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VIEWPOINT

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After Suharto

what does the opposition want?

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Workers rights

There are no legal independent trade unions in Indonesia. No right to strike, and no effective right of assembly. Independent unions like the Indonesian Prosperity Trade Union are systematically repressed. In some parts of the country, workers are still paid in goods, not money. ★

The final straw

Over the last six months, at least 5 million Indonesians have lost their jobs as industry collapses. Most of these workers supported many members of their family.

The decline of the rupiah, and IMF-imposed increases in energy and food prices has meant a 50% drop in purchasing power for the average family.

One quarter of Indonesia's 200 million people lived in extreme poverty – surviving on less than one dollar a day. ★

The IMF contribution

In December 1997, the International Monetary Fund forced the suspension of activities of 16 Indonesian banks. Six weeks later, the IMF admitted that this panic reaction was unnecessary, and had provoked a crisis of confidence.

The IMF prevented Suharto from fixing the exchange rate of the rupiah to the US dollar. The Indonesian currency has since collapsed so quickly that trade has come to a virtual stop. With IMF-imposed interest rates at 50%, so has most other economic activity.

By obliging Suharto to end subsidies on fuel and other necessities, the IMF contributed to the riots which shook the country in mid-May. As inflation soars, the middle classes may lose most of their savings.

Since the IMF is opposed to controls on capital transfers, Indonesia's rich have transferred their own money to dollar accounts in Singapore or Hong Kong. ★



Paper Tiger

Indonesia's economy is based on low salaries, and a savage exploitation of natural resources. Because imports were consistently higher than exports, Suharto kept interest rates high, to keep attracting foreign capital.

This led to a deformed economy, with a tiny minority consuming much of the wealth, and a speculative bubble of real estate investments.

Most banks and industrial companies had heavy debts, and relied on political connections, grand projects, and financial speculation to balance their books. When last year's Asian economic crisis pulled down the rupiah, along with other currencies in the region, debt repayments rocketed. ★

After Suharto: what does the opposition want?

Economic collapse, mass riots by the urban poor, and a dynamic student protest movement have forced the resignation of Indonesia's dictator Suharto. This is a victory, but the real struggle is still ahead. President Habibie is virtually Suharto's step-son, and the New Order regime is still very much in place.

Habibie has some support among religious groups in the Muslim majority, but he depends for power on the armed forces, led by General Wiranto. Sometimes portrayed as a moderate or liberal in the western press, Wiranto is the key man fighting to maintain what can be saved of Suharto's New Order.

Since the 1965 coup which brought Suharto to power, Indonesia's armed forces have had a "dual function" – controlling civil as well as military matters. They are the country's only stable institution. Unless they can be neutralised, through troop unrest or clever negotiations, they will move against the democratic movement and crush it.

Liberals and technocrats are trying to surf into power on the wave of protest. The most prominent, Amien Rais, has already shown his preference for deals with the Army rather than the movement.

As the democratic movement asks "what next," there is an inevitable polarisation between conservative and radical groups. Over support for Habibie or Rais; over the urgency of elections; on price controls; and on the status of East Timor.

Free elections are not enough. While bourgeois democracy and civil society are a step

forward, Indonesia's problems can only be solved if workers, peasants and the poor play a central role in redefining society.

The radical wing of the democracy movement, notably the left-wing People's Democratic Party (PRD) are trying desperately to keep people mobilised, and push forward demands for political reform and social and economic justice.

They urgently need our support. Now is the time to help Indonesia's fledgling revolutionary left spread their ideas, build the strongest possible social movements, and organise themselves to meet the challenges and dangers ahead. ★

East Timor: a once-in-a-lifetime chance

Occupied by Indonesia since 1975, East Timor now has a chance to win its independence. Not only is their oppressor occupied with domestic problems, but, for the first time, progressive forces in Indonesia can openly call for self-determination for East Timor's Maubere people.

Indonesian opposition leader Amien Rais has suggested a 10 year transition period, followed by a United Nations-supervised referendum in East Timor. If this idea gains popularity in Jakarta, we may see a split between Timorese who accept such a deal, and those who demand more immediate and profound change.

East Timor is a defining question for democrats in Indonesia. Like Britain with Ireland, a nation that oppresses another can never itself be free. ★

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What kind of government?

In the last days of Suharto's presidency, 50 prominent establishment and opposition figures proposed themselves as a "People's Council" to supervise the "transition to democracy."

Edwin Gozal of the radical left People's Democratic Party (PRD) warns of the limits of this proposal, and calls for the formation of a more popular democratic movement.

This extract from the vigorous and wide-ranging debate within the opposition movement shows the difficulty in building an opposition force able to confront the more sophisticated representatives of the *status quo*, who have deposed Suharto to save the system.

Despite this "People's Council's" stated desire to solve the economic and political crisis, and despite the present of outspoken figure such as [moderate Muslim leader] Amien Rais, Gunawan Muhammad, Hendari and Mudrick Sangidoe, the big question is whether this Council can impose democracy in the post-Suharto era.

The idea to set up a People's Council



which will become a transition government that will reconstruct Indonesia's socio-economic and political structure is a good one. We can't rely on the corrupt system of Suharto's New Order regime. And none of the structures of that regime are pro-people institutions. Certainly not the puppet parliament, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) and People's Representative Council (DPR).

But does this particular "People's Council" have a clear programme for politician and economic reform in Indonesia? As far as we know, it only calls for Suharto to resign, for the military not to use force in dealing with the people, and calls for the students, youth and common people to maintain the peaceful situation.

This is not a political programme that will guarantee democratisation in Indonesia. They have no clear position in favour of abolishing military intervention in civilian affairs. They have no clear position about repealing the repressive political

laws. We can't find their vision for future working class life, nor what they think about the IMF's austerity programme for Indonesia.

While they call for Suharto to resign, they don't call for the entire New Order bureaucracy to resign. But there will be no democracy if Suharto alone is replaced. "Undemocracy" in Indonesia has been imposed by the corrupt bureaucracy of the New Order regime, and as long as this corrupt system exists, there will be no democracy.

People like Amien Rais have even put his trust in the Army. Speaking in Jakarta's Al Azhar Mosque on Friday 15 May, he said "our hopes are concentrated on the Armed Forces, whose mission is well defined. They still have a sense of mission, because they respect the oath of the Armed Forces." Doesn't Amien know that, under the oath of the Armed Forces, the Indonesian Army slaughtered one million people in the bloody 1965 coup [which brought Suharto to power]. Doesn't he know about the occupation of East Timor? About state terrorism during the 1980s, and during the recent upheaval? The Indonesian Armed Forces have no experience of maintaining democracy. All they have ever done is violate democratic values in Indonesia.

Looking at the personalities suggested as members of this "People's Council, we see mainly people connected with the New Order regime.¹ Those people still represent the ruling class. They will not impose any pro people programme. They will try to maintain the corrupt New Order regime.

PIJAR's concept for a new government

A similar call for a "transitional government" has been made by PIJAR, one of the few organised student groups. Their criteria for individuals who are eligible to sit in this transitional government are "people with proven social commitment, and who are still young."

This proposal looks like a good step for the democratisation process in Indonesia. Power should indeed be handed over to the people. But unfortunately, PIJAR still wants to maintain the old New Order system. They still want to maintain puppet MPR/DPR politicians,² former ministers, and, last but by no means least, General Wiranto, Chief Commander of the Armed Forces!

It will be very hard for those people to impose democracy. When they used to be in government they never tried to introduce democratic changes, in the people's interest.

The PIJAR proposal also includes individuals from the Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association, the secular nationalist PDI political party, and well known critical analysts.³ But the question is, are the Indonesian people only represented by this section of the population? What about the working class, urban poor and students? If the transition government is only based on a small section of society, it will not become a

★ Indonesia

of SSDI-PRD at the Lampung demonstrations, where two students were killed by the police.

In fact, these accusations were true. PRD-SSDI was always in the forefront of students demonstration in the key cities of Jakarta, Lampung and Solo – demonstrations which have become the trigger for bigger students demonstrations elsewhere.

Nezar Patria, Deputy President of SSDI was captured on March 13 because he had been identified while leading the group organising students demonstration at Jakarta's prestigious University of Indonesia, and followed by army intelligence after one demonstration. And PRD activist Andi Arief was kidnapped in Lampung, because he joined a public forum just before the bloody clash between military and students there.

Radical catalyst

The moment when 10,000 students burned Suharto's effigy [for the first time] in Yogyakarta, was also because of SSDI intervention. When National Union of Students who officially chaired those protest gave a chance for us to make happening art, we intervened with the effigy burning.

The emergence of demands for revision of the five repressive political laws shows that SSDI-PRD are always in the forefront of the struggle. We are the only organisation who consistently put forward this demand. We have been doing so for three years already. Today, this demand is getting more support from the people. Even Suharto and his ministers finally said that they would revise several repressive laws, including the Election and Parliament Membership laws.

Further evidence of the SSDI-PRD role in the radicalisation of the students came on May 8, when students in Jakarta staged a mock trial in which an "extraordinary people's court" charged Suharto with killing two million "suspected" opponents, between the seizure of power in 1965, invasion of East Timor in 1975, the savage "Petrus" repression of "petty criminals" in 1983, the massacre of Muslim protesters in Tanjung Priok in 1984, and State Terrorism towards students and workers in the late 1980s. The students pronounced Suharto guilty and sentenced him to death.

Political events like this don't happen spontaneously. Only a few students group are concerned about the bloody killing in 1965, and illegal occupation of East Timor. The wider student public only becomes sensitised and radicalised on these questions because of the leadership role played by progressive forces like the PRD-SSDI.

Labour-student links

The increasing number of the workers and urban poor who are linking up with the students is another interesting question [for those who doubt the role of the radical left]. For example, on May 3, around 300 factory workers from Tangerang, East Jakarta, joined the Salemba demonstration at the invitation of students leaders. In fact, only SSDI-PRD consistently put forward



this kind of concept about worker and students alliances. Fortunately, we are finding a growing audience for these ideas.

Before the banning of PRD-SSDI, we were trying to organise the students and workers alliance through the Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle, the PRD-affiliated trade union.

The clashes that took place in the first weeks of May are also the result of SSDI-PRD intervention. The new term "students *intifada*" become so popular because we are really prepared for that kind of rock and stone-throwing. When the police in Solo tried to collect the stones thrown by students during one such demonstration, they found at least six baskets of rock.

The escalation of direct action expanded to include action to detain police or army spies at demonstrations, and exchange them against students arrested by the police. [In the weeks before Suharto fell] this became a massive phenomenon.

In Yogyakarta at least six army intelligence agents were arrested by the students. In Bogor, one policeman was killed by the students. In the first three weeks of May, more than 100 police were injured. Students in Semarang even occupied the National Radio and pushed the reporters to read out the pro-democratic programme. Unfortunately they finished the occupation on May 18th, just a few days before the dictator resigned.

The other forces

So far, we haven't been able to act openly as the SSDI-PRD. Not only because of security problems, but also because of the fragile coalition that is being built. Most of the forces who joined and are joining this recent upheaval are new forces, who are being politicised by the current circumstances. Not all of them are friendly with the SSDI-PRD as such, although they have often agreed with elements of the PRD-SSDI programme, and chanted PRD-inspired slogans.

Of course, bourgeois media prefer to publish the profile of these groups and personalities, rather than progressive forces like SSDI-PRD.

One rising star is Rama Pratama, the President of the National Students Union at the University of Indonesia. He is a moderate students leader, but he has received a lot of attention from the media. He just calls for "complete reforms," which means Suharto has to step down. The problem, of course, is that, if only Suharto is replaced, and the entire system still exists, how can we impose democracy in Indonesia? With the brutal military still there, and the puppet parliament still existing?

Rama Pratama says that "it is not the job of the students to decide the future leader: let the system decide that." He said that his group would support anyone who could make improvements. "If there is no improvement, students will be demonstrating again. This is what independent students, without any interest in politics, want".

Apart from "primadonas" like Rama Pratama, the rising force is Action of Moslem Students in Indonesia (KAMMI) headed by Fachri Hamzah. This group is affiliated to Amien Rais, the head of the middle class Muslim movement Muhammadiyah, and endorsed him as the future president. In the past this group was silent [during student protests]. But suddenly, in the first weeks of May, they appeared, acted strongly anti-government, and made several actions. We suspect that they got an order from Amien Rais to become outspoken and critical about recent political development.

Some of the protests are completely spontaneous, and lack political leadership. Like several protests outside Java, in the holiday islands of Medan and Lombok. Other protests have been initiated by liberal democrat students group like PPPY (Union of Students of Yogyakarta).

These groups don't have any clear demands and political programme. This leads them to do things like have a march and rally to the zoo, proclaiming that they want to tell the animals about their concerns, because they can't rely on their parliamentary representatives. Or having a rally outside the Post Office, and handed in a giant postcard addressed to the Supreme Court Judges.

Moving forward

We of the SSDI-PRD haven't yet won the leadership of the student movement as a whole. But at least we have made many interventions that have made these protests become more political.

We have failed to maintain the slogan "Democracy or Death" as the central student slogan. Unfortunately, "Reform or Death" is taking over as the most popular slogan. I say "unfortunately," because we have consistently argued that reform will mean nothing, because, for liberal democrats, reform means freedom for the few, while maintaining the system that holds down the majority.

On the other hand, PRD-SSDI slogans like "arrest and try Suharto, his family, and his supporters" and "nationalise all the assets of Suharto's family, his cronies and the multinationals" have become more and more popular as time goes on. ★

Ten days that struck Denmark (a little)

Large parts of the private sector struck for ten days at the beginning of the month, demanding a sixth week of paid vacation, and other benefits. In doing so, they rejected the latest cosy deal between employers and trade union leaders.

There was surprisingly little reaction when the Social Democratic government imposed a pro-employer settlement on May 6th. But the strike has contributed enormously to the regeneration of the working class movement.

Jørgen Arbo-Bæhr

The conflict was unusual, given the organised and stable class collaboration that social democrats and the trade unions have developed over the last 100 years.

With 75-80% of the workforce unionised, the Danish Trade Union Confederation (LO) has enough strength to secure decent pay and working conditions for most workers through nation-wide Agreements with the employers organisations. This effectively limits strikes to the short period every second year preceding the re-negotiation of the general agreement for each industry. Since almost all other strikes are in defiance of these agreements, the trade unions refuse to support them.

The trade union leadership has tried to avoid conflict at almost any cost. Since the 1985 general strike, they have succeeded in steering through each re-negotiation and obtaining general agreements without conflicts. This is partly due to the pacification of the working class after 1985, particularly through mass unemployment, which rose steadily after 1985 and only began to fall again in 1994.

This strike was particularly unusual because, for the first time since 1956, workers rejected an agreement approved and recommended to them by the trade union leaders.

Declining unemployment since 1994 has meant an increased self-confidence and will to fight in the working class. Workers show wider awareness of the existence of common demands, particularly concerning the redistribution of labour time through longer holidays and shorter working hours. A growing number of Danish workers see this as the best way to benefit the employed and unemployed.

No-one is forgetting that Danish employers have made record profits during



recent years. In 1997, shareholders of the largest Danish companies received 18% in returns on their shares. The value of shares rose from 500 to 776 billion kroner. (US\$115bn.) in 1997. This increase in wealth for the owners of capital was as large as the entire amount spent on wages for the industrial, transport, trade and construction sectors during 1997.

A traditional "No!" campaign...

In the months before the vote on this

year's accord, the "No!" campaign was not especially larger or different than in previous years. It was organised by the left wing of the trade union movement, particularly the 30 to 40 local unions that coordinate most opposition to the leadership.

This particular "No!" campaign was dominated by members of construction unions: the General Workers Union, the Timber Industry and Construction Workers Union (TIB) and the Metal Workers Union. The 55,000-member TIB is tradi-

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★ Denmark

tionally a "Yes!" federation.

This positive addition to the "No!" coalition was balanced by the switch to the "Yes!" camp of the traditionally progressive 25,000-member Graphical Workers Union and the 30,000-member Restaurant and Brewery Workers Union.

Perhaps more than in previous years, the campaign was influenced by representatives from the local unions, rather than shop-stewards from the major workplaces. This reflects the continued influence of militants from the old Danish Communist Party (DKP) in the union movement. Although the DKP has disintegrated, its former members are still the largest current to the left of the social democrats within the trade unions.

With male workers in their 50s comprising 90% of campaign activists, the "No!" campaign seemed in many ways very "traditional."

...with unexpected success

The final rejection of the accord by a majority of workers, even in industrial and transport sectors, where the left is weak, testifies to a split between the members of the largest federations and their leaders. Presidents of the 53,000-member Women Workers Union, the 123,000-member Metalworkers Union, and the 208,000-member Unskilled Workers' Union had massively recommended a "Yes!" vote. About 60% of their members said "No!"

In other words, the vote reflected a genuine rank-and-file revolt, rather than an expression of left-wing strength in the workers movement.

The size and impact of the strike should not be exaggerated. It only involved 20% of the country's 2.5 million workers. While it closed down much of industry, transport and construction, it did not involve public-sector or retail workers.

While the conflict bit hard into employers' profits, it hardly touched the everyday life of the general population. Public transportation kept functioning, and the shops remained open.

Restricting the strike in this manner was part of a deliberate attempt to maintain broad public support. But the "invisibility" of the strike made it harder to build enthusiasm and activity among the strikers. This contributed to the failure to put sufficient pressure on employers to reach an agreement, and the inability to prevent the government from intervening.

Inside the strike movement

Once the strike started, social democratic labour leaders – many of whom had recommended acceptance of the Agreement – tried to gain an important place in the leadership and dominate protest activities. They did so by declaring that they respected the democratic right of their members to vote down the Agreement, and promising to now work for a better outcome!

They succeeded in taking over the leadership because – especially outside the capital, Copenhagen – no realistic alterna-

tive was posed. Very few unions succeeded in actively involving a majority of their members in the strike. After all, even the activist layer has had little experiences of active struggle in the 13 years of "industrial peace" since 1985.

But the success of the social democrats in regaining the initiative also reflects the solid support for this new alliance by the ex-CP current that provided so many leaders of the "No!" campaign.

The result of all this was that the real leadership of the strikers' movement and protest activities was the self-appointed co-ordination committee in Copenhagen and the local LO branches in the provinces. It also meant that at no time was there room for shop stewards from the larger workplaces in the leadership of the movement.

This was reflected in the central activities during the strike. Before the government intervention on May 6, calls were issued for two "days of action" with demonstrations in the largest cities. Speakers' lists at the April 28 and May 5 demonstrations were dominated by representatives from LO and union federations that had been recommending acceptance of the Agreement!

In Copenhagen, the central perspective of the co-ordination committee was to maintain organisational and political co-operation between the social democratic leadership of the labour movement and more progressive union leaders.

This was also expressed in the formulation of strikers' demands. Although it was obvious that an overwhelming majority of members wanted to stick to the demand for a sixth week of paid annual holiday, union leaders announced that the priority was "starting" the sixth week. Throughout the dispute, the co-ordination committee shifted ambiguously between these two formulations.

Positive long-term results

Nevertheless, the dispute has given many strikers some positive experiences of using the strength of the private sector union movement. It has brought some concrete benefits in a number of industries where the trade union movement is weak, with many unorganised workers and many others labouring under conditions worse than those accorded in the general agreements. In these sectors, effective and militant blockades were organised during the strike, which meant that many employers were forced to sign agreements to hire only union labour from now on.

For many youth, this was the first time they saw the labour movement as a means to obtaining gains, and a tool in the struggle for social justice and progress. This opens up the opportunity to renew the union leadership, which is dominated by the generation of (formerly) active leaders from the 1973-1985 period.

On May 6 the government introduced legislation to end the strike. Although the entire labour movement – from the national trade union leadership to the co-ordination committee of the recent private sector

strike – was against state intervention in the strike, only a minority wanted to carry on centralised action against the government's policy.

Government intervention

Social Democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen said parliament must intervene in the conflict because chaos was threatening Danish society. "This was simply not true," observes Red-Green Alliance MP Søren Søndergaard.* "The strikers had taken all the necessary steps to maintain essential services for the population.

"Employers, however, were certainly hit hard by the strike. Even some major foreign companies, like the Swedish car maker Saab, had to stop production because of the strike in Denmark. At the same time, the strike created increasingly greater support among the population for the demand of six weeks holiday. The employers were loosing – economically and politically."

The deal agreed between the Social Democrats' minority government and the opposition Liberal and Conservative parties gave workers one extra day holiday, and two parental leave days for those with children under 14. Starting next year there will be three such "family days."

The conflict started with two central demands: a sixth week of paid annual vacation, and a greater contribution to holiday, social security and health insurance benefits from the employers. On both points, the government intervention meant the employers had it their way.

The imposed deal was "cost-neutral" for employers, Rasmussen assured parliament. In other words, it cost exactly the same to employers as their original offer. This was because the deal reduced planned increases in employers' pension contributions, and scrapped plans for a new sickness benefit tax on employers. The plan adds 4.5% to total wages, the same as the employers' and union bosses' original proposal.

While employers are relieved, most workers have been angered by the deal. The extra vacation will be paid at lower than ordinary pay, and those without children under 12 will not benefit from the "family days."

Seasonal workers, and those who change workplaces often (like construction, hotel and restaurant workers) will not get any extra holidays at all. The extra vacation day is restricted to those who have nine months continuous employment, and the "family days" only go to those with six months continuous employment.

In global terms, most of the strikers will not see any improvement in their conditions, and a large minority will be worse off than under the agreement they voted down.

The left response

The only parliamentary parties to vote against the deal were the left social democratic Socialist People's Party (SF) and the left-socialist Red-Green Alliance. These

two groups won 10% of votes in parliamentary elections in March (see April issue of *International Viewpoint*).

The Red-Green Alliance considers the government intervention a clear attack on democracy. Danish workers expect a system in which trade unions negotiate the collective bargaining agreement, which workers must approve through voting, and with the right to use strikes to reinforce bargaining tactics.

Unfortunately, the SF said they would be ready to support any "socially acceptable" state intervention to end the strike. By taking responsibility for "society's economy," the reformist SF effectively accepts that the right to make profits and the right of the capitalists to produce are more important than the right to strike.

The government intervention was met with anger at all levels of the workers' movement. Trade unions accused the social democratic government of working for the benefit of the employers. They argued that the intervention was an attack on collective trade union rights. Many called the intervention "scandalous" and "a disgrace".

About 1,000 people attended the nation-wide shop-stewards meeting the day after parliament declared the strike illegal. The atmosphere was agitated, but while most participants condemned the intervention, very few actually represented workplaces willing to continue the struggle despite the new legislation.

The co-ordination committee didn't want to initiate more activities. But representatives of two of the largest and most active trade unions in Copenhagen wanted to plan a large demonstration for May 11. But this proposal was easily dismissed, since it was clear that such a protest would not represent a perspective of continued struggle against the government intervention.

What next?

At present, no plans are afloat to continue the struggle through a collective fight against the government-imposed deal. But this does not mean the strike was completely defeated. The struggle created and strengthened the seeds of the future reconstruction of a left wing in the labour movement.

Søren Søndergaard explains: "Among the strikers the government intervention has been met with big dissatisfaction. Many see it as a fundamental attack on the right to strike.

"But there won't be a united protest strike against the government intervention. Partly because some feel that they actually have gained something from the conflict, but first and foremost because there is not any credible leadership for a united fight for a better outcome. The trade union leaders have objected to the intervention but will not lead any extra-parliamentary fight against a law adopted by a social democratic government.

"Since the big strikes in 1985, the trade union left has been weakened at the workplaces and among shop-stewards. More

experiences of struggle must be accumulated before the understanding necessary for a national organising of shop stewards on a rank-and-file-level emerges."

The coming months will see local negotiations in many workplaces. Many workers will say that "we will take back what the government gave to the employers". If salary and vacation demands are expressed in a collective framework, there is real potential to build links between workplaces.

There is also an organisational and political basis for creating local co-ordination of shop stewards, including representatives from the larger workplaces and progressive unions, to co-ordinate support for strikers, and prepare struggles around the next round of collective agreement negotiations.

Hopefully, the lessons will be learned in time for the 1999 negotiations for new general agreements for public sector, agricultural and other workers not covered by the 1998 settlement.

Bad news for Brussels

The Danish and European bourgeoisie rightly fears that the government intervention increases the likelihood of a "No!" vote in Denmark's May 28 referendum on the European Union's Amsterdam Treaty.

On May 7, Germany's main conservative newspaper the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, praised the Danish Prime Minister for putting an end to this "insane workers struggle," but warned that "it could happen that frustrated union members will now repay their Europe-friendly Prime Minister and try to turn the vote against the EU Agreement." "Let's hope they succeed," comments Søndergaard. "Some times it's worth just saying 'No!'"

Whatever happens on May 28, this 10-day conflict has undoubtedly deeply affected the Danish class struggle. The big strikes in 1985 were the culmination of a 10-year rise in the class struggle. April-May 1998 is only the beginning of a new wave! ★

A Europe of the regions?

The poor and peripheral nation of Wales is the scene for the latest European Union summit. Led by Tony Blair, Europe's leaders will discuss huge cuts in regional aid.

Ceri Evans* explains.

The regional policy of the European Union (EU), was grandly designated in the Maastricht Treaty as a commitment to "economic and social cohesion and solidarity among the member states". The two main mechanisms proposed to facilitate this cohesion were structural funds, directed at poor regions across the whole of the EU, and cohesion funds, specifically targeted at the four poorest members – Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece.

Despite many years of such funding, the EU's own figures show that enormous inequalities still exist.¹ The German port of Hamburg has a per capita GDP nearly twice the EU average, four times higher than that of the poorest regions in Greece, Spain, Italy and eastern Germany.² The poorest regions in Britain are Merseyside and South Yorkshire, with GDP of 70% of the EU average.

Across Europe, wealth remains concentrated in and around state capitals. Greater London's GDP per head is 139% of the EU average. There is a "golden banana" of wealthy regions, stretching from London, Brussels and Paris down through the Rhinelands of western Germany and into northern Italy.

**EURO DEMONSTRATION
CARDIFF JUNE 13 '98**



**EWRO WRTHDYSTIAD
CAERDYDD 13 MEHEFIN '98**

Of the four poorest states, only Ireland has made significant progress. The relative position of Spain and Portugal has only slightly improved, while Greece has actually fallen further behind the EU average GDP per capita.

Nationalists in many smaller nations point to the Irish experience as a model for existing [and new] small nations in Europe. But, while Ireland has enjoyed a mini-boom in recent years, there are a number of structural problems. EU grants are only awarded if the local government provides matching funds. In Ireland and elsewhere, this has meant cuts in many other areas of government spending, in order to attract subsidies in those areas Brussels considers important.

The benefits of the cohesion fund bonanza have been very unevenly distributed, contributing to a deepening of inequality within the country. Most EU money has been spent on infrastructure, and outrageous corporate tax breaks to attract

★ European Union

foreign investment. This is hardly a model of equitable and sustainable development which other small nations should try to emulate.

EU regional policy is a failure. There has been no fundamental change in the pattern of regional inequalities since the early 1970's, when regional funds were first established. In fact, the situation has deteriorated. And the concentration of wealth and investment in the core regions of Europe will probably be accelerated by the free movement of capital and labour enshrined in the Single European Act, and the destruction of less profitable enterprises and industries when the single currency is introduced.³

More far-sighted observers warned of these trends when the Maastricht treaty was first signed.⁴ Even some supporters of Maastricht, such as Wayne David, leader of the British Labour group in the European Parliament, have acknowledged that such trends are "inevitable."⁵

Social democrats like David say that the Maastricht project contained two trends. The first was a move towards concentration of ownership and the centralisation of production in a few core regions, driven by economic and monetary union. But they said there would also be a counter-tendency towards regional decentralisation, facilitated by regional funds, the principle of subsidiarity, according to which decision-making would be decentralised wherever this brought benefits to the citizens, and the creation of the Committee of the Regions.

Established by the Maastricht Treaty, the Committee of the Regions first met in 1994. It is composed of 222 delegates from regional and local authorities across the EU. The European Council (heads of

national government), the Commission and the European Parliament are supposed to consult the Committee on certain questions where regional interests are deemed to be involved. The Committee can also deliver opinions on its own initiative. It has no powers beyond this.

But the powerlessness of the Committee is not the only problem. It represents such wide, and sometimes contradictory, interests that it is difficult to see what role it could play.

This confusion stems from the tremendous diversity of Europe's smaller nations, national struggles and regional politics. Nationalism in poorer small nations, like Wales, Scotland and Euskadi (the Basque Country) is most often to the left. In many cases progressive nationalists in smaller nations are in direct competition for working class votes with a more centralist social democratic party.

But the ascendant nationalism of more prosperous small nations, such as Catalonia (in North-West Spain) and Flanders (Dutch-speaking Belgium) is predominantly, though not exclusively to the right. The relatively new phenomenon of right-wing regionalism is most spectacularly illustrated by the growth of Italy's Northern League, but also by significant votes for the Republican Party in the German Land (state) of Baden-Württemberg in the early 1990s.

It is hard to see how right-wing politicians from Europe's richest regions, which benefit from the current inequalities, will find common cause with those from the poorest regions, who are obliged to support a more redistributive approach. Such are the dilemmas and contradictions of EU regional policy.

The current meagre resources allocated to regional assistance have failed to address the problem. Since centralist economic tendencies will be accelerated by monetary union, it might be expected that an increase in regional funds would be in order. In fact, the opposite is the case. EU leaders are determined to reduce regional funds, in order to finance EU enlargement to the East. [and to stop new member states like Poland claiming similar subsidies to Greece and Portugal]

Agenda 2000

These proposals are contained in a European Commission document entitled Agenda 2000.⁶ As well as cutting regional funds, the proposals include opening EU agriculture to the "free" market, and reducing the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). While there are many real problems with the CAP, the alternative proposed by the Commission will be detrimental to small farmers, rural workers and the environment.⁷

As the EU expands into East-Central Europe, Polish, Czech and Slovenian workers and farmers will face similar problems to the existing poorer regions. The terms of enlargement are likely to be detrimental to the workers and poor of the new member states. Existing Association Agreements between the EU and most East

and Central European countries are designed to boost EU exports to those countries, while restricting the import of textiles, coal and steel into the EU.⁸ These are the main, sometimes the only sectors in which the former Stalinist countries can compete effectively with the EU heartlands.

The continued imposition of austerity measures is also a precondition for EU membership. This will cause further erosions in social provision and an increase in unemployment.

Despite this, the new elites in Eastern Europe express an almost desperate desire to join the club. In the words of Igor Bavcar, Slovenia's minister for European affairs "I'm afraid that there will be a new line drawn in Europe. It will be the Schengen line, [common police and immigration policies] and there is no line harder. But that's life."

The Council of Ministers has fixed the Agenda 2000 budget for 1999-2006 at 1.27% of EU GDP. Even pro-Maastricht commentators admit that this is "woefully inadequate." Since no significant increase in cash will be available after the year 2000, the money for enlargement has to come from the existing programmes.

The document is committed to promoting labour flexibility, in line with the decisions of the Luxembourg Summit last November, stating that "a key task of structural policy will be to underpin the reform of labour market policies and practices". The convergence criteria are also invoked, in that control over the allocation of cohesion funds will be "strengthened to prevent excessive public deficits in the context of the stability and growth Pact."

What about Wales?

The effects of Agenda 2000 can be understood looking at Wales, which is hosting the current summit.

Under the current system, most of Wales is covered by either Objective 2 or Objective 5b status. This has resulted in annual funding of around 100 million Ecu (£150 million). This is a very small amount of money, compared to the £7 billion budget of the Welsh Office, through which the British state channels most Welsh spending.

Most of this E100m. will disappear by the year 2003, since Wales no longer qualifies for Objective 1 status and only small parts of the country will qualify for Objective 2. The situation of other poorer regions of Europe is similar.

These proposals have predictably raised a storm of protest from governments and politicians across the European Union, worried about the effect that such drastic cutbacks will have on their electorates.¹⁰

The response in Wales, which mirrors that in Britain as a whole, has been threefold:

Lobbyists have correctly argued that using unemployment levels to establish Objective 2 status does not take account of the real poverty of a nation or region. After all, the unemployment rate in Wales is below the EU average, while the

EU Regional spending 2000-2006

	Euro*
Regional Assistance	218.4
Cohesion Funds	20.8
Enlargement	46.8
of which pre-Accession Aid	21.8
Total	286.0

*(in Euro 10 billion)

Under the new proposals, the present five categories of regional assistance will be reduced to three:

- Objective 1: The poorest regions, with GDP less than 75% of the EU average.
- Objective 2: Areas with unemployment above the EU average.
- Objective 3: aiming to tackle high unemployment, combat poverty, anticipate economic change and promote opportunities for women. Replaces the European Social Fund,

Funding at pre-Agenda 2000 levels will only be automatic for Objective 1 areas. Areas which lose Objective 1 status will have their funding phased out over six years; those that lose Objective 2 status over four years. ★



average household income is the lowest in the British state.

There have been frantic efforts to redraw the "poverty maps" prepared by the EU statistics agency Eurostat, so that smaller sub-regions can qualify for Objective 1 status, or at least be guaranteed Objective 2 status.

And there has been an intensification of the long-standing argument that Wales must become more efficient and effective in its lobbying and bidding operations,¹² through improved professional support, better co-ordination between local authorities and an enhanced role in Europe for the new National Assembly for Wales.¹³

Each of these approaches misses the point, which is that regional funds were inadequate to begin with, and the pot of money has suddenly shrunk. Attempts to redefine criteria or redraw maps will only result in some poorer regions securing funds at the expense of others. And Poor regions already spend far too much money and effort in competing for scant EU funds. To intensify this scramble is desperate lunacy.

Most politicians in the poorer regions of Europe have accepted the logic of taking part in an enormous competition amongst the poor for a shrinking pot of EU assistance. For the moment, this is a competition within the existing member states. In an enlarged EU, there will be even more competitors. And the potential new members in Central and East Europe have pockets of poverty deeper than anywhere inside the EU's current frontiers.

The starting point for any truly alternative approach is rejection of this whole approach and, in particular, rejection of Agenda 2000 as a basis for enlargement of the EU and reform of structural and cohesion funding.

The Marxist left, particularly in Britain, has generally given insufficient attention to the regional dimension of EU politics.¹³ This probably reflects the far left's concentration in the metropolitan centres, where regional aid is less of an issue. But 51% of the EU population lives in areas covered by regional programmes.

The funds involved are indeed small, in financial terms, but their real importance lies in the ideological gloss and justification which they provide for social democratic and left politicians to support the Maastricht process. Hence, the visible outrage (and thinly disguised panic) which has followed the Agenda 2000 proposals.

The left needs a wide ranging discussion on how to respond to Agenda 2000. Some things are already clear:

- The left should not oppose EU enlargement to the East. We must stand for an inclusive Europe, and mount a struggle over the social and economic basis on which it is constituted.
- We should, however, oppose Agenda 2000 as a basis for enlargement. We should demand that all social democratic and left parties vote against this proposal in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.
- Pro-Maastricht politicians of the left have traditionally hidden behind the excuse that the EU is dominated by right-wing governments. But there are now social democratic governments in France and Britain, with the prospect of a third in Germany. The time for excuses is over, we should demand that they formulate a Europe-wide plan to tackle unemployment.
- There should be a massive increase in regional aid, both from state governments and the European Union, to fund regional development and enlargement. Regional spending should not be restricted to infrastructure projects and promoting small and medium sized enterprises but predominantly aimed at directly creating jobs through a programme of public works. Any moves towards further privatisation or erosion of the welfare state must be opposed.
- These measures should be paid for by direct progressive taxation across the EU, and a EU-wide tax on speculative foreign exchange transactions.

None of these demands will be won, or even forced onto the agenda, without a

concerted effort. It is time that the leaders of our trade unions and the left parties gave some real content to their talk of a social Europe, by mounting active campaigns on demands such as those above. It is also vital that we continue to develop the existing Europe-wide campaigns on these issues, such as those which have successfully mobilised for the Summits in Amsterdam, Luxembourg and Cardiff.

The Single European Act, the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam and the Dublin Stability Pact were, each in their own way, blows against the workers and poor of Europe. Agenda 2000 threatens to further reinforce a "Europe of the core regions" at the expense of an impoverished periphery to its south, west and east. It must be opposed. ★

*The author is active in Cardiff West Labour Party and is secretary of the Cardiff Euro Demonstration Committee. He can be contacted by E-mail via the committee at <full.employment@cableol.co.uk>

Notes

1. *GDP in the Regions*, Eurostat Report, April 1998. Available from: <http://europa.eu.int/eurostat.html/>
2. Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of the total goods and services produced in a given region.
3. For a more detailed discussion of uneven development in Europe, see Brendan Young, "Wales in Europe: the poor relation?", *Conference Papers*, Socialists and a Welsh Assembly, Cardiff, July 1997.
4. Ash Amin and John Tomanev, "EC policy muddle will fail the poorer regions", *The Guardian*, 13 July 1992.
5. Wayne David, *Building on Maastricht: a left agenda for Europe*, Tribune Group of Euro MP's, March 1993.
6. *Agenda 2000: the legislative proposals*, The European Commission, Document IP/98/258, March 1998.
7. "The common agricultural policy", *International Viewpoint*, Special Issue on the EU, #290, 1997.
8. Catherine Samary, "Can the EU absorb the east?", *International Viewpoint*, #278, June 1996. Also, "The EU's eastward expansion", *International Viewpoint*, #290, 1997.
9. Marc Champion and Tim King, "Long road ahead to the EU for eastern supplicants", *The European*, 1-12 April 1998.
10. One Ecu = £0.65, €1.00, or \$1.00.
11. Martin Walker and David Gow, "Poorer UK regions face 'colossal' Europe aid cut", *The Guardian*, 19 March 1998. Also, "Agenda 2000 - protests at regional reform plans", *European Parliament News*, April 1998.
12. See, for example, Victoria Winkler, "Strategic partnerships and a communitaire spirit", *Agenda*, Institute of Welsh Affairs, Summer 1996.
13. The National Assembly provides a limited measure of autonomy for Wales, though its powers fall far short of those granted to the Scottish Parliament or regional governments in Catalonia and the Basque Country.
14. A notable, and interesting, exception is the article by Claude Gabriel, "The crisis of citizenship and the future of Europe", *International Viewpoint*, #228, May 1992.

International Youth Camp '98

The 15th European camp of youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth International will take place in Jutland, Denmark, on 25-31 July. Participation costs US\$100-200, depending on your country of residence.

For more details see April issue of *International Viewpoint*.

For more information contact your International Viewpoint distributor or write to SAP, Box 547, Nørre Allé 11 A, DK-2200, Copenhagen N. fax +45-35373217. E-mail <socinf@inet.uni2.dk>

INTERNATIONAL
SOCIALISTISK
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Caterpillar From rejection to ratification

Unionised auto-workers at Caterpillar have ratified the same contract they rejected in February, but with one big difference. The company has reinstated all 160 union members fired for dispute-related activities.

Kim Moody*

CAT workers voted down the offer by 58% in February, when the company proposed to take back only 110 of the 160 sacked members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union, leaving 50 to face an uncertain future in arbitration. The majority of the workers realised that if the best fighters could be fired, there wouldn't be much of a union left.

Mike Legel, who works on the UAW Local 974 newsletter *The Unionite*, said after the vote, "Hopefully, Caterpillar will come to the realisation that we are not about to abandon our brothers who were illegally discharged." Ratification did not mean that the majority were happy with the contract. As Legel told the *Detroit Sunday Journal*, "Our only victory is that we still have a union."

Union members at Caterpillar have sent a strong message to management, union leaders, and to the 4,000 scabs who were not paying union dues before the ratification and couldn't vote on the contract. Whatever the content of this contract, union workers will fight on.

Resistance from the war zone

It should come as no surprise that the heart of the rejection movement came from some of the plants in the Illinois "War Zone." The centre of this movement was Decatur, scene of long struggles at A.E. Staley and Bridgestone-Firestone, as well as Caterpillar.

Even with all 160 illegally fired workers back, Decatur CAT workers voted down the offer by 7 to 1 (in February 9 to 1) Workers at the giant East Peoria plant voted "No!" by 6 to 1 in February and only barely passed it in March.

The new contract is big on "flexibility." It includes expanded use of temporary workers, management's right to introduce flexible schedules as required, a new incentive system tied to unit production, and a two-tier hiring system, with new workers starting at 70% of the union wage, and reaching parity only at the end of their six-year contract.

Throughout the prolonged struggle, Caterpillar seemed almost invincible. Its sales soared and its stock tripled between 1993 and 1997. Its profits for those years

leapt from \$626 million to \$2.3 billion. In the plants it conducted a reign of terror against union members.

Saving the union in the plants was no small achievement at the end of this six-and-a-half year battle.

From co-operation to confrontation

In the 1980s Caterpillar had been a model of labour-management co-operation. CAT management used that period to restructure the company by building non-union facilities in the USA and abroad.

Union members were reduced to about 25% of the workforce as CAT quietly expanded and the UAW leadership looked on silently. Then in 1991, management decided the time to reorganise its union workforce had arrived. It broke the industry practice of following the contract pattern set by the UAW in negotiations with another employer, John Deere.

The UAW struck, but ordered the strikers back to work in April 1992 when the company threatened to bring in permanent replacement scabs. This sent shock waves across the labour movement. The UAW then attempted to run an "inside" campaign to force Caterpillar to back down, but CAT wouldn't budge.

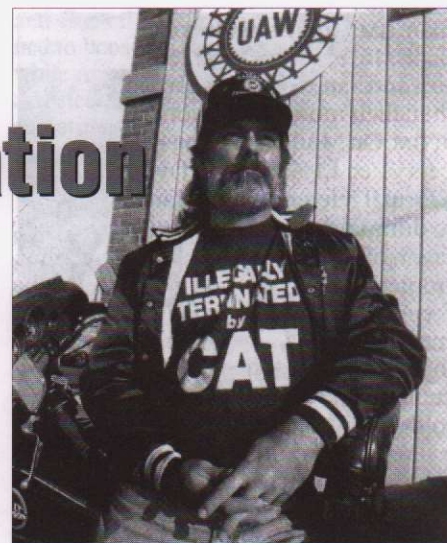
The UAW struck again in 1994, but ended the strike in December 1995, in what appeared a total defeat. The union presented CAT's final offer for a vote, but the members voted it down overwhelmingly.

The UAW attempted to keep some pressure on the company by continuing to amass unfair labour practice charges through the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). By the time they recommended the February 1998 agreement, there were 441 Unfair Labor Practice charges against the company.

The company too had a legal strategy. In December 1995, just as the strikers returned to work for the second time, CAT went to court with a suit that would have completely undermined the UAW's traditional system of shop floor representation.

CAT contended that the UAW system of full-time, company-paid workplace representatives was illegal. Caterpillar, the "Big Three" car producers, and most major firms under UAW contract had allowed this system to flourish informally for decades: they recognised its utility in containing potential conflicts.

The Big Three automakers even opposed Caterpillar's new strategy in court. Through the American Automobile Manufacturers Association, they complained that making company-paid workplace representatives illegal would "significantly disrupt both the companies' operating practices and the structures of collec-



tive bargaining relationships in the U.S. automobile industry."

For the UAW's ruling Administration Caucus, such a decision would cost millions of dollars, undermine its shop floor presence, and eliminate its main patronage device. Company-paid full-timers are a mainstay of the Administration Caucus in the workplace and the local unions. They frequently collect overtime even when not in the plant, and some make as much as \$100,000 a year.

In January 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case. It appears that the acceptance of the suit by the Supreme Court was motivation enough for the UAW leadership to represent to members essentially the same offer that was rejected in 1995. They thought workers were desperate enough to desert fifty of their fired comrades. They underestimated them.

Fites fumbles

Building on the restructuring of the 1980s, CAT Chief Executive Officer Donald Fites launched an ambitious expansion program in the 1990s that saw the company go from 39 plants to 74, half of them abroad. By 1997, 51% of Caterpillar's sales were overseas.

Following the big Pacific-rim craze of the decade, Fites targeted Asia in particular. The 1997 economic crisis in East Asia opened a period of deep industrial restructuring, and austerity. The kind of measures that make CAT's heavy equipment an avoidable luxury.

Not only did Caterpillar's Asian market collapse, but products it had sold there during its targeted expansion came flowing back as second-hand, "grey market" competition for its new US sales.

CAT wanted this contract because it would drastically lower costs in this new competitive situation. CAT Vice President Wayne Zimmerman said it was "tailored to Caterpillar's needs." The workers, however, had convinced management they would hold the contract for ransom until their comrades were reinstated.

The savings from the new contract would be substantial indeed. About 4,000 of Caterpillar's 12,900 union workers

were eligible for retirement. The new agreement, which increased pension benefits by up to \$500 a month, was designed to encourage them to take it.

In their place would come thousands of new hires at 70% of the old wage, who would remain cheaper until the end of the contract, when thousands more would retire and a new wave of low-cost workers would come along. The six-year deal guaranteed this, and took some of the guess-work out of planning in an uncertain world market.

UAW leadership, long accustomed to being guardians of the corporate bottom line, saw no way to turn CAT's new difficulties to the union's advantage. The members, many of whom were less aware of management's serious fumble in Asia, used their veto to make the best of a bad situation. Sometimes, just sometimes, the out-of-control world economy can help workers in struggle.

Nothing is over

CAT's union workers face a difficult situation — a management with blood in its eyes, 4,000 former scabs as co-workers, and a top union leadership that is praying for peace. Donald Fites wants costs cut by any means necessary, and he wants them more than he wants labour peace. He has proved that he could run his plants during a self-imposed class war and make big bucks. He reduced average manufacturing time in his U.S. plants by 75% over the last five years and now he wants more.

Strikers, line-crossers, and new hires alike are in for some serious labour intensification, downsizing, and long hours. The militants, at least, understand their long fight was just one battle. Camron Austin, a supporter of the Decatur plant's *Kick The CAT* newsletter says, "This is not over." "If organised labour has to fight for its survival, so be it, let it begin here," writes Rick Corbin in *The Unionite*.

This kind of consciousness is not isolated to CAT veterans. In the recent rank-and-file rebellion at Saturn, inexperienced UAW members fought the company's 'team concept' organisation, and local and national union leaders, to tie their contracts to the "traditional" GM contract.

They lost the vote to dump the Saturn contract when the union threatened 2,700 layoffs, but as Saturn worker Tom Hopp told a *Labor Notes* school on union democracy in March, "Two thousand people agree with us. That's a start." The fighters at Staley, the Detroit newspapers, the activists in the long string of strikes at GM from 1994 through 1997, and the victors at UPS all displayed this new consciousness.

Win or lose their immediate battles, more workers today are seeing the "big picture" — capital is on a world-wide rampage, and union leaders are in retreat or following their own agenda. The result is not only strikes, but spreading rebellions within the unions.

Recent years have seen victories and near-victories for rank-and-file reform movements in the Teamsters (the country's largest union), the 50,000-member

Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, the 40,000-member California State Employees Association, and the 35,000-member Transport Workers Union Local 100, which represents public transport workers in New York city. Conservatives in Local 100 stole the union election in December 1997, but it will be re-rerun later this month.

Coming behind the victors and near-victors are those newer to the rebellion in countless locals across the country.

What can we learn?

Rank and file persistence is a powerful force. On the other hand, the UAW's entire approach to Caterpillar reads like a negative text book.

A union that lets itself become a minority of the company workforce is unlikely to win a traditional business union-style strike. The union should have followed the company as it expanded, and attempted to organise each new plant. This lesson applies to the UAW across the automobile industry, and to far too many other unions, even in their core jurisdictions.

Both old and new experience points to the use of volunteer member organisers as the key to success. That, however, requires a certain trust in those members, something missing in the UAW. This distrust of the members also undermined the union's "inside" strategy between the strikes. Pioneer workplace strategist Jerry Tucker is one of the many who say that campaign was run too much by "remote control" from Detroit.

Effective inside campaigns must not simply mobilise the members episodically, but draw on their initiative and involvement in designing the actions.

The union's failure to take advantage of the changed international position of CAT last year flows from its embrace of company competitiveness as a strategy for preserving the institutional basis of the union. The lesson is clear: If you are not willing to at least wound the giant, don't expect to win.

A broader lesson is that union democracy is not a luxury. In the final analysis, the members and their position in production are the strength underlying any such

confrontation no matter what tactics or alliances accompany it.

If members are accustomed to passivity in union business; if, in fact, they are excluded from real decision-making in union affairs, influence over bargaining, and the ability to make their leaders accountable, then the hope they can be mobilised at the "right" tactical moment is illusory.

When the members can use the union and its structures to mobilise themselves, then you have power.

The Caterpillar workers, like so many others, did not control their leaders above the local level. In a 14-plant strike over a national contract such as that at Caterpillar, local influence is not enough. Centralised headquarters' control over bargaining goals and negotiations, over dispute strategy and tactics, and over the timing and procedures for presenting an offer to the members is a recipe for keeping the members disorganised.

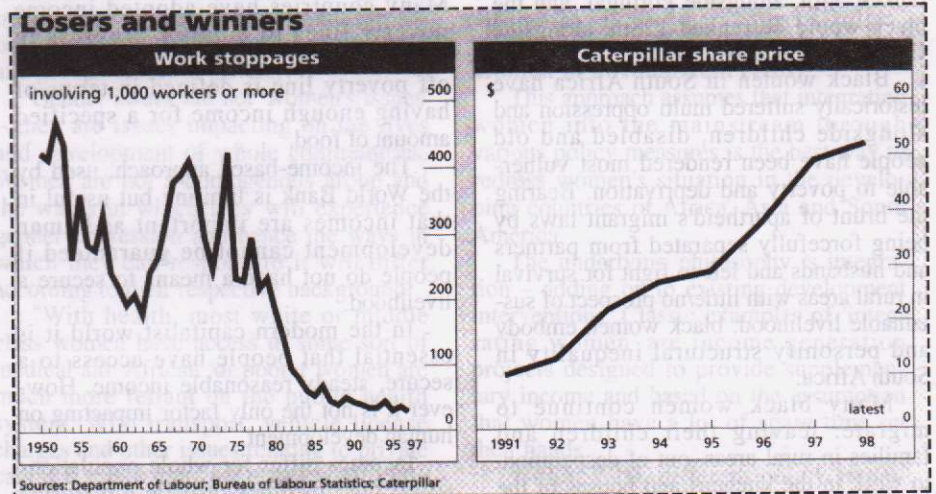
To be a force in the struggle, the members must have collective power and influence over these processes. This the Caterpillar workers did not have.

The 1997 UPS strike was an example of this. The Teamsters had taken important steps toward democratisation and membership power. In preparation for a major confrontation with UPS the Teamster leaders solicited grassroots input in to bargaining goals; members were kept informed regularly about bargaining progress; rank and file initiative was encouraged in the mobilisation against the company's Team Concept programme from 1995 on, and then in the 1997 contract campaign.

The existence of Teamsters for a Democratic Union made much of this possible, reminding us that rank-and-file power and union democracy are not just about good structures and fair elections.

In the era of multinational corporate giants, this is a strategic lesson for all labour. The more union members realise the need to organise themselves and fight for union democracy, the fewer will be the setbacks such as that at Caterpillar—and the faster the real growth labour needs. ★

* The author is director of *Labor Notes* and author of *An Injury to All* and *Labor in a Lean World* (Verso). This article reprinted from *Against the Current*



Gendered poverty

Nowhere outside South Africa do class, 'race' and gender interact so clearly in defining structural inequality. **Tamara Braam** examines the relationship between poverty and gender in the South African context, looks at the different ways of analysing and conceptualising genderised poverty, and sets out the guidelines against which the impact of poverty programmes can be measured.

South African society's most salient feature until the 1990's was the racialisation of the entire political, economic and social systems. The people of South Africa were racially classified (based on physical features such as skin colour, hair texture, shape of nose etc.) into 'white', 'African', 'Coloured' and 'Indian'. The atrocity of the *apartheid* system of legalised racism lies not only in having socialised South Africans into positions of relative inferiority and superiority but also that this has had direct material socio-economic implications. In short 'race' and class in the South African context have emerged as intrinsic to each other whereby black people (those classified African, coloured and Indian) were systematically oppressed and exploited, the result being large sections of these groups being forced into positions of deprivation and abject poverty.

According to the 1995 United Nations Development Programme report, South Africa ranks 95th among the countries of the world in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI). However if black and white South Africans were considered separate "countries", the white would be ranked 34th, alongside Portugal, and the black would be ranked 128th, alongside Ghana. (UNDP, 1995: 22).

Black women in South Africa have historically suffered multi oppression and alongside children, disabled and old people have been rendered most vulnerable to poverty and deprivation. Bearing the brunt of *apartheid*'s migrant laws by being forcefully separated from partners and husbands and left to fight for survival in rural areas with little/no prospect of sustainable livelihood, black women embody and personify structural inequality in South Africa.

Many black women continue to migrate: leaving their children and families in rural areas, out of desperation, to work in the kitchens and houses of the

urban middle and upper classes. Black women's poverty coloured by their racial classification of the previous *apartheid* era is genderised in that their position and status as women, further compromises their chances of living a tolerable life.

Key indicators of poverty

There is no uniformly agreed upon poverty line for South Africa. Estimates of the poor population range from 35% - 55%. In a 1995 World Bank report on *Key Indicators of Poverty in South Africa*, used as a base for the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the poorest 40% of households were defined as poor, and the poorest 20% of households as 'ultra-poor.'

According to the report, South Africa has one of the worst records among comparable middle-income developing countries, in terms of social indicators (health, education, safe water, and fertility) and among the worst records in terms of inequality.

Nearly 95% of South Africa's poor are 'African', 5% are 'Coloured' and less than 1% are 'Indian' and white. Female-headed households have a 50% higher poverty rate than male headed households.

The vast majority of the poor and ultra poor have no access to electricity, running water in the household or modern sanitation. 1/3 of the poor live in shacks or traditional dwellings. About 95% live in rural areas. Almost half have no education or only incomplete primary education. Less than 30% of poor working-age adults are actually working. Over 45% of the poor are children below 16 years.

Three Perspectives on poverty

Poverty can be evaluated in different ways. With an "Income perspective," a person is poor if, and only if, her income level is below the defined poverty line. Many countries have adopted income poverty lines to monitor progress in reducing poverty incidence. Often the cut-off poverty line is defined in terms of having enough income for a specified amount of food.

The income-based approach, used by the World Bank is limiting but useful in that incomes are important as human development cannot be guaranteed if people do not have a means to secure a livelihood.

In the modern capitalist world it is essential that people have access to a secure, steady reasonable income. However it is not the only factor impacting on human development.

Incomes differ for whole populations so average incomes provide a distorted

picture of a national economy, averaging out rich individual incomes with poor incomes.

On a social group /class level incomes differ within the same group e.g. within the working class one will find higher income and lower income depending on what occupations workers find themselves in. There are urban and rural divides and gender divisions on a group level, which are not taken into account.

Alternatively, with a "Basic Needs Perspective," poverty is defined as deprivation of material requirements for minimally acceptable fulfilment of human needs, including food. This concept of deprivation goes well beyond the lack of private income: it includes the need for basic health and education and essential services that have to be provided by the community to prevent people from falling into poverty. It also recognises the need for employment and participation.

The "Capability perspective" understands poverty as the absence of some basic capabilities to function – a person lacking the opportunity to achieve some minimally acceptable levels of these functionings. The functionings relevant to this analysis can vary from such physical ones as being well nourished, being adequately clothed and sheltered and avoiding preventable morbidity, to more complex social achievements such as partaking in the life of the community. The capability approach reconciles the notions of absolute and relative poverty, since relative deprivation in incomes and commodities can lead to an absolute deprivation in minimum capabilities.

Poverty in South Africa is usually measured using the October Household Survey. Poverty patterns are looked at using the household as the unit of measurement. This is problematic, because households generally consist of women and men. And so, patterns of inequality and poverty where women and girls do not have equitable access to cash, schooling or even food in relation to men and boys is not taken into account.

Human Development Framework

This perspective draws on each of the three perspectives but particularly on the capability perspective. The focus lies not merely in the impoverished state in which the person actually lives but also on enlarging people's choices.

From a human development perspective poverty means the denial of choices and opportunities for a tolerable life (UNDP 1997,5). Given the different intersecting dimensions of poverty and the complexity of how they all impact on the quality of life



that a group/individual enjoys, using the income index on its own is inadequate. The UNDP had defined human development as the process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, other guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self-respect.

The human development process in South Africa is about an improved quality of life for the "poor" which means meeting the myriad of challenges of housing, literacy provision, adequate health care services, increased employment opportunities, clean running water, etc.

Human Poverty as a concept within the human development framework means the denial of choices of opportunities for a tolerable life (UNDP, 1997:5) This perspective argues that poverty manifests itself in the deprivation of people's lives and goes beyond material things. It can mean denial of opportunities and choices most

basic to human development – a long, healthy life, dignity, and freedom from violence, reproductive choice, self-esteem and enjoying a decent standard living. The UNDP (1997) argues that poverty must be addressed in all its dimensions. Gender oppression and racial discrimination are obvious factors impacting on individuals' and groups' levels of poverty.

Gender issues are not 'women's issues' – they are issues impacting on the lives and development of whole communities. Women are not a homogenous group and the ways in which they will experience gender oppression and hence the ways in which they can respond to it will differ according to their respective background.

"With health, most white or middle class women have access to some sort of medical aid. African, or poorer women are much more reliant on the public health system. With transport, vehicle license charges and other issues relating to private cars will affect most white or middle class women. African, or poorer women will be

concerned about public transport, or the construction and maintenance of basic roads, tracks and paths in rural areas. With emerge, most white or middle class women unthinkingly use vast amounts of electricity each day. Many African, or poorer women spend much time and money accessing much smaller, and often inadequate, amounts of energy". (*The Second Women's Budget 1997*, 44).

"Time poverty"

One of the most critical pillars and manifestations of gender oppression is the blindness of the unpaid labour which women do in the home.

Child bearing, child rearing, taking care of the needs of the extended family are all roles played by women, much more than men. This work is unrecognised, unpaid and taken for granted yet society could not function effectively without it. Unpaid labour is time consuming, often laborious and repetitive and places demands on women all hours of the day. Poverty can also be measured in terms of time and this is a critical factor in looking at gendered poverty for women are disproportionately time poor.

Conventional economics experiences difficulty in conceptualising time poverty as it does not have a specific monetary value. But the concept of "time poverty" is particularly useful to feminists, because it is the sexual division of labour which allocates women the bulk of unpaid labour while men engage in work that is more highly valued in the productive sphere that is a foundation of gender oppression.

"Time budgets use the 24 hours in a day as the measure and the amount of time required to complete all the tasks required of one to fulfil their paid and unpaid obligations and to rest and otherwise care for themselves sufficiently to continue. A deficit implies that the person has a 'choice' to spend less time in caring for themselves so that s/he becomes ill and/or less able to do other things. Or, it may imply that the person is spending less time working, which reduces income (when the work is paid) or reduces benefits to society (when it is unpaid) (Elson, 1996 a: 23)

Different approach have been developed in attempting to address gender oppression

Women in Development (WID)

This approach assumes that integrating women into the mainstream through various policy measures is the best way to redress women's situation in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and South America.

The underlying philosophy is integration – adding on to existing development interventions. Classic examples of 'integrating women' are income generation projects designed to provide supplementary income and based on the assumption that women have a lot of spare time on their hands.

Within WID, different policy frameworks have emerged, articulated by Moser

★ South Africa

(1993) as equity, anti poverty, efficiency and empowerment frameworks.

The problem with WID is that it considers women as a homogenous group and does not take racial, economic and other factors into account. It projects the myth that women's development can be achieved by addressing economic issues alone. It does not question the kind of development being imposed on developing countries. It has no scope for change and transformation, as it does not challenge existing power relationships in society.

Gender and Development (GAD)

Ideas from the third world movements among others have resulted in the emergence of this alternative approach. GAD does not consider women as a uniform group. Women's situation must be seen in context of the socio-economic, racial and other factors. Society is considered a major factor in the making of female and male identities. And it is important to focus not only on women but on the relationship between women and men and how society influences they're respective roles.

The problem with GAD is that it is easy to disguise the issues that really affect women by focusing on gender in a broad analytical way, concealing personal issues which have a profound impact on women's development.

The GAD approach introduces vocabulary, which focuses on gender identity, gender roles, division labour, reproductive roles, productive roles, community management roles and community politics roles.

In particular, it introduces the concepts of Practical Gender Needs (PGN), which arise out of the particular role which women play – like the need for child care – and Strategic Gender Needs (SGN), which usually challenge the existing power relationships between men and women. This approach provides 'technical tools' for doing gender planning and analysis in a framework geared towards transformation.

Unfortunately, "Gender and Development Approach" has become the latest 'buzz word' in the development sector. Its adoption does not necessarily represent a shift and a commitment to challenging gender power relationships.

Also, the technical emphasis of the GAD approach tends to shift the focus away from developing an understanding of the wider socio-political-economic context and how this in turn impacts on people's lives.

As a further critique of GAD, Nair (1996) asserts that the linking of gender to development means that gender debates become shaped by development debates which in turn are shaped by the interests of international institutions like the IMF.

Characteristics of gendered poverty

Many Marxists and Feminists in Africa and elsewhere have used a Human Development Framework to conceptualise and discuss poverty. This lends itself to integrating an understanding and analysis of gender relations as a critical component of 'enlarging people's choices as well as



raising the level of well being achieved'. (UNDP, 1997).

The most critical indicators are: to lead a long, and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, other guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self respect.

Health

Well known British health theorist Lesley Doyal (1994) had this to say at the 1994 Women's Health Conference in Johannesburg.

"In the end, it is not doctors that (make) women sick or better. It is the reality of their lives... it is how society (and men) treat them that is the central issue. Instead of starting with diseases and looking for their causes, we need to start with women's daily activities and assess their potential for providing or destroying women's health." (quoted in Goosen, Klugman, 1996)

Women bear the major responsibility for child bearing and child rearing and at the same time often work to supplement the household income. Women put food on the table, care for the elderly and sick and contribute to the community functioning by raising funds for the church or working together to get a water or housing project off the ground. With all the demands placed on women there is little time to take care of their own health and development. Women experience low social status, political oppression and exploitation by bosses and family which results in poor physical and mental health, which in turn feeds back into powerlessness and poor self esteem.

One of the most critical factors to radically improve a nation's health and quality of life is to make sure that everyone has access to safe, clean water and toilets and dispose of waste hygienically. Millions of people in South Africa do not

have access to safe water supplies, toilets and refuse removal.

In many areas, only polluted water from rivers, streams and dams is available, forcing women to spend what little money they have on expensive fuel to boil water. The effort that women have to make to obtain water, a basic necessity of life, is a criminal waste of women's time, energy and money.

One of the ways in which water gets polluted is through contact with human faces, which contain many dangerous bacteria, spreading illnesses such as typhoid, diarrhoea and cholera. Life is particularly harsh for women living in informal settlements as without modern sanitation and clean water, even if women themselves are not ill, the burden of caring for children or elderly/frail people is their responsibility.

Not having access to adequate, quality reproductive health care has devastating results on the lives of women as they cannot space the birthing of their children and are unable to make informed decisions about their lives, reproductive system and bodies. Women finding themselves pregnant repeatedly and struggling to cope with the children they presently have, have resorted to back street abortions with disastrous consequences for their future health, fertility and lives. Unsafe abortion is one of the five primary causes of maternal mortality and leads to an estimate 20,000 deaths every year (World Health Organisation, 1991); 99% of these deaths occur in the developing world.

Safety and security

"According to the Interpol International Crime Statistics Report (ICPO) of 1994 South Africa has the highest reported rape ratio in the world while in terms of theft of motor cars and property related crime South Africa is found in twenty seventh and thirteenth positions respectively".

The extent of the epidemic level of the problem of violence against women is captured in the following statistics:

- * Rape Crisis claims that 80% of rapes are perpetrated by acquaintances of people known to the survivor.
 - The most prominent non-governmental organisations working in the field estimate that one in six women are abused by their partners (Human Rights Watch, 1995:45)
 - In the first study on femicides (women killed by intimates) in South Africa, 41% of women in the magisterial district of Johannesburg who were murdered during 1994 were killed by their partners (Vetten, 1995).
 - Rates of rape were highest in Kwa-zulu Natal and appear to reflect overall levels of violence in an area
 - The Human Rights Watch Report quotes police estimates that only 2.8% of all rapes committed are reported.
 - Just less than one third of reported rapes actually reach the court and have those cases prosecuted only half result in convictions.
- (Source: *Second Women's Budget*)

Despite the fact that violence against women should clearly be a top priority issue for the police force the SAP has not identified it as such. Women value their own safety and bodily integrity more than they do motor cars, hand bags and any other cash/assets that they may own but decisions at a policy level has certainly not taken this into account. The brutal face of violence against women, historically, has not been exposed but like the invisible labour of women in the home has been concealed by the demise of the private/domestic sphere.

The low attendance of the public men's march to protest against violence against women on 22 November 1997 which had received much media attention and had been the build up of weeks of planning and campaigning is indeed a reflection that South Africans have a long way to go in prioritising the issues as a national priority. Yet daily, hourly, women's lives are being shattered and destroyed with no possible chance of overcoming the barriers which stand between them and dignity, freedom and optimal human development.

Transport

In South Africa, as in other countries the vast majority of persons using the public transport system are women. Yet the way in which the public transport system is set up is not taking the multiple roles which women fulfil into account.

Many poor women find themselves in the informal sector and need to use public transport to move their goods from one point to the next. Often women travel with babies and young children, which makes using, congested, smoke-filled trains particularly difficult. Many women work extra long hours, having to leave in the early hours of the morning to return in late evening: this confronts them with the

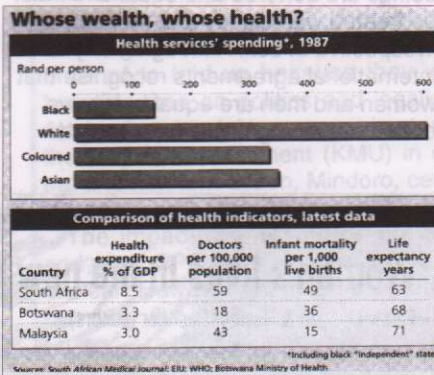
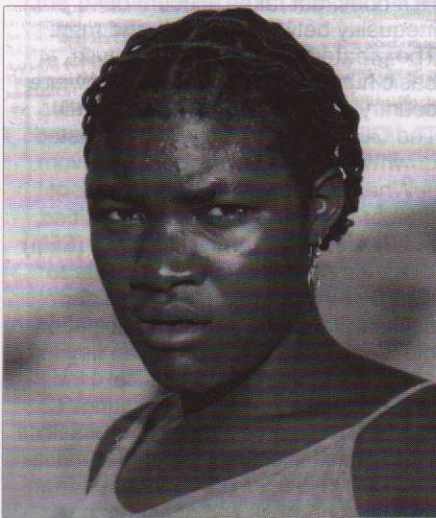
problem of irregular transport and the anger of sexual harassment.

Apartheid planning whereby black people were placed outside of the cities has meant that distances between home and work for black working women are long, eating into their time. "For example, in her study of economically active single mothers in Pretoria, Fairhurst found that the average distance travelled to work was 23.7km for African women, 12.4 for coloured and 10.8km for white women. (Fairhurst, 1982: 142)

Rural women have to walk great distances to collect wood for cooking and to fetch water. The combined effects of increased distances travelled and heavier loads places extra stress on the well being of rural women. There are very long distances to travel to reach basic health care amenities. In some instances when a child/family member is ill a rural woman is obliged to take her other children along with her as she will be away for more than a day and does not have access to reliable transport. In many cases she has to pay a relatively large amount of money to a person who owns a car to transport her in such an emergency.

"To be educated"

Pre-primary education and the Educare Programme receives less than 1% of the overall education budget. This lack of provision of services severely hampers the income earning ability of mothers and care givers who cannot afford to pay for privately run educare centres.



High rates of teenage pregnancy are a major reason for girls dropping out of school. The official teenage pregnancy rate in South Africa, excluding the former 'Homelands,' is 330 for every 1000 women younger than 19.

In 1994 of the 25.6 million adults aged 15 years and older 7.4 million could be described as illiterate, and over half, 4m were women. There were about 10.3 million adults with education levels of Standard 5-8 needing vocational training. More than half were women.

There is a direct link between the level of education and the degree of poverty. More than 2/3 of households where the household head has either no education or less than standard one, are living in poverty. This impacts more particularly on women.

Although the teaching profession is dominated by women (60 and 80% of employees), men hold 58% of principal posts, 69% of deputy principal posts and 50% of head of department posts.

Women's low level of education limits their access to skilled and thus higher paid jobs. In 1991 women represented 54.5% of people older than 18 years with no education. This in turn limits women's opportunities to enjoy a decent standard of living.

Work

Makgetla (1995) defines three distinct segments to the labour market. In the primary labour market, women are concentrated in service professions such as nursing and teaching and the clothing industry. Women occupy a disproportionately high number of jobs in the secondary labour market, mainly in agriculture, domestic work and the informal sector. And women are the exclusively occupiers of the non-market labour segment - agriculture and domestic work.

The jobs which women perform are mainly in the service sectors: catering, retail, domestic, secretarial and clerical, whereas the job men perform are located in manufacturing occupations. Women are concentrated in low paid jobs. Women are 59% of those with annual earnings of R1,000-2,999 (US\$200-590), but a mere 6.4% of the R100,000-299,999 income bracket. (Nyman and Caga, 1995).

Reasons for women's low income include their concentration in jobs that are flexible and low-paid. Flexible work includes casual work, part-time work, sub-contracted work, seasonal work and home-based work.

Women are also located in jobs where there is a low level of unionism, which could serve as a further explanation for women's low income. While low level of formal education and training qualifications contribute towards limiting employment opportunities for women, this is not the only factor. Women's (unpaid) responsibilities in the home are often used to justify employers' discrimination in the workplace.

Women represent a major percentage of the unemployed. According to one World Bank/SALDRU survey, 71.2% of African women of the age group aged 16-

24 are unemployed. Trade liberalisation policies have had a particular effect on the textile and clothing industries whose work force is 80% female. When South Africa opened up trade with the rest of the world, many of its factories were unable to supply goods as cheaply as their competitors or at the right quality. The result has been that close to 40 000 jobs have been lost in the clothing and textile industry.

Large numbers of women are engaged in the informal sector of the economy. A key feature of this is that as within the formal economy, women occupy a disadvantaged position. Horn (1994) argues that often when activities undertaken by women become more profitable that they are gradually taken over by men. She ascribes this to the inferior legal status of women, men's greater access to resources such as credit and women's role in social reproduction.

Concluding remarks

It should be clear from all of the above that just as poverty in South Africa has been racialised, it also has a particular gendered characteristics that can be woven into a discussion on any aspect of socio-economic life in our country.

The gendered nature of poverty needs to be a critical part of an analysis and strategy to tackle poverty in a fundamental way.

It will fail if it is added on as an important issue, as articulated in some WID approaches. It will fail if it loses perspective of the power relationships between women and men by focusing on gender in an overtly technical way. It will fail if it is only focused on outcome and not simultaneously on process.

Monitoring the various indicators cannot substitute for building the capacity of black people, poor people and poor, black women who are the embodiment of the most abject poverty in our country to participate in, understand and determine processes, political agendas and strategies which will deal with gendered poverty in a fundamental way. ★

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Measuring poverty

There is no easy way to measure genderised poverty. Tamara Braam looks at the various indexes that have been used within a Human Development Perspective, and suggests a few guidelines for measuring progress in addressing genderised poverty.

Human Development Indicator...

The **Human Development Index (HDI)** measure the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development – longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living. A composite index, the HDI contains three variables: life expectancy, educational attainment (adult literacy and combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment) and real GDP per capita (in US\$).

The **Human Poverty Index (HPI)** measures deprivation in basic human development in the same dimensions as the HDI. The variables used are the percentage of people expected to die before age 40, the percentage of adults who are illiterate, and overall economic provisioning in terms of the percentage of people without access to health services and safe water and the percentage of under weight children under 5 years old.

The **Gender-related Development Index (GDI)** measures the achievements in the same dimensions and variables as the HDI does, but takes account of inequality between women and men. The greater the gender disparity in basic human development, the lower a country's GDI compared with its HDI. The GDI is, in effect, the HDI adjusted downwards for gender inequality.

Whereas the GDI is an indicator of gender inequality in basic capabilities, the **Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)** indicates whether women are able to actively participate in economic and political life. It focuses on participation, measuring gender inequality in key areas of economic and political participation and decision-making.

The 1979 **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** starts from the basic premise is that all human beings are born free and equal and must be treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of sex. Although many international agreements recognise that women and men are equal extensive discrimination against women exists.

Where there are poverty women suffer the most, as they are the last to receive food, health care, education and training opportunities for work. In order to stop this discrimination against women, states must:

- Create a new economic order based on equity and justice
- Remove all forms of racism and racial discrimination, colonialism and all forms of international aggression
- Strengthen international peace, security and cooperation so as to promote social progress and development.
- Recognise the great contribution women make to the welfare of the family and development of society.
- Make sure that the role of women as mothers is not used as a basis for discrimination against them.
- Work to change traditional roles of women and men in society and the family so that the upbringing of children will require a sharing of responsibility between women, men and society as a whole.

Clear guidelines are stipulated in 16 articles covering discrimination, policy measures, guarantee of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, affirmative action, sex role attitudes and prejudice, prostitution, equality in politics and government, participation in international affairs, citizenship, education, employment, health care and family planning, special help for rural women, law and marriage and family life.

...and the political dimension

The CEDAW obligations should be the broad framework within other more specific indicators is developed.

It is clear that human poverty, gender relations and gendered poverty include many dimensions that cannot be measured – or are not being measured. Indicator systems fall into three areas: traditional indicators such as censuses, composite indicator systems such as the Human Development Index and alternative indicators such as qualitative indicators. Use of all methodologies for measurement, including indicator systems, has overt or covert political intentions. The measurement generally also involves a moral attitude towards those being measured, which determines to a large extent which methodology will be

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Women's lives in the new global economy

Penny Duggan & Heather Dashner (editors)

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chosen. Traditional and composite indicator systems have largely operated in a gender blind fashion until recently.

Towards developing indicators to measure gendered poverty

The excellent work done by Debbie Budlender and the team of feminist researchers involved in compiling *The Women's Budget* and *The Second Women's Budget* is an excellent basis from which to develop suitable measurements for defining gender indicators within the South African context.

A thorough overview of developments in respective sectors and the impact this has had on the lives of specifically poor women paints the context within which indicators should be developed. It is not merely a technical exercise but a profoundly political one. Using CEDAW as the broad parameters, building onto that by developing the questions raised in the two volumes of *The Women's Budget*, appropriate mechanisms to deal with the complexity of genderised poverty can be developed.

The subjective factor

Qualitative indicators involve peoples' perceptions, judgements and values. Such indicators can play an important part in the attempt to measure results of development projects, and in the attempt to include women through the project cycle. They should be used in combination with quantitative indicators and qualitative analysis such as gender analysis.

After all, indicators largely point to important trends and questions but do not provide answers to these questions. (Beck, 1997). Qualitative indicators can reflect women's and men's experiences, recounted from their own perspectives, and can be used to elicit women and men's views about participation, their role and their influence. Their use is one way of safeguarding the measurement of genderised poverty from a purely technical angle. They make possible an approach which:

- Contextualises gendered poverty in the framework stipulated by CEDAW.
- Builds onto the work done by the Women's Budget Initiative in understanding and defining what government departments' indicators are.
- Uses the broad human development framework of understanding poverty, going beyond a solely income based approach.
- Sees the measurement of gendered poverty as a technical task, which is implicitly political.
- Locates change within a broad gender and development framework.

By building on to the GDI and GEM by incorporating qualitative aspects through which critical qualitative elements such as whether women's strategic gender needs are being met, true levels of autonomy within the home can be measured. ★

The other Asia

Philippine Communist Party splits – again

Reihana Mohideen

A number of key leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines have been expelled after opposing directives to abandon the party's legal front organisations in order to advance the armed struggle in the countryside.

According to one leader of the opposition, Nicolas Magdangal, "There's a strong propensity to treat all debate as counter-revolutionary".

Dissident leaders of the legal peasant organisation aligned with the CPP — the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP)* said, in an open letter published in March, that the "wrong line" in the current debate comes from those [ie the CPP leadership faction around Wilma Tiamzon] who are "guilty of an ultra-left error that [leads to] political isolation [and to] denigrate the importance of legal peasant organising and open mass struggles... they deny the importance of various forms of struggle... they say that the anti-APEC campaign and the anti-imperialist World Peasant Summit in 1996 were wrong... so was the anti-GATT/WTO campaign in 1995, the Church-Peasant Conference, the campaign calling for the dismantling of the rice cartel, and all other major political battles we initiated in the past to defend the peasantry and the Filipino people's interests.

"They assert that it is not necessary to build open legal organisations and pursue peasant struggles in the framework of a strong open peasant mass movement... they pushed for the dissolution of KMP chapters in the villages and towns... projects had to be stopped... armed units of the underground movement were mobilised to raid the local office of one of the KMP's support NGOs in order to force its closure."

The struggle seems to have been sharpest in central Luzon (where the CPP base was strong), where at least 500 party members have been purged.

The Tiamzon leadership, which represents the CPP's Netherlands-based chairperson 'Joma' Sison, has labelled the dissidents it expelled as "wrong-liners" and "reformists". A number of CPP organisations in central Luzon were ordered to fold up because they were "wasting time on politics and legalism". Also ordered to fold up were chapters of the May First Movement (KMU) in central and northern Luzon, Mindoro, central Visayas, and Mindanao.

The impact of the split on the KMU and other CPP legal organisations is still unclear. However, there were reports of two May Day rallies in Bataan, central Luzon — a 2000-strong rally organised

by the labour alliance Amba-bala, which was previously the KMU chapter in the area, and a much smaller KMU rally of around 100 people. ★

Source: Green Left Weekly#318, May 20

New police unit will "shadow" HK radicals

Hong Kong Police are forming "tailing squads" for shadowing and phone tapping "pro-democracy organisations with overseas connections, radical pressure groups, pro-Taiwan groups and individuals with Taiwanese background." Their targets include Leung Kwok-hung of April 5th Action Group and Lau San-ching, one of the board members of *Hong Kong Voice of Democracy*.

These "tailing squads" are modelled on the former political section of the force, disbanded in 1995. The squads will be composed of more than 100 policemen, supplied with advanced equipment.

Leung Kwok-hung has been harassed by the police since Britain returned control of Hong Kong to China. In an interview with *Oriental Daily*, he said that he has been closely monitored by the police since last July and they seemed to know the exact time and date of his planned demonstrations. ★

Source: *Oriental Daily*, May 18, reported by *Hong Kong Voice of Democracy*, 3/F, 57, Peking Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong, China. Email: editor@democracy.org.hk. www.freeway.org.hk/~democracy/

Crackdown on Korean student unions

The Korean CIA has ordered the arrest of all elected representatives of *Hanchongryeon* (Korean Alliance of Student Unions), and arrested 5 people, including the vice-president of Youngnam University student council and the president of Dukseong Woman's University student council.

In April, police blockaded the 6th *Hanchongryeon* conference, and announced that any participants would be arrested. The association (of 150 university student councils, with direct elections), rejects the accusation of being a "pro-enemy group."

On April 13 police arrested Hanyang University student Ha Youngjoon on a charge of violating the National Security Law by "possession of pro-enemy documents". Presented as evidence was the British journal *Race And Class*, one of Ha's textbooks, and academic papers like *Marxist Theory Of Depression*, which have already been translated and published openly in Korea. ★

Source: PICIS Newsletter

★ India

The following articles and press clippings reflect the reactions of several sections of the Indian left to the recent nuclear tests, and the threat of Western sanctions.

According to anti-nuclear campaigner Achin Vanaik, "after what has happened, there are still two vital paths to pursue. The first is to call a halt to the line where it now is and to adamantly oppose further movement by India towards open development and deployment of nuclear weapons or indeed any further tests.

According to Vanaik, those who have supported the tests but are rightly hostile or worried by the way in which the government, led by the Hindu communalist *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) has hijacked the nuclear agenda, have another responsibility. "Even as they may feel or publicly declare that these tests are desirable and will contribute to a strong India, it will be the most shameful abnegation of their political and moral responsibility if they do not also declare publicly that they are motivated by a vision of Indian nationalism that is fundamentally opposed to the ugly, antidemocratic, communal, intrinsically belligerent *Hindutva* that is the guiding force of the BJP-RSS project..."

Neither of India's mainstream Communist Parties have taken a consistent anti-nuclear stance. The recent nuclear tests seem to have provoked a slight shift in Communist discourse. But it remains couched within a "patriotic" framework. Almost as if the BJP finger on the trigger is more significant than the detonation of the device itself, and its implications for India and the region.

[BS/JD]



The main enemy is at home!

Gone are the voices of discord. Gone are the criticisms of corruption. Gone even is the criticism of the destruction of the *Babri Masjid* (Mosque). Congress, *Janata*, *Samajwadi*, and various regional parties are tripping over each other's feet in their bid to hail India's shiny, new-found national unity in the aftermath of [last month's] nuclear explosions.

National security has become the watchword with which the Vajpayee government, and the [Hindu communalist] family, are seeking to mobilise public opinion. For a whole month, until the explosions, the bourgeois media criticised Defence Minister George Fernandes for having attacked China and "damaged attempts at normalisation of relations." Those same scribes and editors are now competing with each other to praise Fernandes for having "prepared public opinion" for the explosions.

This wave of chauvinistic nationalism has drawn in the major parties of the Indian left. Constantly looking at bourgeois and petty bourgeois public opinion, whose approbation has become their life's blood, the CPI and the CPI(M) have done no more than slightly distanced themselves after the second round of explosions, and even then, after taking a bow in the direction of the scientists, and after ensuring that their bourgeois allies will not be too upset by their criticisms.

"National security," yells Prime Minister Vajpayee. "National security," cries *The Organiser* [newspaper of the extreme-right RSS]. "National security," agrees happily Mulayam Singh Yadav, ex-defence minister, spurious socialist, and supposedly the major rival of the [governing, Hindu communalist] *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP). "National security,"

agrees the [opposition] Congress Party, stressing that they, not the BJP, are the real father of India's nuclear teeth. And "national security," mumbles the shame-faced left. But who is threatening whom? Whose security will the nuclear explosions safeguard?

For the Indian working class, the answer is clear. The day the nuclear devices were exploded, Maoist activists were still being murdered in Bihar state by the Ranvir Sena, a private militia closely linked to the ruling BJP. Striking nurses in Delhi were being threatened with eviction, arrest, the application of the Essential Services Maintenance Act, and any number of repressive measures. Delhi University teachers, recently on strike for better pay and other benefits, were threatened with pay cuts for the period of strike.

Jingoism pays

Because the BJP did not win a clear majority of parliamentary seats, it governs in an unstable coalition (see April's *International Viewpoint*) and has moderated its programme. But the underlying fascist agenda was never abandoned. Jingoistic nationalism is one such element.

Such nationalism not only threatens peace in the region. It is also a weapon in the hands of the ruling class to ideologically break working class solidarity. The threat of war is always a good weapon. It whips the petty bourgeoisie, and even layers of the working class, into a frenzy. It isolates the class conscious vanguard. It gives the regime legitimacy in leading attacks on working class standards of living, and into attacking and seeking to smash trade unions.

In today's India, the BJP can also call on the mass organisations of fascism that

have been built up over the years, particularly the RSS (see p.26)

Already, the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission have warned that "sanctions must be faced with determination." Indian capitalism clearly has the required determination. Determination that this time the costs must be passed on to the working class, and that the union-protected, hard-earned rights of the workers must go.

After the sanctions begin to bite, every struggle by the working class to maintain its standard of living will be branded a treasonous activity. Every major strike will face, not only state action, but the organised violence of the fascist forces.

Sovereignty threatened?

Are India's securities and sovereignty, truly threatened? By whom? Can Pakistan really invade and dismember India? Had there been no sustained history of repression in Kashmir, had there been no systematic violation of the democratic rights of the Kashmiri people, had their right of self-determination not been trampled underfoot, just as West Pakistan had done with the people of then East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), then Pakistan would have been able to do nothing in that region.

Moreover, what are nuclear weapons supposed to do? No imaginary line on a map will stop radioactive fall-out. An Indian nuclear bomb dropped in Pakistani cities like Lahore or Karachi will also affect Indians, quite apart from the fact that Pakistan may retaliate in kind.

Moreoever, what are nuclear weapons supposed to do? No imaginary line on a map will stop radioactive fall-out. An Indian nuclear bomb dropped in Pakistani cities like Lahore or Karachi will also affect Indians, quite apart from the fact that Pakistan may retaliate in kind.

Is it the sovereignty of India vis-a-vis USA that the government wants to demonstrate? This is a farcical and token sovereignty. Internationalisation of capital has meant that the sovereign state plays a very limited role in many crucial areas. Neither India, nor any other country, can ignore the WTO or the international financial institutions. Nothing short of world-wide workers' struggles, culminating in workers' revolutions, can do that.

Attacking the workers

No, what is being sought is far more sinister. Indian capitalism, rallying behind a fascist-militarist tendency, wants to strengthen state power against its own mortal enemy, the Indian working class.

The economy of India is not yet like Jamaica or Sri Lanka. Significant sections of the working class still get substantial cost-of-living increases, and struggles, by bank employees and others, have politically blocked certain moves in the direction of liberalisation. This rankles with the upper classes. The sovereign state is now urged to exercise its mind in this, domestic direction.

Obviously, there is also a foreign policy dimension to these latest developments. It is the attempt by the Indian bourgeoisie to attain big-power status. Former Prime Minister Gujral tried to be a nice guy. That got India no promise of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Now, increasing sections of the military,

the state bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie are adopting the long-cherished RSS vision of an armed, combative India, dominating Asia from Kabul to Singapore. A vision enthusiastically fed to the middle class public by the paid "opinion-makers".

This big power status means India will be able to dominate neighbours like Pakistan, so long as direct US interests are not challenged. This is the meaning of Prime Minister Vajpayee's private messages to US President Clinton.

Obviously, this is bound to raise tension in the region, and create a local arms race, involving India, Pakistan and China. With Vajpayee and Defence Minister Fernandes now identifying China as the main enemy, India is virtually declaring that India wants to re-negotiate the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, to ensure parity between India and China.

Since China has a declared stockpile of 300 nuclear arms, and knowing that producing the nuclear warheads is only a small part of the total cost of weaponisation, the indications are grave. Recent posturing suggests that the Indian government is willing to rush into missile production at a very high rate, and enter into a contest with China, which is three times as rich as India, and has a faster-growing economy.

This can be done. In the 1930s, Hitler rearmed Germany at a breathtaking pace. And the USSR maintained an arms race with the USA for many years, despite its weaker economy. But the cost is very high, and inevitably falls on the working class. Though, for a certain period of time, militarisation can offer large profits, and provide a major area of investment. From the point of view of Indian capital, such a programme may compensate for the effects of Western sanctions.

Western and Indian hypocrisy

The United States is showing its usual hypocrisy. It is the only country to have used the atom bomb, and the first country to test the hydrogen bomb and make the neutron bomb. In the war against Iraq, the USA, despite the vaunted accuracy of its "smart bombs", killed many civilians. Consciously and deliberately. The United States has fought more destructive wars than any other country since World War II.

The rulers of the USA say sanctions are intended to ensure that nasty weapons do not fall into the wrong hands. But by what standards are *their* hands the right ones? The imperialist butchers of Korea, Vietnam or Iraq have no moral right to dictate terms to any other country.

This sentiment is widespread in India. Like Nehru and Indira Gandhi before them, India's current rulers want to exploit the legitimate anti-imperialist feelings of the mass of the people for their nefarious ends. Threats and sanctions will be used to consolidate the RSS-BJP position, just as the savagery of the second Gulf War has actually strengthened rather than weakened Saddam Hussain in Iraq.

In this context, India's testing of nuclear devices was wrong, just like every

testing of nuclear devices. In every case, it is not the neighbouring country, but the ruling class at home, that constitutes the main enemy of the toiling masses. This kind of "national security" actually jeopardises the lives of millions of ordinary Indians, by exposing them to the risk of retaliatory nuclear attacks.

India's scientists should not be congratulated. On the contrary, by contributing to the further damage of the environment, and a new nuclear arms race, for the sake of personal wealth, "glory" or misplaced nationalism, these scientists stand convicted of crimes against humanity.

Even before 1945, some scientists, in Germany and elsewhere, had resisted the pressure to help out their regime. And since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, every scientist who takes the side of nuclear war-mongers, anywhere in the world, does so knowingly, and cannot be absolved of his or her personal responsibility.

As well as replacing nationalist hype with clear, class demands, those who want peace and amity in the sub-continent, should unite to fight for India's immediate signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty with no further negotiations.

This does not mean supporting sanctions against India. On the contrary. Nuclear weapons are unsafe in any hands, but the struggle against the bomb must be a progressist and internationalist struggle, oppose every ruling class attack on the proletariat anywhere. ★

This article was produced by the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan (Indian Section of the Fourth International)



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The coming arms race

by Achin Vanaik

India's bomb tests are morally shameful and politically foolish. Any act which legitimises or promotes the production or deployment of these evil weapons of mass destruction whether it is by the USA, China, India or any other country deserves to be criticised at least on moral grounds even if the overall judgements that such considerations must be subordinated to 'national security concerns'.

Indeed, historically India had always cited the moral factor as a major reason why it would not behave like nuclear elites elsewhere. That nobody amongst the new army of applauders has even bothered to point to the moral dilemma intrinsic to this act reveals most strikingly the general mood of the Indian elite and strategic community. But since nobody barring opponents are bothered by this, let us go to the political dimension.

Amongst the numerous reasons why this act is so foolhardy there is space here only to highlight one – it unleashes a political dynamic which is outside India's control and whose ultimate end cannot yet be forecast.

More precisely, there will now be tremendous domestic pressure on Pakistan to carry out its own test in retaliation. If this happens, which is more than likely, the pressure on India to go a step further and openly deploy nuclear weapons will become intense... Once this happens, Pakistan will follow suit and the regional nuclear arms race will begin.

Expect the bomb lobby to react in two ways to such a development. On the one hand there will be the appeal to national chauvinism about the need to counter any Pakistani nuclear threat in the name of national security, ignoring that Pakistan is reacting to India here. On the other, there

will be the claim that it doesn't really matter and that, in fact, Pakistani acquisition and deployment of nuclear weapons capability will enhance its self-confidence and therefore improve the prospects of peace through active nuclear deterrence.

What will be missing will be any recognition of the simple truth obvious to all but the 'nuclear expert' that the initiation of such nuclear rivalry both reflects and qualitatively exacerbates the hatreds, tensions and suspicions that have made this the only part of the world that has had for over 50 years a continuous hot-cold war between two countries, and with no end in sight.

China and Pakistan

The supposed Chinese nuclear threat against India has always been abstract, arising not from the actual behaviour of China but from... the deceptive slant given by vested Indian interests to the interpretation of the China-Pakistan relationship. This has falsely been made out to be a near nuclear alliance when it is actually nothing more than a relationship of co-operation in dual use materials and technologies and arms carried out for mutual economic, technological, commercial and political benefit.

One can imagine the uproar in India if China were to supply Pakistan with its most advanced fighter aircraft or help it set up two nuclear reactors. Yet this is exactly what Russia is doing with India. The Pakistani hawk who screams that this indicates an alliance between Russia and India against Pakistan is as fundamentally mistaken as the Indian hawk who makes the opposite but equivalent claim about the China-Pakistan relationship.

The purpose of Defence Minister Fer-

nandes' recent tirade against China now stands revealed. It was to lay down the ideological rationale for the bomb tests.

This could not have been pegged to claims about Pakistani nuclear provocation, because of that country's essentially reactive diplomacy. It could only have been pegged on the need to counter a future threat from a 'potential' enemy, China. And on the need for India to finally be seen as a 'great' power', and win 'world respect.

This action is not the expression of a mature, calm, confident and relaxed nationalism, but of the very opposite! For a long time now we have been witnessing an insecure, tense mood of frustrated and uncertain nationalism amongst the Indian elite and middle classes. It is precisely because this *milieu* exists, and because this promotes the search for a more aggressive 'resolution' of existing problems that the BJP-RSS combine has been able to make the political inroads that it has.

It is not in the least a coincidence that the party which has pursued the most aggressive and viciously communal form of cultural nationalism has also been the party with the most aggressive nuclear position. It has been the only party whose official position was that it would "exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons" as distinct from merely keeping the option open.

India's insecure elite

Fifty years after independence there is a widespread sense within the Indian elite, that the country has not 'made it' internationally. China has its economic miracle. Smaller far eastern countries are greater success stories. But, the elite complains, India is not listened to seriously. We are a great civilisation, they protest. We must shape the twenty-first century along with other great powers.

This is a context eminently suited to the near desperate search for some perceived short-cut that offers the hope of somehow changing such a situation. There has been no change in the external environment or in threat perceptions that explains what has now happened. This is all about India's changing self-perceptions.

The sheer lack of sobriety in much of the public response, the near-hysterical character of the adulation is not only pathetic but deeply disturbing because of the out-dated mind-set it reveals. In the more complex and difficult world we live in, great power status of the conventionally sought kind is neither as important as it was once (and still) thought to be, nor as easy to attain, nor pivoted as significantly on military might.

Certainly, nuclear weapons are not only irrelevant to the issue in a way that economic prosperity and strength is not, but so self-defeating as to be part of the problem, not the solution... ★

Source: *The Hindustan Times*, May 14
The author is a leading anti-nuclear journalist, as well as a frequent writer on the communalist danger.

National Alliance of Peoples' Movements: "Restrain the nuclear hawks!"

The testing of these destructive weapons on the day of birth and Nirvana of Buddha has added a sad irony to the process... We, the people's movements and the people working for a sustainable, equitable and humane social-economic order unequivocally condemn the ill-advised step by the Government of India and call for an immediate halt to any such military adventurism in the guise of nationalism.

India has been isolated in the world community because of these nuclear tests. No doubt, the strident reaction by the rich and nuclear weapon nations is mostly an example of double standards about atomic weapons. However, that does not justify India's following them. In fact, power-holders in India have only given [western] nuclear powers greater legitimacy.

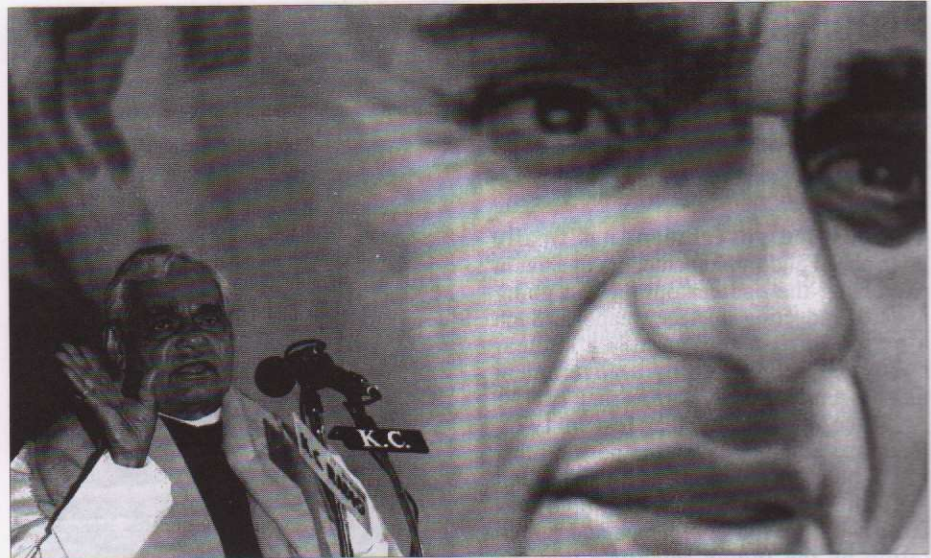
Besides, a large number of non-nuclear countries from all parts of the world have made their disagreement known. India has betrayed the trust and expectations of the peoples all over the World, including those in India, of playing a leading role in a peaceful, nuclear weapons free international relations. After Independence, India has taken a principled stand against nuclear weapons and general militarization of the globe.

India's moral and political power in international politics was largely dependent upon such principled stand and pursuit of a new international economic and political order. This stand has been paying short term and immediate dividends to our country in the international community.

All along these years, the international community has been taking the Indian view seriously and has mostly adopted a tough posture towards the tantrums by Pakistan. That apart, India has forfeited the opportunity and historical responsibility to lead the march towards a more humane, peaceful world. We too have become the part of the Global Market of the Military-Industrial complex.

The nuclear tests are being justified on account of national pride and glory. The real glory would have been the availability of clean drinking water, housing, employment, minimum health services and opportunities for education. The Government, rattled by the political squabbles and unwieldy economic situation sought a convenient way out for diverting attention from the basic issues by projecting an issue which has nothing to do with the basic problems of this country or of international politics.

The adventurist step will definitely provide alibi and legitimacy for forces like Pakistan and China to unabashedly pursue their gregarious designs. This will further destabilise the security environment in the South Asian region and it has further



Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee does not hide his roots in the fascist National Volunteer Force (RSS). His communalist vision of *Hindutva* India means class war.

blotted the image and moral-political authority of India in World Politics.

We appeal to people in India not to fall prey to the frenzy of pseudo-nationalism that is being sought to be whipped up by the Government and all the protagonists of the Bomb. We appeal to all political parties not to be a party to rationalising the act. The people in India alongwith the conscientious people from all parts of the world must try to restrain the nuclear weapon nations in the world and the powerholders in India who pursue hawkish policies while paying lip service to "Peace, Disarmament, Nuclear weapons free world". It is the people's power which can counter any attempts for destructive nuclear power and weapons. ★

© National Alliance of Peoples Movements, May 14
The National Alliance of Peoples Movements brings together over 100 different movements and groups. The largest and most active include Narmada Bachao Andolan, National Fishworkers' Forum, Samajwadi Jan Parishad, Azadi Bachao Andolan, Pennurimai Iyakkam, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangh, Sarva Seva Sangh, Ganga Mukti Andolan, and Himalaya Bachao Andolan.

CPI: "No sacrifice in the name of resisting sanctions!"

While mounting an aggressive anti-China campaign in his letter to the US President, the Prime Minister has deliberately ignored the long-standing threat perception of India concerning the US nuclear military base in Diego Garcia. This Indian Ocean island base has been used by the USA in the Gulf war and its

weapons have a range that cover India. Such deliberate silence about imperialist military manoeuvres and support to anti-Indian extremist activities reflects the pro-imperialist shift in Indian policy. Increased tensions in South Asia will enable USA to actively intervene in the region.

No to Western sanctions!

We strongly protest against the sanctions being imposed on India by the western powers. The nuclear weapon states and others who have all along supported an unequal and discriminatory nuclear order in the world have no right, moral or otherwise, to impose sanctions on India. All sections of the people will unitedly reject any intimidatory tactics directed against India.

The people of the country will not tolerate further attacks on their livelihood through further "liberalisation" and opening up of the economy to foreign capital in the name of combating the sanctions. Already the government has announced the decision to offer counter guarantees to three multinational companies for power projects.

Accelerating this disastrous course will not combat the effect of sanctions but on the contrary, will make India more vulnerable to imperialist economic pressures jeopardising the country's economic sovereignty and simultaneously, imposing greater burdens on the working people. The arms race, at the same time, will both divert scarce resources away from compelling economic needs and divert people's attention away from pressing problems. ★

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Pierre Rousset

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People's Democracy (CPM) Editorial

A setback to India's peace-loving stance

The BJP-led government has finally gone ahead and implemented its agenda in exercising the nuclear option and going towards inducting nuclear weapons. Such a major shift in the country's nuclear policy has been taken by a government that has a precariously narrow majority.

Since the first nuclear test in 1974, India had all along taken the position that it will build its independent capability but keep the options open. This stand was taken with the full confidence and preparation by the Indian scientists that the option can be exercised the moment India perceives a nuclear threat. By keeping the option open India had conveyed to the world its unflinching commitment to the process of universal nuclear disarmament.

At the same time, India had correctly refused to be party to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) since these treaties were loaded in favour of the already existing nuclear powers and hence discriminatory. India firmly resisted imperialist pressures and safeguarded our sovereign right to decide on these issues guided solely by the country's interest.

This accepted policy was also a reflection of India's commitment that it shall not be the one which will initiate a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent which has grave and far-reaching consequences both for the subcontinent and South Asia.

Further, unless pressed into a situation in the paramount interests of our national security, which is non-negotiable, India would keep the nuclear option open and thus allow a large portion of its national resources to be available for developing much needed social infrastructure of its people, in eliminating hunger, poverty,



illiteracy etc.

Having assumed power at the Centre, the BJP-led government had informed the country that a comprehensive and strategic review of India's security concerns will be undertaken and on the basis of such a review the decision on exercising our nuclear option would be made. But by unilaterally conducting these tests, simultaneous with the successful launching of the Trishul missile, India has indicated to the world that it has both the bombs and the delivery system. One indication of the government's thinking was reflected in the Defence Minister's strident anti-China campaign. The bellicose statements were actually a build up to making the bomb. Thus, the BJP-led government has betrayed its own assurance to the country by taking a decision of such import without the promised review.

Such a decision may jeopardise the recent advances made at India's initiative, in improving good neighbourly relations in the sub-continent. It also puts under

question India's long standing role as a champion of universal peace and disarmament as well as a leader of the third world countries efforts for disarmament and development.

"Proud of our scientists"

It is clear that the BJP government was motivated by concerns other than India's security. That India always had the capacity to make the bomb and that the Indian scientists have made the country proud by their indigenous capabilities was never under any doubt. It is these efforts over the last 24 years that have made it possible for such tests to take place.

But in exercising the nuclear option, the BJP-led government was obviously guided by its strident jingoism which dovetails with its ideological outlook. In doing so, the BJP seeks to on the one hand, divert the people's attention away from the fast deteriorating conditions of livelihood and on the other, whip up an arms race in the subcontinent with strong communal overtones.

Such tensions in the subcontinent and diversion of national resources away from basic socio-economic development can be appreciated if there is indeed a grave threat to India's security. What has transpired within the two months since the BJP assumed power which warrants such a drastic shift in our security perceptions? This is a question that the BJP has to answer to the Indian people.

Chauvinist strategy

That the interests of national security were not the main concern of the BJP in going ahead with these tests is buttressed by the latest issue of the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* which is dedicated to India making the bomb and whipping up chauvinism as an answer to all problems that the Indian people face. It is not a mere coincidence that this issue of the *Organiser* appears simultaneously when the tests were being conducted. Further, the BJP has now decided to observe May 16 as a day of celebration of 25 years of the 1974 nuclear tests. By whipping up such jingoism the BJP seeks to consolidate its rule at the expense of the Indian people and negate India's long standing and acknowledged contribution to international politics for a long lasting durable peace on this planet.

Behind the veneer of whipped-up national jingoism, all patriots must seriously consider the BJP's plan in consolidating itself in power and implementing a communal agenda that poses a serious threat to India's existence as a modern, peace-loving, secular democratic nation.

India's patriotic secular democratic opinion must ensure that the country continues to adhere to its unequivocal commitment to universal nuclear disarmament; no first use of nuclear weapons; not to accelerate a nuclear arms race in the region and for durable peace and security in South Asia and the world. This is particularly necessary when imperialism would now seek to mount new pressure on India

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to sign unequal and discriminatory treaties as well as accept its economic prescriptions which will further jeopardise our country's economic sovereignty.

However, the western nuclear powers and all those who support an unequal nuclear order, as reflected in the NPT and CTBT, have no right moral or otherwise, to impose sanctions on India, which will be resisted at all costs. ★

This editorial was published in the CPM weekly newspaper People's Democracy on May 17

CPI(M), CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc: "Clear contempt for the people"

This major policy declaration is fraught with serious consequences. The Left parties are of the categorical opinion that making of nuclear bombs and weaponry at this juncture is unwarranted and contrary to the interests of the country. There is no direct nuclear threat posed by any country against India which necessitates such a step.

The BJP-led government has taken this drastic decision on its own without even caring to discuss with the national political parties. The Prime Minister is now promising to call a meeting of opposition leaders on the eve of the budget session of Parliament after making the BJP's own policy a *fait accompli*...

The Left parties demand that the BJP-led government immediately stop the talk of nuclear weaponisation. It must take steps to restore the process of improvement of relations with our neighbours and rely upon the sound policy India has been pursuing of working for nuclear disarmament while safeguarding India's security interests by not signing any discriminatory treaties like the NPT and the CTBT. ★

Joint statement issued on May 16.

Standing up against the N-tests

Despite a massive jingoistic media campaign in favour of the bomb tests, a range of progressive organisations have condemned the tests, and appealed to the population not to "fall prey to pseudo-nationalism".

Several members of the **National Democratic Front** joined a protest in Parliament Street, New Delhi on May 15th. NDF Chairman B K Prasad condemned the government for inviting arms race in the region. "The minority government is not given a democratic mandate to take such drastic steps and play with the right of livelihood of the citizens of the world", he said. The NDF has called for suspension of the BJP government, formation of a national government, a joint parliamentary session for deciding the future course of action and for India's signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The **Student's Federation of India** condemned the Vajpayee government for "backtracking" from the policy of nuclear disarmament and for not divulging the reason for the necessity for undertaking tests. It said the BJP's decision was "deliberate," and "guided by electoral interest." According to a SFI statement, the government's move was an appeal to national chauvinism and directed to promote ultra-nationalism, characterised by anti-democratic, communal and intrinsically belligerent ideology of the BJP and RSS.

The SFI also condemned the US government for imposing sanctions. It urged the student community to oppose the "immoral act of imperialism" which had outraged the sovereignty of India. "The secretariat emphatically states that the USA, a country owning nuclear

monopoly has no right to impose sanctions on India".

It asked the government to oppose the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, initiate a mobilisation of nations for universal nuclear disarmament, and act as a leader for world peace.

The **National Alliance of People's Movements** also condemned the tests, and called for an immediate halt to "military adventurism in the guise of nationalism". By this, a NAPM spokesperson said, the power-holders in India had provided legitimacy to the nuclear power states which had double standards. The view which vested India with the "historical responsibility" to lead the nations to a peace was therefore outdated and irrelevant. The "real glory" lay in providing basic minimum services to the Indian people - which the government had conveniently diverted. The bomb tests would provide an alibi and legitimacy to Pakistan and China to pursue their "gregarious designs". It appealed to people not to fall prey to the "frenzy of pseudo-nationalism".

Ignoring numerous threats, nearly 400 people participated in the 16 May rally in Delhi under the banner of **Movement Against Nuclear Weapons**.

The organisers included the **National Alliance of Peoples Movements, Samprad-yikta Virodhi Andolan, Janwadi Adhikar Manch, All India Peoples Resistance Forum, Saheli**, the historians Tonika and Sumit Sarkar, and the anti-nuclear journalists Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaiik. A Memorandum was prepared calling upon the government to stop testing and abandon the programme to make India a nuclear weapon state. [BS/JD] ★

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By B. Skanthakumar

On 6th December 1992 the destruction of a Muslim place of worship which allegedly stood on the site of a long destroyed Hindu temple in the city of Ayodhya sparked off the worst communal riots since Partition in 1947, accompanied by revenge attacks against Hindu minorities in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The perpetrators of this atrocity and prime instigators of the orgy of violence which followed were members of the *Sangh Parivar* – a ‘family’ of Hindu communalist organisations including the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (now in power), *Bajrang Dal*, *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*, *Shiv Sena* and the “family’s” patriarch, the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS – National Volunteer Corps)*.

The Indian Left had warned for many years of the menace posed to secularism and democracy by these forces but even it, perhaps especially it, was taken aback by the ferocity of the violence, the supine response of the state and the overt sympathy and sometimes downright collaboration of the police and bureaucracy.

Suddenly, ‘Fascism’ which “appeared till the other day a mere epithet, worn out by overmuch, indiscriminate use” (Sumit Sarkar) now stalked the streets of India.

The claim that the entire coterie of Hindu communalist organisations is “fascist” – a claim not made with that same confidence prior to the tragedy at Ayodhya, and today often asserted rather than argued – has been challenged from the Left by Achin Vanaik.

While agreeing that “the Hindu Right has certain fascist characteristics”, Vanaik locating himself in a classical Marxist tradition of analysing and combating fascism which includes figures such as Leon Trotsky and Ernest Mandel, rejected fascism’s “spatial extension to backward, dependent capitalist countries.”

Aijaz Ahmad has challenged this with the observation that “every country gets the fascism it deserves, i.e., the historical form of fascism always shifts according to

the historical, economic, political, social, even religious and racial physiognomy of a given country, and it is useless to always seek an approximation with the German experience.”

A mass fascist movement

This is the background to Kunal Chattopadhyay’s intervention in the debate, with this analysis of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)*. A lecturer in History at Calcutta’s Jadavpur University, Chattopadhyay reveals the “fascist affinities” of the RSS through a textual analysis.

The RSS is a mass movement with millions of members, dozens of ‘front’ or affiliated organisations entrenched in civil society. Its daily activities include morning physical exercises, ‘Indian’ sports and politico-religious classes.

In the wake of natural disasters, train and plane accidents and in refugee camps, its members turn up dispensing food and medicine and doing relief work.

The stakes in this debate have always been high and are now raised even higher by the election to government, of the *Bharatiya Janata Party*, the political vehicle of Hindu communalism.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani began their political careers in the RSS and have never concealed their past and present ties to the organisation.

The influence of the RSS over the new government was demonstrated recently when the BJP’s nominee for the important Finance portfolio, Jaswant Singh was overruled by the RSS in favour of Yashwant Sinha – not one of their members but clearly someone they trust.

Immediately charges were raised that the RSS was “remote-controlling” the government from outside. Nothing of the sort, the RSS protested. There was no necessity for the RSS to do such things said one of their leaders, revealing more than he may have intended. “After all,” he boasted, they [the BJP] are all seasoned RSS workers.” ★

The strong popular attachment to bourgeois democracy in India (despite all its shortcomings) obliges the RSS to take a careful public position. Since the Second World War, few organisations anywhere have attained mass dimensions in the post-World War II era, while proclaiming their adherence to classic fascism. But if we turn to the early history and ideology of the RSS, its fascist affinities emerge clearly.

Kunal Chattopadhyay

Classic fascism was not a simple agent of monopoly capitalism. It preserved the rule of capital but in its own way, at the cost of politically expropriating the bourgeoisie, and harnessing the petty bourgeoisie in a mass movement that was apparently based on a supra-class nationalism.

The mass movement was tightly controlled by a centralised and authoritarian organisation. Throughout the period of its rise to power, both in Italy and in Germany, the fascist movement maintained its independence from the traditional right-wing parties, and in both cases took power in a coalition but proceeded to liquidate the traditional right-wing partners.

Cultural nationalism

The RSS claims to be a cultural, rather than a political organisation. But its cultural project, from formal education in RSS run schools, to sports and other cultural activities, is deeply political. Absolute loyalty to the organisation, denial of any critical thinking, submission of self to ‘superiors’, and submergence into community, are ways of creating a fascist cadre with a fascist mentality.

The key text to understanding the formation of the RSS as a fascist force is M. S. Golwalkar’s *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. Four editions were printed between 1939 and 1947, at a time when communalists of both hues were working up to a fever pitch for their war against the ‘other community’ and against all democratic and human norms.

Even the Holocaust did not dampen Golwalkar’s ardour for the Nazis. It was only after an ex-RSS member Nathuram Godse murdered independence leader ‘Mahatma’ Gandhi, and the organisation was banned, that Golwalkar adopted a strategy of doublespeak – one discourse for the initiated, another for the public.

He developed and stressed the concept of cultural nationalism, rather than territorial nationalism. Not all who lived in India were truly Indians. The totalitarian implications were proudly flaunted, with reference to history’s most genocidal political movement.

“German national pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture,

Germany shocked the world by purging the country of the Semitic races – the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by” (p.27).

[An earlier far-right theorist] G. D. Savarkar had insisted that the patriotism of Indian Muslims and Christians is always inferior and doubtful, because they could not identify their *pitribhumi* (father land) with *punyabhumi* (holy land). Golwalkar carried the argument to its logical conclusion.

An exclusively Hindu India

In *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, he wrote: “From this standpoint sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of the Hindu nation.

They must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age-long traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead. In one word, they must cease to be foreigners. Or, they may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, not even citizen’s rights” (p.52).

This is the cornerstone of cultural nationalism. The “unity in diversity” mentioned by *Hindutva* ideologues is hollow. After claiming that Hinduism’s ‘catholicity’ (breadth) is an element of its superiority to Christianity, Islam or Communism, Golwalkar calls for rigidity, to homogenise Hindus. The test of patriotism that he puts forward is acceptance of the “religion of the soil.”

In another book, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Golwalkar attacked Democracy and Communism as false theories. Democracy gives political equality, creates the desire for social equality, and fuels Communist propaganda. In competing electorally with Communists, the Congress party also makes populist promises, strengthening the Communist case.

“A faith to live by and die for”

According to Golwalkar, the alternative is the dictatorship of a party that would (claim to) stand above classes and class conflicts in the name of morality. Of course as we know this would continue to ensure capital accumulation but that function would be masked by the stress on building a “faith to live by and die for”, and the struggle against Communism.

In his Introduction to that book, Professor M. A. Venkat Rao writes, “Another advantage of the Indian (sic) view of society is that it eschews class war. It postulates social harmony as a potentiality, if not as a fully actual order of laws and customs, observances and enforcement’s. Nor is it an exploiting agency. It is an

agency of morality or *dharna*.”

Anti-Communism, hostility to democracy, hostility to the struggle of the working class, were crucial issues to RSS. Far from being the enemy of the British colonialists, Golwalkar wrote, in his *Bunch of Thoughts*, “Being anti-British was equated with patriotism and nationalism. This reactionary view has had disastrous effects upon the entire course of the independence struggle, its leaders and the common people.” Not surprisingly, the RSS was never a target for British repression, throughout the 1940’s and up to independence.

After ex-RSS member Nathuram Godse murdered Gandhi, the RSS was banned. At this point, Golwalkar turned to anti-British nationalists, arguing that they and the RSS had a common interest in beating back Communists.

The Communist and democratic threat

Like Hitler, Golwalkar realised that mere use of state power was inadequate to crush the working class movement.

Hitler believed that this task could be fulfilled by mobilising the middle class as a battering ram against the proletariat. “The class of the middle only manifests (itself) perceptibly when the two extremes are locked in mutual struggle” (*Mein Kampf*, p. 520). The so-called ‘red terror’ could only be crushed when a mass social movement from below emerged, with the proclaimed goal of destroying Marxism.

Golwalkar too fulminated against the twin evils of Democracy and Communism. He wrote to India’s post-independence leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, arguing that governmental power and RSS cultural force must be combined to eliminate the Communist menace. And the first RSS front organisation to be founded was their trade union, *Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)*.

[The party already had a women’s organisation, *Rastrasevika Samiti*, but this was defined as the women’s branch of the RSS rather than a front group.]

Like the Nazi NSBO trade union organisation, the goal of the BMS was to preach rejection of communist ideas of class struggle. According to Somendra Kumar, a veteran UTUC trade unionist from Bihar, “the BMS tried to replace the class and internationalist outlook by sectarianism, through the propagation of *Viswakarma Puja* (a religious rite) in place of May Day.”

Follow the leader

The RSS is a thoroughly undemocratic body. In 1929, the principle of *ek chalak anuvartita* (following one leader) was adopted, and RSS founder Hedgewar was chosen as organisational supremo for life. So has each of his successors: Golwalkar, Deoras, and the incumbent Rajendra Singh.

The *sarsanghchalak* (Supreme Leader) gives an annual address disclosing the tasks for the year, and this is implemented faithfully by the *shakhas* (neighbourhood units).

In 1949, under government pressure, a

written constitution was adopted, and elections were introduced for local and provincial *sanghchalaks* (leaders). But this is a formality. The key local and provincial post is the *pracharak* (full time cadre) who is appointed and tightly controlled from above.

Fascist origins, fascist ic practice

Our insistence on the fascist origins of the RSS is not historicism. The recent history of the RSS and its affiliates corresponds fully to what we have shown about their origins. L. K. Advani’s infamous *rath-yatra* (chariot-tour) resulted in 43 riots. This was not accidental. “Hindu nationalism”, (actually a fascist Hindu communal identity) had to be mobilised at a high pitch. And these programmes consolidated the Hindu identity. I remember some of my own students beginning to make crypto-BJP noises for the first time in the aftermath of the Bombay and Surat communal riots.

The “cultural nationalist” propaganda of the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (World Hindu Council) strips Muslims of all humanity. The vast and rich cultural traditions of Indian Islam are flatly ignored to suggest that Muslims only have the aim of humiliating Hindus.

The ideology of *swadeshi* (economic nationalism) should be viewed in proper perspective. It was and is an ideology and emphasises the need for cross class unity. The euphemism called economic liberalisation, which has led the working class in numerous countries into utter crises, has been progressing relatively slowly in India, and the mainstream press is quite explicit in blaming trade unionism for this.

Destroying the powers of the unions within the current political framework is impossible. This is why the BJP has been legitimised so much, even by sections of the media previously presenting a secular face. It is now constantly argued that the BJP government must tackle labour in a “proper” way — i.e. crush the Left.

The RSS is well aware that the present government is a coalition, and that the full RSS agenda cannot be implemented. But through the Home and Human Resource Development ministries, it wants to begin a major re-orientation, slowly building support from other bourgeois parties.

In India today, anti-communism, anti-labour policies, and support for economic liberalisation are combined in a systematic programme of a fascist nature. There is an urgent need to recognise this shift, and to wage a systematic battle against it. ★

In the diaspora, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* in particular is very prominent running temple management committees, religious festivals (often sponsored by ‘multi-cultural’ local government and funding bodies), and running summer schools and camps for diaspora youth who want to know about their ‘culture’ and roots. The excellent Bombay-produced magazine *Communalism Combat!* is packed with articles, ideas, arguments and resources to fight the politics of prejudice and hatred
Contact: Javed Anand & Teesta Setalvad, PO Box 28253, Juhu Post Office, Bombay 400 049, India. Tel: 605 3927, Fax: 648 2288. E-mail <sabrang@bom2.vsnl.net.in>
Subscription rates (1 year): India Rs.100, SAARC US\$15, Other Countries US\$25

1968 in France

Thirty years ago, a wave of struggles in France shook the European ruling classes and opened up new possibilities for the left. John Lister asked former student leader **Daniel Bensaïd** how he now interprets May 1968.

• **What is the background to May 1968? The students responded to attacks on their rights; but what were the issues mobilising the working class?**

Bensaïd: Much of the debate and reinterpretation of these events in France, especially among those who have broken with revolutionary politics, tends to insist on the cultural, ideological aspects of 1968. But what gave the 1968 events real weight, at least in France, was the combination of the student mobilisation – which also happened in countries like Japan and the United States – with the general strike. Today's commentators often forget that we had a real general strike, of between eight and ten million workers, which lasted three weeks.

What did it mean? Maybe we tended to overestimate the political content of the strike. It opened up the possibility of a political crisis. Some democratic demands were raised against the rigid archaic state of [French president] De Gaulle, with very concentrated power; and there were a series of economic, material demands to raise the standard of living. But, even given the big wave of the movement, the enormous general strike, the politicisation remained small.

There was no big crisis in the reformist parties. Despite its hostility to the street protests, the Communist Party obtained good results in the 1969 elections, and it was able to channel most of the radicalisation. There was no big crisis in the unions either: in fact, they grew rapidly, especially in the middle-sized and smaller factories. There were no big ruptures in the labour movement, like we saw in 1945-47, after the war. A very limited layer of youth and workers split from the majority currents, creating the space for a new far left. This is significant because it still exists, but it was a very small rupture.

The possibilities for action changed, but not the relationship of forces. That is to do with the limits, the dynamics of the general strike itself. There was much less self-organisation of strikers than in Italy, for example. There were factory occupations, but very few elected strike committees or mass meetings. The union officials maintained control throughout the strike.

Some of today's commentators tend to identify the birth of social movements like the women's movement with 1968. In reality in France this came two or three years later, as a result of the '68 events. The distinctive demands of the women's movement did not appear in 1968.

It was a transitional general strike, which remained under the control of the reformist leaderships, and which, in the framework of the functioning welfare state of the time, served to win more space and social gains, winning back some things that had been lost under the De Gaulle government.

In fact, there was no final agreement between strikers and the state. There were negotiations but, since the results were rejected in some Renault plants, they remained only as a basis for decentralised agreements. There was no global agreement as there had been in 1936. The main points conceded were on wages, and on trade union rights, but there was no agreement on social security.

Despite the limitations of the strike and dynamics of the movement, there were possibilities to open up a political crisis. We don't say now, twenty years later, it would have been an immediate revolution; but it was possible to open up a political crisis in the context of the 1960s.

Obviously many things have changed, and nobody knows exactly what might have been possible, but 1968 changed the situation in France and for Europe in the early 1970s. I am not saying there could have been a revolution, but the strength of the movement, in spite of its limitations, promised much more than was achieved.

• **The Communist Party line contributed to this limitation?**

Absolutely. If we re-read today the literature of the big parties of 1968, mainly the Communist Party, we see how they were obsessed with the idea of [ultra-left] provocation and plots.

They were trying to find an answer to the changes in French society, in which, for the first time, the working class was in the majority. And they had developed the idea of a new coalition of social forces, expressed at the electoral level by the 'union of the left'. Meanwhile, De Gaulle's conservatives ('gaullists') kept winning the elections. Communist Party (CP) leaders thought that the Socialist Party (SP) had been pushed to the side by its capitulation on the Algerian War of Independence.

Indeed, in a real sense the SP was very reduced in influence in 1968, so the CP thought there could be an opening for



them, like the Italian CP, to become the major party of the left and to grow step by step through elections. All this was being disturbed by the 1968 events.

They were determined to control the mass movement. They successfully negotiated a broadening of union rights which strengthened the CP at the level of union bureaucracy. In the end this was the main result of the strike.

• **Although it did not want to challenge the government, the CP did change its line during the strike, raising the demand of a 'popular government'**

Yes, but that was a very short period between 22 May and 29 May. A week of open political crisis, because the agreements were rejected and there was no possibility of stopping the strike just through that kind of agreement.

The specificity of the Gaullist regime left no channels to reach a consensus or negotiate: it was very centralised, and the strength of the regime was its weakness when it was challenged. So there was an opening of a political crisis because De Gaulle announced on 24 May that they could not find a way out, and called for a referendum. Everybody, even reformists like Mendes-France and Mitterrand, rejected the referendum. That could mean an open political crisis. There were two answers. The SP was ready to have a 'left government with personalities'; even Mitterrand was ready to propose a new government based not on parties but on personalities, without exclusions and with negotiations. We called it 'inclusive bonapartism'.

The CP was afraid of being marginalised and out-manoeuvred, so it raised the abstract question of a popular government, without any clear content. But this was only used to occupy the space for four days. Mitterrand said afterwards in his balance sheet of 1968 that this was all a manoeuvre, to say 'we are ready to take

our responsibilities' so De Gaulle would withdraw the referendum, then dissolve the assembly and hold elections.

At that time, Mitterrand was a bourgeois personality, he was not personally a member of the SP. He was in a small bourgeois radical group: only later did he join the SP, rise to the top, and win two presidential elections.

All this lasted just a few days when De Gaulle disappeared to see the army in Germany and then came back. There was a kind of panic at that time, but it was a very short period.

• Do you think now, looking back, that a more concrete governmental slogan would have been better – something like 'Communist Party take power!'?

The CP alone could not have taken power. The kind of answer we raised was not very concrete but was not so bad, and was proven in the struggle. There was a big CP-CGT demonstration on 13 May or thereabouts. They felt threatened from the right and the left, because the previous day we had organised a rally which attracted the new social democratic left and the new far left and the CP was frightened by this mixture.

They organised their own demonstration – a very big one. We were the only current from the left to participate, and we were very small. We came with our slogan 'popular government, yes; but no Mitterrand and Mendes-France!', and it was taken up by people from the CP because it expressed the political issue and a solution and at the same time showed a mistrust of the manoeuvres of Mitterrand and Mendes-France.

The other difficulty with the general strike not having been called, but only existing 'de facto' was that to call for it would also have raised the question of who should negotiate: who should be the leadership of the general strike – the normal union bodies, or the left? In this context we have to be conscious of the fact that we as a current had only maybe 400 members, and in the factories we had very little – a few individuals.

• Could you say something about the origins of the JCR?

We were expelled from the CP's youth organisation in 1965 for two reasons. One was the kind of support we gave to Vietnam; we fought for support and active solidarity with the National Liberation Front (NLF), against the official CP slogan of 'peace.' The other was that we opposed the CP decision to back Mitterrand as the sole candidate in the first round of the 1965 presidential election.

We were expelled in 1965 and formed the *Jeunesses Communistes Révolutionnaires* (JCR) in April 1966

with 3-400 members, 90% of whom were students. Our main activity was Vietnam solidarity and opposition to university reforms, which started at that time.

When the general strike started, it was obvious we had no real weight to compete: the only thing we could do was to try to organise and centralise in some way the more radical, dynamic part of the movement, through the action committees which appeared. This was not real self-organisation, since the action committees were more like gatherings of radical people. We tried to centralise these gatherings to gain a little strength to push proposals into the movement.

In France today, there is a tendency to exaggerate the extent of the radicalisation and politicisation of the youth and student movement before 1968. The real growth came only in 1968, and afterwards. Before, the communist students were the *milieu* of the maturing of the radicalisa-

tion, and they never reached 5,000 members; nor were there such massive demonstrations before 1968. The radicalisation started with the us bombing of Hanoi in 1966-67, but the demos were not so big.

I was at Nanterre university, and we called what we considered a big gathering of people one Sunday – 500 people out of 10,000 students at the university. It was a significant minority of very active people – no more than that. What is interesting is to compare that with the situation now: then there was a kind of happy, spontaneous internationalism, a strong identification not only with Vietnam. Vietnam obviously was centralised, summarised as an issue, imperialism versus black people, a clear-cut confrontation, everything clear, politics, morals, ethics, everything lining people on the same side, no problem.

But at Nanterre the movement also took on anti-bureaucratic struggles; involving students in Warsaw, and other Polish issues.

The Nanterre movement was open to everybody. It had three main axes: it was against bourgeois education reforms; anti-imperialist, and anti-bureaucratic. The only limitation on becoming involved was that there were no tests, no programme like a party or anything – was opposition to US intervention in Vietnam: that was the only real criterion that was used. Then it was all very clear, a unified view of the world was a real characteristic of those movements.

• How do you assess the other movements of that time, like the "22 March" students?

The 22 March movement began first at Nanterre university, and changed composition as it spread. It was a confused political movement. At the beginning there were mainly two currents: us and the anarchists. The CP youth always opposed it, and there were some Lambertists (members of Pierre Lambert's *Organisation Communiste Internationaliste*, OCI) who were very concerned with student unionism.

They considered the 22 March movement to be an 'anti-union' movement to destroy the student union. We didn't. So the really dynamic forces in the movement were the anarchists and the JCR.

Among the youth, the CP was very marginalised at that time, so there was us and the ultra-sectarian Lambertists. The main current were the Maoists who were growing as a result of the cultural revolu-

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tion in China in 1966-67. At the beginning of the 1968 events they were stronger than we were, but we won out in comparison to them through 1968.

• **Did the JCR grow fast in 1968?**

Yes, we had enormous prestige because we were identified from the beginning with the radical wing of the movement, with the 22 March. For example, we were the only national political current which fully participated on the night of 10 May – the ‘night of the barricades’.

The growth of the JCR, and the *Ligue communiste révolutionnaire* which we became later, came from the combination of two things: our participation in the movement when the Maoists were a bit discredited, and the campaign of our comrade Alain Krivine in the 1969 presidential elections.

Most far-left groups, showing their left infantilism, had no idea of utilising those elections. It was not obvious, and it was particularly difficult to do it, but it was a good idea, and it was this which within a year gave us a big space to expand.

• **After the strike, the JCR was banned**

Both then and again in 1973! But it was an advantage in some ways. Because if you don’t have the crazy line of the Maoists and if you have some real links with the workers’ movement, illegality is a formality and gives a certain prestige. We had to reorganise for four months, and 20 people were jailed until September or October, but it was not a big problem for us.

• **How could things could have been done better? Do you think that the potential of 1968 led some people to artificially high expectations?**

Obviously it was a high point, with potentialities which were not used, but we should remember with what strengths we entered 1968.

We were formed in 1966, defending the very idea that the working class still existed, when all kinds of people were arguing that everyone was bourgeois now. Suddenly within two years we had a real, live general strike. It is very good for you!

There were obviously other potentialities even for a small organisation if we had only had more experience and more maturity. The real question you are raising is firstly one of an estimation of 1968.

This is not an academic question. Should we say it was a mountain or just a small hill? The truth may be between the two. But what it represents depends on what we do now: if nothing more happens, then it was just a big peak followed by a general decline. Now is the moment we must start from.

Some say it was the last big strike of the nineteenth century working class. But perhaps it was the first big strike of the twenty-first century. We don’t know, and it depends on what we do now.

A more balanced view of 1968 is not that it was a revolutionary strike – though sometimes we insist on stressing the political potentialities. A colder assessment shows that the consciousness of the working class had been formed by the years of prosperity and expansion, the welfare state, democratic rights.

1968 was not a revolutionary crisis like those of the 1920s or 1930s: that is true, and sometimes in polemics with the CP we insist too much on the revolutionary character of the situation.

Perhaps we have been more objective in our polemics with the Lambertists, though at first we did not know how to express why we felt that the situation was not revolutionary but was pre-revolutionary. Yes, there was a deep movement of the working class that was shaking the bourgeoisie: but there was no ‘subjective factor’, no revolutionary leadership rooted strongly in the working class.

The strength of the bureaucracy has something to do with the level of consciousness of broader layers of the working class. We can now see that better.

It is true that there were also many more illusions in Maoist currents, partly because of the view that the working class was finished. They expected revolution now, immediately. They went rapidly into decline. Their very illusions, coupled with the frustrations of what happened in Europe and then in China do not justify but explain why so many right wing intellectuals have come from Maoist currents.

Social democrats tend to interpret 1968 in cultural and sociological terms: some say 1968 was a success because of what the SP was able to do in government – realising democratic aspirations, legalising abortion, and so on.

Of course this is absurd: in many countries all this and more has been achieved without 1968. It doesn’t explain anything about the peculiarities of such a movement, why a general strike involving millions of people took place, and so on.

There is a general move to depoliticise the interpretation of 1968. We have to defend the real political content and the dynamics of that upsurge. And not just to celebrate, but to give it some present political meaning. ★

* In 1968 Daniel Bensaïd was a prominent leader of the student movement at Nanterre university. Today he is a leading member of the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*, French section of the Fourth International.



booknotes

From Che Guevara’s FBI file...

Che Guevara and the FBI: The U.S. Political Police Dossier on the Latin American Revolutionary, Michael Ratner and Michael Steven Smith, (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 1997) \$US18.95 [paper], pp. 213.

Reviewed by Jim Cockroft

Che Guevara and the FBI is a bombshell. It reproduces and annotates a selection of documents on Che Guevara from FBI files obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. Huge chunks of the materials have been blackened out, but what remains is still devastating.

Civil liberties lawyers Michael Ratner and Michael Smith decided to publish these laundered items because they illustrate the obsessive concern of U.S. police agencies with not only the Cuban revolution and its possible spread but also, and more emphatically, with Che. Also, they illustrate how the U.S. government manipulates the press, including the *New York Times*. Finally, they provide readers with a quick easy-to-understand snapshot of how thorough and incompetent U.S. snooping and police agencies are in their monitoring of anyone suspected of dissent, a practice that has grown more sophisticated and ominous since Che’s 1967 murder in Bolivia on orders from the CIA. (Declassified documents on the last months prior to Che’s death are still amazingly scarce.)

The documents reproduced here are only the tip of the iceberg. Although they consist largely of CIA reports sent to the FBI, they come only from the FBI archives. Ratner and Smith are now conducting a quest for the rest of the CIA’s voluminous reports on Che, some of which are still classified.

In their introduction to Che Guevara and the FBI, Ratner and Smith point out that the FBI legally “was not supposed to

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be involved in international political intelligence work anymore than its younger and bigger brother, the CIA, was supposed to involve itself in American domestic affairs" (p. 4). Their book blows the lid on that not so well kept secret!

The young Che

The FBI started its dossier on Che in 1952, when, apparently, Che was in Miami. The FBI photocopied his passport and took his fingerprints. A 1958 CIA document claims Che "had a police record in Miami," where he "was arrested and interrogated during the Korean War" (p.31). Yet a 1964 CIA report says that upon his arrival in Miami Che "was turned back by U.S. immigration authorities" (p.117).

Reliability of reports submitted to U.S. security agencies is always problematic, because the informants are often contradictory, prejudiced, self-serving, and stupid. One report alleges that Cubans will not be attracted to communism because they like "to idle in the sun or dance to their native rhythms" (p.6).

Other CIA gems on Che relayed to the FBI in the 1956-66 period include reports that Che "has never studied medicine," "has no negro strain in him," "hates to wash and will never do so," and "is fairly intellectual - for a 'Latino'." According to the same sources, Che's mysterious absence was not "motivated by problems with Fidel," his farewell letter to the Cuban people was "fictitious," and Che was killed while landing on the coast of the Dominican Republic in a "yellow-painted pocket submarine."

The CIA began its spying on Che in 1954 when Che was one of millions of voices protesting the CIA-directed military coup that overthrew Guatemala's democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz in order to protect United Fruit Company's idle lands being distributed to peasants. By the time of Che's 1956 arrest in Mexico City, U.S. spy agencies had bundles of reports on him. This suggests that they probably had files on thousands of other Latin Americans who at the time were not well known.

Che in Cuba

Reports on Che and others in Fidel Castro's guerrilla camps of the Sierra Maestra in 1956 were clearly obtained by informants who spoke with or overheard Che. The CIA, fresh from its experiences in Europe, Iran, and Guatemala, was once more infiltrating possible "communist" insurgencies. Yet it showed no comprehension of why Latin Americans were unhappy with U.S. policies in Latin America. Instead, it attributed anti-U.S. feelings to "an attitude which is fairly common among young 'Latin Americans'." Attitude indeed!

Che Guevara and the FBI sheds new light on the events immediately following the defeated U.S.-led Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) invasion of Cuba in 1961. Memoranda sent by presidential adviser Richard Goodwin to President Kennedy about his meeting with Che at the Punta del Este

conference of the Organisation of American States (OAS) reveal that Che, speaking as head of the Cuban delegation, sought a modus vivendi between Cuba and the United States. Goodwin viewed Che as the one Cuban official most "dedicated [to] communist views" (p.73).

One Goodwin memo states that Che told him there would never be enough internal support in Cuba for an overthrow of the revolution and that in other Latin American countries "the commies would get in through popular election" or, under dictatorships, armed revolt (p.78). Note the use of the fanatical term "commies" by Goodwin, a prominent U.S. liberal intellectual.

Che assured Goodwin that in time Cuba would have "free elections, [after] the establishment of a one-party system." Che also said the Cubans were willing to make concessions to the United States, such as agreeing to no "political alliance with the East" although this would not affect their "natural sympathies." Finally, Che thanked Goodwin and Kennedy "for the invasion [that] transformed them from an aggrieved little country to an equal" (p.79).

Goodwin's recommendations to Kennedy were to tighten the economic blockade of Cuba, form "the Caribbean security pact" to deal "with the spread of revolution," and eliminate the "peaceful coexistence which Castro is now trying to create" (p.74).

Internationalism

Che's internationalism in practice was viewed in Washington as even more threatening than the example of the Cuban revolution itself. It is ironic that the CIA's super spooks seemed to be in the dark about Che's whereabouts in 1965-66 when he was first in the Congo and then in Bolivia, fighting revolutions in his attempt to cripple imperialism by creating "two, three, many Vietnams." Che's efforts in the Congo against Mobutu failed, although one of the young leaders of the time, Laurent Kabila, thirty years later led the uprising that finally toppled Mobutu.

Che's efforts in Bolivia also failed, in part because his presence was constantly spotted by the U.S. military's heat-seeking infrared devices originally developed by academics at the University of Michigan. Several pages of *Che Guevara and the FBI* reproduce the misinformed allegations by CIA informants that Che was dead, that Fidel had ordered him executed, that Che was in one or another Third World country, when all the time he was carrying the internationalist revolutionary banner to other lands.

A final section of *Che Guevara and the FBI* shows Goodwin and his aides meeting with *New York Times* editor Ben Wells a year after Che's death in order to have the *Times* spread news about a Havana-Moscow split in an effort to undermine both the Cuban and Soviet governments. One Goodwin aide reports "We made every effort to emphasise 'Castro = Trotsky' and emphasised how

seriously things must be regarded in Moscow when they applied the name Trotsky in this situation" (p.212).

Like Che, Leon Trotsky, murdered on Stalin's orders in 1940, believed that socialism could not be built in one country alone because, in the words of Ratner and Smith, "the forces of the world market would eventually restore capitalism to the Soviet Union unless the Russian revolution broke out of its isolation and was extended abroad" (p.202).

While doing a superb job in annotating these nefarious FBI/CIA documents, Ratner and Smith skate on thin ice when they say that many of Che's speeches they reproduce here from the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) "are probably the only extant copies of the speeches."

A few of the speeches may indeed be the only copies in English, but most are available in Spanish and other languages, and several are available in English. Moreover, the other copies may be more reliable, since, as a "Publisher's Note" to *Che Guevara and the FBI* states, the FBIS transcripts "should not be regarded as accurate transcriptions" (p. xiii).

Even so, it is inspiring to read Che's words here, still appropriate so many years after intellectuals and other self-styled revolutionists around the world have pronounced the ideas of guerrilla warfare and international revolutionary solidarity as dead or wrong-headed.

Che Guevara and the FBI serves to remind us of the real threat U.S. corporate capital and its political representatives in Washington saw behind the so-called "evil empire" of communism during the Cold War years and now Cuba today and "international terrorism": revolution, and its consequent constraints on corporate capital's obscenely high profits made at the expense of working people world-wide.

Che Guevara and the FBI also reminds us of why Che was not only feared in Washington but admired throughout most of the world. His statements resonate—revolutionaries as "motivated by deep feelings of love," the OAS as a "ministry of colonies," and, from his last public speech, "The practice of internationalism is not only a duty for the peoples who struggle for a better future, it is also an inescapable necessity." ★

This review first appeared in *Monthly Review*, vol. 49, no. 11 (April 1998) 49-53

The Price of the Euro

De prijs van de euro (The Price of the Euro) is edited by Geert Reuten, Kees Vendrik and IIRE co-director Robert Went, the initiators of last year's Dutch and European economists' appeals questioning the Euro project from a left perspective. Contributions from 15 Dutch economists outline the negative consequences of the euro for democracy, women, the environment, social security, employment, job security and the public sector. Available in most Dutch bookshops (f35), or via the IIRE (see p.35 for address).



conference notes

Free trade and its opponents

Andrew Elmore

While executive heads of 34 Western Hemisphere countries gathered in Santiago, Chile for the Second Summit of the Americas on April 18, another summit had ended a few blocks away. In an historic meeting of over 1,000 representatives of diverse social groups from every country in the American Continent, the Summit of the Peoples of the Americas brought together non-governmental organizations such as human rights groups and environmentalists together with organized labor.

While the heads of government negotiated commercial agreements, the People's Summit called for social protections and the defense of the interests of the majority.

Free Trade on the Continent by 2005

While the Second Summit of the Americas gave lip-service to democracy, human rights, and social justice, the governmental summit reaffirmed the Con-

tinental leaders' commitment to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA would link together all of the hemisphere's economies (except Cuba's) by the year 2005.

This summit was a continuation of the Continental dialogue started in Miami at the 1994 Summit of the Americas. During the first summit, Mexico was held out as the model of economic reform and NAFTA as the model trade agreement. Just ten days later, however, the Mexican peso underwent a massive devaluation. Since then, and contrary to the expectations created at the December 1994 Summit, the expansion of free-trade agreements throughout the hemisphere has proceeded slowly.

Nevertheless, in this Summit governments have continued the process set in motion in 1994, proclaiming in their Final Declaration that "we are confident that the FTAA will benefit the well-being of our peoples, including economically disadvantaged people in our respective countries."

A People's Summit

That confidence in favor of free trade stands in stark contrast to the Final Declarations of the People's Summit, which criticizes economic agreements like the FTAA for "causing rising unemployment, expanding the informal sector of the economy, endangering labor relations, increasing production quotas and decreasing salaries." The unconditional government support of the FTAA in the face of this, according to the Summit, means that "the

proclaimed social concerns of these countries continues to be treated like small-change in commercial negotiations."

Bertha Lujan, Coordinator of the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC), said that, in addition to its lack of proposals to protect social interests, the People's Summit opposed the official Summit's "participation in negotiations without the approval of the people, converting it into a discussion between governments and executive powers."

A New Agenda

According to Lujan, "Social groups on the Continent, unions, women, peasants, indigenous communities, all represent an alternative path to that of neoliberalism, which is why the two Summits were in absolute opposition." The Summit of the People launched a counter-strategy to create a Continental Social Alliance which would represent all sectors of society.

The People's Summit meetings reflected the multi-faceted composition of the Summit: Organized Labor, Women, Indigenous Communities, Peasants, and Environmental activists all had a forum. For three days, these groups met to focus their agenda on topics of globalization such as sustainable development, international investments, quality of life and employment.

The Summit achieved wide-ranging agreements on a social clause for commercial negotiations in the Americas. The final declaration approved the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions' (ICFTU) proposal to base the social clause on ratified International Labor Organization (ILO) agreements, including the right to organize and to a collective contract, the prohibition of forced and child labor, and protection from discrimination in employment.

The Economic Alternatives meeting and the Parliamentary session called for all future economic agreements with special protections for the agricultural sector, indigenous autonomy, natural resources, the facilitation of technology transfers, and a focus on developing and resolving foreign debt for developing countries through international funds. Finally, these demands were all sent by Chilean Chancellor José Miguel Insulza to all the chiefs of state and of government participating in the Summit of the Americas, to analyze before beginning negotiations of the FTAA.

Interamerican Labor Accord

Coordinating the Labor forum was the Interamerican Regional Labor Organization (ORIT), whose President, Dick Martin of the Canadian Labor Congress, along with Vice-President Luis Anderson presided. They in turn handed the floor to international and national Federations affiliated with the ORIT, such as the moderate Chilean Unified Federation of Workers (CUT) in Chile. Chilean independent unionists objected with heckling when the CUT invited the Chilean Minister of Labor to speak, according to Maty

Arteaga, an organizer for Mexico's FAT.

Mexican labor organizers were visibly upset when a representative of Mexico's government-controlled Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) took the floor. "She spoke about how the CTM was the first union to oppose privatizing Social Security. When she lamented the death of Fidel Velazquez, [the former CTM patriarch] who, she said, was 'Mexico's most important labor leader,' we shouted 'liar!'," reported one independent organizer from Mexico City.

The labor session passed important measures such as the commitment to labor rights expressed in ILO agreements, some of which are still unsigned or unenforced in some Latin American countries. Those measures were included in the Final Declarations of the Summit.

Women's Table Breaks Up

The women's forum split between ultra-radical and moderate Chilean groups who led the meeting, disappointing many, including Mexican women's groups which hoped to pass numerous proposals to strengthen women's rights, including banning pregnancy as grounds for firings in the Mexican *maquiladoras*. Still, many women left the meeting undeterred.

An Advance, but Work Left Undone

According to Bertha Lujan, if they are to confront the reality of a pending hemispheric trade agreement, future continental meetings need to take a more direct stand against commercial accords without a social clause. Specifically, "there needs to be a communication structure representing diverse sectors of society."

Yet, the Summit did unify organized labor in the Continent around three important commitments for an alliance with other social groups: the rejection of the currently planned FTAA, the importance of preventing free investment from diminishing social standards, and unity in the face of globalization.

Most importantly, the People's Summit challenges any accords reached by the Summit of the Americas by putting it to the people: "we demand that any future commercial agreement be approved by, at least, a referendum or plebiscite in every country."

Mexican delegates sent these and all the final demands of the Summit to Jaime Zabloudsky, Mexico's Secretary of Commerce, who was a chief negotiator of NAFTA.

Press Black-out

While the Chilean press covered the People's Summit in both print and television, media in the rest of the Americas has ignored it. Nevertheless, information (including Summit documents) is available directly through the internet at the People's Summit web page:

members.tripod.com/~redchile/indice2.htm.

Source: *Mexican Labor News and Analysis*,
<103144.2651@compuserve.com>,
www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/.

coming soon

All-European Security in the year 2000 Prague, Czech Republic 9-10 June

Organised by the Bloc-free Europe Information Forum and the Czech Civic Initiative for a Charter on European Security. Panel discussions on the OSCE • the Charter on European Security • a Europe free of military alliances and nuclear weapons • Ecology

Contact: Roman Raczynski, fax/tel: +42 2 731397.
e-mail: <inforum@poboxes.com>

Cardiff Counter Summit Cardiff, Britain, June 12-14

A Counter Summit is being organised by the Reclaim Europe coalition, in response to the Summit of European Union leaders, which opens in Cardiff on June 15th. Like the June 1997 Amsterdam counter summit, it will host a range of debates, criticisms and discussions of the EU aimed at national and international campaigners. This will include:

- Friday: International speakers and updates on campaigning.
- Saturday: Forum on the EU and the consequences of its present agenda. Speakers panel on four broad themes: Employment, social welfare, the environment and implications for the rest of the world, followed by workshops and discussions.
- Sunday: Discussions and workshops on "alternatives to the present EU and campaigning strategies".

On Saturday 13th at 1.30pm the counter-summit will be suspended for the demonstration "No to a big business Europe - Yes to Jobs, Public services and Democracy." This mass demonstration is organised by the Cardiff Euro Summit Demonstration Committee. It will focus on Welfare cuts, employment, equality, environment and social exclusion/racism. It will start and finish with a rally with a panel of national and international speakers.

A Fourth International meeting will also be held. For details contact Alan on +44 181 800 7460, fax 880 1846, e-mail <outlook@gn.apc.org>

Other events on Sunday 14th include an Animal Rights demonstration organised by "Uncaged", and a "People's vigil for peace and justice," Organised by the People's Vigil Steering Group, on the theme "Jubilee 2000, and the cancellation of 3rd world debt. Speakers include Glenys Kinnock MEP. This is not an explicitly religious event, but it is supported by the churches of the Cardiff Churches Form and other religious bodies of Cardiff Interfaith Forum and was initiated and is been underwritten by Church in Wales.

Free sleeping bag accommodation for those travelling from abroad. University accommodation at £15 (\$22.50) a night.

Contact: Reclaim Europe!, 1 B Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ Tel: +44-171-272 9333 Fax: 561 0800, E-mail: europ@globalnet.co.uk or europ@astra.global.net.uk
www.geocities.com/Rainforest/5581/

LCR Festival

Paris, France, June 13-14.

A weekend of debates and concerts with a French and international flavour.

Contact: LCR, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France. Tel. +33.1.48 70 42 20.
Email <redaction@lcr-rouge.org>

Black Radical Congress Chicago, USA, June 19-21

For full details contact Black Radical Congress, PO Box 5766, Chicago IL 60680-5766

Violence against women

Amsterdam, Netherlands, 21-25 June (French and Spanish only)

Co-organised by the Brussels-based Committee for Cancellation of Third World Debt (COCAD) and the International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE) in Amsterdam.

IIRE, PO Box 53290, 1007 RG Amsterdam, Netherlands.
Tel. +31 20 6717263, fax 6732106, <iire@antenna.nl>

Neo-Liberalism, The IMF, And International Solidarity

Seoul, South Korea, July 3-5, 1998

Sponsored by a range of progressive organizations, including the KCTU, Action Network for International Solidarity, PICIS Newsletter, and Solidarity for Democracy and Progress.

For more information, contact PICIS Newsletter at 1578-3, Woosung Bldg. 5F, Shilim1Dong, Kwanak-Ku, Seoul, Korea. Fax: +82 2 839 4359 Phone: +82 2 837 2853.
<hanboss@nownuri.net> <hanboss@mail.nownuri.net>

<http://kpd.sing-kr.org/~picis>

International socialist youth camp

Jutland, Denmark. 25-31 July

See page 36 for details.

Trade Unions, homosexuality & work

Amsterdam, 29-31 July 1998

The 1998 International Conference on Trade Unions, Homosexuality and Work provides a forum for lesbian and gay trade unionists to exchange information, policies and strategies. For full details see *International Viewpoint* #298 or contact the organisers.

PO Box 732, NL 2700 AL, Zoetermeer, Netherlands. Tel: +31-30- 273 2627. fax: 271 0512. E-mail: <modijk@knoware.nl> utopia.knoware.nl/users/modijk

Solidarity Summer School Chicago, USA. 3-6 August

The US socialist and feminist group will hold its annual summer school at the usual venue. The group's convention will run from 7-9 August.

LCR Summer School

Grenoble, France, August 26-30

Cost: 959FF including accommodation and all meals. Youth/unemployed discount available. Contact: LCR, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France. Tel. +33.1.48 70 42 20. Email <redaction@lcr-rouge.org>

Latin American Marxist Magazines

Buenos Aires, 25-27 September

Focus on "the Communist Manifesto in Latin America Today."

Contact Alberto Teszkiewicz at <marxlat@dia.edu.ar>

United States Frank Lovell

On May 1st, Frank died of a heart attack at his home in New York City, writes *Paul Le Blanc*. Frank's political commitment and analytical insight were widely appreciated – as were his, warmth, avid intellectual curiosity, rich sense of humour, and engaging interest in persons of all ages and backgrounds.

In the early 1930s Frank he attended the University of California's radical Berkeley campus, earning a bachelor's degree in philosophy.

Drawn into the socialist movement just after the San Francisco general strike, he join the Workers Party of the United States, led by James P. Cannon and A.J. Muste, in 1935. He subsequently became a seaman and an organiser for the Sailor's Union of the Pacific.

In 1938, Lovell was a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party. For a number of years he served on national leadership bodies of the SWP, writing extensively for socialist publications on labour issues and other matters. For many years he was labour editor for the SWP's *Militant*, which at one time was among the largest-circulation US socialist weeklies. In Portland, Oregon in the late 1940s he edited *The Defender*, a rank-and-file paper opposing the conservatism and anti-left purges throughout the maritime industry and unions.

Purged from the Seamans' Union, Frank moved to Detroit in the early 1950s with his wife Sarah and their infant daughter Joan. There he became an auto worker and a member of the United Auto Workers. With close friends George and Dorothea Breitman, Frank and Sarah played a significant role in the Detroit labour and socialist movements of the 1950s and 1960s. They initiated and maintained for many years the influential Friday Night Socialist Forum (later called the *Militant* Forum), a weekly series that drew a broad range of prominent trade unionists and working-class militants, civil rights and black liberation activists, scholars, intellectuals, students and others.

They also ran openly socialist electoral campaigns – such as Frank's campaigns for Governor of Michigan on the SWP ticket in 1954, 1958 and 1964. In the late 1960s they moved to New York City, where Frank served as the Socialist Workers Party's trade union director.

In the early 1980s, Frank and Sarah Lovell were among the hundreds expelled from the SWP, when the group was taken over by newer leaders intent on replacing the historic Trotskyist program with a closer alignment to the orientation of Cuban Communist Fidel Castro. In December 1983 Lovell initiated publication of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. He was the magazine's first editor, and later continued on its Editorial Board. Before her death in 1994, Sarah served as the magazine's treasurer and chief copy editor.

Frank and Sarah were also part of a small group known as the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, which from 1983 to 1992 sought to bring about unification of all U.S. supporters of the Fourth International while at the same time defending the proud traditions of American Trotskyism and seeking to apply revolutionary Marxist ideas to contemporary realities and struggles. After the group's dissolution, some of its members – including Sarah and Frank – joined Solidarity (although Frank eventually allowed his membership to lapse). Impressed by the conferences of *Labor Notes*, he felt that forces around this publication, as well as such currents as Teamsters for a Democratic Union, represented important trends in the class struggle. He was also active in and hopeful about the prospects of the Labour Party – present at its founding convention in 1996, he planned to attend its second national convention this autumn.

In Frank's final years he gave attention to creating and administering the Thomas Giunta Living Trust, named after a veteran Trotskyist seaman. This fund has provided financial support to the Ernest Mandel Institute in Brussels, Belgium, to the Leon Trotsky Museum at Coyoacan in Mexico City, as well as to the Tamiment Library for the processing of its collection of the late George Breitman's papers. The newly-expanded Breitman-Lovell Collection at Tamiment promises to be a valuable source on the history of the U.S. Trotskyist movement for scholars and activists.

Frank is survived by his companion, Miriam Braverman, and his daughter, Joan Lovell. He will be fondly remembered by those he touched with his generous spirit.

A memorial meeting will be held at the Tamiment Labor Library, New York University, NYC, on Sunday Sept. 20.

Aotearoa/New Zealand Geof Pearce

After a four-month battle with cancer, Geof Pearce passed away on 19 February, at the age of 51.

Geof was drawn into the struggle for a more equal society in his early teens when he became involved with the anti-imperialist Progressive Youth Movement. This led to his participation in the international movements in support of the revolutions in Cuba, Vietnam, and South Africa.

At the time of his death Geof was a leader of NUPE, a militant public employees' union. His working life had followed a varied path including working as a painter's assistant, sports reporter, factory worker, railway officer, graphic designer, printer and business partner. In his later years Geof taught sociology at university, worked as a researcher in a public health organisation, before gaining employment in the union movement.

While working on a farm picking raspberries, Geof met Heather, his companion of thirty years. Together they managed a

foster home, caring for dysfunctional youth, for five years, while raising two children of their own Sasha and Nadia. They then ran a shop selling tropical fish, which became a place for philosophical and political debates, especially amongst students. It was during this time that Geof began to realise his intellectual strengths, so he entered university in 1978, aged 32.

Although he had no formal education, leaving school at the age of fifteen, Geof quickly gained confidence and completed a Masters in Sociology, and then a doctorate. Through his studies in education, philosophy and sociology he encountered the work of Leon Trotsky and Ernest Mandel.

Mandel said Geof's 1987 PhD thesis, *Where is NZ Going*, showed "exceptional capacity... combining painstakingly detailed analytical research with profound synthetic judgement." It remains the seminal application of the Marxist labour theory of value empirically to Aotearoa/New Zealand.

While at university, Geof organised the small Revolutionary Communist League. He argued that the social-democratic Labour Party, elected in 1984, would become the vehicle for the bourgeoisie's solution to the social and economic crisis. Many on the left were still supporting the government when, several months later, it initiated radical structural adjustment policies which amounted to a massive attack on the working class.

To build a bridge between the small revolutionary nuclei and class-conscious workers, the RCL used a series of articles in the *New Zealand Monthly Review*, a long-standing left magazine, to argue the need for a workers united front against the attacks on working people and beneficiaries. The call resulted in the formation of Socialist Alliance, which at one point had branches in New Zealand's three main cities. In 1986-89, often against the leaders of the social democratic and Stalinist left, the Socialist Alliance campaigned for a system of participatory democracy and a reduction in working hours without pay.

After the demise of Socialist Alliance, Geof established a Socialist Education centre, which functioned as a forum for debate among the left and the promotion of the Fourth International.

Based in the front part of his and Heather's home, these Friday night 'political cafes' occurred on a regular basis for three years, with Geof and Heather providing food and hospitality. The cafes were marked by their non-sectarian nature and the conversations ranged far and wide, often late in to the night.

Geof visited many of the European sections of the Fourth International, to learn and exchange experiences. He also contributed to *International Viewpoint*.

Geof's rare combination of practical skills and intellectual ability will be sorely missed by his comrades and colleagues in the union and socialist movements in New Zealand and abroad. The manner in which he lived his life and the courage with which he faced his early death is an example for the rest of us. [JC] ★



International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE)

Postbus 53290, 1007 Amsterdam, Netherlands
<iire@antenna.nl> fax: +31 20/673 2106

Coming sessions

Collaboration on Third World School

A majority of IIRE's students have come from the global South. We were founded in 1982, the year the Third World debt crisis exploded. And issues of debt and IMF/World Bank autocracy have grown steadily more important for our activities. In 1998, to deal better with these issues, we are cementing a close working relationship with the Brussels-based Committee for Cancellation of the Third World Debt (COCAD).

COCAD founder and co-ordinator Eric Toussaint is a long-time IIRE Fellow. In 1995 he co-edited our Notebook for Study and Research no. 24/25, IMF/World Bank/WTO: The Free-Market Fiasco, which consisted in part of material also published by COCAD in French and Dutch.

In 1998 the expanded IIRE/COCAD partnership will result in two major activities. In June we will co-organise a Seminar on Violence against Women here in Amsterdam. An Uruguayan leader in the movement against violence against women, Estela Retamoso, will be based here at the Institute in the weeks before the seminar, which will bring together women active on the issue from Latin America, Africa and Asia as well as Europe.

The seminar will be immediately followed in June and July by the fourth IIRE Women's School. Many of the women who attend the seminar will stay for the school (which will be held in English and Spanish). The school will be co-organized by roughly the same team responsible for the success of last year's school: IIRE Women's Studies Director Penelope Duggan; Tatau Godinho of Brazil, and Nancy Herzig of Puerto Rico.

The other major IIRE/COCAD project for the year will be a month-long North-South School in November-December. This session will draw on the IIRE's past "New Questions" Schools, and COCAD's special expertise on issues of global trade and finance. The common core of our collaboration is globalisation, its realities, ideological distortions and challenges.

Eric Toussaint's new book on the global financial system, *La Bourse ou la Vie* is being distributed as a double-issue of the IIRE's French language Notebook series.

Economics seminar

Long waves and "financialization"

Participants from Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands and the Spanish State met at the IIRE from April 17 to 19 for the Ernest Mandel Study Centre (EMSC) Economists' Seminar.

The first theme of the seminar was the current economic world situation. Reports were presented on the economic conjuncture and the social and economic consequences of the crisis in Asia for the region as well as for the world economy as a whole; on myths and realities of globalization; and on the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the coming introduction of the euro.

While the debates showed a lot of common ground, there were also important disagreements, especially on the importance of and explanation for the growing weight of the financial sector in the world economy ("financialization").

The second major theme of the seminar was to establish where we are in the long wave of capitalist development. The absence of our US participant was particularly regrettable, since some Marxist economists in that country do argue that the United States is entering a new long wave of expansion; an idea which merits discussion.

Participants analyzed and debated the importance of changes that have taken place in the accumulation regime (or productive order) since the mid-seventies and concluded that our next seminar in 1999 will have to continue this debate.

Finally, a report was given on economic policies for full employment, based on recent French experiences and debates. After a first exchange of opinions, particularly about the extent to which French developments are more generally applicable, participants decided to program a continuation of this discussion too at the next economists' seminar.

In the coming months some of the written reports will be reworked and some of the oral reports written up, to be published in a dossier in *International Viewpoint* and its French version, *Inprecor*, after the summer.

Mexican Labor News and Analysis

A wealth of information for US and Canadian trade unionists, and all those interested in Mexico's labour movement.

- Zedillo Cabinet Shuffle: New Secretary of Labor - by Linda Stevenson
- Mexican Unions File NAFTA Case Against U.S. Gov't
- Mexico's "White Unions" Don't March on May Day

Mexican Labor News and Analysis is produced in collaboration with the Authentic Labor Front (Frente Autentico del Trabajo - FAT) of Mexico and with the United Electrical Workers (UE) of the United States and is published the 2nd and 16th of every month.

MLNA can be viewed at the UE's international web site: www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/. For information contact editor Dan La Botz at <103144.2651@compuserve.com> or tel. (+1 513) 961-8722.

Sangat Review

The April issue of this English-language South Asian magazine includes: drug addiction on the streets of Karachi, "The Making of the Neo-Colonial State in South Asia: The Pakistani Experience" by Hassan N. Gardezi, "Whither Secularism" by Jamal Hasan, "The State of Dalit Mobilization: An Interview with Kancha Ilaiah", The Devdasi Tradition and Prostitution, and Sunaina Maira on Organizing Strategies for the Diasporic South Asian Communities. Poems by Harris Khalique's 1996 volume, *If Wishes Were Horses*

<http://sangar.org/review.html>

Viento Sur

The April issue focuses on the struggle for the 35 hour week, the unemployed movement, the recent 5th Federal assembly of the United Left, and Spain's apparent wave of violence against women in recent years

www.nodo50.ix.apc.org/viento_sur/

Bandera Roja

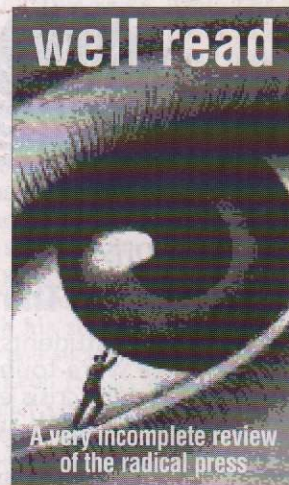
The May issue of this Puerto Rican monthly looks at NASA activity on the US colony, environmental legislation, and the sovereignty-anexation debate.

www.bandera.org
info@bandera.org

Cuadernos del Sur#26

"150 years of the Communist Manifesto," with articles by U.Eco, E.Gruner, B.Kagarlitsky, M.Bellucci, M.Lowy, A.Dabat, A.Shaik, J.Holloway, A.Bonnet, E.M.Wood and W.Bonefeld

Ana Dinerstein looks at Argentina's unemployed movement, and Dianna Hoshraich examines the vulnerability of continental and global banking and financial systems after the Asian crisis.



Indonesia

Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor has the most comprehensive background material and up-to-date information about Indonesia and East Timor

www.peg.apc.org/~asiet.

The Support the Struggle for Democracy in Indonesia web site, maintained by Australia's Democratic Socialist Party, has details of actions and forums, DSP and PRD statements, an index of relevant Green Left Weekly articles, and many useful links.

www.peg.apc.org/~stan/dsp/dsp-indo.html

ASIET also has a listserver, with daily updates on campaign activities, statements and manifestos by Indonesian and East Timorese groups and other related material.

To subscribe free, just email majordomo@peg.apc.org, including the word "subscribe asietnews-l" (without the inverted commas) on a single line and with a space between the two words in the body of the message.

ASIET NetNews is a weekly e-mail package of reports and press clippings from a variety of conferences and sources posted on the internet.

To subscribe free, email majordomo@peg.apc.org and include the text: "subscribe asietnetnews-l" (without the inverted commas) on a single line and with a space between the two words in the body of the message.

There is also a shorter version, ASIET NetNews Digest

Puerto Rico Libre.

A new English and Spanish discussion space Existing bulleting board topics include • Sindicacion de Empleados Publicos • 25 de Julio • Anuncios

Net Working



(de actividades) • Gays y Lesbianas • Ambientales • Trabajadores Inmigrantes • Mujeres /Feminismo /Derechos Reproductivos • Prisioneros politicos Puertorriqueños • Police Brutality in the U.S.

For more information: <CesarAyala@worldnet.att.net>
<http://forums.delphi.com/m/main.asp>

Another useful Puerto Rico address is the website of the island's Frente Socialista, which includes the Fourth International supporters of Taller de Formación Política.

www.bandera.org

Queer Left

A new discussion list for queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people active in movements for progressive social change.

Queerleft is a discussion list on any topic which is in some way related to both queer/GLBTs and left politics -- activism, theory, history and organizing both in queer movements and organizations, and in socialist, anarchist, other radical currents, union, student and community organizations.

To subscribe, send e-mail to: majordomo@queernet.org, with body: "subscribe queerleft" or "subscribe queerleft-digest" (without the inverted commas).

Transformation and regroupment

But reactions to the current socio-economic crisis all too often take the form of reactionary tendencies of an ethnic, nationalist, racial or religious character. Hence the urgent need to rebuild a worldwide movement of anti-capitalist struggle, taking account of the recomposition of the workers' movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

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

In all the countries where such possibilities exist, the organisations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the re-groupment process. We consider this as an important step towards the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left on a world scale. At the international level, the Fourth International is an active participant in re-groupment, bringing with it the advantages of a long tradition of combat against capitalism and Stalinism. ★

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