing in Russia itself, where the media refuses to simply echo official statements, and where anti-war demonstrations have been larger than their organisers expected.

But how many more thousands of Chechens must die, how many more Russian soldiers must return home in coffins, before protest activities are organised in the rest of the world?

Wherever we are, it is urgent that we demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya, and that we demand the respect of the right of the Chechen people to self-determination! ★

Declaration issued by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in March 1995

1. "Yeltsin extends his power", International Viewpoint no. 212, September 1991.

2. Over 120,000 Russian troops are stationed in the other ex-Soviet Republics, according to the C.I.S. Statistical Committee. For a summary of the Russian debate on the C.I.S. see the author's "More equal than the others," International Viewpoint no. 237, October 1992.

3. The Kremlin anticipated a brief, successful war to strengthen Russian hegemony in the region, and Yeltsin's position in the elite. But there were other factors at play: the influential Southern Russia lobby in Moscow wanted to eliminate a second potential centre of power in the Northern Caucasus, the Minister of Defense and the General Staff needed to divert attention from a mass of corruption scandals, and other lobbies were irritated by Dudajev's role in various shady oil-transactions.

4. Kazakhstan (where the 'national' ethnic group is a minority) has come under considerable Russian pressure, and recently accepted military cooperation with Russia, and the principle of dual citizenship with the Russian Federation.

5. The depression in Ukraine has been particularly hard on the industrial working class in the eastern part of the country. And this group is mainly Russian-speaking.

Alternatives

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6. Reuters, 8 February 1995.

7. One impact of the war has been to convince Abkhaz separatists in Georgia to accept negotiations for limited autonomy in a single state, rather than continue an armed conflict with the pro-Moscow Georgian government.

NAFTA's northern crisis

Quebec will hold a referendum on independence towards the end of this year. Events since the September 1994 election of a bourgeois nationalist-separatist majority in the province's

"National Assembly are not just destabilizing Canadian imperialism — combined with the crisis in Mexico they render the North American Free Trade Agreement very, very fragile.

by Michel Lafitte

The line-up of social forces is clear: the federalist option is supported by almost all the major Canadian companies, including the French-speaking part of the Canadian bourgeoisie. The Liberal Party of Canadian Premier Jean Crétien is at the head of a consensus grouping the French and English-speaking Liberal parties, the Progressive Conservative Party (in power from 1985-93) the Reform Party (right wing populists in English Canada) and the English Canadian social democratic formation, the New Democratic Party (in power in three provinces, including Ontario and British Columbia, the two most important provinces in English Canada)¹.

The independence project in Quebec is supported by a minority of the French-speaking bourgeoisie, which would like to become a national québécois bourgeoisie, the entire French-speaking trade union movement, the vast majority of popular and local organisations, the women's associations, a majority of French-speaking artists, the non-sectarian left, and all the student organisations except those grouping business and economic students. This bloc is led by the Parti québécois (Quebec Party) of Provincial Premier Jacques Parizeau, supported by the Bloc québécois party in the federal assembly.

The English Canadian trade union movement has an ambiguous position. The Canadian Labour Congress defends the right of self-determination for Quebec, but pronounces itself clearly in favour of an unitary Canadian state. And the 'labour' New Democratic Party is virulently pro-Canadian.

Opinion polls show the Quebec population 55-45% against independence — with 97% of English-speakers in Quebec, and recent immigrants not yet assimilated to the majority English or French communities pro-federalist, and a majority the French-speakers in favour of independence. The final result could go either way.

A junior imperialist...

The Canadian state is an unique imperialist state. Created by the British

Colonial Office in the mid-19th century, the Canadian state has always contained a large French-speaking minority hostile to the British Empire. From the very beginning the multi-national Canadian state has been founded on inequality — a real prisonhouse of peoples.

The Canadian bourgeoisie constituted itself only after the state has been set up.



Québec Premier Jacques Parizeau votes in the 1994 provincial election (CTK/AP)

Constantly threatened by their more dynamic southern brothers, the Canadian bourgeoisie exploited the new state to build up strong, 'national' monopolies in the banking and transportation sectors. At the end of the 19th century the state had only 11 banks, two railway companies and three maritime transport companies. Already at that time the bigger Canadian banks were penetrating the Latin-American markets, constructing the major part of the rail, port and electric infrastructure.

At the beginning of the 20th century, having definitively minoritised the French-speaking population², the Canadian bourgeoisie de-coupled themselves from the British Empire, and linked up to the United States of America. Despite numerous conflicts, that faithful

attachment remains to this day.

This relationship has not reduced the Canadian bourgeoisie to the status of local comprador agent for U.S. interests — 75% of the global assets of Canada companies are 'locally' owned. Canadian companies are big investors abroad too - in 6th place after the U.S.A., Japan, Germany, France and Great Britain. Canada is the biggest investor in the United States, and that country's biggest trading partner. Canadian financial capital is Mexico's second largest creditor, controlling 6% of the country's foreign debt.

As well as the G7 summits of the world's seven richest countries, Canada participates in the U.S. nuclear weapons' structure NORAD, while Canada's Communication Security Establishment is tightly linked to the United States' National Security Agency.

The Parti québécois' project

A powerful nationalist movement developed in Quebec during the 1960s. Important sectors of the French-speaking civil service hoped to create a Quebecer bourgeoisie using the support of the provincial government. Former minister René Levesque abandoned the Liberal Party to create the Parti québécois (PQ), which soon hegemonised the new nationalist movement. The beginning of the end of the extra-parliamentary pro-independence movement can be dated to 1970, when many militants were repelled by the kidnapping of the British Consul and the local Minister of Labour by the Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ). And after the strike wave of Spring 1972 was defeated, all the trade union federations gave their open or indirect support to the PQ.

Elected at the provincial level in 1976, the PQ cemented its support among the vital forces of the Quebec nation (except those bourgeois sectors most closely linked to Canadian imperialism) through a series of social-democratic type reforms. Nevertheless, they lost Quebec's first referendum on sovereignty, in May 1980. For many people, this was the end of the

national struggle. The federal (Liberal) government, supported by the social democratic provincial governments in English Canada began to redefine the Canadian constitution in 1982-83.

The Parti québécois loses the 1985 provincial elections to the Quebec Liberal Party.

While the large Canadian bourgeoisie gropes its way towards a neo-liberal perspective, and a perspective of total continental integration, the Progressive Conservative Party, power in Ottawa for the first time since the great depression tries to solve the "constitutional question." Two proposals of constitutional reform implying economic centralisation and cultural decentralisation are proposed. One after the other they are rejected: massively in Quebec, and by a small majority in English Canada.

The reasons for this rejection are different in each of the two major nations. Québécois rejected centralisation, while the big guns of the "no" campaigns in English Canada were opposed to any concession to Quebec, even on the purely cultural level.

Growing chauvinism in English Canada provoked a rise in nationalist feelings in Quebec. Conservative and Liberal deputies in the federal parliament deserted to form the Bloc québécois (Quebec Bloc - BQ), led by former Federal (Conservative) Minister Lucien Bouchard. The BQ is currently the second largest party in the federal parliament in Ottawa. Over 1/2 million people demonstrated in Montreal on 24 June 1991 (Quebec's national day). And in 1991-92 over 1 1/2 million people signed a petition in favour of a referendum on sovereignty.

But if Québécois bourgeois nationalists have understood one thing, it is that they can't risk being carried into power on the back of a mass mobilisation. In this epoch of great imperialist blocs, extra-parliamentary demonstrations are the last thing that the imperialist power centres want to see. A not unimportant part of the French-speaking bourgeoisie in Quebec would like to control their own state, to ensure a better insertion in NAFTA as a new, small, independent but non-

threatening partner, who has the right to some limited autonomy. The creation of large trading blocs, and the reduction of the role of nation states in favour of supra-national economic mechanisms seems to be encouraging this kind of limited bourgeois independantism in many parts of the world.

To carry this off, the part of the Québécois bourgeoisie which has "nation-building" aspirations needs the support of the trade unions and the popular movement. This is a parliamentary system. But the bourgeois cannot allow their supporters to get too active, and to start carrying forward their own hopes and aspirations. So far, the bourgeoisie has been able to count on the collaboration of the trade union leadership, which has been very quick to forget the union's former opposition to NAFTA.

"In the dominated nation, Quebec, the fact that 80% of the boss class is foreign gives a real boost to popular nationalist currents (which have always been hegemonic in the workers' and popular movements). In the dominant nation, English Canada, the Canadian nationalism of the leadership of workers' movements, trades unions and the social democratic forces has linked the working class to the interests of "its own" imperialist bourgeoisie." ★

Between 1991 and 1994 the Parti québécois and Bloc québécois played a parliamentary game. They participated in a series of commissions of enquiry, which served to quieten down the movement. They put all their hopes on the 1994 provincial election, which they win by a very narrow majority of votes. Mass mobilisation is no longer in the air.

The pre-referendum process

This is when the Quebec provincial government prepares draft legislation which begins with a declaration of Quebec as a sovereign country (pays souverain), but contains only measures which would maintain the status quo. A sovereign Quebec would not only stay in NAFTA, NATO and all of imperialist Canada's other clubs, but maintain the Canadian dollar, double citizenship, and all existing Canadian laws. A "special economic association" would be negotiated. At the beginning of 1995 a series of government-nominated regional commissions carried out a limited public consultation on this set of proposals, on the basis of which the government will fix the final version of the question to be put in a referendum to be held in all parts of Quebec by the end of 1995.

All pro-federalist forces, be it the federal government, the Quebec Liberal Party or the New Democratic Party in English Canada, claim that no form of accession to independence for Quebec is legitimate under Canada's constitution, and have boycotted consultations so far. Of course, when the campaign gets going, these forces will become the official or informal "Vote No!" committee, whatever the question put to the people of Quebec.

Bribery, intimidation, economic threats, the possibility of military intervention; the unofficial anti-autonomy campaign of the Canadian bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the mass media has already taken a "hard" line. Public debt is high? Quebec's fault! Unemployment and interest rates? Same story. An independent Quebec would face an economic disaster, they say. Senior citizens would lose their old-age pensions, they warn (federal government plans to cut pensions to almost nothing by 1998, but these scare-mongers don't seem too concerned about that). Young people will lose the right to go find work in the rest of Canada, they warn (not that this means a lot to most young Québécois, since you can't work in French in the rest of Canada). And so on, ad nauseam. A vulgar kind of campaign, but one that is marking points, since the Québécois bourgeois nationalists are only promising the status quo, which doesn't exactly mobilise people, and doesn't even reassure them.

Recognising their weakness in the opinion polls, a current of bourgeois nationalists around Bloc québécois leader Lucien Bouchard and Quebec vice-premier Bernard Landry propose to dilute the draft sovereignty legislation into the

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old "sovereignty-association" formula which lost in 1980. But as far as imperialism is concerned, this formula is probably even less acceptable than it was 15 years ago.

For the moment Jacques Parizeau, provincial Prime Minister, rejects this dilution, though he has suggested that a question combining total sovereignty with a social and economic status-quo could well be a loser.

What about the left ?

Our own Marxist-revolutionary current in the Canadian State adopted the demand for Quebec's independence as its own at the end of the 1960s. We think the Canadian state - a 'prison house of peoples' has to be broken up so that the Québécois and English-Canadian working classes can finally break their habit of collaboration with their respective 'national' bourgeoisie. After this, all kinds of new voluntary cooperation and federation are possible, provided they are based on equality.

The struggle for the break-up of the Canadian state can only improve conditions for the struggle for socialism, through a frontal attack on Canadian imperialism aimed at the state which brought it into being and protects its interests.

In this context, we can only choose to support all concrete measures which advance the independence of Quebec. The first measure of the draft legislation of the Parti québécois government is to declare a sovereign Quebec. We agree. This is the best way, at the moment, to fight against Canadian imperialism, and even to defend Mexicans against the combined imperialist forces of NAFTA. A struggle for the independence of a dominated nation can only de-stabilise NAFTA. U.S. President Bill Clinton understands this, which is why he openly supports the unity of the Canadian state.

But, if we want to have a chance to win the referendum, we must refuse the proposals to maintain the status quo which form the rest of the provincial government's draft legislation. Quebec's trade unions and popular movements have consistently denounced NAFTA, NATO, neo-liberal economic strategies, and Canadian monetary policy, but the leadership of these movements says nothing about the PQ project which would maintain all this. And you simply cannot convince a majority of people to leap into the unknown, faced with the threats of Canadian imperialism, with the declared goal of not changing anything.

The Party of Socialist Democracy (Parti de la Démocratie Socialiste - PDS) supports the "Popular Network for the Yes vote", "so that the sovereignty of Quebec is not just an exchange of one flag for another, but a popular and egalitarian sovereignty, with solidarity to defeat exclusion in society" A key demand of the network is a Constituent Assembly, elected on the basis of proportional representation. At least 50% of representatives must be women.

The network is currently being founded across Quebec, in a very modest way. We know that the leadership can't tolerate disorder on its left-wing. But we are sure that several hundred militant women and men will see in the network a solution to the current absence of an autonomous working class "yes" campaign. The PDS hopes to present a platform which will regroup the left, and map out the major contours of a project for a new society for the working class and popular sectors.

The predecessors of the PDS won between 1.5 and 7% of votes in the last elections in the Ridings (electoral constituencies) where they presented

candidates. Under Quebec's British-based "first past the post" electoral system, this doesn't give the party a deputy. But this is a respectable score, especially since voting in the sovereignty referendum will be very, very close. And if it is dynamic, the network may prove itself a step towards the political independence of the Québécois working class. ★

1. The Canadian state is a federation, with most power concentrated in the federal capital of Ottawa, but 10 provincial governments with real powers of their own. Quebec has 7 million citizens (out of 27 million in the Canadian state), of which 80% are French speaking.

2. Western Canada forbade French schooling at the end of the last century, and Ontario, the country's industrial heart land, closed its French schools in 1913.

3. The main trade union bodies are the Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec (FTQ - affiliated to the Canadian Labour Congress but enjoying real autonomy, 400,000 members), the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN - the former Catholic labour federation, similar in many respects to France's CFDT, 250,000 members) and the teaching professions' Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (100,000 members). Over 200,000 workers in Quebec are members of non-affiliated unions. In English Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress is the only significant union grouping.

4. Quebec's law on popular consultation allows for a short official campaign, animated by officially-recognised and financed "Yes" and "No" committees. Third parties are not formally allowed to intervene, but the federal government is above this legislation, and has never hesitated to spend millions of dollars of tax payers' money to oppose Quebec independence. ★

Socialist Challenge/Gauche socialiste Congress

Montreal (M.L.) -- Delegates from Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, Hull, Montreal and Quebec city met in Montreal from 18-20 February for the 3rd congress of Gauche socialiste/Socialist Challenge, the Canadian state's section of the Fourth International. About half the participants were under 30 years old, and more than half of the delegates had never participated in a congress of the organisation before. The new Central Committee is 47% female, just short of the parity we set as our goal.

The main resolution dealt with the crisis in NAFTA. Delegates recognised that the North American trade bloc faces a double challenge: economic disaster in Mexico and the mass movement provoked by the Zapatista revolt there, and the question mark over the future existence of the Canadian state posed by the referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec, due later this year.

The resolution reaffirmed two fundamental strategic elements of Fourth Internationalist thinking in the Canadian state. Firstly, the recognition that Canada is an imperialist state, secondary and vulnerable compared to its southern neighbor, but powerful nevertheless. And secondly, the central importance of the national question in the struggle for socialism in the northern 'prison house of nations' which Canada has been since its very beginnings. The campaign for the unconditional right of the Québécois and native peoples to self-determination was approved as a central element of our organization's intervention in Quebec and English Canada.

The global balance of forces has shifted in favour of the reactionary camp over the last few years, congress noted, but at the same time there is a limited radicalisation of working class youth and students against their marginalisation. The signs are to be found in mobilizations against the Axworthy "reforms" and the resulting massive cuts in social security and higher/further education, in ecological struggles, in the renaissance of English Canada's militant student movement, in anti-racist struggles, and in the opposition to the repression of immigrants, women, gays and lesbians.

Congress supported the decisions of the Quebec wing of the organisation Gauche socialiste, (which has full tactical autonomy) in its orientation to the upcoming referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec, and the decision to enter the Parti de la Démocratie Socialiste (PDS, formerly NPD-Québec). Congress noted that, unfortunately, the time has not yet come for a similar left regrouping in English Canada.

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Peace, Justice and Dignity

Interview with Rosario Ibarra of the National Democratic Convention

Rosario Ibarra de Piedra is a member of the National Council of the National Democratic Convention (CND) and a Deputy in the Mexican Federal Parliament. In the 1984 presidential election she was the candidate of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (Fourth

International). She entered politics as a "Mother in Black" - demanding that the state release her "disappeared" son Jesús, or admit his torture and murder.

She was interviewed on 22 March by Alfonso Moro

Ibarra: This is probably the final phase of the crisis facing the Mexican regime. But as so often before in Mexico, a severe crisis, and terrible consequences for the society, has not provoked the simultaneous emergence of a global alternative. The crisis is expressed as a generalised lack of belief in those holding power, but not the development of an alternative set of policies which we could suggest in the place of the current system. The Zapatistas are the best placed to develop such alternatives, but they are effectively contained to the Blue Mountains of Chiapas state [on the border with Guatemala. They have found an echo among the population, but they don't have the possibilities to build a structured, organic response of the masses to the current crisis.

The regime chose to use the Federal Army to intervene in Chiapas, sending soldiers into the Lancandona forest to flush out the Zapatistas, and placing them in day-to-day contact with the indigenous populations of the region. This move has complicated the crisis facing the government, by provoking a polarization of opinion in the armed forces. Some soldiers and officers have expressed a more democratic — patriotic — opinion, others are increasingly reactionary, even fascist in their pronouncements. It won't be as easy for the regime to control the army as it was a few months ago.

Viewpoint: The presidency is a pillar of the repressive system in Mexico. For the first time in our history, popular groups, capitalists and even sections of the ruling PRI party have attacked the 'untouchable' president Zedillo. Why?

People used to think that our strong presidential regime contributed to our

stability and successes compared to other Latin American countries. As you say, the president was untouchable. But now the opposition of poor to rich, and of the political opposition parties and the employers towards the centre is changing. People are no longer afraid of the president, and no longer respect the institution of the presidency. So this is a historic change in the way Mexicans express themselves. Whatever the future brings; a dialogue that brings the Zapatista's message to the people and allows democratic reforms, or a military coup, I don't think we can go back to the strong president of yesterday. That system has shown its limits.

From 1988 to 1994, President Salinas de Gortari presented our economy as a paradigm for the region. All this dissolved when the peso fell through the floor this winter, and the current crisis developed.

For those for whom the economy is a set of macro-economic indicators, Mexico indeed seemed to be growing rapidly, and coming out of the crisis of the early 1980s. But the problem is that the policy of Presidents Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) and Salinas created an unprecedented economic and social polarization. A bunch of adventurers made fortunes overnight through speculation. The winners in this "casino economy" were generally friends of the president — the "happy family" as the 40 million Mexicans who live in misery called them.

The crisis deepened brutally in December 1994. President Zedillo blamed the Zapatistas — the very people who had risen up against the policies that fed the crisis! The Zapatistas simply showed our misery and pain — and our shame, because Mexico is a rich country — to the

world. The rebellion also showed that the model was a failure — not just in human terms, but in terms of its own fragile macro-economic measuring sticks.

The reforms of the 1980s made us more and more vulnerable in our relationship with the United States. We are so dependent on those to our North that our 'cooperation' looks more and more like a kiss of death. I don't think any country ever made such massive transfers of wealth to another country — \$US 52,000 million! The conditions the U.S.A. puts on the repayment of our debts have violated our national sovereignty. Under the agreement between our Ministry of the Economy and the U.S. Treasury Department, a New York Court will judge infractions of the agreement between the two countries — in other words, Mexico will be subject to the legal system of the United States. A judge in New York will issue orders which will be legally binding on the government of Mexico. And at the same time we go through the farce of asking ourselves if the Mexican parliament agrees or disagrees with the specifications of the letters of credit. How absurd, when a District Judge in North America will be taking the fundamental decisions which affect Mexico! The text of the agreement reduces the Mexican Consul to an "agent of notification." And the income from our oil sales will go to the United States, and they will decide what do do with the money if the Mexican government falls behind with its debt payments.

President Zedillo has won the support of opposition parties in parliament, including the [left-wing] Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD) for a "National Political Agreement". How could the PRD agree to such negotiations?

Ever since the 1994 elections a section of the PRD has concluded that the more radical, intransigent campaign of the party under Cuahutémoc Cárdenas failed. They propose instead a policy of negotiation with the state — like the PAN tried when the government cheated them in the 1988 election. The 'new realists' of the PRD note that the PAN was subsequently permitted to win a few more seats in various states, and even a few posts of state governor.

As soon as Zedillo "won" the 1994 election, he let the PRD know that, once Salinas left, a new policy of national discussion and cooperation would be introduced. A part of the PRD lapped this up. Even before Zedillo was invested, some PRD deputies were meeting him for lunch or dinner, stitching up a pact which disgusted the rank and file of the party. How could one accuse the government of fraud in August, and spend September trying to come to an arrangement with them?

For the 'realists' of the PRD, the revolt in Chiapas, the existence of the Zapatistas are obstacles in the way of a reform and reorganization of the Mexican state. I don't know what Cuahutémoc Cárdenas' position is, but I have the feeling that a majority of the PRD is opposed to this new line.

How have the Zapatistas affected left politics?

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) developed outside state structures. The power of co-optation in Mexico is so strong that the emergence of an organisation completely outside the state apparatus is completely new. Part of the crisis of the regime is over how to deal with this.

The EZLN differentiates itself not only from the regime, but from the traditional parties. It has incorporated the ethical dimension into politics — take for example their slogan "everything for everyone, nothing for us alone." They talk of themselves as the "little Mexicans," the "little people." They say they do not want power, because it would be a tragedy if an armed group took power. They continually call on civic society to take control of political life. All this has changed the traditional political discourse in this country. The left is developing a new, more fundamental kind of politics, where the question of dignity, of believing truly in what one says and does is more central than it was before. For sure, the mainly Indian composition of the rebellion is a major reason for this new discourse.



Rosario Ibarra addressing the CADTM assembly in Brussels, 18 March 1995

Large parts of society identify with this new discourse. They have had enough of the Institutional Revolutionary Party regime, which has held onto power since the revolution, and betrayed, institutionalized and violated the heritage of that revolution.

Like in the Soviet Union?

Since the collapse of the U.S.S.R., Mexico is the longest 'post-revolutionary' regime. But unlike the end of the U.S.S.R., the crisis here is within the context of a radicalisation towards the left. A large part of the civil society is very enthusiastic about the new political force which is emerging 'from below.'

So what do the Zapatistas want?

They say they represent "basement Mexico," the marginalized, indigenous, pauperized Mexico, and that they want to overturn the measures of the last few years. They cry "enough" and say we must rebuild the nation, and that democracy is the only way to do so. They say they want a free Mexico, and that once we are free, we will see what we want.

They want a Mexico where different political projects can express themselves, and people can say what they think. In the old days, left organisations were 'avant guardist' — they told people not only what we had to do to overturn the regime, but what we would have to build afterwards. The EZLN says that, until the working class, the peasants and the employers themselves are able to form their own organisations and defend their own interests, the main priority is to give

oxygen to society, to free Mexico from the domination of the party state and the state as such.

Of course, if in a country like Mexico, you struggle for land, health care, wages, housing, water, democracy, peace, justice and dignity, then you are struggling against the system of domination. Indeed, without shouting it from the rooftops, they have challenged imperialist domination. After all, what interests the American government is cheap Mexican labour, tied up in deeply reactionary trade unions.

The base of the revolt in Chiapas are peasants, of Indian culture. But the EZLN constantly affirms that the changes they want to see cannot happen without the working class. I infer from their statements that they imagine a kind of alliance between basement Mexico and the ground floor -- working class Mexico. Not since the revolution of Zapata and Villa have we had such an alliance, which can offer a global alternative, for a new nation.

The CND is a space in civil society — which had no political instruments, and was made up mainly of people outside the existing political parties. Many people without previous political experience found a means of expression in the CND. So as well as some 300 organisations (trade unions, cultural and political organisation) the CND is also a place for citizens themselves.

Ours is a new social phenomenon, less than a year old, and evolving rapidly. After the first large assembly, we went through a difficult moment, when some of the people who ought to be with us did not feel the climate in the CND was favourable for their active participation. At the same time, some social organisation which claim to be not only non-party but even anti-party wanted to make the CND into a political

**Mexico:
interview
with
Rosario
Ibarra
de
Piedra**



structure which could be their tribune. There are still powerful sectarian currents in the CND which want to transform the organization into an expression of what they think the far left is. But I am still convinced that the CND can become the expression of the wishes of the popular and radical sectors of society, with a supple tactical line, and flexible alliances.

At the first assembly of the CND, EZLN subcommandante Marcos "returned" the national flag to your hands. Why?

This piece of cloth is the symbol of our country. I accepted to look after this banner on behalf of those who honor this symbol, who have risked their lives to bring us to a more just Mexico, where democracy is a reality, with peace, justice and dignity.

The public appeals of the EZLN are more and more dramatic. Can the CND respond?

Some of the forces in the CND have not always listened to the appeals of the Zapatistas. And this has held us back. But there is no easy solution: the CND is a real organisation, and it regroups lots of different people. On any question you raise in the CND, you find a range of opinions, sometimes quite extreme.

In my opinion, the CND needs to adopt a strategy, clearly fixing our objectives. We came together to democratize the country, because the constitution had been amended, beaten, raped, and beaten again by this miserable government. But the CND wasn't created to realize the socialist programme, or fight imperialism. And I say this even though the CND has a programme which is clearly anti-imperialist. Because to attain its objectives, the CND needs to form alliances, regroup forces, without thinking we can impose the programme of the CND on those forces, and on the various political parties.

In December 1994 the EZLN proposed the formation of a large, pluralist Movement of National Liberation (MLN).

Some of our comrades were opposed to this. Then they said they were in favour of the MLN, but they placed so many conditions on any new alliance that, in practice, it would have been very difficult to find anyone to form the MLN with!

Each component of the CND must be free to develop and popularize its own programme, but the movement as a whole must search for the lowest common denominator, the programme that will unite all the opposition to the regime, and move us towards a democratic alternative.

There are four potential sectors for a real Movement of National Liberation: the CND, the EZLN, the movement around Cardenas (including most of the PRD, and some people outside it), and finally all those forces which have participated in the CND over the last ten months, but

"Readers of International Viewpoint, knowing your feeling of solidarity, I appeal to you to support the campaign of aid to the indigenous Zapatista communities. You can send your contributions to account number 5016464-9, Maria del Rosario Ibarra, Bancomer Bank, Mexico DF, Mexico. Please notify all transfers by separate letter to me, at Medellin 366, Col. Roma Sur, 06760 Mexico DF, Mexico."

-- Rosario Ibarra de Piedra

dropped away since, and which continue to be active in civil society, in the organisation of solidarity with the EZLN, in support of indigenous activities, and so on.

You recently visited the Zapatista strongholds in the Lacandona forest. What are the conditions like now?

Terrible. Whole communities have fled deep into the forest — from fear of the army or to support the Zapatistas. I visited many communities where the army had destroyed the few possessions the Indians of Chiapas have — their cooking pots, stoves, milk churns, and ponchos. In Nueva Estrella I saw something worse. The houses had been abandoned, and in them we could see the machetes and boots of the inhabitants. But a peasant or an Indian never goes into the forest without

these two things. How could he or she make a path? So I worry that these people were in fact illegally arrested by the army.

How to describe the fear of people in villages with 110 inhabitants, occupied by 1,000 soldiers, where the women say they can no longer wash themselves, because there are always soldiers waiting by the river? It reminds me of Guatemala, Vietnam and El Salvador. I didn't think it could ever happen in this country.

The world the Zapatistas created in that forest, where you could breath freely, where there was no conflict between neighbors and the people solved their problems in an open assembly has been replaced by a vision of confrontations and hatred. The army has brought peasants from other regions to occupy the deserted buildings and fields. They are creating strategic villages, where poor fight poor for the possession of a miserable hut and a few tools.

In March parliament approved a government-sponsored amnesty law. You were one of the seven deputies who voted no. Why?

The law says nothing about the withdrawal of the army. This is fundamental — there is no dialogue when the other party is holding a pistol against your head. And yet, since the law suspends the warrants for the arrest of Marcos and the other leaders, the official justification for the military intervention has evaporated.

It all depends what you want to do as a deputy. I don't want to win a little concession here or there, I want to represent the people. Either a parliamentarian has his eyes on the centre of power, or on the people. And the people demand the withdrawal of the army. No-one wants to listen to a deputy who can't bring himself to demand even that minimum. Some of my radical colleagues see their parliamentary work as pressing for the reform of the president's excessive powers, or acting as a pressure group to win superficial modifications here and there. I disagree. ★

"A classic populist regime"

United Nations troops replaced U.S. expeditionary forces in Haiti on April 1st. But the real transformation in Haiti is in the president's office. Despite the hopes put in him by the country's poor, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide is creating a "classic, populist regime," dependent on U.S. support. Elections are planned for June 4th, and the U.S. is still hesitating between declaring Aristide safe for U.S. interests, and resussitating the remnants of the old Duvalier regime.

by Arthur Mahon

Aristide has put U.S. sympathisers in charge of the security services, in the hope that they will squash any plots by Duvalierist sympathisers. The president is trying to win room for maneuver from the Americans, but his options are limited. He came back to Haiti without an organised base of supporters, and without a political party. He is trying to compensate for this weakness by building support among a section of the popular civic associations. There are a large number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Haiti, but most of them have only a few members. And these 'representatives' often expect to exchange their support for the government against an offer of work, or some money. This was true in 1991, but it is even more pronounced nowadays.

The Presidential Palace distributes money left, right and center, often on the pretext of financing infrastructure or public service projects, in the knowledge that the partner will not finish the work. This financing of NGOs to buy influence is a central strategy of the C.I.A. and other U.S. bodies in Haiti too. In fact, the lists of contacts are often crossed. In November 1994 Aristide called several hundred NGO representatives to the palace, and promised them large sums of money for their development, provided they handed over lists of their members' names and addresses! ¹ Given his lack of control over his own security services, this was



irresponsible at the least.

During the struggle against dictatorship, Aristide ignored the organisations which heroically struggled to organise resistance on the ground. Nowadays he tries to suck them into the nebulous mass of hangers-on and supporters he has created from the Presidential Palace. After hurricane Gordon hit the island, some of the biggest disaster aid grants went to deputies from districts which had not been hit by the winds and floods. Not suprisingly, in many cities organisations of the poor are at each others' throats over how to divide the money. High salaries, slush funds, nepotism: a fairly classic populist system.

On 9 March the presidential spokesperson, Yvon Neptune, stressed that "the country as a whole, just like the people, is suffering." The responsibility is with "those inside the government" who don't take their responsibilities seriously and encourage people to "exercise their rights" without regard to the overall situation. Neptune was at that time particularly concerned by a series of popular demonstrations demanding the reduction of the prices of basic commodities.

Paradoxically, it is the ultra-liberal governor of the central bank, Leslie Delatour, who criticises the president most openly for his "extreme generosity towards certain individuals" like the supposedly pro-Aristide millionaire Mews family. Aristide's 'Christian' response - "it is better to be too soft than too hard" is

little comfort to those who have to demonstrate to get food at a decent price.

Faced with the continued violence against militants by supporters of the old regime, and hired thugs of local businessmen, and a growth in violent crime in general, on 7 February Aristide urged the population to form "vigilance brigades" to protect their districts and villiages. But in the current situation, this call is a double-edged sword. Genuine civic organisations cover only a small minority of the population. In some districts, real vigilance groups have been

Any petty thug can call himself a vigilance committee -- If he accepts a few basic rules, he can even get a government grant

formed to scare off delinquents and trouble-makers. But in the vast majority of towns and villages, who is really going to form, and benefit from these militias? Any petty thug can re-name himself a vigilance committee. If he accepts a few basic rules, he can even get a government grant. Demobilised soldiers of the old regime's army have taken control of a number of districts in this fashion.

In this tense social situation, some American advisors are in favour of Aristide resting in power. Draft legislation is being prepared to extend his mandate by



the three years he spent in exile (since the Haitian constitution forbids a president from holding office for more than one term, this is the only way Aristide can stay in power).

The problem for the Americans is that elections are a complicated business. On 4 June Haitians will elect members of parliament, two thirds of the senators, mayors and town/district councils. More than 2,000 posts are up for election. The abstention rate will be high, but the results are far from predictable. Have the various American agencies been betting on the right horses? Unlike in 1990, there is no real pro-imperialist political party in Haiti. What to do?

The pessimistic wing of the American establishment in Haiti recommend an increased support for the various networks of supporters of the previous Duvalier

regime. In several regions of the country prominent strong-men, protected from popular anger by U.S. and now U.N. troops, are more and more confident.

Since everyone knows that supporting the Duvalierists is one of the main options for US leaders, the number of "regrettable incidents" (brutality against ordinary Haitians by U.S. troops) increased towards the end of their mandate. As for the U.S. secret services in Haiti, they are clearly trying to forment a climate of violence, in order to maximise the abstention rate in the elections, which will make it easier to produce whatever result their masters decide upon on the day. ★

1 Haiti Info, 3 December 1994, v.3. n.5

Uphill struggle for "Landslide"

The U.S. doesn't want to see an important election score for the Lavalas (Landslide) Political Organisation (OPL). The word in Port-au-Prince is that President Aristide isn't too keen on seeing his old supporters do too well either.

OP Lavalas was founded under the dictatorship by dissidents inside the Haitian Communist Party, progressive religious activists, intellectuals, and personalities from some of the non-governmental organisations. It tried to replace the original Lavalas Organisation, (OL) which had brought Aristide to power, but collapsed under the repression of the dictatorship, during Aristide's exile in the United States.

OP Lavalas takes relatively few public positions, and those it makes are fairly vague. As of yet, the organisation does not seem to have a clear list of demands or an electoral programme. And it will probably contest the elections in coalition with several smaller parties which are reluctant to criticise Aristide.

Nevertheless, most of the militants of OP Lavalas clearly oppose the manoeuvres of the palace towards the community of civic organisations, and the organisation clearly refuses to become a loyal, silent supporter of any president.

OP Lavalas was the only Haitian party to boycott a 6 February summit of political parties expected to contest the forthcoming election. This get-together of those Haitians who supported the coup against Aristide and those who suffered the consequences was organised by the National Democratic Institute, linked to the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy. According to Haiti Info (28 Feb. 1995) OP Lavalas was not invited to this event designed to groom responsible potential parliamentarians. Other sources suggest that OP Lavalas declined their invitation once they realised who was behind the get-together.

How might OP Lavalas deputies vote if the new parliament proposes the cuts implied by the structural adjustment programme being prepared by the outgoing government? The American "aid" and security agencies, and the Presidential Palace in Port-au-Prince are worried that the answer will be NO! ★

Your solidarity makes a difference!

The U.S. Embassy in Haiti is currently selecting their candidates for the 4 June elections. Generous election funds will soon be made available to the lucky few. The rest of us have very little time left to deliver our material aid. As in the 1990 campaign, pre-recorded audio cassettes are an essential tool to spread the word in the countryside, and among the illiterate poor.

Useful addresses

National Labor Committee in Support of Workers and Human Rights in Central America
15 Union Square
New York, NY 10003, U.S.A
tel. (212) 242 0700, fax 255 7230

School Supplies Campaign
American Friends Service Committee
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102, U.S.A

Peasant Movement of Papay
Education and Development Fund
25 West Street (second floor)
Boston, MA 02111, U.S.A
tel. (617) 542 1140

Haiti Reborn (Quixote Center)
P.O. Box 5206
Hyattsville, MD 20782, U.S.A
tel. (301) 699 002 fax 86 2182

European and Asian readers can contact their local International Viewpoint sales group, or International Viewpoint in Paris (address on page two)

For more information, read...

Haiti Info (English newsletter)
Box 407189
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33340, U.S.A.

"Haiti After the Coup: Sweatshops or Real Development?" and "Paying to Lose our Jobs," both published by The National Labor Committee in Support of Worker and Human Rights in C. America (address above). ★

World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, March 1995

An attack on the poor, South and North

by Michel Chossudovsky

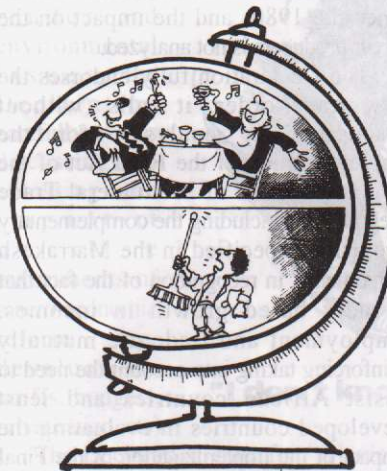
Since the early 1980s, the "macro-economic stabilisation" and "structural adjustment" programmes imposed by the IMF and the World Bank on developing countries (as a condition for the renegotiation of their external debt) have led to the impoverishment of hundreds of millions of people. Contrary to the spirit of the Bretton Woods agreement which was predicated on "economic reconstruction" and the stability of major exchange rates, the structural adjustment programme has largely contributed to destabilising national currencies and ruining the economies of developing countries.

Internal purchasing power has collapsed, famines have erupted, health clinics and schools have been closed down, hundreds of millions of children have been denied the right to primary education. In several regions of the developing World, the reforms have been conducive to a resurgence of infectious diseases including tuberculosis, malaria and cholera. The restructuring of the World economy under the guidance of the Washington based international financial institutions increasingly and the newly created World Trade Organization (WTO) denies individual developing countries the possibility of building a national economy: the internationalisation of macro-economic policy transforms countries into open economic territories and national economies into "reserves" of cheap labour and natural resources. The State apparatus is undermined, industry for the internal market is destroyed, national enterprises are pushed into bankruptcy.

The massive compression of the standard of living resulting from a structural adjustment programme (S.A.P.) implies a corresponding reduction in labour costs; therein lies the "hidden agenda" of SAPs: the compression of wages in the Third World and E. Europe supports the relocation of economic activity from the rich to the poor countries. The globalization of poverty endorses the development of a cheap labour export economy; the possibilities of production are immense given the mass of impoverished workers throughout the

World. The development of this global cheap labour economy is central to an understanding of the World social crisis.

Increasingly, the same macro-economic therapies are being applied in the developed countries. While the underlying policies tend to be less brutal than in the South and the East, the theoretical and ideological underpinnings are broadly similar. In Europe and North America, "economic stabilisation" measures (in principle adopted "to alleviate the evils of inflation") have contributed to depressing the earnings of working people and weakening the role of



the State: under the sway of monetarism, public expenditures are trimmed and social programmes are undone. With high levels of public debt, economic and social policies are increasingly dictated by the State's creditors. The neo-liberal agenda promotes the deregulation of the labour market: deindexation of earnings, part-time employment, early retirement and the imposition of so-called "voluntary" wage cuts... In turn, the practice of attrition (which shifts the social burden of unemployment onto the younger age groups) bars an entire generation from the job-market. The rules of personnel management in the United States are: "bust the unions", pit older workers against younger, 'call in the scabs', slash wages and cut company paid medical insurance".

Many of the achievements of the Welfare State are repealed, State policies have also encouraged the destruction of

small and medium sized enterprises including the family farm. Low levels of food consumption and malnutrition are also hitting the urban poor in the rich countries... South, East and North, a privileged social minority has accumulated vast amounts of wealth at the expense of the large majority.. This new international financial order feeds on human poverty and the destruction of the natural environment. It generates social apartheid, encourages racism and ethnic strife, undermines the rights of women and often precipitates countries into destructive confrontations between nationalities. Moreover, these reforms —when applied simultaneously in more than one hundred countries— are conducive to a "globalization of poverty", a process which undermines human livelihood and destroys civil society in the South, the East and the North.

Since the mid-1980s, the impact of structural adjustment including the derogation of the social rights of women and the detrimental environmental consequences of economic reform have been amply documented. While the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development has acknowledged the "social dimensions of adjustment", no significant shift in the formulation of economic and social policy is contemplated.

1. The Neoliberal Agenda

The Declaration and Programme of Action of the Social Summit seeks a consensus on broad humanitarian and social principles while neglecting to analyse the root causes of the social crisis. It broadly endorses the neo-liberal policy agenda and the World Bank's focus on "the social safety net". According to the Declaration and Programme of Action (henceforth referred to as the Declaration), "free trade" and "structural adjustment" constitute the required "solutions".

The Declaration accepts neo-liberal policy prescriptions as the sole basis for the formulation of social policy. The dramatic consequences of IMF-World Bank sponsored devaluations, budgetary austerity and trade liberalisation measures

are not the object of serious debate. The overall validity of the "economic model" is not questioned.

While the Declaration contains a number of important statements pertaining to the goals of social equity, sustainable development, women's rights, the rights of indigenous people, etc, these objectives remain abstract and divorced from a meaningful debate on policy alternatives. The statements are largely rhetorical, they tend to blur one's understanding of key social and economic issues. Devoid of operational content, they cannot constitute the basis for a genuine Programme of Action.

The international community including the representatives of governments, non-governmental organisations and citizen's groups are called upon to endorse the Declaration at Copenhagen. Endorsement of this document is tantamount to providing legitimacy to the Bretton Woods institutions and the newly created World Trade Organization, including the interference by these organisations in the internal affairs of sovereign states. Many developing countries fear that failure to endorse the Declaration will be conducive to a tougher stance on the part of the G-7 and international financial institutions pertaining to debt rescheduling and the granting of foreign aid.

2. Implementing the Final Act of the Uruguay Round

Amending the Declaration without questioning its fundamental propositions does not modify its main thrust and commitment to the Neoliberal policy agenda. According to the Declaration, the system of global trade and macro-economic reform is conducive to "sustainable development": "Globalization ... opens new opportunities for sustained economic growth and development of the world economy, particularly in developing countries. Globalization also permits countries to share experiences, to learn from one another's achievements and difficulties and a cross-fertilization of ideals, cultural values and aspirations". (14)

The impact of trade liberalisation on national societies including the new regime of intellectual property rights under the articles of agreement of the new World Trade Organization (WTO) is not addressed. The Declaration fails to recognize that at the heart of the global economic system, lies an unequal structure of trade, production and credit which defines the role and



position of developing countries in the global economy.

The actual workings of the global market mechanism and the extent to which it is manipulated by powerful economic and financial interests is not addressed. The deterioration of the terms of trade since the 1980s and the impact on the direct producers is not analyzed.

The Declaration fully endorses the new trade order, it calls (without discussion or analysis) for the implementation of the Final Act of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations including the complementary provisions specified in the Marrakesh agreement, "in recognition of the fact that broadly based growth in incomes, employment and trade are mutually reinforcing taking into account the need to assist African countries and least developed countries in evaluating the impact of the implementation of the Final Act so that they can benefit fully." This unequivocal endorsement of the emerging system of global trade is unacceptable. The GATT agreement violates fundamental peoples' rights, particularly in the areas of foreign investment, biodiversity and intellectual property rights.

3. "Global Surveillance" and the Coordination of Macro-economic Reform

The Declaration calls "for the coordination of macroeconomic policies at the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. In this regard, the Declaration broadly accepts the new "triangular division of authority" between the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In this context, the IMF had called for "more effective surveillance" of developing countries' economic policies and increased

coordination between the three international bodies. The relationship of the Washington based institutions to national governments is also to be redefined.

"Enforcement" of IMF-World Bank policy prescriptions, therefore, will no longer hinge upon ad hoc country-level loan agreements (which are not "legally binding" documents). Henceforth, many of the clauses of the structural adjustment programme (eg. trade liberalisation and the foreign investment regime) will become permanently entrenched in the articles of agreement of the new World Trade Organization (WTO). These articles (which have received the endorsement of the Declaration) will set the foundations for "policing" countries (and enforcing "conditionalities") according to international law.

The Declaration acknowledges that "the gap between rich and poor has increased" including the gap between developed and developing countries, yet the underlying causes of these disparities are not identified. Human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy, are put forth rhetorically as abstract concepts. People are "placed at the centre of development", economies are to be directed to "meet human needs more effectively" (25,26). The accumulation of wealth is not seen as a factor which generates poverty.

The Declaration is notoriously repetitive, the same themes return in each of the sections, no analytical review or reference to concrete country realities is put forth. The Declaration fails to acknowledge the existence of a global economic crisis, it fails to recognize that poverty is the consequence of a process of national and global economic restructuring.

The Declaration calls for policies which enable "small enterprises,

cooperatives and other forms of micro enterprises to develop their capacities for income generation and employment creation”, yet it fails to acknowledge the massive displacement of small scale enterprises in both developed and developing countries which have resulted from the macro-economic and trade reforms. The lifting of tariff barriers — which is fully endorsed by the Declaration— has also contributed to destroying productive activities in the informal sector.

4. Distorting the Balance-sheet of Global Poverty

World Bank poverty indicators are accepted outright by the Declaration, no independent assessment of global poverty is devised. The World Bank “estimates” that 18% of the Third World is “extremely poor” and 33% is “poor”. The “upper poverty line” is arbitrarily set by the World Bank at a per capita income of one dollar a day. Population groups in individual countries with per capita incomes in excess of one dollar a day are arbitrarily identified as “non- poor”.

Double standards in the “scientific measurement of poverty”: the World Bank “estimates”, for instance, that in Latin America and the Caribbean only 19% of the population is “poor”: a gross distortion when we know for a fact that in the United States (with an annual per capita income of \$20,000) one American in five is defined (by the Bureau of the Census) to be below the poverty line.

In other words, through the blatant manipulation of income statistics, the World Bank figures represent the poor in developing countries as a minority group thereby justifying the notion of “targeting in favour of the poor”. The Declaration broadly follows the World Bank methodology: it presents poverty in developing countries as a problem pertaining to so-called “vulnerable groups”.

A quantitative assessment of poverty in the developed countries is totally lacking. Poverty in the ghettos and slum areas of American (and increasingly European) cities is in many respects comparable to that prevailing in the Third World. No concrete analysis of these phenomena is presented in the Declaration.

The social data base used by the Declaration is flawed, the statistical information provided in support of the Declaration’s commitments is scanty. The Declaration fails to acknowledge the

dramatic deterioration of social conditions and the rise in unemployment in the South, the North and the East since the onslaught of the global debt crisis. It fails to identify the causes of this deterioration.

The Declaration points to improved levels of life expectancy, literacy and primary education, access to basic health care and lower infant mortality in developing countries. Yet recent evidence confirms that these achievements of the post-war period have largely been reversed. In many regions of the developing World, the evidence points unequivocally to an increase in the levels of infant mortality and child malnutrition and a decline in life expectancy.

5. The “Social Safety Net”

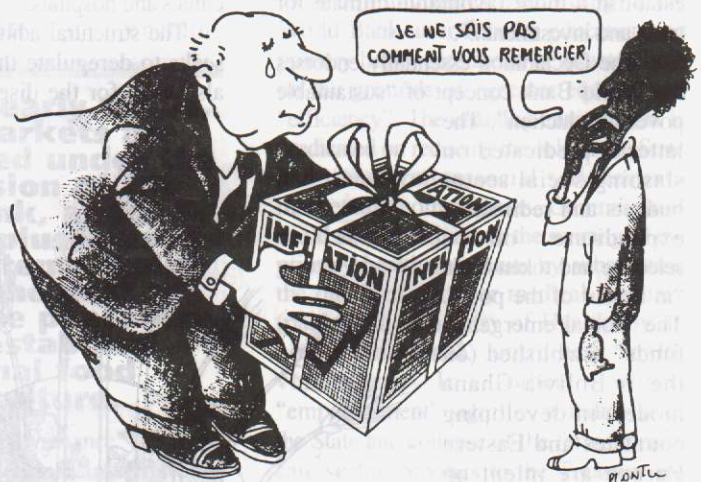
While recognising the “social dimensions of adjustment” including gender and environmental issues, the Declaration carefully avoids discussing and assessing the impact of precise instruments of macro-economic reform (eg. devaluation, tariffs, budgets, privatisation, etc).

The Declaration calls for “[r]eview [of] the impact of structural adjustment programmes on social development including, where appropriate, by means of gender sensitive social impact assessments and other relevant methods, in order to develop policies to reduce their negative effects and improve their positive impact; the cooperation of international financial institutions in the review could be requested by interested countries; The Declaration disregards the evidence and the numerous specialised studies (including those conducted by UNICEF) pertaining to the social impact of macro-economic reform.

The report endorses the mainstream economic model. Token provisions for monitoring the social consequences of adjustment programmes are included. While the Declaration acknowledges the “negative social effects”, these are largely considered as “social costs” to be balanced against the “economic benefits” of structural adjustment.

The Declaration replicates the World Bank approach by calling for the establishment of “a social safety net” to be incorporated in the economic reform package (ie. as part of the loan conditionalities). No concrete evaluation or justification of the “social safety nets” is presented in the main document.

The Social Emergency Funds (set up under “the social safety net”) support the objective of debt servicing. The SEFs are token initiatives predicated on budgetary austerity. The Social Emergency Fund officially sanctions the withdrawal of the State from the social sectors and “the management of poverty” (at the micro-social level) by separate and parallel organisational structures. It is worth noting that “poverty eradication” and the “social



“I don't know how to thank you enough”

safety net” are invariably included as conditionalities of World Bank loan agreements.

Various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) funded by international “aid programmes” have gradually taken over many of the functions of local level governments whose social expenditures had been frozen as a result of the structural adjustment programme.

The Declaration calls upon the Bretton Woods institutions to provide support “in the design, social management, assessment of structural adjustment policies and in implementing social development goals and in integrating them into their policies, programmes and operations”. It does not envisage any formal mechanism providing for IMF-World Bank accountability. It entrusts the Bretton Woods institutions with the task of designing social policy.

6. Alleviating Poverty at Minimum Cost to the

Creditors

Poverty is analyzed in the Declaration by centring on the individual and the household, by focussing on low productivity, low levels of education, etc. The structural causes of poverty are not mentioned. How is poverty generated as a result of low prices paid to farmers, exceedingly low industrial wages in the Third World's manufacturing enclaves...?

The report affirms its commitment "to accelerating the economic, social, and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries...". This objective is to be achieved through the implementation "at the national level [of] structural adjustment policies, which should include social development goals, and effective development strategies that establish a more favourable climate for trade and investment...".

The Declaration essentially endorses the World Bank concept of "sustainable poverty reduction". The latter is predicated on slashing social sector budgets and redirecting expenditure on a selective and token basis "in favour of the poor". The "social emergency funds" established (on the Bolivia-Ghana model) in developing countries and Eastern Europe are intent on providing "a flexible mechanism" for "managing poverty" while at the same time dismantling the State's public finances.

The Declaration is committed to the concept of "targeting", it tacitly denies the principle of universality in the provision and funding of basic education and health, it endorses the process of budgetary contraction. Yet it also puts forth (without any examination of funding requirements) a set of abstract goals to be achieved by the year 2000. These pertain to basic education and health, life expectancy, infant mortality and maternal mortality, child malnutrition, etc. The Declaration does not say how the objective of "reducing inequalities, and eradicating absolute poverty by a target date" are to be achieved.

The report calls for the promotion of "basic social programmes and expenditures, in particular those affecting the poor and the vulnerable segments of society and protect them from budget

reductions while increasing the quality and effectiveness of social expenditures". It does not however question the foundations of these budget reductions.

7. Deregulating the Health Sector

The Declaration points to communicable diseases as "a serious health problem in all countries" (22) yet it fails to acknowledge the collapse of preventive and curative health care in developing countries amply confirmed by the WHO. The shortage of funds allocated to medical supplies as well as the price hikes (recommended by the World Bank) in electricity, water and fuel have been responsible for the collapse of health clinics and hospitals.

The structural adjustment programme seeks to deregulate the health sector. It also calls for the disengagement of the



State from the distribution of essential drugs leading to dramatic hikes in the prices of pharmaceuticals (including anti-malaria drugs). A recent report by the WHO points to significant hikes in the price of pharmaceuticals which followed the devaluation of the CFA franc in early 1994 on the instructions of the IMF and the French Treasury.

Throughout the developing World, there has been a dramatic resurgence of malaria, tuberculosis and cholera. In India, for instance, the outbreak of bubonic and pneumonic plague in 1994 was the direct consequence of a worsening urban sanitation and public health infrastructure which accompanied the compression of national and municipal budgets under the 1991 IMF-World Bank sponsored macro-

economic reforms. In Vietnam, malaria mortality tripled in the four years following the deregulation of the health sector under the structural adjustment programme.

8. "Appropriate Attention" to Education

While the Declaration calls for "[s]trengthening [of] the educational system at all levels... and ensuring universal access to basic education and life-long educational opportunities", no analysis of the educational system including tendencies in primary and secondary school enrolment, is presented. According to the Declaration, "appropriate attention" should be given to education. The modalities and the budgetary implications, however, are not discussed.

The Declaration fails to acknowledge the closing down of schools and the high drop out rates observed in many developing countries. In Somalia, for instance, where the structural adjustment programme was first adopted in 1981, school enrolment declined by 41 percent (despite a sizeable increase in the population of school age), textbooks and school materials disappeared from the class-rooms, school buildings deteriorated and nearly a quarter of the primary schools closed down. By 1989, teachers' salaries had declined to three dollars a month under the government's austerity programme.

Freezing the number of graduates of the teacher training colleges and increasing the number of pupils per teacher are explicit conditions of World Bank social sector adjustment loans. The educational budget is curtailed, the number of contact-hours spent by children in school is cut down and a "double shift system" is installed: one teacher now does the work of two, the remaining teachers are laid off and the resulting savings to the Treasury are funnelled towards the Paris Club of official creditors...

These initiatives are still considered to be incomplete: in Sub-Saharan Africa, the donor community has recently proposed a new imaginative ("cost-effective") formula which consists in eliminating the teachers' meagre salary altogether (in some countries as low as 15-20 dollars a month) while granting small loans to enable unemployed teachers to set up their own informal "private schools" in rural backyards and urban slums. Under this scheme, the Ministry of Education would nonetheless still be responsible for monitoring "the quality" of teaching...

9. Pursuing the Goal of "Free Markets"

While recognising the possibility of "market failure", the "free market" is considered by the Declaration as the most effective instrument of poverty alleviation. The solution resides in promoting "dynamic, open, free markets, while recognizing the need to intervene in markets to prevent or counteract market failure". Poor people should have better access to the market. According to the Declaration, "[p]ublic policies are necessary to correct market failures, to complement market mechanisms, to maintain social stability and to create a national and international economic environment that promotes sustainable growth on a global scale..."

The Declaration fails to identify the concentration of wealth and decision making power in the hands of some 700 global corporations and commercial banks. How will the activities of these global economic actors be monitored on behalf of civil society? The issue of wealth accumulation and its social impact is not mentioned.

None of the key issues pertaining to economic restructuring are analyzed: — eg. the massive delocation of industry in the developed countries to cheap labour havens, the phasing out of entire areas of manufacturing, the dislocation of small farmers, the impact of the technological revolution, the destruction of the informal sector, etc.

10. Assisting "Eastern Europe in Transition"

The Declaration suggests that there "are also serious social problems in countries with economies in transition". Until recently, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were considered as part of the developed "North", —ie. with levels of material consumption, education, health, scientific development, etc. broadly comparable to those prevailing in the OECD countries. Whereas average incomes were on the whole lower, the international community (including the relevant specialised agencies of the UN) had nonetheless acknowledged the achievements of the Eastern block countries particularly in the areas of health and education. The evidence confirms in this regard that the collapse of the standard of living and the demise of social programmes was largely the result of the macro-economic reforms imposed by external creditors. The Declaration does not explicitly acknowledge the collapse of

social programmes in Eastern Europe.

11. Creating an "Enabling Environment"

The Declaration outlines a number of commitments: it seeks the establishment of a so-called "enabling environment": "We commit ourselves to create an enabling economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development." According to the Declaration, the international community should strive to "providing a stable legal framework, transparent and accountable governance and administration and the encouragement of partnership with free and representative organizations of civil society".

The concepts of "enabling

Since the early 1980s, grain markets are deregulated under the supervision of the World Bank, and U.S. grain surpluses used more systematically than in the past to destroy the peasantry and destabilise national food agriculture.

environment" and "governance" are those of USAID-World Bank. International consultants will be contracted by the donors and multilateral institutions to redraft constitutions, land legislation, etc. US bilateral aid rather than being channelled into capital formation is increasingly allocated in the form of technical assistance in support of the "enabling environment". A free market for land will be established, invariably through the derogation of traditional land rights. Alongside the development of the free market, political institutions are to become "free and competitive" yet the fundamental issue of debt and policy conditionality which constrains developing countries' sovereignty is not addressed. The "enabling environment" at the national level is to be complemented by the creation of "a supportive external economic environment, inter alia, through cooperation in the formulation and implementation of macroeconomic policies, trade liberalization...". In other words, the Declaration is firmly committed to the mainstream macro-economic and trade agenda.

12. The "Empowerment" of Local Communities

Civil society is to perform many of the functions previously undertaken by ministries. The presumption is that it is "more democratic" for local communities to run their own programmes with their own meagre resources. "Reinforce as appropriate the means and capacities for people to participate in the formulation and implementation of social and economic policies and programmes through decentralization, open management of public institutions, and strengthening of the abilities and opportunities of civil society and local communities to develop their own organizations, resources and activities" (Commitment 1).

Under this scheme, local communities are "empowered" to raise the money, ie. the debts of the State are transferred to the local communities. According to the World Bank, user fees for education and primary health care are to be exacted both on the grounds of "greater equity" and "efficiency". The enabling environment is predicated on reducing the role of the State and transforming social services into marketable commodities. Communities could also participate in the running of the primary health care units by substituting the qualified nurse or medical auxiliary (paid by the Ministry of Health) by a non-professional, untrained health volunteer. In other words, "empowerment" signifies withdrawal of the State and collapse of the formal health care sector. Savings to the Treasury are channelled to debt servicing. Social policy is developed in accordance with the interests of the State's creditors.

13. Alleviating Famine

"Efforts should include: the elimination of hunger and malnutrition, the provision of food security, education, employment and livelihood, primary health care services, including reproductive health care, safe drinking water and sanitation, adequate shelter and participation in social and cultural life." What policies are to be adopted, what financial resources are to be committed? The Declaration does not say.

The elimination of famine appears in the Declaration as a commitment, but the causes of famine are not mentioned. The destruction of food self-sufficiency at the local level is not analyzed.

The underlying realities of international agri-business are not addressed in the Declaration. Throughout the developing World, food security is undermined, trade barriers are removed, subsidies to farmers are erased and the peasantry is subordinated to the

requirements of the global food monopolies. Global trade under the WTO also derogates plant breeder's rights in favour of international agri-business. Famine is no longer a consequence of "a shortage of food." On the contrary, famines are spurred as a result of a global oversupply of grain staples. Since the early 1980s, grain markets are deregulated under the supervision of the World Bank, and US grain surpluses used more systematically than in the past to destroy the peasantry and destabilise national food agriculture.

14. Distorting the Causes of Global Unemployment

The Declaration's third Commitment pertains to employment: "We commit ourselves to promoting the goal of full employment". The Declaration stresses "the creation of employment, the reduction of unemployment, and the promotion of appropriately and adequately remunerated employment...". The obstacles to achieving these goals are not outlined.

The unemployment figures included in the Declaration are misleading and grossly out of context. The Declaration fails to include relevant ILO data, it fails to acknowledge the fact that official data is heavily biased. The report seriously underestimates the extent of global unemployment (in excess of 800 million according to the ILO's most recent estimate).

15. Debt Relief

The Declaration is exceedingly vague and rhetorical in regard to debt relief: "Ensure urgent implementation of existing debt-relief agreements and negotiate further initiatives, in addition to existing ones, to alleviate debts of the poorest and heavily indebted low-income countries at an early date. Where appropriate, these countries should be given a reduction of their bilateral official debt sufficient to help enable them to exit from the rescheduling process and to enable them to resume growth and development".

The Declaration says "substantial debt reduction is needed to enable developing countries to implement the Declaration and the Programme of Action", but it endorses the status quo: it points to "progress" achieved under the auspices of the G7 and invites "the

international financial institutions to continue to explore ways of implementing additional and innovative measures to alleviate substantially the debt burdens of developing countries."

The Declaration looks to "the possibilities of debt-swaps for social development, with the resources released by debt cancellation or reduction invested in social development programmes... without prejudice to more durable

In Bolivia, severance payments to redundant miners (laid off under the IMF-World Bank privatisation of the mining industry) were invested in the acquisition of land in the coca producing areas.

solutions such as debt reduction and/or cancellation". It is worth mentioning that the debt swaps enable donors to reduce their "aid" commitments to social programmes (by swapping aid for debt relief).

16. Curbing Illicit Trade

The Declaration calls for the adoption of "effective and environmentally sound national strategies to prevent or reduce substantially the cultivation and processing of crops used for the illegal drug trade". No consideration, however, is given to the structural causes of illicit trade.

In a global economy characterised by surplus output, World prices for legal primary commodity exports have tumbled. In turn, "alternative" exports unfold within the spheres of the illicit economy. With legal commodity prices often below the costs of production, illicit trade and the narco-economy often become the main source of the country's foreign exchange.

The Declaration also fails to recognize

that the macro-economic reforms applied in countries involved in narcotics production (eg. Peru and Bolivia), invariably destroy the possibility of "an alternative development". In Peru and Bolivia, the peasant economy was undermined as a result of the devaluation and the hikes in the prices of fuel and farm inputs. The economic reforms encouraged the migration of impoverished peasants to the coca producing areas. In Bolivia, severance payments to redundant miners (laid off under the IMF-World Bank sponsored restructuring and privatisation of the mining industry) were invested in the acquisition of land in the coca producing areas.

As the legal commodity economy declines as a result of the macro-economic and trade reforms, illegal commodity exports are used to generate revenues required to service the debt. The recycling of "dirty money" towards debt servicing is a necessary consequence of the weakening of the legal economy and the incapacity of developing countries to service their debt from shrinking export revenues.

17. The Repatriation of Capital Flight

The Declaration calls for the creation "in African countries and least developed countries, of an enabling environment that ... induces the return of flight capital". This "enabling environment" consists in reforms of the banking system and the foreign exchange regime which facilitate the repatriation of "dirty" and "black money" deposited in offshore accounts. It thereby provides the privileged elites with a convenient mechanism: capital flight is repatriated in the form of foreign exchange and used to purchase State assets or land put on the auction block under the World Bank sponsored privatisation programmes. In turn, the repatriation of capital flight serves the interests of the creditors: the foreign exchange proceeds of these sales are channelled towards the national Treasury where they are earmarked for debt servicing. ★



The international community would like to wish you good luck !

Message to readers

Sorry for the mistakes which crept into the last issue. The final words of several photo credits and subtitles were lost.

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The following publications are not available in most commercial bookstores, because what the authors have to say makes the rich and powerful uncomfortable. To order, try your nearest progressive bookstore, contact the publishers directly, or write to La Breche, 9 rue de Tunis, 75011 Paris, France tel. (+33 1) 43 67 63 57 fax 43 79 29 61 (English, French and Spanish spoken).

Where no price is given, we suggest you enclose a donation of US\$ 10 in any convertible currency to cover the postage costs of the publisher

Health and Structural Adjustment in Nicaragua/La salud y los Ajustes Estructurales en Nicaragua

This 48 page bilingual report documents the advances in health care made under the Sandinista government, and the dramatic decline in public health since the present right-wing government took office. It includes recommendations for a greater involvement of non-governmental organisations in any new decentralised health care system.

Published in 1995 by the Centre for Information and Advisory Services in Health (CISAS), Apto. 3297 Managua, Nicaragua, tel/fax (+505) 2/666711 e-mail cisas@nicarao.apc.org

Russia: Economic and Political Shifts

The latest issue of this 76 page English language newsletter includes articles on Chechnya, the Federation of Independent Trades Unions of Russia, and the IMF sponsored "Shock without therapy."

Edited by International Viewpoint correspondent Alexander Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov, Trehrundi 6-46, Moscow, Russia 103001, tel 095/2997739

World Bank/IMF: Enough!

Susan George, Michel Chossudovsky and others analyse the autocracy that is strangling the third world, and present voices from the growing movement to challenge the 'new world order';

NSR 24-25, US\$5, 30 FF, £3.50, published in 1995 by IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 RG, Amsterdam, Netherlands. [Also available in French from CADTM, 29 rue Plantin, 1070 Brussels, Belgium]

Les cahiers du féminisme (Feminist Notebooks)

A French-language socialist feminist revue published six times a year. Inspired by the same ideas as International Viewpoint. Issue 71/72 discusses current campaigns to reduce the working week, and asks how this can be done without increasing the fragile and part-time status of many women workers. The difficult relationship between free time and housework is also treated.

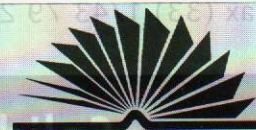
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Feminist and socialist summer camp

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Buses will be organised from most European capitals. Cost (including food, and entry to all events, but excluding transport) from 500 to 1,000 French Francs, depending on your country and circumstances. For more information contact your International Viewpoint seller, or write to the Youth Camp Committee, c/o International Viewpoint, PECE, P.O. Box 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France
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