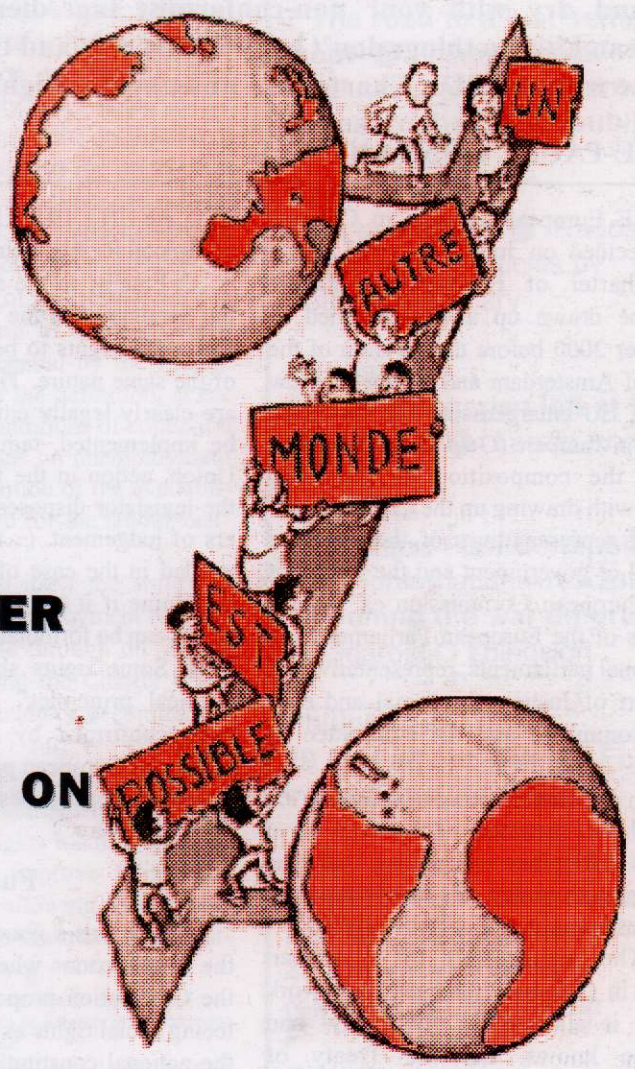


international VIEWPOINT

**Dec
2000
No. 326**



**EUROPEAN UNION: ANOTHER
WORLD IS POSSIBLE**

**ITALY: FAUSTO BERTINOTTI ON
GLOBALIZATION**

SERBIA: A NEW STAGE

Argentina	\$2.00	India	Rs 20	Poland	3.50Zl
Australia	\$4.00	Ireland	£2.00	South Africa	R8
Brazil	RS2.50	Lebanon	US\$3.00	Sri Lanka	Rs50
Britain	£2.00	Malaysia	M\$5.00	Sweden	SEK20
Canada	\$4.00	Netherlands	f6.00	Taiwan	NT\$100
Czech Republic	10 Kc	New Zealand	\$4.00	Uruguay	\$20.00
Denmark	Dkr20	Pakistan	Rs25	USA	\$3.50
France	FF 35	Puerto Rico	\$2.50	Others	US\$3.50
Greece	500 Dr	Philippines	P25		

Fundamental rights at risk

ASK a cook to make you an apple tart with some leeks, some potatoes and a vegetable mill. They'll tell you it's impossible and leave you high and dry with your non-conformist ingredients. But in the European kitchen things don't happen that way and this is very much the case with the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights.¹

MARIE-PAULE CONNAN*

THE European Council in Cologne decided on June 3-4, 1999 that a Charter of Fundamental Rights would be drawn up and proclaimed in December 2000 before the revision of the Treaty of Amsterdam and before the new phase of EU enlargement. The European Council in Tampere (October 15-16, 1999) defined the composition of the body charged with drawing up the Charter, composed of representatives of the heads of state and of government and the President of the European Commission as well as members of the European Parliament and the national parliaments, representatives of the Court of Justice, the social and economic committee and the committee of Regions.

From the first meeting (December 17, 1999), the 63 members of this body have met real difficulties in carrying out their task. And with reason, the three following postulates being posed as unavoidable:

a) The mandate of the European Council in Cologne limits the framework to what is allowed by the Treaty² and everyone knows that the Treaty of European Union has some extremely restrictive social clauses. It is drawn up in such a way that nothing can hinder the freedom of circulation of commodities, goods and services and capital.

b) The secretariat of the Presidium considers that the 1951 European Convention on Human Rights constitutes a minimum standard and that "the Charter cannot mark a regression on the Convention such as it is interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights".³ However, the Convention only contains civil and political rights. Its editing took place in a climate of passionate debate which ended up with social and cultural rights, incorporat-

ed in the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, being rejected.

c) Finally, in the area of social rights, the Secretariat of the Presidium stipulates that, "The rights to be guaranteed are not of the same nature. There are rights which are clearly legally enforceable. Others, to be implemented, require action from the Union, action in the framework of which the legislator disposes of significant powers of judgement. (...) A reflexion is then needed in the case of each right so as to determine if it can be legally enforceable or if it can be formulated in such a way that it is. Some rights should be defined as political principles". This demand has been confirmed by the declarations of numerous European parliamentarians: one cannot make promises that one cannot hold to in the future.

Fuss

There was a good deal of fuss during the first sessions when some members of the Convention proposed articles guaranteeing social rights as they are drawn up in the national constitutions and legislations. The conservatives and liberals scolded: "The Treaty! Nothing but the Treaty!". The first group then evoked public opinion, arguing that it would not understand. The argument had a certain effect. The members of the Convention have, then, opted for a Solidarity chapter. They sought a compromise by putting together some articles which could create the illusion of the integration of social rights in the Charter, while containing restrictions which would render them ineffective. While the clauses on civil and political rights, protected by the European Convention, start logically with "Each person...", those of the Solidarity chapter begin: "The Union rec-

ognizes and respects..." and end "...according to the modalities established by community law and national practices and legislations".

Will the European Council administer this narrowly defined Charter of Fundamental Rights? For the conservatives and ultraneoliberals who have rejected social rights, the answer is yes, and as quickly as possible. It will be presented to the European Council at Biarritz on October 13 and 14, 2000 and a decision should be taken from its official proclamation by the three European institutions at Nice on December 7-8, 2000. The European Council will commit itself to the fast lane in a process of enlargement with the objective being the extension of the European Union to 27 states.⁴

Final stage

Parallel to this, there will be the final stage of Economic and Monetary Union for the 12 countries of the Euro zone. From January 1-15, 2002, 50 billion coins and 14 billion bills in Euros will replace the coins and notes in national currencies. In 2003, a first European army will be constituted with a force of 180,000 soldiers. And, as it would be dangerous to conceive of an army and a currency without a state, several heads of state and government believe it is urgent to pose the question of a European Constitution to bring into being a superstate of law superior to the national constitutions. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union – which was the object of a shoddy compromise but hailed as a great victory by many, institutionalized and proclaimed with great pomp – is called on to become the preamble of the European Constitution.

The result would be a European Constitution, with preeminence of laws, without social constraints; with no guarantees of rights to employment, a minimum income, an equitable wage, housing, freedom and pluralism of media, or access to services of general interest and the right to strike remaining unrecognized at the European level. Once more, the European Union demonstrates its capacity to dismantle the social frameworks. The process of drawing up of this Charter could be considered useful if it carried legal guarantees of the social rights contained in the national constitutions and legislations in the context of the development of EU bodies ori-

entated towards the market, the introduction of the single currency and the stifling criteria of the pact of stability, security, and defence. But nothing of the sort has happened. This process has been exploited on the contrary to encourage the disappearance of social rights of the legal kind.

Unacceptable

The manner in which the right to employment, income and housing have been twisted is unacceptable:

■ The right to employment: the authors of the Charter have subtly transformed the right to a job into the right to work in the chapter on Liberty. Each person has the right to work and to exercise a freely chosen or accepted profession (Article 15). Thus, the employers and the states no longer have obligations, except to leave everyone free to work... or die of hunger!

■ Rights to minimum income, housing: the text of the Charter is very ambiguous. It says: In order to struggle against social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognizes and respects the right to social aid and to housing aid to assure a dignified existence to all those who do not dispose of sufficient resources, according to the modalities established by Community law and national legislations and practices. This last phrase carries no guarantee when the modalities established by Community law favour the objectives of market liberalization and the drastic convergence criteria for the single currency by obliging states to reduce the generosity (sic) detected in national legislations and practices. As to the beginning of the article, it is equivalent to a rejection of the principle of universality of rights and the acceptance of poverty and exclusion as necessary evils, imprescriptible laws of nature, whereas social rights are, on the contrary, the expression of a human will to free oneself from poverty and exclusion.

The members of the Convention have examined the risks and have then acted in all lucidity. Here is a written contribution from the representative of the French government, Guy Braibant: "To refuse to inscribe an existing right would indicate a willingness to sanction its disappearance from the legal order". (May 26, 2000)

This Charter is an instrument of social regression, a genetically programmed monster. EU enlargement without social rights will serve the sole interests of those

who see central and Eastern Europe as an enormous market waiting to be conquered and a reservoir of cheap highly qualified labour. Since the establishment of Economic and Monetary Union the European machine has been transformed into a steamroller of the systems of social protection and unemployment benefits. The rhythm has accelerated with the process of Luxembourg, Cardiff, Cologne, the broad guidelines of economic policies and the guidelines on employment. The revision of the Treaty takes place in the secrecy of diplomacy, but the documents to which we have access give the impression of a rewriting of the social clauses (article 137) which offers an ultraneoliberal European Commission the possibility of taking the initiative of a directive on the conditions of granting of unemployment benefit. The text prepared by the French Presidency envisages the definition, at the European level, of conditions of collection of payment, limitations on unemployment benefit, and the definition of the availability of the unemployed for the labour market.

The EU is giving itself the ability to confiscate rights to unemployment benefits and minimum income through the Treaty as revised in Nice and the Charter being integrated into the Treaty or becoming the preamble of the future European Constitution.

We now face a race against time, not only to defend the rights historically conquered but also to improve living and working conditions, allowing their equalization in the progress towards a democratic and social Europe.⁵ ★

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1. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is accessible on the Internet at the following address: <http://db.consilium.eu>.

2. The mandate of the European Council of Cologne from June 3-4, 1999: this Charter must contain the rights of liberty and equality as well as the rights of procedure like those guaranteed by the Convention to safeguard human rights and fundamental liberties in line with the common constitutional traditions of the member states, as general principles of community law. The Charter must also contain the fundamental rights reserved to citizens of the Union. In the drawing up of the Charter, it will be necessary moreover to take into consideration economic and social rights such as those spelt out in the European Social Charter and in the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers (article 136 TCE) to the extent that they do not justify uniquely objectives for EU action.

3. Information note from the Presidium, January 20, 2000.

4. The solemn opening of the negotiations took place in London on March 31, 1998. It is envisaged that six states – Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia plus Cyprus – will enter in the Union between now and 2004 and a second group – Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Rumania, Slovakia – before 2007.

5. Preamble to the Treaty of Rome.

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THE international and European references defining basic social rights that the Convention charged with drawing up the EU Charter of fundamental rights cannot ignore:

* The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In 1948, the editors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (proclaimed by the United Nations) defined social rights.

"Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 22. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23. (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 25. (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

* The Treaty of Rome

The member states committed themselves in the Treaty of Rome in 1958 to "affirming as the essential objective of their efforts the improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples".

* Article 136 of the Treaty of Amsterdam :

The Community and the member states, conscious of fundamental social rights, such as those spelt out in the European Social Charter signed in Turin on October 18, 1961 and in the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights of Workers of 1989, have as their objectives the promotion of employment, the improvement of living and working conditions, allowing their equalization in progress, an adequate social protection, social dialogue, the development of human resources allowing high and stable employment levels and the fight against exclusion.

* The Recommendation of the European Council of June 24, 1992 (92/441/CEE) resulting from the 1989 Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers recommends that member states particularly:

recognise the fundamental right of persons to resources and benefits sufficient to live conforming to human dignity;

fix, taking account of the standard of living and prices in the state considered, as well as different types and sizes of households, the amount of resources estimated to be sufficient to cover essential needs with regard to the respect of human dignity;

do this on the basis of indicators that they deem appropriate, like for example statistics on average disposable income in the member state, household consumption, legal minimum wage, if it exists, or the level of prices;

set modalities for periodic revision of these amounts, according to the indicators, so that this covering of needs is assured.

These clauses sustain the fight against social exclusion and poverty and organize the right to a dignified existence for all those who do not possess sufficient resources. ★

The Nice summit

NERVOUSNESS reigns in the highest European spheres as the Nice summit approaches. The Danish setback followed a series of failures: the fall of the Euro and the inability of Duisenburg and his cronies at the European Central Bank (ECB) to develop a coherent policy (from a bourgeois point of view); the absence of a coordinated reaction from the EU to the fuel crisis, with each government assuming the management of the class struggle in its own manner; and the fiasco of the “anti-fascist” intervention in Austria, cynically utilised to inaugurate “the birth of the political Europe”.

FRANÇOIS VERCAMMEN*

ONCE again the development of the EU is getting bogged down. The “benefits” of the Portuguese presidency from January-June 2000 (full employment through the new economy) have rapidly evaporated. They were not enough to develop a “European-communitarian” spirit to the point where the interests of the national states could be relegated to the second level.

As for public opinion, it is proving a disappointment to the social democratic dreams: at a time when the economic conjuncture is bullish and the governments are making concessions, workers, instead of thanking their generous governors for their promises, have moved into action in a number of countries to recoup their losses.

No tempest

The Danish “no” has not unleashed a tempest, either on the financial markets or in the chancelleries. The former had largely anticipated the event. The second have adopted a low profile. Yet each EU government and political leader has had to meditate on this fact: half the population of a member-country has been able to resist a veritable political-ideological bombardment, lasting for several months and led by all the centres of power (state, political, economic-financial, trade union, media). This vote of resistance also brings to mind the enormous rate of abstention during the last European elections and the manifest setback to the ruling social democracy, principal architect of the Amsterdam treaty. The EU enjoys a very weak legitimacy in all the member countries (except the poorest countries and regions which

receive, for the moment, the manna of subsidies).

Against this background, the EU governments are confronted with a series of problems of great breadth, linked to the passage to a European power, by supplementing the single currency (which enters into circulation on January 1, 2002) with a European army and the political-economic unification of the European continent. It is in this framework that institutional reform is posed, starting from economic and social upheavals internal to the “enlarged and powerful” EU, which of course affects the relationship of forces between member states, but also external relations, i.e. the presence of the EU on the world stage and rivalry with the US.

Problems

The Nice Summit will have to deal with sizable problems which go well beyond the formal agenda:

1. A paradox: the official agenda is only a remainder of the meeting in Amsterdam in June 1997 and boils down to three points: the size of the Commission (total number of commissioners, and how many for each country), the weighting of the votes of each member state in the Council of Ministers, and the type of vote (unanimity or qualified majority) according to the matters being dealt with. With a supplementary point: strengthened cooperation, that is the possibility for some member countries to advance together in a particular area. Nonetheless, these are not merely “homeopathic” measures.

2. Immediately linked to this structure: the role of Mister CFSP (High

Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy), today incarnated by Javier Solana. Already secretary general of the Council of Ministers, which has entrusted him with setting up a proper executive apparatus, he must also incarnate the imperialist capacities of the EU and represent its states, and among these latter the most powerful. It is a crucial choice so far as the weight of the Council and the Commission are concerned. Prodi and others contest this situation, preferring to attach the function to the Commission. All the more so in that already the idea is being advanced of a “High Representative for Economic Policy”, who would be an interlocutor with the ECB and spokesperson of the Council.

3. This function is linked to the establishment of a “European army” (increasingly linked to a project of a European police and “European prosecution office”). Here, what is at issue is “internal security” and the maintenance of order, in the perspective of a new wave of immigrant labour). Although it is not formally on the agenda, the Summit should register a verdict on the progress on the ground (Kosovo, as it happens!) and deduce from it the conclusions for the institutional organization chart.

4. The absurd and untenable situation of a totally sovereign (and opaque) European Central Bank that manages “a currency without a state” and as a function of one sole and exclusive criterion, that of price levels (zero inflation!). In no other country of the world does such a situation exist (not even in the United States which is supposedly taken as a model). In good capitalist logic, monetary policy is part of economic policy of which it is an instrument.

In the EU the Bank has a “dialogue” with the 11 finance ministers (the “Eurogroup”) and decides, giving moreover its opinion on all the key social and economic questions! Economic coordination in the EU is limited to the broad guidelines of economic policies following the “stability pact”, which serves in fact solely to dragoon the labour movement. This incoherence now seriously annoys big capital. Formally this point does not figure on the agenda. But it is there under the surface, in fact at the heart of the executive apparatus which is to be built.

5. The oft-proclaimed enlargement of the EU (towards the countries of the East, as well as Cyprus and Turkey) should

★ European Union

begin to be implemented in practice (Poland, Hungary), for a new postponement could provoke a gigantic moral and political crisis in these countries – with explosive social crises which could have a boomerang effect in the EU. Even if this happened without major conflicts, this “new EU” would be so heterogeneous that the main founders would be affected by it. Not only because of the number of members, but above all because of the differences in economic and social structures.

6. The Charter of Fundamental Rights – a neutered attempt to give a certain protection to citizens of the European state which is under construction – involves a real social regression. It is dangerous because, adopted as it is, it provides a point of “European legal” support to the national governments in dismantling the gains of a century of workers’ conquests (see the article by Marie-Paule Connan on page 2). However, indirectly, and involuntarily, it raises the problem of the incorporation of this Charter in the Treaties, and, from this, the problem of a European Constitution.

Problematic

Faced with this problematic of historic dimension, a consequence of capitalist globalisation, the informal summit at Biarritz presented a derisory spectacle where everything turned around squabbles about posts (who and how many) in the Commission or in the Councils of Ministers (happily there was Kostunica to give a little relief). In reality, behind some narrowly functional changes, there are two basic questions, still present, never explicitly touched on:

1. The EU: Federation or Confederation (*Bundesstaat* or *Statenbund*)?

2. What institutions are needed to create a real political leadership?

Certain journalists have written that these are no more than “homeopathic” operations. Wrongly, however: these measures, certainly not very exhilarating, have an obvious principal aspect. Abandoning majority rule is not simply a measure of functional efficiency (“how to take decisions in an EU which will go from 15 to 18, 25, 30...”): in abolishing the right to veto (the rule of unanimity) in favour of majority vote (“qualified” as it happens) one enters a regime of supranationality, of abandonment of national sovereignty (a country in the minority is obliged to apply



Mr CFSP – Javier Solana

the decision). This is proposed for the Council of Ministers, which is the real decision-making power in the EU (the executive, legislative and constituent body) and the heart of intergovernmentalism.

Nonetheless, officially the EU swears by the “communautaire” method of which the Commission is supposed to be the “locomotive”! If that happens, one does not imagine that the big three (Germany, Great Britain, France) or any one of them can be put into a minority on an essential question. That would immediately lead to a great crisis. Thus, it is necessary to assure a numerical preponderance of this trio inside the Council. Hence the weighting of the votes which expresses material weight (by a demographic criterion alone or by combining it with the GDP of the country). On the basis of the figures which circulate, the countries of the trio, which each have 10 votes, will have 30 (Schroeder is demanding 33), as would Italy, Spain would have 27, and so on. This would have consequences for the composition of the Commission. There, the weighting is defined differently: the big countries (the trio plus Spain and Italy) each have two commissioners, the other countries only one. What if the EU enlarges to 20 or more? Will every member country then have a commissioner? Impractical, they say. Thus, a smaller Commission in order to be more coherent and more efficient, for example one of 10 or 12 commissioners. That would not go without a regular rotation!

But a Commission without the big countries would be a weakened commission in dealing with the Council of Ministers. Chirac’s solution is that each

country would be present in the Commission, but a sort of Presidency of the Commission would be set up, composed of the biggest countries. Obviously, in this scenario, it becomes possible to extend the number of matters or clauses of the treaty which could be adopted and amended on the basis of a qualified vote: the countries of the trio would abandon entire areas of their national sovereignty (going from 70 to 120 clauses is spoken of), in exchange for a new supranationality shared between them!

What is at stake here is giving a legal, institutional basis to the actually existing mechanism which is the real motor of the EU: the bilateral (exceptionally trilateral) preparation between France, Germany and Great Britain of all the summits, and, between the summits, consultations on the taking of important political positions. This mechanism would be thus incorporated into the Treaties.

Thus, an enormous step forward would have been taken: a real political leadership would be created in tune with the EU’s ambition of becoming a superpower (dixit Blair but also Chirac, Schroeder being more discreet on such a subject) without being a supranational state. In this scenario (which Chirac tried to impose brutally on the smaller countries at Biarritz), the centre of gravity would be displaced towards the Council of Ministers. The EU would head towards a confederation (abandoning the federalist perspective which implies a continuous and maximal transfer of the prerogatives of the states towards the supranational level).

Prerogatives

A Confederation is distinguished, by definition, from a Federation and a Unitary State, by the narrow number of supranational prerogatives: currency, defence, law and order, questions of citizenship. Freer “strengthened cooperations” will open this possibility, creating a more advanced and more coherent centre of gravity, to which the other states would be attached on the basis of a more limited commitment. All this being evolutionary, of course. It is for the moment the case in the EU for monetary union (Britain, Sweden and Denmark aren’t part of it), the Schengen treaty, the setting up of the Eurocorps. One can imagine that some Eastern countries will join the EU without participating in monetary union (without applying the Maastricht cri-

teria and the stability pact, and without being present in the ECB). But it is doubtful that in the first case, the EU is pushing for homogenisation. In the second, this partial involvement in the EU could structure itself.

Contradiction

In this scenario, the contradiction between the institutional deepening of the EU and its enlargement is a false problem, artificially puffed up by the tactical needs of countries playing the game of the balance of power and by superficial journalists. In reality, there is substantial agreement between the trio (and others like Italy) on this perspective. Even if this agreement is shot through with contradictions, these are secondary.

What obscures this basic dynamic is the difficulty the British government has in joining the monetary union and the necessity for Blair to make rhetorical concessions to a majority of the British population. But Blair (and big British and foreign capital) is in favour of membership. The European army under construction is an initiative by Britain (with France), on the basis of their common engagement in the Balkans and their irritation (also common) with the US. If this question is resolved, the other problem, that of the political management of the ECB, could be approached.

The EU and its vanguard (the three key imperialist countries) have the perspective of creating a political leadership in tune with their European, indeed global ambitions. It would be otiose to stress the threat that this carries for democracy in the EU and for the conquests of the working class.

Another Europe is needed — social, democratic, egalitarian, generous. For that it is necessary to do everything possible to stop this machine. There is only one way: the mobilisation of the labour movement and progressive public opinion around one idea: Stop right there! Break down the closed doors of an omnipotent European Council! The right to speak and make decisions must lie with the peoples of Europe!

They must determine, through public debate, through a decision of their elected representatives, the fundamental bases on which they wish to live together: from the Pole to Gibraltar, and from the Atlantic to the Urals! ★

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The road to a just settlement

THE resolution which follows was adopted by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, the worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists, at its October 2000 meeting.

THE bloody autumn unleashed by the provocation committed by general Ariel Sharon, supervisor of the massacres at Sabra and Chatila in Lebanon in 1982 — with the escort graciously provided for him by general Ehud Barak, “Labour” prime minister of an Israeli state more than ever dominated by the military — already constitutes one of the most brutal episodes of the long history of criminal violence perpetrated by the Zionist enterprise against the Palestinian people.

The entire world has seen yet again to what point the discourse of the imperialist powers on human rights and the rights of peoples is variable according to the interests of their world hegemony: intensive bombardments and murderous embargos for Iraq and Serbia, “rogue states”; unequalled levels of military aid and friendly advice for Israel, key member of the strategic apparatus of imperialist domination in this major oil-producing area of the world and in any case non-recognition of national rights, whether of Palestinians or Kosovars.

Sharon’s provocation was nonetheless only the drop of water that made a cup that had been full to the brim for a very long time run over. It shattered the process opened up by the Oslo accords and their signature in Washington, on the White House lawn, in September 1993. It is the consequence of the overaccumulation of frustrations in the course of the seven years since then, during which the economic and social position of the Palestinian people have worsened.

In signing these accords, general Rabin offered the Palestinians a fraudulent deal: he could proceed to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from inside the zones of Palestinian population in the territories occupied in 1967 — a withdrawal which Israel’s military top brass had demanded since the Intifada in 1988, motivated by a

concern to preserve the moral of their army and worried about the consequences of its being bogged down in the tasks of repression in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on its state of general preparation in relation to the Arab environment.

Elementary demands

Beyond this redeployment, Rabin offered no concession of a nature to satisfy the elementary demands of the Palestinians: dismantling of the Zionist settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, total withdrawal of the Israeli army from the territories occupied in 1967, establishment of a Palestinian state on the whole of these territories, including East Jerusalem, and the return to Palestine of the refugees of 1948 and 1967.

It only held out the possibility of accepting a largely truncated and perverted version of Palestinian aspirations, on the express condition that the Palestinian Authority (PA) headed by Yasser Arafat fulfilled its part of the deal, by showing that it was capable of bringing the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to heel efficiently and on a lasting basis.

This fraudulent deal very quickly came up against a major contradiction: successive Zionist governments, those of Rabin, Peres, Netanyahu and Barak, conceded to the Palestinians only some of the promises of Oslo, with an eyedropper and increasingly late, demanding each time that the PA increase its proxy repression as condition for the following stage. Their “security”-fixated mentality, their chauvinist arrogance and their racist contempt for the Palestinians meant that their priority concern was pandering to the most reactionary fringe of Israeli public opinion. Meanwhile, they have carried out a policy of development of the Zionist colonies and a military and infrastructural parcellization of the Palestinian territories, which has



been humiliating and revolting to the highest point for the population of these territories.

In such conditions, it was totally predictable that the PA, confronted with the exasperation of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, would experience a lot of difficulty in muzzling Palestinian society completely, despite its efforts to do so. Moreover, Yasser Arafat and his lieutenants were much less inclined to push the repressive escalation further given that, on the one hand, they knew that in losing all legitimacy in the eyes of their population, indeed in the eyes of a section of their troops, they weakened themselves in relation to Israel; while on the other, they feel increasingly that they have been duped.

This increasingly obvious impasse determined the recent explosion and the bloody autumn which has resulted from it and which is still going on. These events illustrate in a cruel manner the total bankruptcy of the strategic choice of the Arafat leadership, consisting in counting on the benevolence of the Zionist state and the so-called arbitration of Washington so as to obtain a Bantustan in the 1967 territories. The increasingly evident bankruptcy of this strategy only fostered the growth of Islamic fundamentalism among the Palestinian population.

Barak, who is trying to win the participation of Ariel Sharon in a government of Zionist unity, proclaims today his intention to go back to the initial project of the Israeli military leadership, as it was conceived in 1988: to carry out unilaterally the redeployment of the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in such a way as to consolidate strategic Israeli control of these territories and their external frontiers, placing the enclaves of Palestinian population under permanent siege, reduced to the situation of vast self-managed concentration camps, constantly threatened with being asphyxiated by a retightening of the Israeli blockade.

The first difference between this perspective and the Israeli interpretation of

the Oslo accords would be the absence of direct collaboration between the Palestinian leadership and the Zionist government and a contemptuous indifference on the part of the latter as to the internal management of the Palestinian territories. Faced with this, the only progressive perspective which is offered to the Palestinian people would be to develop anew the forms of self-organization which characterized the early days of the Intifada, instead of the repressive and highly corrupt administration set up in the framework of the Oslo accords.

Points of support

The Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip does not have the means on its own to free itself from the Israeli yoke. The relationship of forces is unfavourable to it in a crushing way. It can hope to change it only by finding the points of support which until now have been cruelly lacking:

- in the pressure of the popular movement of solidarity on the Arab governments to force them to give the Palestinians the diplomatic support and economic aid which are indispensable to them;

- in the pressure of the movement of international solidarity for the recognition of the right of the Palestinians to a state, for an emergency international aid, to stop the state of Israel from pursuing its policy of strangulation of the Palestinian territories and to cut off all military and related aid; one of the conditions for an effective movement of solidarity with the Palestinian people is to forcefully reject any expressions of anti-Semitism;

- inside the state of Israel itself, where the outburst of violence of which those Palestinians holding a second class Israeli citizenship have been the victims has shown to what depths Israeli society could plunge. It is to be hoped that this fearful perspective could impel a large number of Israelis to mobilize to force their government to stop starving the Palestinians and to recognize their right to a sovereign state on the whole of their territories occupied in 1967, as an indispensable element on the road to a just settlement on the principle of equal rights of all people Arabs and Jews without which this region of the world would have no perspective of the future other than murderous violence and permanent insecurity. ★

An urgent statement to the Israeli public

IN November, 121 Palestinian political and academic personalities issued an appeal to the Israeli public in which they outlined their grievances and aspirations. The appeal was published in major Israeli newspapers and on the web (www.arabrights.org/palestine/state-ment/index.htm) and has since attracted wide international attention.

IN February of this year, we, a group of Palestinian academics and activists, addressed an urgent call to the Israeli public. We expressed in it our fear that the Oslo peace process, as it had evolved over the past seven years, was inevitably leading to further conflict -perhaps even war-rather than to our hoped-for goal: a final historic reconciliation that would enable our two peoples to live in peace, human dignity and neighborly relations.

We expressed our concern that the Oslo accords have been used by Israel, despite claims to the contrary, to create unprecedented expansion of settlements, almost double the settler population, and continue the expropriation of Palestinian land. Freedom of movement for Palestinians has been severely curtailed while settler violence against our communities continues without restraint.

Against this background, the Palestinian population has had no physical, legal or political means of protection. While military occupation is a palpable reality that affects us every day, it has been disguised under Oslo in ways that negate international law and the protection it might afford. We now live in a series of small disconnected areas which are being posited as the emerging Palestinian state. The only way to expand these Bantustans according to the distorted logic which has dominated negotiations, is for the Palestinian leadership to make concessions which would legitimize a number of Israeli demands in contravention to international law: to concede our national rights to East Jerusalem, allow settlements to remain in occupied territory and renounce the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

The Israeli leadership (be it Likud or Labor) has continued to imagine that, given the massive military balance of force in its favor, it would be able to impose on the Palestinian Authority its unjust vision of a final settlement, and pretend that the conflict is resolved in the eyes of the world. This delusion that a deeply

unjust agreement can be made by Israel with President Yasser Arafat alone, who is then expected to force his people into accepting it, is profoundly shortsighted and has inevitably led to the critical situation that confronts us now. Many of us were in the streets over these recent weeks, holding neither guns nor stones. We were holding candles to commemorate the deaths of our students, neighbors and relatives who tried to make the world hear with their lives what we were unable to with our words. The naïve and dangerous notion that Palestinians took to the streets following Yasser Arafat's orders is not only an insult to our intelligence but also a clear sign of the lack of understanding of the reality in which we live.

We are deeply concerned that the conflict has, at times, dangerously spiraled, into an ethnic/religious one, as the pogroms against Arab citizens of Nazareth, the lynching of the two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah and the numerous mob attacks on synagogues and mosques have shown. The profoundly irresponsible and self-serving act of the Barak government in allowing Ariel Sharon onto the Haram al Sharif shows not just an alarming lack of judgement, but also a total disregard for Palestinian, Arab and Muslim sensibilities.

The use of live ammunition against unarmed Palestinian civilians at demonstrations there the next day and at protests ever since, shows total contempt for Palestinian life. The stubborn and escalating use of Israel's overwhelming military power in order to crush the current uprising and terrify the Palestinian population into submission shows a dangerous, wilful refusal to address its underlying causes. Military might may be able to subdue the current wave of protest — at the immediate cost of many lives. But in the long run, it cannot stem the will of a people seeking their just and rightful place in the world. It will also condemn us to re-visit the current crisis again and again.

All of us are firm believers in an equitable and just negotiated peace between Israelis and Palestinians that recognizes the right to self-determination. However we, like our communities, have lost hope in the possibility of resolving the current inequities in the framework of the Oslo agreements and the exclusive American 'brokerage' of the process.

We believe that we must find an equitable basis for peace which must necessarily take the following broad principles as a point of departure:

1. Negotiations must be based on the principles that all the lands occupied by Israel in 1967 are, in fact, occupied territories and that peace will be only be achieved by ending the occupation of these territories and thus enabling Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination and sovereignty.

2. East Jerusalem is part of these Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Consequently, a final settlement must include Palestinian sovereignty over East



Jerusalem and the commitment to Jerusalem as the recognized capital of two states.

3. Israel's recognition of its responsibility in the creation of the Palestinian refugees in 1948 is a pre-requisite to finding a just and lasting resolution of the refugee problem in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

4. Both sides must recognize the spiritual and historical affinities of each other to sites and locations within their own borders and they must affirm and guarantee the access and protection of the other people to these places within their own borders. But in neither case should the existence of such sites be used to advance extra-territorial claims to locations within each other's borders.

We believe that the implementation of these principles will provide for a just and therefore, genuine and lasting peace. The hoped-for co-existence between our two peoples can only become possible if a reconstructed peace settlement is equitable. This requires moral recognition of the historic injustice visited upon Palestinians. Peace and co-existence will not be accomplished by imposing an unjust settlement that goes against the will of the people.

This land is destined to be the home of our two peoples. The need for a solution based on mutual respect and accommodation is dictated not only by the search for security and stability, but also by the quest for freedom and prosperity of future generations. It is our hope that, out of the tragedies of recent weeks, a new and fair vision of peace can emerge between the two peoples. ★

1. Dr. Haidar Abdel-Shafi Head of Red Crescent Society, Gaza 2. Dr. Hanan Ashrawi PLC Member 3. Dr. Saleh Abdel Jawad Birzeit University 4. Dr. Kamal Abdul Fattah Birzeit University 5. Dr. Abdul Rahman Abdul Ghani Birzeit University 6. Ezzat Abdul Hadi Bisan Development Center 7. Dr. Rabab Abdul Hadi American University, Cairo 8. Ghassan Abdullah Birzeit University 9. Prof. Ibrahim Abu Lughod Birzeit University 10. Dr. Lamis Abu Nahleh Birzeit University 11. Dr. Ragheb Abu Sarris Birzeit University 12. Nadia Abu Zahra Researcher 13. Dr. Mohammad Abu Zaid MD and writer 14. Dr. Ilham Abu-Ghazaleh Birzeit University 15. Dr. Latif Abuhijleh Birzeit University 16. Prof. Eisa Abu-Shamsieh Birzeit University 17. Khader Abusway Journalist 18. Dr. Mamdouh Aker Surgeon 19. Mohammad Alagha Journalist, London 20. Dr. Suad Al-Aamiry Riwaq 21. Dr. Nazmi Al-Ju'beh Riwaq and Birzeit University 22. Ghassan Al-Khatib Jerusalem Media and Communication Center 23. Rana Al-Khatib Birzeit University 24. Mustafa Al-Kurd Composer and musician 25. Dr. Helga Al-Kurd/ Baumgarten Birzeit University 26. Dr. Majdi Al-Malki Birzeit University 27. Dr. Sherif Al-Mousa American University, Cairo 28. Hussein Al-Rimmawi Birzeit University 29. Dr. Simon Araj Birzeit University 30. Tayseer

Arouri Birzeit University 31. Naim Ashhab Journalist 32. Prof. Naseer Aruri Emeritus, University of Massachusetts 33. Naela Ayesh Women's Affairs Center, Gaza 34. Suheir Azzouni Women's Affairs Technical Committee 35. Dr. Raja Bahlul Birzeit University 36. Dr. Mustafa Barghouti MD and Head of Palestinian Union of Medical Relief Committees 37. Siham Barghouty Palestinian Federation of Women's Action 38. Kamal Boullata Visual artist, France 39. Ibrahim Dakkak Institute of Palestine Studies 40. Rabeih Diab Ministry of Youth and Sports 41. Dr. Beshara Doumani Berkley, USA 42. Ali El-Taher Birzeit University 43. Dr. Tamer Essawi Birzeit University 44. Prof. Ghassan Faramand Birzeit University 45. Anita G.-Abdullah Birzeit University 46. Dr. Rita Giacaman Birzeit University 47. Dr. Rema Hammami Birzeit University 48. Rudaina Hammouri UK 49. Dr. Sari Hanafi CEDEJ, Cairo 50. Dr. Ahmad Harb Birzeit University 51. Dr. Roger Heacock Birzeit University 52. Dr. Jamil Hilal Writer, Palestine National Council member 53. Prof. Khalil Hindi Brunel University, UK 54. Dr. Suha Hindiyeh-Mani Birzeit University 55. Dr. Samia Huleileh Birzeit University 56. Islah Jad Birzeit University 57. Penny Johnson Researcher, Birzeit University 58. Aysha Joma Terre des Hommes 59. Hassan Joubeh Publisher 60. Zahira Kamal Ministry of Planning & International Cooperation 61. Prof. Sharif Kanaana Birzeit University 62. Mustafa Karkuti Journalist, London 63. Samira Kawar Journalist, London 64. Hassan Khader Writer 65. Jalal Khader Advocate 66. Salima Khalil Journalist 67. Dr. Samir Khalil Neuro-Pediatrician 68. Rashid Khatib Orlando, USA 69. Amal Khreishe Palestinian Working Women Society 70. Eileen Kuttub Birzeit University 71. Flora Lahham Journalist, London 72. Khalil Malouf Terre des Hommes 73. Prof. Nur Masalha SOAS, University of London 74. Dr. Nadim Mseis Birzeit University 75. Zakaria Muhammed Poet and journalist 76. Prof. Ibrahim Muhawi Edinburgh University 77. Prof. Foad Mughrabi University of Tennessee 78. Reem Musleh Birzeit University 79. Dr. Walid Mustafa Bethlehem University 80. Dr. Issam Nassar Institute of Jerusalem Studies 81. Prof. Jamal Nassar Illinois State University 82. Maha Nassar Palestinian Women's Union 83. Mamdouh Nofal Writer and PCC member 84. Dr. Muna Odeh University of Sao Paulo, Brazil 85. Ziad Othman Journalist and researcher 86. Imad Qamhiyeh Birzeit University 87. Dr. Mudar Qassis Birzeit University 88. Nahla Qourah Ramallah Municipality 89. Suleiman Rabadi Birzeit University 90. Ramzi Rihan Birzeit University 91. Adnan Sabah Lawyer, UK 92. Nahed Sabri- Mikki Pediatrician 93. Abdul Jawad Saleh PLC Member 94. Hilmi Samara Petroleum Consultant, UK 95. Dr. Rosemary Sayigh Researcher and author 96. Prof. May Seikaly Historian and author 97. Dr. Othman Sharkas Birzeit University 98. Raja Shehadeh Lawyer and writer 99. Samih Shibib Lecturer and journalist 100. Dr. Azmi Shu'aib PLC Member 101. Mahmoud Shukeir Novelist 102. Prof. Salim Tamari Institute of Jerusalem Studies 103. Vera Tamari Artist, Birzeit University 104. Dr. Spiro Tamas Surgeon 105. Muna Tamimi Birzeit University 106. Dr. Liza Taraki Birzeit University 107. Laura Wick Birzeit University 108. Prof. Muhsin Yusuf Birzeit University 109. Jamal Zaqout Palestinian National Council member 110. Prof. Elia Zureik Queens University, Canada 111. Dr. Wassfi Kafri Birzeit University 112. Dr. Gamal Siyam Birzeit University 113. Dr. Muhammed Abd al-Haq Birzeit University 114. Dr. Samih Geda' Birzeit University 115. Dr. Ilias Saqan Birzeit University 116. Dr. Mundir Barakat Birzeit University 117. Dr. Khalid Abaza Birzeit University 118. Dr. Allan Tlaibi Birzeit University 119. Dr. Fuad Husni Birzeit University 120. Dr. Mervat Bulbul Birzeit University 121. Prof. Mashhour Abudaka Birzeit University.

A new stage

THE overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic on October 5, 2000 marks a new stage in Balkan history. The state of mind in Serbia has changed from top to bottom. Nothing will be as it was before.

RADOSLAV PAVLOVIC*

THE general strike was total. The movement affected every household and the smallest village in the country. The essential problems remain, but a monstrous obstacle to the future has been swept away.

It was the miners of Kolubara who gave the signal and the tone to the movement. Like the others, in their majority they used to voted for Milosevic. In ten years they had hardly led an economic strike. Because of this moderation, but also because of their central role in the energy system, their action became an affair of state. From the beginning they made it clear that their demands were not sectoral but political — the recognition of the victory of the opposition candidate, Vojislav Kostunica.

Peaceful revolution

A peaceful revolution? Yes, because the relationship of forces was changed. It was not because Milosevic was voluntarily inclined to recognize the verdict of the ballot box that bloody conflict was avoided. He had mobilized all the available police. However, popular unanimity and determination exceeded all that he, like Kostunica, had been able to imagine. Belgrade alone against the regime would not have secured victory. It was the provinces that played the decisive role: the working class towns like Cacak, Kraljevo, Kragujevac Uzice, Valjevo, Novi Sad and Nis. The majority of the 100,000 provincials who came to Belgrade on October 5 were youth and workers.

The decisive nature of this support from the working class is moreover obvious if one compares it to the winter of 1996-1997, when some hundreds of thousands of Belgraders had demonstrated over three months against fraud in the municipal elections. The working class was not mobilized at this time, which allowed Milosevic to give way on the municipals but maintain central power. This time, popular unanimity and determination polit-

ically disarmed both police and army.

Milosevic himself was destabilized. The electoral defeat was flagrant, too much time was needed to effect a credible fraud, the state apparatus now only worked reluctantly. For Milosevic nothing worked any longer, panic invaded the highest spheres of the regime. He who had reigned by fear ended by earning universal contempt.

Hence the revival of pride, dignity and confidence in the masses. It was a spectacular overthrow, a big gain for the future, but it is not for all that a definitive gain for the struggles to come. The best lessons of history are confirmed: the more the masses are politically determined and energetic, the more easily the enemy throws down its arms and the less blood is spilt.

Anger

Anger against Milosevic was quickly generalized after the NATO bombings. Responsibility for the lost and shameful wars fell on him unanimously, but there was no political channel to express this anger. Milosevic called elections — his initial calculation was not so stupid, since he had changed the Constitution last July. By introducing the election of the federal president by universal suffrage but suppressing the rule that 50% of registered voters had to vote, he hoped to give himself years of unshared power with the 20% of the electorate represented by the SPS-JUL,¹ against an opposition dispersed into 3-4 lists, of which none expected to win more than 10%.

This, moreover, in conditions of mass disaffection about politics, promoting abstention of more than 50% of the electors. The opposition denounced this constitutional change as a veritable coup d'etat, which it was, but it rapidly understood the danger of boycott. By getting rid of Draskovic, who wanted to dominate the electoral bloc as head of the biggest party, and who ended up sabotaging it with his own candidate, the democratic coalition of 16 parties was able to unite. It chose the



DOS² of Kostunica, a democrat and nationalist, but without beard, weapons or alcohol. He was violently anti-NATO during the bombings, without siding overtly with Milosevic, although he has never disavowed the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie of Serbia had nothing better. The man who could overthrow Milosevic from a centre-left position, Ivan Stambolic, former head of the Serbian Communists who Milosevic had removed in 1987 and a left social-democrat, had been kidnapped in the street a month before the elections. The Serbian working class, unorganized, voted for Kostunica to get rid of Milosevic and assure the minimum of democracy. This choice was not wrong, although there should be no illusions. In the economic, social and national domain the conceptions of Kostunica are clearly rightist.

The heterogenous democratic opposition established a very limited contract with Kostunica, as did the masses. Illusions in him are minimal and he will be subject to as much surveillance from below as from above.

The Serb right was wiped out at these elections, above all the monarchist Vuk Draskovic. The fascist Seselj, who got more than 20% of the votes at the previous elections, only won 5-6% in these. The most unexpected fall was that of Vuk Draskovic. He was punished for having sabotaged the united opposition front with a candidate who only gained 2.8%.

Democratic desire

The elections signified a profound democratic desire and a firm determination to defend the victory in the street. Public opinion was profoundly affected by the dynamic network of students called *Otpor* (Resistance). Waging guerilla war through posters, without leadership or central office, mobile, inventive, cheerful, they banished the fear of the population, above all in the provinces. Their slogans sim-

the consciousness of the masses.

Undoubtedly a new period has opened, despite the appearance of nationalist continuity between Milosevic and Kostunica. A new generation has arrived, which has only known Milosevic. The big gain for everyone is that this fall is due to the spontaneous action of the masses, with their own means, their own determination and organization. The masses do not feel indebted to anyone, not even Kostunica. That means the new president's room for maneuver is very narrow faced with immense popular demands. Not so much in terms of incomes immediately, but in the areas of political transparency, democratic management, peace initiatives and normalization of relations with the outside world.

The fate of Milosevic was sealed at the ballot box and in the street, but not that of the bureaucracy. Milosevic wants to stay in political life, supported by the Russians. If Kostunica tries to amnesty him and reintroduce him into politics, under Russian pressure and/or institutional constraint, the masses would revolt. The democratic alliance would be broken.

Tension

Workers targeted the bureaucracy and not only its supreme leader. A tension seems to reign in all Serb factories. The directors are in general the local leaders of the SPS, up to their neck in shady and illegal affairs behind the backs of the workers, enjoying not only the absolute power that the law gives them, but also total impunity in the general arbitrary ambiance of the Milosevic regime.

Like the army top brass and the SPS deputies, all these directors have expressed their allegiance to the new president in order to save their posts. They are capable of changing their party card in 24 hours. If Seselj the fascist had won, they would have done the same. The Serb bureaucracy under Milosevic had no other ideology than personal profit.

What will Kostunica do about this bureaucracy? To overthrow it from top to bottom is to carry through the political revolution. Kostunica is anything but a revolutionary. But also he is a democrat. We will soon see where the alliance between himself and the numerous workers who have carried him to the presidency ends.

The fate of Milosevic is another problem. Kostunica cannot hand over Milosevic to the international penal tribu-

Ten days that shook Serbia

A FUNDAMENTAL obstacle fell on October 5 for those who want to establish a genuine "left". The whole day had been marked more by jubilation than by confrontations; the police presence 'guarding' the Parliament or state television buildings was derisory — by comparison with what is seen in Paris for "normal" demonstrations, or again what was deployed in Prague to protect the IMF and the World Bank against demonstrators some days earlier! The same had been true throughout the ten days following the elections, September 25 to October 5, with a half-million people in the streets of Belgrade: daily and festive demonstrations, marked by corrosive slogans, helping to overcome fear, taking place in a capital without visible police.

These ten days which have shaken Serbia have then astonished the world — and the Serbs themselves: nobody imagined that the strongman in Belgrade would accept defeat without civil war. Yet while some stressed the traits of dictatorship characteristic of the Milosevic regime — the para-military forces used for ethnic cleansing, the harassment of the media, the disciplining of the universities and the judicial system, the unpunished crimes, the alliance with the far right — others pointed to the anti-imperialism, the effective pluralism the government tolerated, the existence of an independent press and an opposition which had won control of most of the big cities, including Belgrade, since the winter of 1996-97. This latter factor allowed the opposition a very systematic control in more than 90% of electoral districts, making fraud virtually impossible.

There were no conditions for a "pure class vote" in these elections. There was rather a kind of counter-plebiscite, with all classes mixed together, analogous to that which had brought Milosevic to power in 1987. The Serbian Democratic Opposition (DOS) presented itself as a "technical coalition" — very heterogeneous, stretching from liberal nationalism to social democracy via ultra-neoliberalism — to beat Milosevic. But only the personality of Vojislav Kostunica allowed the mobilisation of the great mass of those who, up until the summer, would have voted neither for Milosevic nor for the opposition as it was then, without Kostunica (the latter and his party were marginal and outside of the oppositional intrigues). That was why Milosevic took the risk of contesting the elections.

Neither Milosevic nor NATO and against corruption — whether it originated from the regime or the United States — with the hope of emerging from isolation in Europe: such was the profile of the victorious candidate. The regime's campaign, assimilating all opponents to NATO agents, thus could not discredit Kostunica. The oldest and poorest people of the rural zones still voted (at nearly 40%) for Milosevic, but the great mass of youth and workers voted against. On October 4, the miners of Kolubara were supported by the opposition while the regime sent its crack troops against the strike committee. The fraternisation that took place that day with the police force expressed what was happening at a deep level throughout the repressive bodies: a collapse, which explains the weakness of the police apparatus the next day.

But the miners who initially mobilised so as to have their vote recognised then turned against the corrupt and arrogant directors who formed the clientele of the regime. The DOS is, then, already before a major contradiction: calling for the right to self-management when its economic programme boils down to accelerated privatisation. The social and national questions of the Federation remain unresolved. As for the crimes that have been committed, they should be judged, in the first place by the Serbs themselves. ★

Catherine Samary

nal for ex-Yugoslavia which has arraigned him for war crimes — all Serbs are agreed on that, including this author, although for different reasons. He cannot amnesty him either. Serbia cannot avoid the question of his role in the wars of ethnic cleansing. The future of the numerous Serb refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo will pose this question.

Thus everything indicates new struggles in Serbia. Kostunica has promised democracy. In the current situation it is one step forward. To guarantee democracy, is to guarantee freedom of the press, trade union freedom, political liberties, freedom

of criticism, the independence of the judicial system. For us the basic question is the fate of the Serbian working class. It will face traps no less dangerous than those it has encountered for 10 years, above all in the area of privatization and the national question. It has shown an élan for spontaneity and a remarkable capacity of organization, but it needs help to emerge from its national isolation which has disarmed it in relation to nationalism.

The Serb workers have made a leap forward, above all in the provinces. They have shown their courage but for the future political intelligence is needed. If

★ Serbia / Kosovo

not they will fight for the interests of other parties and other classes, to be finally disappointed. They cannot get out of this alone. The workers' international movement must act. Our task is not to settle the political programme of the Serb, Albanian, Croat or Bosnian workers in detail, to do their work for them, but to help them reconquer elementary notions of class, so that they can forge their own political and trade union tools of social liberation and inter-ethnic peace, build solid bridges of mutual confidence after what has been destroyed by the wars.

It is the most urgent task, for behind the Yugoslav tragedy, enormous for a relatively small country, can come new and greater catastrophes in Eastern Europe. Despite the victory of the democratic opposition and although it has lost the elections, fascism in Serbia is not inexistent. Its partisans combine ballot boxes and weapons, and while they have lost at the former they maintain the latter. For Serbs to genuinely break with the Stalino-fascist policy of Milosevic and Seselj, they must learn the whole truth about these wars over the last ten years, and this not a job where a few honest intellectuals on all sides can take the place of the workers' movement. If, on the contrary, we are content to pose dubious questions about the fact that Serb workers voted massively for a politician of the liberal right like Kostunica, it might be as well not to bother. ★

* Radoslav Pavlovic is an independent Serbian trades unionist and one of the initiators of International Workers Aid for Bosnia.

1. The Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) of Slobodan Milosevic and the Union of the Yugoslav Left (JUL) led by his wife Mirijana Markovic.
2. DOS (Democratic Opposition of Serbia) is the name of the victorious electoral bloc which put forward the candidature of Vojislav Kostunica. His programme of reforms allies popular illusions in the Western democracies and some elements of a programme seeking the integration of Serbia inside the "civilized world". He favours the return of Yugoslavia and Serbia to the world through reintegration in all the international institutions (Pact for Stability in Southeast Europe, IMF, World Bank, EU) in the hope of benefiting from financial aid and foreign capital and investment. He proposes radical economic reforms, notably cutting public expenditure, tax reform involving the introduction of a VAT, the creation of a stable currency (issuing of a new convertible currency or adoption of the German mark!), the liberalization of prices (accompanied it is true by a system of aid and subsidies for the most deprived) and privatization.



Towards Self-determination?

THE victory of Ibrahim Rugova's party in the recent Kosovan elections opens a new stage in the history of Kosovo. The social questions, the future of the UN protectorate and the self-determination of Kosovo are henceforth major and unavoidable issues.

The first elections organized in Kosovo since the establishment of the UN protectorate in June 1999, boycotted by the Kosovar Serb population, have been seen as a stage towards independence and liberation from the yoke of Belgrade by the Albanian population. This latter, participating massively in the ballot, gave an overwhelming majority to the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), led by Ibrahim Rugova, in most municipalities. The three parties originating from the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) received 35% of the votes. The small centre parties shared the remaining votes.

The LDK's score is the result of a number of factors: the growing division and discrediting of the forces originating from the UCK, in fact marginal within Kosovar society and associated, rightly or wrongly, with Mafia-style practices, great political intolerance and a tendency towards violent settling of accounts; but also, a profound aspiration to non-violence, correlated with a weak past engagement of the population in the armed struggle; finally, the prestige maintained by Ibrahim Rugova.

This writer became an international symbol of the peaceful resistance of the Albanians of Kosovo after Belgrade's dissolution of the province's parliament on July 5, 1990. Following the clandestine referendum of September 1991 and the elections organized in the "Republic of Kosovo", the Albanian speaking population elected him president, setting up also a parliament and parallel education and health systems. The elections organized by Belgrade were since then boycotted.

After the Dayton agreement in 1995 the hope that the great powers would recognize independence disappeared, while the Belgrade regime gained international credibility. The armed struggle launched by the UCK responded not to the impossibility of regaining and negotiating autonomy with the Milosevic regime, but on the contrary to the danger, from the point of view of a pro-independence logic, that such an autonomy, would be accepted, under international pressure, by Ibrahim Rugova. The ferocious repression unleashed by Belgrade against the UCK, characterized as "terrorist" by all the great powers until 1998, served the pro-independence cause more than any argument: the martyred UCK increased in popularity. The US changed its tune in autumn 1998, threatening Belgrade with bombings if the repression was "excessive", while meeting officially with the UCK. The latter seized the possibility of the internationalization of the conflict through NATO. Ibrahim Rugova was marginalized at Rambouillet, which influenced his behaviour during the NATO war.

But the restored peace changes – and will change again – the givens of the political situation, and raises big questions absent from this election: that of the ownership of the mines and the rights of workers in Serbia as in Kosovo; the existence of a hypocritical and unstable protectorate: Belgrade, under Milosevic as under Kostunica, demands the application of UN resolution 1244 which maintains Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia. This latter, rejected by the Kosovo Albanians, is also challenged by Montenegro. Whatever the intentions of the leaders in office, the idea of self-determination of the peoples and a just peace, based on equality of status of peoples, can gain in strength. Paradoxically, it would be the return of the Serbs of Kosovo, the protection of their lives and rights by a multiethnic police, their full participation in the bodies of the province, which would consolidate the cause of a Kosovo determining in a sovereign fashion its relations with neighbouring states, demanding also, this done, the end of the protectorate. The victory of Ibrahim Rugova and that of Vojislav Kostunica will be perhaps a transition facilitating the emergence of political forces capable of posing all these questions. ★

Catherine Samary

The Hungarian left at the Millennium

1. Parties, platforms and publications

So far as the organizational structures of the Left in Hungary are concerned, there is no other point to start with but the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP). Not because this party would be socialist in terms of ideology, or because it would be the only organization of the left in terms of party politics. The reason for the primacy of MSZP is that it is a conglomerate that is first of all the only solid organization in the left with strong electoral foundations and organizational capacities and because many other parties, platforms and publications can be characterised by their relations to MSZP.

The Hungarian Socialist Party was formed in October 1989, at the last congress of the old communist party, which was called the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP). Instead of the more than 700 thousand members of the old party, MSZP had only about 30 thousand. Instead of the old links to the communist world, MSZP decided to join the Socialist International (SI), which they did in 1996. Despite the emphasis on the break with the past, however, MSZP inherited much of the property of MSZMP, and of course most of the members and leaders of the new party had been members of the old one.

The first president of MSZP was Rezső Nyers, who started his political career in the 1940s as a member of the Social Democratic Party, and who in the 1960s became known as the father of the famous economic reforms of Hungary. After the party was defeated in the 1990 general elections, Nyers was replaced by Gyula Horn, minister of foreign affairs in the outgoing cabinet. The party received 33 per cent of the vote in the 1994 general elections, and gained 54 per cent of the mandates due to the rather distortive electoral system of Hungary. Horn formed a coalition government with the liberal Free Democrats. The inevitable financial stabilization and some corruption scandals, however, undermined the popularity of the

IN an article originally written for the German newspaper *Neues Deutschland*, Hungarian academic LÁSZLÓ ANDOR* presents a profile of the left in Hungary.

coalition, and in the meantime the unity of the Right was restored. Thus in 1998 the Left was defeated at the elections, despite the fact that MSZP maintained its 33 per cent support. Horn had to step down as a result as president of MSZP, and László Kovács, foreign minister of the defeated government, was elected president of the party.

In the 1990s, no other left wing parties managed to get into parliament in Hungary. In 1990, however, four of them were still very close, and in fact this disunity was one of the main reasons for the right wing victory in that year. In 1990, some left-wing sympathisers voted for the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, and others for the Patriotic Election Coalition, which was a successor of the former Patriotic People's Front (an umbrella organization that was among other duties responsible for holding parliamentary elections in the state socialist period). The rural left voted for the Agrarian Union, that tried to protect the collective farms, and the old and committed comrades voted for the revived MSZMP. A few years later this latter changed its name to Workers' Party, but its leader has remained the same, Gyula Thürmer, a young foreign policy expert. In its political profile, the Workers' Party is comparable to the German PDS or the Italian Rifondazione, and maintains close links with them.

Before 1989, much of the political press was owned by the MSZMP in Hungary. In 1989, most of these national and regional daily papers were turned into shareholder companies, and sold to majority owners like Axel Springer. *Népszabadság*, the daily of the former communist party, became an interest of Bertelsmann, and, despite the general

right-wing political mood in the country, remained the most popular daily paper of Hungary by far (a million readers per day). *Népszava*, the former trade union newspaper, has changed owners several times, and maintained much of its left leaning working class readership. When MSZMP was refounded after the creation of MSZP, the old guard launched the weekly *Szabadság*, which is still the only left wing political weekly in Hungary. Various MSZP and trade union organizations maintained their own bulletins, or even launched new ones, but these rarely came close to national significance, and remained important only for the particular area or locality.

MSZP continued to run the monthly *Társadalmi Szemle* until 1998, when its publication was halted for an indefinite period. Thus, by the end of the 1990s, only two left wing periodicals remained on the market. One of them is the quarterly *Eszmélet*, which was launched as an independent bimonthly in 1989 by representatives of the Hungarian "New Left", organized in the tiny Left Alternative Association. This political movement started in 1988 with about 300 members, and gained some significance in influencing left wing politics in the early 1990s. This was the only political tendency in Hungary that promoted a left-wing critique of and alternative to the failed state socialist regime, and advocated workers' ownership within the democratic political system.

Leaders of the Left Alternative became prominent in the Left Bloc — a radical platform — of MSZP, and the party related press foundations often provided support for *Eszmélet*. The other significant left wing periodical is *Ezredvég*, which is a cultural and political monthly supported by the Workers' Party. *Eszmélet* regularly publishes translations from leading contemporary left wing thinkers of the world (Wallerstein, Amin, Mészáros, Altwater, Petras, Brenner and so on), and *Ezredvég* provides space for the best of the Hungarian socialist literature and poetry.

With the support of the state and the

★ Hungary

Soros Foundation, there is a multitude of liberal and conservative magazines in Hungary, and some representatives of the first group also publish articles by progressive authors. There is also an increasing number of environmentalist publications, but the political orientation of these is uncertain. With the withdrawal of the Soros Foundation and the strengthening right wing influence in the government bodies, the positions of the progressive press can be expected to weaken even more in the future.

2. Issues, initiatives and ideology

During the ten years since 1990, when the first general elections took place in Hungary after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the political landscape of the country has changed only marginally. So far as the parliamentary landscape is concerned, the same six parties entered parliament in the three post-communist general elections, with a small change in 1998 when the tiny Christian-Democratic party collapsed and its place was taken by the far right Party of Hungarian Justice and Life. In fact the presence of the latter was not entirely new, since their leader, István Csurka, was member of the first post-communist parliament as vice-president of the ruling Hungarian Democratic Forum. As for the extra-parliamentary parties, the revived communist party was the strongest force in the early 1990s, just like today, in 2000.

In terms of political ideology, the landscape has not changed either. The political rhetoric and the moral capital of the new forces in 1989 was linked to achieving a transition, or systemic change, that would lead the nation from a one-party dictatorship with a centrally planned economy into a multi-party democracy with a market economy. Ever since this common political goal was defined in 1989, the agenda of politics in Hungary was the gradual perfection of this market democracy. Those who criticized the rulers claimed that the systemic change has not been accomplished properly, and the rulers often answered that the systemic change can only be accomplished under such and such circumstances, i.e. only if they get re-elected for another term.

In the political ideology of the Hungarian transition, the myth of the 1956 'revolution' has played an essential role. The changes of 1989 started by a revision

of 1956, since the suppression of the uprising provided the legitimacy for the regime of János Kádár until the end of the 1980s. It was soon understood by all different left circles that no political force can survive in the post-communist era with a negative attitude to 1956. Thus the Socialist Party contributed to a cult of Imre Nagy, the executed prime minister, who was a communist and loyal to the Soviet Union until the end, but realized that without engaging with the popular sentiment the communist party could not create a democratic foundation for its power. Nagy, who was exhumed and reburied publicly in 1989, became a flag for the dominant pro-capitalist forces of MSZP. However, even the left of the party was affirmative on 1956, and highlighted the workers' councils movement as the progressive legacy of the uprising. Party leader Gyula Horn, who joined Kádár's militia in 1956 to put down the uprising, had to apologize publicly, and confess that now he thinks about 1956 differently than forty years earlier.

In the early 1990s, the right wing government of Hungary attempted to pull the country out of state socialism into the past, instead of the future. Government policies were dominated by the attempt of a general social and cultural restoration. Even the interwar, semifascist dictatorship of Admiral Miklós Horthy was idealised by some, and the backward looking forces took advantage of the Millecentenarium of the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin in 1996 and the Millennium of the foundation of the Christian Hungarian Kingdom in 2000.

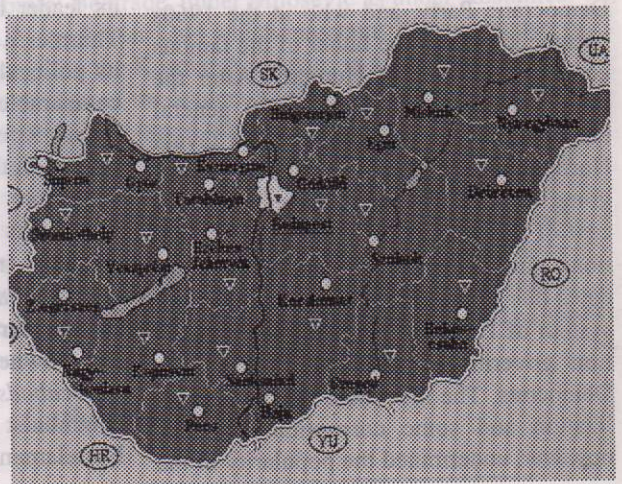
However, some forces on the left have tended to look into the past instead of the future too. The contemporary Workers' Party can with no exaggeration be called a nostalgia left, because their main message is that Hungarians lived better under the regime of János Kádár, i.e. between the late 50s and the late 80s. A major gathering for the party which attracts thousands of people from all around the country is the anniversary of the passing of Kádár in early July. Recently, party leader Gyula Thürmer pictured himself with Kádár's giant photo in the background.

Even if it is true that most of the Hungarian people had an easier life in the 1970s and 80s

than in the decade of transition, the Workers' Party had to understand that it cannot base its future by looking only into the past. Some initiatives emerged that would turn the party into the Party of Social Europe, which is not necessarily a bad idea. However, it would not inevitably become a success, given that the party had already changed its name once less than a decade earlier, and it is doubtful that the same leadership under a different name could attract masses of young people, which is the issue of life or death for the Workers' Party in Hungary.

The Socialists have always wanted to distance themselves from the old communist party, and their modernization ideology was one of the instruments to serve this purpose. The programme of modernization was identified with the transition to market democracy and Euro-Atlantic integration. The Socialist Party has thus been no exception from the general tendency in the new Hungarian political elite, for whom Europe has been functioning as the positive utopia for the transition. Whenever politicians or social scientists tried to argue for something good or something better than we had, they called it European. This political linguistics resembled the earlier times when the adjective socialist functioned very similarly. This utopian land, however, was the Europe of the past, i.e. the pre-Maastricht model of neo-corporatism, social- and Christian democracies. There has been very little analysis of what changes the end of the Cold War triggered off on the Western side of the continent, and in what ways the previous socio-political model of the European Community was undermined by the implementation of the single market and the drive towards the single currency.

Soon after the Socialist Party lost the



1998 elections, a debate about the Third Way emerged in Hungary as well, and even the search for “the Hungarian Tony Blair” began too. Ironically enough, the only possible candidate for this role is the former prime minister Miklós Németh, who spent the last nine years as vice-president of the London based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. It is yet to be fought out between the current party leader László Kovács, ex-premiers Németh and Horn, and Péter Medgyessy, the former deputy for Németh, as to who should be the candidate for premiership for the Socialist Party in 2002. Four men, all of them former members of the Central Committee of MSZMP, and all of them economists by their training. This bias can be hardly compensated by the introduction of quotas for the representation of young people and women in the leading bodies of the party, which was done in 1999. An American political marketing expert, Professor Bruce Newman (DePaul University) advised MSZP to focus the campaign on the question of women in order to win the 2002 elections for a center-left coalition, but this will not be easy if the “gang of the four” take all media attention to themselves.

Having felt the shortcomings of the hitherto pragmatism, and in order to present something more than just personal rivalry, MSZP embarked on producing some major documents in the period 1998-2000. One of them was the Social Democratic Charter, and the other one the 15 year programme of the party. Both works were directed by the old sociologist Iván Vitányi, who had been one of the leading figures on the right wing of MSZP. Both works have been accomplished after producing tons of semi- and by-products, but none of them created a text that would signal clear alternatives and that would inspire a new generation to follow the values of the left. Without this latter, however, MSZP cannot even dream about replacing the current right wing coalition in 2002, since the right wing Alliance of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party has managed to build up and maintain its popularity among the youth ever since the Socialist-Liberal coalition introduced tuition fees in higher education in 1995. To win the young vote for the left, the Socialist Party has started to build-up a campaigning around the internet, but still lacks a clear vision about a more egalitarian school system.

Similarly to the perspectives on youth, the case for ecology should be an integrated part of a progressive left programme in the 21st century, but we are still very far from it in Hungary. When the transition began, environmentalism as a political issue was thrown to the right, largely because of a very unfortunate debate over a dam on the river Danube. This project, launched in the 1980s, became a symbol of Stalinist gigantomania, and the emerging political dispute around it created a picture that the left is predominantly technocratic and ignorant about the natural environment, while the right wing parties were able to collect the sympathy and the vote of those who saw the environment threatened by the prevailing business mechanism.

In the 1990s, the only achievement in



Hungarian PM Orbán

this field was that the dam on the Danube was not built, but in many other areas environmental degradation and risk was just aggravated. In 1998-2000, the Orbán government featured a minister for the environment who not only hurt the national institutions of environment protection but turned this area into the most problematic one in the accession talks with the EU. The problem is that all this was not enough for the Left to develop a strong environmentalist tendency, and now, having sacked the trouble-making minister, the Right has the chance again to rebuild their constituency in this area.

The fundamental problem with the new MSZP documents, i.e. with the Charter and the Programme, is that the authors did not dare to drop the idea of perfecting the systemic change, though it has become clear that the people do not look on it with such positive attitudes and expectations as ten years earlier. In the meantime, it is more and more apparent that the programme and rhetoric of the left should be rethought and reformulated. Party leader László Kovács, for instance, claimed in opposition that unemployment was not a significant problem in Hungary since its

rate has fallen below the European average, i.e. to some 7 per cent. The figure was correct, but the context was cheating, since the size of the inactive population grew very fast in the early 1990s, and the employment ratio of the Hungarian society remained in a very low range, i.e. around 54-55 per cent in the late 90s. In such circumstances the lack of jobs is indeed a burning issue, even if the official unemployment figures do not provide sufficient evidence.

The drama of unemployment becomes even more obvious when we realize that the miserable situation of the Roma population — the half a million strong community of Hungarian gypsies — is also largely due to the lack of jobs and the decline in the real value and availability of welfare provision by the state. In 1999, even the European Union mentioned the Roma problem as one of the most significant deficits of the development in Hungary. The EU, however, similarly to the Hungarian liberals, interpreted the Roma issue as a problem of minority rights and discrimination, as if it could be resolved simply in the area of ethics and political representation.

Of course, these are parts of the problem. We have to see, however, that the impoverishment of the Hungarian Roma in the 1990s has been a parallel process with the emergence of a new Hungarian underclass. And, this has been due to economic and welfare reform policies proposed by the IMF and the World Bank and also actively supported by the European Union. Raising the Roma problem in 1999 as an obstacle to the EU accession of Hungary is hardly more than sheer hypocrisy.

It should, however, be the Hungarian left who provides a proper analysis of the problems of the Roma and the new underclass, and who comes out with a blueprint of economic and social reforms that could strengthen social cohesion within the circumstances of a globalized market economy. This is not possible now without taking a critical position about the new capitalist system, i.e. focusing on the correction of the systemic change instead of its accomplishment, even if it is not easy to accommodate internationalism with egalitarian social policies in the first decade of the 21st century. ★

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★ Colombia

1. WITH the approval by the US Congress of the so-called Plan Colombia, the political, social and military conflict in Colombia could become one of the main scenarios of anti-imperialist confrontation in the Third World. The US decision to finance and directly lead Plan Colombia is presented as an operation of struggle against drugs and the narcotics trade; yet 80% of the \$7,500 million of Plan Colombia has a counterinsurgent political objective and this will be implemented through the destruction of the cultivations on which 400,000 peasant families depend for their survival. Destruction of cultivation and ecological-ethnic-cultural depredation, similar to the experience of "Operation Dignity" in Bolivia — an operation led by US "advisers" and soldiers and the USAID agency.

Plan Colombia means the most serious foreign aggression of recent times against a Latin American country and confirms the desire of the imperialists to assure their hegemony over Latin America and the Caribbean. It fits into the US vision according to which the "Colombian disorder is becoming a regional danger", increasing the "insecurity of the hemisphere" and endangering the "national security" of the US. The empire has resolved to turn Colombia — and the Andean region — into a new theatre of war.

2. The decree issued by the Clinton administration on August 23 which approved military "aid" of \$1,319 million to the government of President Pastrana can only be read in one way: it is a declaration of war against the armed insurgency (FARC, ELN, EPL), and also against the trade union, peasant, popular and human rights movements, against the political parties of the left and, in the end, against all the democratic actors in Colombian society. In the framework of a political, social and armed conflict that in recent years has led to 35,000 deaths, 1,000,000 "internally displaced" (a figure only exceeded by the Rwandan-Congolese drama) and 800,000 exiled, Plan Colombia, far from being an option for peace, is an instrument to strengthen the repressive capacity of the state, as well as the criminal paramilitary organizations.

3. This escalation of US interventionist strategy takes place in a Latin American landscape characterized by economic cri-

Against Plan Colombia

THIS resolution was adopted by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, the worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists, at its October 2000 meeting.

sis, the growth of social resistance, and the loss of legitimacy of the "neoliberal model". In some countries, moreover, the governing elites face situations of ungovernability and crises of domination (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia).

The successive indigenous uprisings in Ecuador, popular and peasant uprisings in Bolivia, as well as the decomposition of the Fujimori regime on the one hand and the nationalist discourse of Chavez on the other, have whipped up the tempests in the Andean region. Simultaneously, we witness a growth of anti-neoliberal discontent and resistance in other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. US imperialism is then playing all its cards to achieve a "stabilization". Plan Colombia is intended to change decisively the relationship of forces in the Colombian internal conflict, if not to establish control over the Amazon region and the oil wealth of the Orinoco, or reaffirm a military presence in the zone of the Panama Canal and the Caribbean.

4. The argument based on the "national security" of the United States is a manifestation of tutelage and the most complete and arrogant ignorance of any notion of national sovereignty which conflicts with US interests. This policy submits the Latin American peoples and countries to the economic control and neocolonial pillage of the international financial organizations and the multinational companies (payment of the foreign debt, unequal exchange, privatization) and accelerates the path towards the creation of the American Free Trade Area (AFTA) which seeks an "integration" subordinated to US interests and which in many aspects puts into question the currently existing regional blocs, in particular Mercosur.

It also seeks to discipline more the Latin American governments and block any alternative project of democratic and sovereign development proposed by the

left and the popular camp.

At the same time, Plan Colombia pursues a delimitation of areas of influence with the imperialisms of the European Union, competing for Latin American markets and the bioenergetic and strategic wealth of the Amazon, assigning to the EU governments the EU the role of "humanitarian" donors, above all to balance macro-economic disequilibria, the payment of the public and private debt and the "collateral" social effects of the scorched earth policy.

5. Unlike other US interventionist operations, Plan Colombia uses military pressure to ensure the application of the anti-popular denationalizing adjustment plan that the Pastrana government and the IMF agreed in 1999. This accord established the conditions to pursue counter-reforms which undermine free education and public health and solidarity-based systems of social security; which deepen the flexibility of labour; the privatization of state companies, roads and rivers; the sale of biodiversity; the private exploitation of energy resources; and the negation of the rights of the indigenous peoples.

This adjustment plan aggravates unemployment and poverty in a country where 50% of the population survive on less than \$2 a day and where a small oligarchic minority (3%) owns 70% of the land. These counter-reforms, which have an antidemocratic character — and can only be applied to the exclusion of basic social rights and by violating elementary human rights — have been contested by the social movements through strikes and various mass demonstrations.

6. Before the gravity of the moment, and taking into account that "Operacion Sur" has already been implemented in the Putumayo region (as a pilot for Plan Colombia), the trade union, peasant, indigenous, neighbourhood, women's, religious, organizations and movements,

Amnesty International, and the Peace and Justice Service, as well as the political fronts and parties of Latin America (in particular those grouped in the Sao Paulo Forum), are beginning to mobilize against this US aggression and in solidarity with the Colombian people. Also diverse NGOs, solidarity groups in Europe, the US and Canada, together with personalities like Noam Chomsky, Eduardo Galeano, Jose Saramago, Dario Fo, and Danielle Mitterrand, among others, have signed a Manifesto for Peace and Human Rights in Colombia.

All these mobilizations and campaigns demand: full respect for national sovereignty and human rights; the dismantling of paramilitarism, the immediate end to state terrorism, and the ending of impunity for those guilty of innumerable massacres; the withdrawal of the 300 US military "advisors" and an end to any foreign intervention; as well as respect for the autonomy of the social, peasant and indigenous movements — including in the zones controlled by the armed insurgency — and "dialogue with social justice" as a condition for peace.

7. The sections and sympathizing and fraternal organizations of the Fourth International participate in these movements and campaigns and in the battle against the media intoxication that, beneath the cloak of the war against drugs, seeks to neutralize the actions of a great number of NGOs and social and democratic movements. Simultaneously, we insist on the necessity of engaging in the development of a broad, plural and unitary campaign of solidarity with the popular and indigenous movements and organizations, not just in Colombia but also in Ecuador and Peru, which are directly targeted by the repressive strategy of Plan Colombia.

The forces of the Fourth International agree also on the necessity of emphasizing the class nature of this war and the legitimacy of insurrectional struggles which are in practice struggles of anti-capitalist resistance against the local oligarchies and the expression of a concrete anti-imperialism. In such conditions, the next World Social Forum (Porto Alegre, January 2001) is a militant opportunity to incorporate the consequences of the Colombian and regional conflict into the discussions and debates against capitalist globalization, and on political and social projects for a radical transformation of society. ★

Behind the war on drugs

ONE of the fictions that the US Plan Colombia is based upon is that the aid destined for the Colombian military and police is part of a war on drugs being waged in the name of civilisation.

GEAROID O LOINGSIGH*

THAT the US government is interested in waging war on drugs would be laughable were it not for the tragedy that unfolds in US cities many of which were opened up to the international drugs market by US officials in dirty deals to finance counter-insurgency operations in Latin America. However, within this fiction there is another equally dangerous lie and that is that the peasant farmers who grow the raw materials for drug production, i.e coca leaves and heroin poppies, are the people behind the drugs trade alongside the armed insurgency (FARC and ELN). Common sense would indicate that this is not so. It is worthwhile though taking a look at who actually does control the illegal drugs trade.

Six stages

There are six stages in the production and distribution of cocaine. As we advance along the chain of production the actors involved change as does the value of the product, needless to say so also does the profit margin.

Stage one: This primary stage involves the clearing of land for planting. Given that coca is grown mainly in the Amazon and Orinoco watersheds planting of coca often involves the clearance of tropical rainforest. In the case of Colombia peasant farmers engaged in coca production are colonists officially awarded tracts of jungle as part of "agrarian reform". Most of these peasants have fled precarious economic situations in other parts of the state and increasingly they have been forced off better more productive land in other parts of the country by state backed paramilitaries engaged in "counter-insurgency" operations. Within six months of planting the coca plant will give its first crop and will give five or six harvests per year thereafter.

Stage two: The second stage involves the peasant farmer breaking down the harvested leaves into a coca base. Initially when the trade began it was the drug lords who broke the leaf into a paste. However, the technology required to make coca base is quite rudimentary and the capital investment required is relatively low compared to other stages thus making it inevitable that peasants would eventually branch into this stage of production. The primary ingredients are cement, gasoline and sodium bicarbonate, all relatively cheap and easily accessible. We say relatively because whilst these substances are almost household items the transportation costs of getting them into the Colombian Amazon are quite high.

Upon sale of the base the peasant receives US\$1,000 per kilo. Each hectare of land produces five or six kilos of base per year. The average amount of land under coca production per peasant is three hectares. So a peasant can expect to earn between US\$15,000 and US\$18,000 dollars per year. At first glance this seems to be a hefty sum in country where the mass of the population live in poverty. However, the peasant's profit per kilo is only one tenth of that, i.e US\$100 dollars per kilo or US\$1,500 to US\$1,800 per year given the high cost of the raw materials needed. This, coupled with the higher cost of living in jungle areas where everything has to be imported and where little infrastructure exists to facilitate the movement of goods, leaves the peasant farmer in poverty. (The lack of infrastructure for the movement of goods is also a factor in the production of coca base. Peasants who cannot profitably get their produce to markets in saleable condition encounter no such problems with the non perishable coca base which is moreover collected by the buyer and is small enough to be transported upon one's

★ Colombia

person requiring no investment in mules or river transport).

Once the base has been sold the peasant's contact with industry ceases. It is then in stage three taken to technologically advanced laboratories requiring a relatively high capital and technological investment where it is industrially processed and turned into cocaine. It is at this stage that cocaine begins to acquire a real lucrative value. In the 1980s this industrial stage was controlled by Colombian Mafias, the now infamous Medellin cartel led by Pablo Escobar and the state sponsored Cali cartel. Today however, the power of these two cartels is no more and other competitors have flourished both within Colombia and in other Latin American countries. Mexico in particular is one country which may come to dispute Colombia's dominance of the industrial production of cocaine.

Importation

Stages four and five involve the importation into the northern markets and its wholesale. It is between these two stages that the cocaine changes hands and its value rockets. Having changed hands the product is now in the hands of North American and European Mafias who make most profit. 85% of all the profits made in the cocaine trade are made in the north by these same mafias. If we consider that the peasant farmer initially sold on the coca base for US\$1,000 the same kilo (there is a slight loss in volume in the processing but for our purposes a kilo of base produces a kilo of cocaine), this is then sold in the US for US\$100,000 and in Europe for US\$150,000.

We are of course talking about pure cocaine before it is adulterated previous to street sale, the ultimate stage. Although we have talked about cocaine the same chain of production is to be found with heroin. Synthetic drugs such as ecstasy, however, are produced by capitalist Mafias in the north requiring no raw materials from the south. It is quite obvious that the peasant farmer is not in control of the chain of production. Lacking the technology and capital for the stage of industrial refinement of the coca base he is hardly in a position to have any say in subsequent stages. The peasant farmer should be seen not as a narco-trafficker but as cheap labour for international Mafias. Likewise the consumer and the addict should not be

seen either as criminals but as victims of these same Mafias.

These illegal Mafias are not the only North American and European capitalist companies that make a profit from the drugs trade. In each stage of production there is a parallel legal economy which like its illegal counterpart is more lucrative at each stage. From the initial stage where the peasant buys cement to further stages where transport is required and arms bought both legally and illegally. In the industrial production stage the Mafias require acetone and ether in order to make the paste into cocaine. The two largest suppliers of acetone and ether to the legal market in Colombia are the US and Germany. All of this is money is legally generated although it forms an integral part of the illegal drugs industry. Indeed the illegal drugs industry would have difficulty surviving were it not for the parallel legal economy which accompanies it.

Tax havens

We have not yet mentioned the banking and stockbroking companies through which the profits of the drugs industry are laundered. There are many tax havens that ask few if any questions about where the money has come from. Even where there are obstacles to the laundering of profits they are not insurmountable. It was calculated by the OECD in the 1990s that the international drugs trade generated profits in the region of half a trillion dollars per year. Of this 56% flowed into the US financial system alone¹. The US government has not pursued either the chemical companies or the banking institutions.

What then of the FARC and the ELN? Of the two guerrilla groupings it is the FARC which has the most problematic relationship with the drugs trade. The ELN has publicly stated that it considers the drugs trade to be a crime against humanity and should be punishable as



such. This is not to say that no front of the ELN has had any involvement or contact with the drugs trade. The FARC on the other hand control some of the largest coca producing areas in Colombia. They levy a tax on the export of coca paste from the areas they control. This tax is paid by the drug baron and is calculated on the basis of street sale price in New York. Here begins and ends the FARC's relationship with the drugs trade; or at least all evidence would seem to indicate that this is the case. Even the US State Department's report on Colombia for 1999, published in March 2000, states that there is no evidence to link the FARC to the importation of drugs into the US and reaffirms that the FARC levy taxes on the coca base. The report interestingly enough does point to paramilitary involvement in the drugs trade.

The drugs trade is a northern industry. It is controlled by Mafias in the north which make most of the profits and it is an essential industry to the maintenance of the capitalist financial system which can ill afford to suddenly lose half a trillion dollars. Hence little action has been taken against those who really matter in this industry.

The criminalisation and demonisation of peasant farmers in Colombia owes more to political expediency than any reality about the control of the drugs trade. If every last peasant farmer in Colombia were to stop producing coca the people who dominate all of the other profitable stages in the chain of production would simply source their raw materials elsewhere as all good capitalists do. ★

¹This article is primarily based upon a seminar given in Dublin May 2000 to addicts and community workers by the Corporación René García as part of Latin America Week.
1. Noam Chomsky Cuadernos Africa-América Latina Enero 1996.

End "all out war"!

THE following resolution was adopted by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International at its October 2000 meeting.

1. WHEN President Estrada declared an "all out war" policy against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao, he intended to finish the war in a few weeks. He has mobilized almost three quarters of his armed forces (air force, army and navy) led by the elite force trained by the US through the US-Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement.

2. The objective of this war is to militarily weaken the MILF and to draw it to the negotiating table where the Estrada government can impose its concept of peace on it. Using the modern military hardware provided by the US like the Global Positioning System (GPS), satellite photos and heavy weaponry, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) attacked the 47 camps of the MILF including those camps where the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Bongcayao Brigade (RPA-ABB), the armed unit of the Rebolusyonyang Partido ng Maggaqawa ng Pilipinos (RPMP) or the Revolutionary Workers' Party of the Philippines share with the MILF.

3. The "all out war" policy of the Estrada government is not only directed against the MILF. The strategic role of Mindanao for the success of the neoliberal project of capitalist globalization in the Philippines is the main reason for this war. It is a war directed at all those who will oppose capitalist globalization.

The Revolutionary Workers' Party in the Philippines has been one of the main forces leading the campaign to stop this war, not only in Mindanao but in the whole country. It has been launching grassroots based peace conferences (local and international) and conducting humanitarian projects for those who have been dislocated by war.

4. The Moro people has been fighting for their right to self-determination for more than 50 years. In fact, it has consistently resisted all Philippine colonizers and invaders for more than 300 years. Currently the struggle of the Moro people for self-determination is led by the Moro

Islamic Liberation Front and the Banga Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). The Revolutionary Workers' Party of the Philippines has been supporting this struggle of the Moro people.

5. The Estrada military solution to a non-military problem has been a failure. But it has displaced almost a million people in Mindanao. Many of these people are children and old people are forced to live in the "plastic tents" in the evacuation centres. Several hundred children have died because of lack of food and medicine in these places.

6. The RWPP has been working together with other progressive groups among the three peoples in Mindanao, the Moro, Lumads (indigenous peoples) and the majority Christians to achieve a comprehensive solution to the problems of Mindanao. There have been gains achieved in this already but the Estrada regime and US imperialism would not want to pursue this.

7. It was not circumstantial that at the peak of Estrada's military offensives against the MILF, the Abu Sayyaf (Muslim fundamentalist group) came back to life. They carried out several kidnappings of Christians and foreign tourists in a nearby Malaysian island resort. These acts made the headlines locally as well as internationally. In fact at an early stage they had announced political demands as conditions for the release of the hostages.

The propaganda machinery of the Estrada government had successfully packaged the Abu Sayyaf and the MILF as one. The terroristic acts of the Abu Sayyaf justified the arming of the Christians in Mindanao to fight not only the Abu Sayyaf but the MILF or the Muslims as well. The Muslims and Christians who have been neighbours for a long time have begun to mistrust each other.

8. After thousands of lives lost and heavy destruction of homes and farms, Estrada announced military victory over the MILF, especially after the capture of

the main camp of the MILF (Camp Abubakir). The leadership of the MILF announced jihad, not so much to recapture their camps but to defend their cause and their homeland.

In the last part of July 2000, Estrada sent his representatives to the Foreign Ministerial meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) in Kuala Lumpur to block the application of the MILF as observer in the OIC. A week after this he went to the United States to ask for military assistance from President Clinton.

9. At present the MILF has been conducting guerilla counteroffensives against the AFP. The war has totally drained the resources of the government, so that it has overshot by more than 30% of the allowable deficit by the IMF. At the peak of the military offensives the government was spending more than a million dollars a day. This is one of the major causes of the economic crisis in the country.

10. The crisis has worsened in the last three weeks because of the scandal faced by President Estrada. One of the members of his inner circle has exposed Estrada's involvement in illegal gambling in the country. And now he is undergoing an impeachment procedure in the Congress. The bourgeois political parties have taken advantage of this scandal to further weaken Estrada.

11. In this difficult situation there is an urgent need for forging solidarity among the progressive parties and groups in the world to stop the continuation of the "all out war" policy of the Estrada government directly or indirectly supported by the US imperialists. There is an urgent need for us to support the struggle of the Moro people to self-determination and the progressive organizations embodying this struggle.

12. The Revolutionary Workers' Party of the Philippines has been struggling with the Moro people to attain their political objective of self government through helping them in the revolutionary work of building and strengthening organizations among the working and peasant class to ensure the proletarian content of the right to self-determination. The Fourth International expresses its full internationalist solidarity with the RWPP comrades and pledges to continue its political and material support to them. ★

Reflections on globalization and the perspectives of the workers' movement

WE have to pose ourselves the question of why and how a movement born for the freedom of all was able to end up in reality in forms of oppression. The historic movement of Communism has to give a response, in spite all the difficulties that this involves.

FAUSTO BERTINOTTI*

IT would be easier, indeed more acceptable intellectually, to develop a critique of the outcome of an openly oppressive ideology. However we must approach the contrary case: that of an ideology and of a culture of liberation, which represents the highest point reached by the idea of liberty in the history of human thought. We should then suppose that in the course of events the forces which identify themselves with this ideology, in most of their experiences, have contradicted radically the project from which they originated (...)

The ideas of Marx have experienced an at least three-dimensional development. The first dimension is that of ideal communism, that is the development of the overall doctrine, of the ideology, of the culture which flowed from the Marxian approach; the second is represented by the post-revolutionary state experiences which followed the 1917 revolution in Russia (...); the third is that of the history of the workers' movement as a whole and, inside this latter, the history of the movements, the class struggle and its political expressions such as they developed in western Europe.

These elements as a whole configure the history of a century of the workers' movement. In this global balance sheet, instead of starting from the errors and the bankruptcy of the countries of the East, the reasons and motor causes of this bankruptcy, which poses, moreover, gigantic questions, it is opportune and necessary to reflect first on the thought of Marx.

I share the opinion of Marxist thinkers who, in the course of the last decades, have argued that Marx represented the highest point of political thought, which resides precisely in the concept of revolution.

Nonetheless, judged on the basis of his-

toric experience, it should be said that his thought also contains elements in need of development and gaps, which, certainly, does not explain the tragic events which have marked the history of the workers' movement, but should not be minimized to the extent that these "gaps" paved the way to errors which happened subsequently.

Marx and his heirs

But first it is necessary to reflect on the heritage and the heirs. So far as ideal communism is concerned I continue to believe that Marx's thought on freedom has not been surpassed, even if there have been some great Communist thinkers in the past century, for example Gramsci, who, at a determined historic moment, marked a new evolution of Marxism, without forgetting the gigantic contribution of the great revolutionaries who combined action and thought in the first decade of the 20th century, from Kautsky to Rosa Luxemburg, from Trotsky to Lenin, not to speak of great contemporaries like Sweezy and Marcuse.

It is above all in the course of the last decades that there has been an obscuring of the most radical kernel of Marx's thought. This obscuring is not only determined by a great historic event, that is the defeat of the last great movement which has raised the question of revolution: I refer to the worker and student revolt of the late 1960s, whose defeat indisputably closed a door to the evolution of Marxist thought.

But even before this defeat – and still more after – the theme of freedom was advanced in terms similar enough to those that had been used before Marx, that is by a juxtaposition of freedom and equality and an attempt at composition between

FAUSTO Bertinotti, secretary of Italy's Party of Communist Refoundation, has just published a new book called *Le idee che non muoiono* ("Ideas that do not die"). Believing that the problems approached in this book are of interest to activists in the workers' movement and left intellectuals in other countries, we publish here some extracts, followed by an analysis by our collaborator Livio Maitan.* ★

these two terms which, in the Communist movement itself, seems closer to democratic thought than the original thought of Marx.

After the advent of Fordism-Taylorism Marxist thought experienced a scientist turn, which led to its conceiving the development of the productive forces and technique, fundamentally, as a necessary basis for the pursuit of a process of social emancipation and of liberty. (pp. 29-32)

(...) Despite the obscuring of the project that Marx conceived as the basis of human liberty and despite the limits of his thought and the errors which occurred throughout a whole historic experience... Marx is confirmed as having discovered a fundamental law of history, that is that capitalism is a negator of liberty and that the liberty which can be produced in its framework is the result of a historic process which had links with communism, the struggles and the attempts to realize it. (p. 42)

(...) I remain convinced that our principal critique of the experience of the countries of actually existing socialism concerns their lack of socialism (...). Nonetheless, this lack of socialism does not entirely explain the shortage of democracy and the existence of forms of oppression against persons.

But all this cannot be really explained without the spirit, the idea of liberation in Marx, who indicates as the polar star the human perspective of a free activity for all. Yet, while affirming this, we should be absolutely conscious that more than ever we need a theory of legality. (...)

There is then a supplementary, specific element which should be approached in the process of transformation of capitalist society, whose center remains the transcen-

dence of private property and the socialization of work, in other words, liberation from work. This aspect should not be neglected: we need a theory of the state, of legality and of democracy. In this respect the liberal and democratic thinkers were right, while being wrong for the essential. (p. 45)

(...) In the preceding phase of the development of capitalist society there was a confrontation between reformist projects and revolutionary projects. Both have suffered a defeat. So far as the reformist project is concerned, I refer as much to the reformism of the workers' movement as to bourgeois reformism (in relation to this latter our critique is still more practical and pertinent).

But today we should have a still more radical attitude. We are not witnessing an attenuation of inequality but its accentuation. Yet this process develops without being contested by the center-left governments. (p. 65)

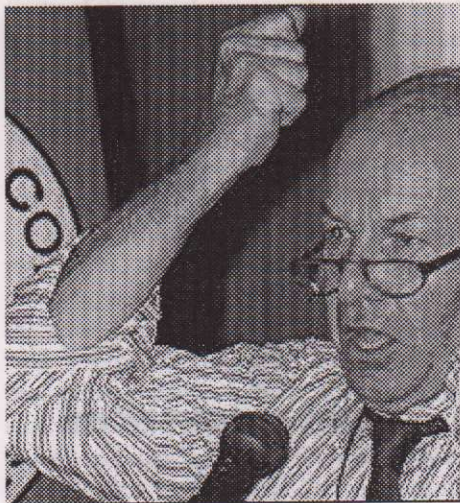
Class consciousness and crises of Marxism

(...) As we know, there have always been two critical interpretations, one which attributes to Marx a completely progressive reading of capitalism, the other which only grasps the negative side which the full development of the class struggle alone can reverse. This paradox helps us even today to reflect on the complexity as much of capitalism as of the class struggle, but undoubtedly also on the social and human condition under capitalism.

To a certain extent this can be grasped if one reflects on the fate of the working class itself. It has been the basis of capitalist accumulation through its labour power and at the same time it is the subject of transformation in its condition of class and acquired class consciousness.

We should nonetheless understand that it amounts to a simplification inasmuch as it is in this historic process itself that we can resolve a question which, if not, would have no solution. If a total capitalist alienation existed, it would be impossible to conceive at the same time the possibility of freeing oneself from this alienation.

We should then take up a formula used by Claudio Napoleoni,¹ that is to admit that there is a residue, something which in some measure escapes capitalist alienation while being connected to this latter. (pp. 88-89)



Fausto Bertinotti

(...) Without the critique of wage labour there is no possibility of materializing a radical contestation of the system capitalist, nor of founding a new revolutionary subject, nor of grasping these two big questions.

I believe still that the different crises of Marxism have had a link with the evolution of class consciousness. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, contrary to predictions, the growth of class consciousness did not have a linear and uninterrupted progression. This has had some important effects on theoretical certainties in the evolution of Marxist thought.

While not sliding towards a determinist approach, it is indisputable that the different crises of Marxism are in relation to the fundamental changes in capitalist society. Thus, class consciousness can be related to a serious defeat or an effect of displacement provoked by capitalism's ability to change its own structures.

That can happen as much through a direct hegemonic process as through an obstruction of antagonistic projects. This effect of displacement has resulted from several elements: notably the setback represented by the defeat of the movement of students and workers at the end of the 1960s, the collapse of the eastern regimes and the development of the capitalist revolution today known as "globalization".

These three elements have determined a change of scenario which has implications for the question of work. The thesis of the end of work has been completely disproved.

It is necessary, nonetheless, to ask the question of why it has been raised. My response is that precisely the appearance of this thesis demonstrates that it is the ques-

tion of work that is at stake here. In other words, to give value to the idea of the end of conflict in a global model of society it is necessary to try to make work itself disappear from the social scene.

Nonetheless, work has not disappeared: it has been profoundly revolutionized. We can henceforth bring together numerous elements of enquiry and analysis on the new condition of work, a real overall picture as much on the world as on the regional level. We can also observe the modifications which have taken place in both the organization of work and its social composition. However, we do not yet possess a unitary key of interpretation. (pp. 93-94)

The current stage of capitalism

(...) At the current stage of the development of capitalism, it is necessary to grasp another aspect of the reorganization of work, which determines, downwards, a change of social composition, stimulated by the effort to buy labour power at the lowest price. We should add here the revolution in information technology and communication.

This component of the revolution of capitalism directly concerns the organization of work. In fact, it modifies not only the relationship of the productive process, of space and time, but also the relationship of finance and productive capital, in the sense that financialisation is a process originating to a decisive extent from the possibility of moving capital across frontiers in real time.

That implies a significant push towards a deterritorialisation of production. Thus, the relationship of material and immaterial factors of production changes radically and the distinction between manual and intellectual labour is also undergoing an upheaval.

It is enough to consider the typographer and the journalist to understand the depth of the changes in space, in time, in the relationship between material and immaterial bases in the process of production.

But this structural modification of work and of production, of their relationship with society, is part of a more general change in the relationship between production and culture. It seems to me that this is happening in two directions. The first is that analyzed by Ignacio Ramonet, which

★ Italy

stresses the progressive construction of an organic and functional viewpoint to this revolution of capital and the technologies subjected to capital.

The second tries to destroy the spaces of autonomy which, while they are integrated into the capitalist division of labour and strongly marked by the rise of the subaltern classes, had characterized the preceding cycle. Significant spaces were conquered in the cultural, scientific and artistic process, sometimes inside even the institutional frameworks, like schools, influencing, through the conflict of classes, the organization of work at an overall level.

It is precisely all this which is now being radically thrown into question. A diffuse intellectuality is being formed, with a new place in the social division of labour and of knowledge. It is no longer about intellectuals who operate a mediation between production and society, organize the consensus and, at the same time, produce. This classic role of the intellectuals is henceforth in crisis whereas at the same time there is the emergence of diffuse intellectuals, intimately linked to the new process of production which breaks down all the barriers between production of material goods, services and culture. Hence an increasingly totalizing dimension inside of which the internal specifications are quite simply technical or in any case deprived of any kind of autonomy. (...) The system demands a total renunciation of thought as such and the acceptance of a separation of the capacity of innovation of the system and of social progress. (pp. 107-9)

(...) [On the subject of the feminization of work] it should not be forgotten that at the same time there is a constant marginalisation of women on the labour market. The process of privatization of social rights determines an ulterior deterioration of the life of women, as much directly as by the mediation of the family. It is not by chance that in the course of this process the family is hypervalorised as basic economic unit, as place of compensation, once more to the detriment of the woman. One can then speak of a feminization of work on the condition of not forgetting that it amounts to a poor feminization, which consists in externalizing numerous functions accomplished before by the organized welfare state and which today are assigned to the system of subcontracting and a distorted use of the "third sector",



subject to the demands of replacement of the public sector by the private in the process of growing privatization.

On the other hand, it is through a completely different conception of social rights, of universal social rights, resting on a higher quality of guaranteed payments, that one can introduce the theme of payment as recognition of social benefit. I believe that this approach can concretize itself in the proposition of a social wage to the unemployed and to long term economically inactive, that the PRC's deputies put forward in a parliamentary draft bill in February of this year, which proposes an assured monetary income from the state to all those who are in such a condition twelve months after registering as unemployed, and guaranteed free services by local administrations. (pp. 114-115)

Different choices were possible

(...) It is not only through historic interest that it is necessary to make a balance sheet of the workers' and Communist movement of the 20th century. Posed at the same time is the problem not only of restoring credibility to the perspective of going beyond capitalist society and then advancing the reasons for which capitalism should not be conceived as a society without alternative, a sort of new end of history, but also to explain why the setback for the experiences of construction of socialist societies in the course of the 20th century does not in itself imply the defeat of any hypothesis of the transcendence of capitalist society.

In my view, it is not enough to have an approach which is experimental, that is to explain that it is necessary to try and try again. In order to refound a trajectory, it is necessary to guarantee that the new

attempts do not cover the roads already traveled. I think that, in relation to the past, we should propose a counterfactual history...

Starting from the hypothesis that, in the history of the construction of the self-proclaimed socialist societies, a different choice could have led to a very different outcome. (pp. 175-76)

Withering away of the national state

(...) The process of globalization sweeps away the powers and competences of national states and throws up its own sites of government. These latter are distant and completely independent of the bodies of representative democracy, even under its most diluted forms (...). We witness, in fact, a process of profound and in some aspects irreversible crisis of the nation-state, which has less and less weight both in internal and in foreign policy. But the disappearance of states does not follow from this crisis. What follows rather is a profound modification of their role and a liquidation of the process of enlargement of democracy which developed in their framework as a result of the struggles of the workers' movement, at least so far as Europe is concerned.

They have less weight, but some states still count for a lot and since the end of the war the number of states, far from reducing, has grown. The policy of the big powers, as we have seen during the events in the Balkans, in fact tends towards the multiplication of states whose territorial dimension is reduced to the least expression and which are sometimes defined on an ethnic basis, but these states have increasingly less power and authority.

At the same time, although financial capital has an international dimension, its centre still has a predominant localization, above all in the US, whose military superpower status and the forms of social organization which support it constitute the heart, the model and the motor of a new imperial system basing its power not on consensus, but on the integration of narrow social groups and the exclusion of very large sectors of peoples and populations from economic, civil, cultural and democratic life.

The crisis of the nation-state goes hand in hand with the creation of a new imperial system, which has at its centre the United States and at its periphery a myriad

of states subjected to this latter or being fought by these latter. (pp. 192-193)

Outline of an alternative programme

(...) A contemporary political programme should outline both an alternative way of governing society to that provided by neoliberal policies and an alternative of emancipation of significant regions of the world in contrast to the social model based on globalization. Is it possible to define this programme without reopening the great question of capitalism and its transcendence?

From this point of view, it seems to me that the problem of Europe is posed precisely, a Europe where it is possible to construct an alternative society, founded on the critique of war as the foundation of a new imperial world order, and an alternative to neoliberal policies. This passage – which could and should involve the construction of political forces for an alternative in a dimension which is not Euro-centric, but is capable of conceiving Europe as a necessary critical mass to advance on the road of an alternative – should be nourished anew by the critique of exploitation and alienation and by the formation of elements of community capable of realizing partial objectives, under non-utopian but concrete forms.

(...) I wish to take up here the Gramscian intuition of the “fortresses” to be liberated in the “class war” against capitalist society. In my opinion, this concept of “fortresses” recalls to us even today the necessity of occupying spaces and times with contents which are capable of escaping, albeit not completely, the logic of exploitation and alienation and to a certain extent referring to a future whose realization implies that the proletariat can only exist on the level of universal history. This dialectic, to use the phrase, of the community and of the world sketches two polarities in the framework of which it is possible to reconstruct a new idea of the class struggle, a new idea of the liberation of men and women, an idea of life which advances the theme of Communism made historically necessary by the counter-revolution of capitalism of which we have spoken.

The most critical element of such a perspective – in a context of disproportion between its objective maturity and the dramatic immaturity of the organized subjec-

tivity of the social movement, the workers' movement, of the forces antagonistic to the new capitalism – resides in the gap which exists, in the framework of the current capitalist modernization, between exploited and exploiters in the widespread perception and culture at a mass level.

The causal relationship between social malaise, on the one hand, and the powers of the bosses and the bourgeois classes, on the other – which were in the 19th century a determinant factor of the growth in proletarian organizations, of the transmission of class consciousness in the communities – is today dissipated following a historic defeat, numerous retreats and changes and a break, a tearing, of the social tissue, of class composition.

That is why this causal relationship, which before was to a certain extent the result of a historic process and a social process, must today be entirely rebuilt. In my view, it will not be rebuilt pedagogically or from the top, but through a new social, political and cultural experience. (pp. 206-208). ★

* Fausto Bertinotti, born into a working class family in 1940, is known primarily for his trade union work at Novare in Turin and in the national secretariat of the CGIL. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s he was the main leader of the left trade union current *Essere sindacato*. After having been a member of the Italian Socialist Party, he joined the PSIUP (a split from the PSI in 1964), and was then a member of the PCI.

Since 1994 he has been a secretary of the Party of Communist Refoundation, founded in 1991 following a break from the PCI, now the PDS (Party of the Democratic Left, then DS – Left Democrats). He is a PRC deputy in the Italian Parliament and the European Parliament. He has published, among other works, *Tutti i colori del rosso* (“All the colours of red”), 1995, and, in collaboration with Alfonso Gianni, *Pensare il '68* (“Thinking 1968”), 1998 et *Le idee che non muoiono* (“Ideas which do not die”), ed. Ponte alle Grazie, 2000, extracts from which we publish here. The choice of extracts, the headline and the subheadings are ours.

1. Claudio Napoleoni, *Il valore*, ed. Iseidi, 1976.



On Fausto Bertinotti's book: Convergences and remarks

LIVIO MAITAN*

THE index of the book that Fausto Bertinotti has just published with his collaborator Alfonso Gianni is revealing of the ambition of the author: Liberty - equality - work - value - need - communism. The book contains a series of general and punctual reflexions on the theoretical questions and accumulated experiences of the workers' movement in the 20th century, analyses of capitalism at a time of globalization and sketches of social and political perspectives for the workers' movement today. In other words, the basic inspiration of the book is the reaffirmation of a necessary continuity with the conquests and struggles of more than a century of history and a lucid assessment of the imperative necessity of a profound renewal, indeed quite simply a new beginning.

All those who, like us, continue to identify themselves with revolutionary Marxism, can only share such an approach. What is more, we are fundamentally in agreement on a series of methodological conceptions and essential ideas, which, particularly in the course of the last decade, have been rejected or grossly distorted not only by the apologists of capitalism but also, on an unprecedented scale, in the ranks of the social-democratic parties, formations emerging from the old Communist Parties and the trade unions under their influence. Let us try in this commentary to underline what are in our view the most important points.

Essential convergences

First it is significant that Bertinotti, who had already reaffirmed the relevance of Marxism and Marx's idea of revolution in debates some years ago, recalls, with pertinent quotations, texts like “The Jewish Question”, the 1844 “Economic



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and Philosophical Manuscripts” and the “German ideology”, taking up the themes of alienation, liberation and the very basics of a new society, communist society.

For our part, we appreciate in particular a quotation from the “German Ideology” which implies by itself the rejection of the idea of socialism in one country. Bertinotti also stresses that this same text, not to mention the “Grundrisse”, advances a perspective on the dynamic of capitalism which helps us understand capitalism at a time of globalization (pp. 170-171).

Moreover, numerous pages are devoted to a reaffirmation of the Marxian theory of value, with references to the classic critique by Piero Sraffa and to the remarkable contributions of the Italian Marxist economist Claudio Napoleoni, who Bertinotti and Gianni consider as their principal point of reference, correctly in many aspects.¹

Conclusion: the new forms of exploitation suggests a reaffirmation of the labour theory of value which allows an understanding of how the contemporary capitalist extracts surplus-value from new labour, whatever its legal definition (pp. 125-138).

In the second place, one can only agree with Bertinotti, whatever the differences of formulation or accentuation, when he recalls the opposition in the workers’ movement since its birth between a reformist project and a revolutionary project and notes that both have suffered a defeat. We are agreed also on the breadth of the defeat, in a number of ways unprecedented, that the workers’ movement has suffered in the 1980s and 1990s. It is correct to stress, moreover, that the social democratic parties have deduced from this the necessity of diluting to the extreme, indeed erasing completely, their nature as organisations of the workers’ movement and accepting henceforth the framework of capitalist society as inescapable and globalisation either as progress or as a sort of natural evolution.² On the other hand, Bertinotti also criticises, correctly, those who, despite everything, maintain a kind of “campist” con-

ception, inspired by the Stalinist and post-Stalinist schema of confrontation between the capitalist and “socialist” countries which are more or less capable of constituting anti-imperialist bastions.³

Thirdly, Bertinotti’s book expresses an unambiguous judgement on the defeat of “actually existing socialism” and indicates in this defeat one of the causes of the current profound political and cultural regression of the workers’ movement. But his analysis is distinguished not only from that of the social democracy, but also from the analyses developed by the formations originating from the former Communist parties and by those intellectuals who try to kick over the traces of their past. He does not limit himself to denouncing the absence of democracy, the different forms of oppression and so on, but he explains that the “main critique” should focus on the “lack of socialism”. The expression might appear a little summary, but it touches on the essentials.

Finally, it goes without saying that we are fundamentally in agreement with a series of analyses on capitalism in an era of globalization, the effects of the diffusion of information technology and the new means of communication, the processes of differentiation, fragmentation and recomposition of the working class, more generally of wage-earners, and the progressive withering of the national state. With greater reason, we are agreed on the main point: wage-earners, far from being in the process of disappearing, as some claim, are on a world scale more numerous than ever and, like all those who sell their labour power, whether under the most traditional or the most “modern” form, are still the irreplaceable subjects of the revolutionary transformation towards a socialist society.

Some critical remarks and questions

In the current phase of the workers’ movement on the international scale one should not be astonished if different points of view exist, including between those who share conceptions and approaches on the essential problems. On top of that, even when there is agreement the problems can be approached from different angles, with different formulae or terminologies, indeed with another conceptual apparatus. One cannot then demand an impossible uniformity in the debates we are involved in. That is why we have put the accent above

all on the points of convergence. That does not stop us in any way from advancing now some critical remarks and raising some problems with a goal of ulterior clarification.

First, the book which, remember, tries to grasp the dynamic of capitalist economy both in the past and today, neglects an essential feature of this economy, namely its cyclical nature. It is true that at one point “the question of crisis” as “an element linked to capitalist society and its mode of production” is raised (p. 134). However, this is only a rapid allusion and, more generally, this book confirms an approach characteristic of the PRC and its entourage which consists in underestimating this key question. From whence notably a propensity to present some traits and tendencies of current capitalism as indefinite features, whereas a new cycle – which nobody can rule out – could throw into question macro-economic choices, technological options and forms of organisation of labour imposed today by the dominant classes and their governments.

Such an underestimation has repercussions also for the analysis of the events of the last two decades, most particularly in Europe. Correctly, Bertinotti stresses the multiplicity of factors which have determined the current regression of the workers’ movement. However, if I am not mistaken, there is not the least allusion to the event which has constituted a major cleavage, the recession of 1974-75. In the final analysis, it is this long term change in the economic cycle which is at the origin of the new economic and social choices which have marked the 1980s and 1990s and the political orientations which flowed from them. Do we need to recall here all the consequences of the crisis of the 1929-32 period, without which it would be impossible to explain in an exhaustive manner either Hitler’s coming to power or, ultimately, the outbreak of the Second World War? In the same way, there was undoubtedly a multiplicity of factors at the origin of the social and political options in capitalist Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, but would these options have been possible without the long wave of expansion lasting nearly a quarter of a century?

What’s more, only a comprehension of the persistent cyclical character of the capitalist economy allows us to anticipate and grasp tendencies which ripen and potential, ultimately inevitable, fractures in this framework that is presented in an apolo-

getic fashion as the end of History.

It is not at all a question of advancing catastrophist approaches, rather not ignoring what the main leaders of the economic powers are themselves asking, sometimes with anguish; how long can the current phase continue and how can a major crisis with global repercussions be avoided?

Second question. In a passage of the book that we reproduce, Bertinotti alludes to some "gaps" in the political thought of Marx which "paved the way to errors which happened subsequently".⁴ Indeed, as the author himself stresses, Marx was perfectly right not to commit himself to a detailed prefiguration of a future socialist state, something which would have represented a regression towards utopian socialism. Nonetheless, it should not be forgotten that in Marx, and in some ways still more so in Engels, there is an analysis of the nature of the state which remains fundamentally valid up to today. There is also in the work of both theorists some very pertinent and not at all obsolete analyses on the more specific forms of bourgeois political domination (for example, in relation to Bonapartism). What is more, if it is above all Engels who insists on the concept of the withering away of the state in the perspective of a communist society, some fundamental ideas in the area of a revolutionary democracy and equality are strongly enunciated in Marx's essay on the Paris Commune. It is significant, moreover, that Lenin took up these ideas in "The State and Revolution", a few months before October 1917.

To come finally to the analyses sketched of the post-revolutionary societies, the process of bureaucratisation was not fundamentally the consequence of errors or theoretical deficiencies, but the product of historically given economic, social and political conditions. Bertinotti confirms several times in his book his radical critique of Stalinism and cites, among others, a famous passage from the "Critique of the Gotha Programme" on the problematic of the transition. Certainly, nobody would expect a book to deal with every subject in 200 pages. Nonetheless, he does not stress the incontestable fact that, beyond its political and cultural dimensions, Stalinism represented a social phenomena.

It was precisely the crystallisation of a privileged new social layer that pushed to the extreme the political drifts and ideological mystifications and allowed a

Post-script

THE Italian daily *Corriere della sera* (of October 20) has published an interview with Fausto Bertinotti on his book, under the headline: "Bertinotti rediscovers Marx: yes, I believe in the world revolution". That the world revolution appears in a headline of the most important Italian daily is, all in all, agreeable. We would like, nonetheless, to make a telegraphic commentary on the following passage: "The revolution is not a revolt and should not be conceived as a conquest of state power. And it cannot be accomplished in a single country. We need to go back to the idea of the revolution as a global and long term process."

Agreed: the revolution is not the conquest of existing "state power". It involves a rupture of the given political-institutional framework and the construction ex novo of revolutionary democratic institutions.

Agreed also on the fact that the revolution would not inaugurate the construction of a society qualitatively different from capitalist society, that is a socialist society, within a national space (let Stalin revolve in his grave!). Agreed, finally on the necessity of envisaging long term processes. Nonetheless, a question mark: if the construction of mass instruments for a revolutionary struggle (and the construction or reconstruction of fortresses) is necessarily a process and the building of the new society is also a process, how is it necessary to conceive the transition from one to the other? Here is posed the unavoidable problem of the revolutionary break, whatever form it might take. This is a crucial point on which it is to be hoped that Bertinotti's book stimulates thought... ★

despotic regime, installed from the late 1920s, to maintain itself for long decades.⁵ On this subject, it seems that Bertinotti, who mentions "the gigantic contribution of the great revolutionaries" including Trotsky (p. 31), has nonetheless insufficiently studied the work of the latter, as well as other theorists like, for example, Preobrajenski and Rakovsky who, from the 1920s, had developed a clairvoyant analysis of the key problems of economic accumulation and the political structures of a society of transition.⁶

Yet the author defends a methodological approach which is absolutely correct when, in opposition to those who reject any idea of a "counterfactual history", he affirms that in the history of the workers' movement other projects and choices would have been possible.⁷ Completely agreed: that is why, if one goes back to the tragedy of the Russian revolution, it is an obligation (including a moral one) to reassert the value of the contribution of men and women who not only have developed critiques on the theoretical level but also fought politically, even at the price of their freedom and their lives, so that radically different and opposite choices could be made rather than those which finally prevailed with devastating long term consequences that nobody would deny today.

A strategic problem that remains open

The three final pages of the book (207-

209) pose the crucial problem that we call, in our own terminology, that of the transitional programme. A critique is sketched of the conceptions of national roads to socialism. The most important passage refers to a well-known passage from Gramsci that the author still considers as an essential strategic reference.⁸ Without denying the value of Gramsci's insights, we continue to think that two clarifications are needed.⁹ The first is of the historic order: the characterisation of pre-revolutionary Russia is excessively simplified, even if the distinction between Russia and the societies of western Europe undoubtedly has a basis.

The second is that we should not forget that Gramsci's thinking on the conquest of fortresses refers to phases of struggle where the workers' movement accumulates forces and structures itself socially and politically. In this sense it does not approach the problematic of the revolutionary rupture. The falsification operated by Togliatti and the other leaders of the PCI in the 1950s consisted in presenting the approach of Gramsci as a reformist gradualist approach whereas this latter in no way authorised the idea that he had renounced a revolutionary perspective.

Today, we can precisely draw an extremely negative balance sheet: the positions of the workers' movement have been to a very large extent dismantled or deserted. With more reason we should be conscious that without the reconstruction of



new positions any revolutionary perspective would only be a pious wish. Yet the problem of transitional objectives — that is objectives capable of stimulating an anti-capitalist dynamic starting from the positions conquered and the level of consciousness reached at the mass level — is far from being resolved.

For our part, we share Bertinotti's judgement: the crucial contradiction currently resides precisely in the fact that it is more than ever necessary to put the perspective of the overthrow of capitalism on the agenda whereas the relationship of forces and the regression of anti-capitalist consciousness constitutes a major obstacle in this sense. We draw even more strongly the conclusion that the Party of Communist Refoundation should make some profound changes in its strategic approaches and its manner of building itself, emerging from the impasse it has entered: it is a sine qua non to enable it to contribute effectively to the renewal of the workers' movement, the reconquest of the lost fortresses and the conquest of new ones. ★

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1. For our part, we share Napoleoni's view that "in Staffa's analysis there is no longer anything remaining of Marx's theory of value nor anything that flows as a consequence from this theory" (*Il valore*, ed. Isedi, 1976, p. 175). Ernest Mandel is of the same view (see "Late Capitalism", London, 1976, pp. 12 and 290).

2. In a public debate with Bertinotti, the secretary of the DS (Left Democrats), Veltroni, claimed that Nelson Mandela had told him that there is no more point in opposing globalization than there is in opposing meteorological phenomena. The comparison is completely lame: globalization is the result of a dynamic and an undertaking by social and political forces and has absolutely nothing fatal about it. If one wanted be punctilious, one could add that, as any good ecologist knows, meteorological phenomena themselves are no longer completely independent of the behaviour of human societies.

3. See p. 177. A similar point of view is still defended today by some members of the PRC and was expressed in a discussion on the world political situation which took place on the party leadership last June. On China the authors express critical judgements (p. 46).

4. See p. 31. In a fairly recent article Bertinotti has spoken of an "absence", including in Marx, of a theory of the state (*Liberazione*, September 3, 2000).

5. Nobody could claim that the bureaucratisation of the USSR was the product of the anti-Marxist thesis of "social-

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ism in one country". It is the opposite that happened: this thesis was adopted to justify the emergent process of bureaucratisation.

6. We also regret that, whereas in the book he rightly refers to contemporary theorists like Sweezy and Marcuse, there is not the least allusion to the contributions of Ernest Mandel whose analysis of neocapitalism or late capitalism, that is the capitalism of the post Second World War period, should be neglected by nobody.

7. See p. 176. Further on, as an example of a possible "counterfactual history", he refers to the Prague Spring which could have had a completely different outcome (p. 178).

8. "In Russia the state was everything, civil society was pri-

mordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relationship between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks; more or less numerous from one State to the next, it goes without saying — but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaissance of each individual country." (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1976, p. 238).

9 On this subject see our essay *Il marxismo rivoluzionario di Antonio Gramsci*, Nuove Edizioni Internazionali, 1987.

BY taking our slogan (“Workers of the world unite!”) and turning it upside-down, they were — in a sense — ridiculing our own internationalism. They forcefully claimed that the internationalism of the post-Cold War era was an internationalism built and defended by capitalists, for capitalists. Lately, however, this confidence has been shaken, if not shattered. The lead editorial in a recent issue of the *Economist* views anti-capitalist protests as “angry and effective.”

More importantly, the editorial warns that globalization is not inevitable and irreversible as the neoliberal ideologues have insisted for the past two decades. Rather, the very fact that globalization can be reversed is what makes anti-globalization movements so dangerous. The *Economist* makes it very clear that open declarations of capitalist confidence are harmful at the present time.

Instead, the legitimacy of globalization — and, crucially, of capitalism — must be restored. The tactic for achieving this is to focus on Third World poverty. That’s why the magazine goes on to argue that the greatest beneficiaries of globalization are the Third World poor, and it’s the anti-globalization protesters who are condemning them to continued poverty.

The post-Seattle WTO has also recast itself as the ally of the poor and marginalised. As Mike Moore, the Director-General of the WTO, declared: “It is poor people in poor countries who are grasping the opportunities provided by trade and technology to try to better their lives.”

So it seems that restoring the legitimacy of the WTO, after what they called “the setback in Seattle”, involves greater emphasis on world poverty as the main issue. At the same time, some of the world’s largest TNCs — with the worst records of labour repression, cultural and ecological destruction and genocide (of which Nike and Shell are just two examples) have founded a new partnership with the United Nations to save the world’s poor.

Helping the world’s poor under the UN corporate partnership makes it a commercial activity — a commodity like everything else. Without having any effect whatsoever on what these TNCs actually do to the planet and the mass of the people on it, this tactic serves to restore the legitimacy of corporate rule and regain the confidence of previous years.

The success of being dangerous

IN the neoliberal ice-age of the early 1980s through to the end of the 1990s, global capitalists and their supporters expressed supreme confidence in their victory over us. This confidence is symbolized in the posters and billboards launched by the *Financial Times* in the mid-1990s, declaring: “Capitalists of the world unite!”

GERARD GREENFIELD

But Mike Moore has gone a step further in these troubled times. In sharp contrast to the days of ridiculing our internationalism by misusing our slogans, we now find Comrade Mike talking about our internationalism as the shared tradition of the WTO: “We on the Left have a lot to be proud of. We built the Welfare State that looks after people when they are sick, poor, or old. We fought for the equality of women and minorities. We argued passionately for internationalism, for solidarity between workers in Sweden and those in Africa.” (Mike Moore, WTO Director General, July 26, 2000).

Rhetoric

At one level this is just a change in rhetoric. It’s a tactical maneuver, not a change in strategy. It’s certainly not a fundamental shift in the nature of the globalization project. This tactic seeks to restore a degree of legitimacy and limit the damage done by the anti-globalization movements. In other words, it’s a way of making us less dangerous.

However, it’s important to recognise that the protests in Seattle also produced its share of rhetoric. The slogan “Shutdown the WTO” may have meant “abolish the WTO” for many progressive labour and social activists, but for more conservative unions and social groups it meant “shutdown this particular WTO meeting.” In this sense it was merely symbolic. Dozens of WTO-related meetings among technocrats preceded the Seattle meeting, and as many have taken place since.

The rhetoric was even more apparent when the president of the AFL-CIO, John Sweeney, declared at the start of the protests, “Today we are making history!” Even before the protests had ended he

announced, “We have made history!” It was less a first step than the last. The WTO was shaken, but not broken, and it was time for the AFL-CIO to get back to the negotiating table to insist on a reformed WTO — with a social clause and without China. The tactics behind the slogans were not only lacking a strategy, but lacked a common goal.

It no longer makes sense to simply accuse the WTO and other agencies of global capitalism of neglecting the poor, failing to recognise the importance of ... (insert any social or environmental issue here), or lacking democracy. Since Seattle there have been numerous speeches and publications churned out by the WTO technocracy which assert the importance of democracy, human rights, environmental protection, social needs, the primacy of “the social market” over the “the free market”, and the need to eradicate poverty. Meanwhile, since Seattle, five more countries have joined the WTO (another 25 will join in the next couple of years). Key agreements have been expanded, and the number and intensity of trade talks and backroom deals has increased — not decreased. So where does that leave us?

As an oppositional strategy, pointing out what is missing in the WTO doesn’t really tell us very much about what it is we’re up against. Those unions, NGOs and social coalitions which want to reform agencies like the WTO employ tactics of lobbying, alternative policy input, and social clauses. The tactic of including those things they believe are missing from the WTO agenda is based on certain key assumptions about what the WTO is and what it does. For a start, they assume the WTO and agencies like it are institutions or organisations. They also assume that the

★ Globalization

main function of institutions like the WTO is to make and implement policies or trade agreements. Based on this, the problem becomes narrowly defined: in running these institutions and making policies and agreements there is too much corporate control and not enough control by social, labour and environmental groups (collectively called "civil society"). This then means that globalization itself is not seen as a problem. It's the kind of globalization that is in question. This then becomes a contest between corporate globalization and a people-centred or more humane kind of globalization.

Rhetoric

By accepting globalization and focusing on the rhetoric of poverty, democracy and social inclusion, these civil society groups are in fact helping the WTO out of its crisis of legitimacy. This occurs at a time when the very thing we should be doing is deepening the crisis. More importantly, these civil society and social groups are creating conditions that would render the anti-globalization movements less dangerous both for themselves and for the political and economic elite. They've clearly missed the point. We can only be effective if we continue doing whatever it is that makes us dangerous — and do it better. It's in being uncivil society that we find we can challenge the WTO and what really lies behind it.

To launch such a challenge it's important to understand that the WTO is not about institutions and agreements. It's not even about trade. The following is an example of the changes under globalization which suggest that trade is not the primary issue. In 1999 the value of global exports totaled US\$7 trillion. In the same year the value of sales by the 690,000 foreign affiliates of the world's 63,000 TNCs was nearly double, at US\$13.5 trillion. It's also significant that while worldwide exports tripled in the period from 1982 to 1999, the sales by TNCs' foreign affiliates increased six times — at twice the rate (*UN World Investment Report 2000*). What this suggests is that free trade is not really about increasing the flow of goods and services across borders, but in increasing the dominance and control of local markets by TNCs. More fundamentally, it increases our dependence on these TNCs.

This dependency reflects a critical dimension of what the WTO, NAFTA and

other free trade agreements really are. They are not just institutions and agreements, but are regimes. Basically, a regime is an arrangement of political power. In this case free trade and investment regimes refer to an arrangement of political power between countries and between corporations and governments. For example, under the WTO regime the arrangement of power between countries freezes the members of the WTO into a hierarchy of "developed", "developing" and "least-developed."

By banning certain kinds of industrial and development policies in the "developing" and "least-developed" countries and increasing overall dependency on TNCs, the WTO regime ensures that only those countries which are already "developed" stay at the top of this hierarchy.

Free trade and investment regimes also establish an arrangement of political power between corporations and governments. It's already well understood that the free trade agenda is about increasing the power and freedom of corporations, especially TNCs. This kind of freedom is what defines globalization: "I would define globalization as the freedom for my group of companies to invest where it wants when it wants, to produce what it wants, to buy and sell where it wants, and support the fewest restrictions possible coming from labour laws and social conventions." (Percy Barnevik, President of the ABB Industrial Group)

Getting rid of these restrictions has meant redefining domestic regulation in ways that protect the interests of TNCs while placing new restrictions on the ability of governments to regulate them. For example, between 1991 and 1999 there were 1,035 changes worldwide in laws on foreign investment. Of those changes, 94 per cent increased the freedom of foreign investors and reduced government regulation (*UN World Investment Report 2000*). The effect of such changes is not only to force policy-making and the judicial process to become more like the US, but to restrict the future possible actions of governments and isolate them from the pressure of labour and social movements.

Assault

As we saw in the NAFTA challenge by Ethyl Corp against the Canadian government in 1997, and in the recent NAFTA ruling in favour of Metalclad Corp against

the Mexican government, it's not just an assault on environmental regulation that we should be concerned about. It's an assault on the original local struggles that brought this legislation into being in the first place. In this sense, rolling back social and environmental legislation under free trade means rolling back the past victories of labour and social movements.

What the NAFTA challenges also showed was that federal governments are often willing to lose these cases so that they discipline provincial, state or municipal governments which have adopted progressive social and environmental policies. Where federal governments do not have the legal or political power to reverse such legislation, it can allow the external intervention of NAFTA and the WTO to act on its behalf.

The WTO is often accused of secrecy and a lack of democracy. This easily leads to proposals for greater transparency and openness. Yet such an approach ignores the fact that we need to have the ability to do something about what we see, otherwise we'll just be spectators in a transparent process. It's not just the absence of democracy in the WTO and NAFTA that is the problem, but the outright hostility towards democracy. Aggressively cutting back our ability to impose democratic priorities on capital is not an afterthought — it lies at the very heart of the globalization project. It also reminds us that the entire WTO process of becoming a member and obeying the rules rests on threats and coercion. It's the threat of trade sanctions that drives it, not human needs or common sense.

The continued spread of international and local protests against globalization in recent months has deepened the WTO's crisis of legitimacy — a crisis which was most apparent in Seattle in November 1999. This is not only an external crisis. There are serious disagreements between the governments of developing and developed countries over the WTO rules, deadlines and procedures which have stalled several negotiations. Despite this, key governments (especially the US, EU, Japanese and Canadian governments) are attempting to expand the scope of WTO agreements and to strengthen its powers. To effectively challenge this we must not help the WTO out of its crisis of legitimacy by calling for its reform. Instead we need to deepen the crisis and create the political conditions necessary to abolish the WTO and the

free trade and investment regimes which lie behind it.

We should be clear that a world without the WTO and NAFTA would not be a world without rules on international trade. Rules already exist at the local and national level in most countries, providing much needed social and environmental protection and regulating the trade in goods and services in ways that are less harmful (and sometimes even beneficial) to working people.

What is needed now is that these rules are strengthened and expanded to manage trade more effectively in the interests of working people on both sides of any trading relationship. But this isn't simply a matter of replacing free trade with fair trade. Having fair trade makes no sense if a country has been forced for the last hundred years to grow and export coffee, or if people are starving and exporting rice at the same time. What this suggests is that we need a fundamental rethinking about why we trade, what we trade and the need for local alternatives.

However, for the countries in the South such alternatives can't even be considered as long as they are burdened by international debt. The total and immediate cancellation of Third World debt and increased, unconditional international social assistance is necessary before any system of fair trade can be truly effective.

The claim that a world without the WTO would be a world without rules is untrue because at the international level we already have a wide range of rules: treaties and conventions on human rights, labor and trade union rights, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as rules which restrict harmful forms of international trade such as toxic waste and military arms. These international rules were the result of a long history of popular struggles worldwide, and it's necessary now more than ever before to reassert the priority of these conventions and principles.

To move forward labour and social movements must first regain their ability to force governments at all levels to regulate trade and investment in ways that subordinate the activities of TNCs to the broader social needs and interests of working people. This makes it necessary to abolish those free trade and investment regimes which lock the state "upwards" into the global interests of TNCs and "away" from popular pressure from below. ★

Not by politics alone

IS the recent republication of a French edition of Leon Trotsky's "Literature and Revolution" a sign of a resurgence of interest in Trotsky in our epoch of (anything but innocent) confusion between Bolshevism and Stalinism?

MICHEL LEQUENNE

IT will be interesting to see whether the leading lights of contemporary literary criticism greet it once again with silence. But it will be a safe bet to say that, with the assistance of postmodernism, the general tone will be negative, despite the fact that it takes tremendous intellectual confusion to read into Trotsky the opposite of what he wrote.

To anticipate the criticisms, let's note at once the most frequently committed sin in the reading of texts from the past: anachronism. This study from 1923 was written in a brief moment of calm and freedom between the end of the civil war and the Soviet Thermidor, i.e. the elimination of Trotsky and the seizure of power by the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev triumvirate. Trotsky was enjoying a breathing spell at a time when the battle of schools was raging among the intellectuals. All his life, even during the civil war, Trotsky read to relax. He was without doubt one of the most cultivated of the Bolshevik leaders (Annenkov, the great painter, a Left Social Revolutionary, who left the USSR in 1924, said in the 1950s that Trotsky was the only cultivated Bolshevik leader. This was unfair, at least to Lunacharsky). Like Lenin, Trotsky was at that time disturbed by the leftist and workerist drift on the art and literature front. The idea of a socialist, or proletarian art was for him a nonsense, not only impossible in the period of transition and in a country where even the working class was culturally backward, but quite simply because the proletariat could



only realize itself by abolishing itself and a new art, a new culture could only exist in a classless society. What was possible and should be the intelligentsia's objective, was a revolutionary art and literature, of which Trotsky gives two possible definitions corresponding, one might say, to two stages: "the works whose themes reflect the Revolution, and the works which are not connected with the Revolution in theme, but are thoroughly imbued with it, and are Colored by the new consciousness arising out of the Revolution".

October divide

Far from underestimating what emerges then, he emphasizes what he calls the "October divide". Admittedly, this is open today to qualification insofar as the date seems excessively precise. In fact, the revolution in art and literature — in Russia as in the whole of Europe — began in the first years of the century, but precisely as harbinger of the ideological impulses which were to come to fruition with the revolution. And with the benefit of hindsight, we can see clearly the ways in which the October revolution strengthened and clarified the avant-gardes which were going to dominate the century. Distance even allows us to discern how the radicalization of art, poetry and fiction spread following the waves of the revolution, from Russia, through Germany and thence to France and the rest of the world.

In 1923, Trotsky was probably the only person to have developed the Marxist analysis of literature to such a point. He is severe, "and that smacks of censorship" according to our modern critics, who know only how to flatter fashionable contemporaries and worship the hallowed dead. In Russia, these latter were Trotsky's contemporaries and, in the violent intellectual debates of the day, the absence of any crit-

★ Review

icism of one of the schools would have appeared as support, which, coming from such a senior figure, would have had precisely the “authoritarian” effect for which his critics have unfairly reproached him.

However, Trotsky could not be and was not neutral. He clearly perceived the dangers lurking in the demand by some schools to be proclaimed the only authentic artistic expression of the revolution, the theory of proletarian culture and literature, as well as Soviet cultural chauvinism. Was it not on such theoretical foundations that the edifice of “socialist realism” was erected?

Opposed

This was what Trotsky most violently opposed, condemning “Marxists in literature who have taken an arrogant attitude toward Futurists, the “Serapion Fraternity”, Imagists and all the fellow-travelers in general, together or separately”. And, contemptuously rejecting the criticisms of the supporters of this “proletarian art”, according to whom the absence of intervention would be, on the Party’s part, the expression of an “eclectic position on art”, he states: “The Marxian method affords an opportunity to estimate the development of the new art, to trace all its sources, to help the most progressive tendencies by a critical illumination of the road, but it does not do more than that. Art must make its own way and by its own means. The Marxian methods are not the same as the artistic. The party leads the proletariat but not the historic processes of history. There are domains in which the party leads, directly and imperatively. There are domains in which it only cooperates. There are, finally, domains in which it only orients itself. The domain of art is not one in which the party is called upon to command”.

I want to stress the fact that Trotsky stated his support for creative freedom loud and clear in 1923. There was therefore no change of position when he insisted, in the 1938 *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art*, on proclaiming “total freedom for art”, rejecting even the reservation proposed by André Breton of “except against the proletarian revolution”.

This clearly shows the meaning of his criticisms of those for whom he had the highest regard. It is significant that the poets and novelists to whom he devoted

the most important chapters are precisely those we continue to consider as the classic writers of the Soviet revolutionary period: Yesenin, Pilnyak, Blok and Mayakovsky — the highpoint of Soviet futurism. As for his criticisms of them, it should be borne in mind that Pilnyak was only at the beginning of his rise, which was moreover swiftly checked, and that Mayakovsky’s “gigantism” was both the essence of his greatness and of his weakness in the short-circuit with the moral wretchedness of the rising bureaucracy.

In the text Trotsky wrote on the poet’s death, when advice was no longer appropriate, he talked about Mayakovsky’s “enormous talent” which was “touched by genius” and wrote that he had been “one of the most indisputable precursors of the literature which the new society will bring forth”. He pointed out, finally, that his suicide came two months after the capitulation represented for him by the obligation to join the “administrative kolkhoz of the supposed proletarian literature”, the Soviet Association of Proletarian Poets.²

Criticism

Is the criticism Trotsky wrote in exile fundamentally different from that of 1923? Those who have insisted on this point have tended to emphasize that the “dictator” had moderated his severity. Here too this is the product of a distorted starting point. Without this distortion, admittedly, one can decry an evolution in his approach to modern literature. But this has nothing to do with his personal situation. It is the result of the development of culture itself and how Trotsky discovers and develops his own appreciation of it.

The paradox is that what developed after the “October divide” was unexpected even for the person who had underlined its importance. Let us not forget that Trotsky was thirty-eight in 1917. The culture of any cultivated person of the period was essentially based on the major European writers of the end of the 19th century, many of whom were still alive in 1914 and even later and that the new trends were barely perceptible, even for the educated sections of the general public. For Lenin, Tolstoy remained the crucial figure in contemporary Russian literature.

Trotsky (and Lunacharsky) stood out for their openness to the new trends. But, in the final period of his life, he had even less time for reading than in his youth. His

criticism is not that of a professional striving to find everything of importance which might be emerging, but of a revolutionary fighter who selected what he found was best able to throw light on the motive forces of intellectual trends in society, particularly works produced by people he was close to, and which most powerfully expressed international intellectual trends. Thus, his later texts do not present an overview of interwar literature like in the 1923 book, but simply the reading of a revolutionary in that period. And, from that point of view, the most surprising thing is that he was drawn precisely to the essential authors of the time and analyses them with an insight they did not meet with from contemporary professional critics.

For Trotsky, art and culture in general are in no way a kind of “decoration” on life floating above it for the benefit of the powerful alone. They are the wealth of life, its culmination and this gives them their value: “man does not live by politics alone”. Before discussing the issue of the “closing of the scissors” between industrial and agricultural production, Trotsky discusses that of closing the scissors between Russian cultural poverty, including that of the proletariat, and the high culture of the Russian intelligentsia which starts from the highest European level.

To achieve this goal, nothing escapes him, not only the problems of changes to the family, the influence of the Church and the curse of alcohol, but also the need for politeness, concern for detail, and so on. And, emphasising the scientific advances of the time, he sees the central role which cinema could play in the new culture, while, ahead of our own time, he raises the issue of linking the contributions of Freud and Pavlov, i.e. of psychoanalysis and what was then behavioural psychology and today neuropsychology.

All that would come to an abrupt end with the Stalinist counter-revolution, whose character as an “anti-divide” is again demonstrated in these texts. ★

1. This article was originally written for our dossier on the legacy of Leon Trotsky in *IV 324*. The collection of essays known as *Literature and Revolution* was originally published by the Soviet Government in 1924. Quotations here are from the version transcribed for the [Leon Trotsky Internet Archive](#) by N. Vaklovsky in June 2000 from an uncopyrighted 1957 Russell & Russell, New York edition of *Literature and Revolution*.

2. Stalinist criticism never budged from the position that the causes of Mayakovsky’s suicide were purely private. Until the end of his life, the ignoble Aragon boasted of having physically assaulted an artist who had known Mayakovsky in his final days and had spread the rumour of the political cause of his death (interview in *Lui*).

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In Tribute to Joe Flexer

March 23, 1933 - July 31, 2000

by Barry Weisleder, editor, Socialist Action (Canada)

IT is difficult to imagine a more political person, and at the same time a more passionate and caring person, than our departed comrade Joseph Flexer. Socialist Action has lost more than a central leader, more than a brilliant writer, educator and strategist. Together with the worldwide labour and socialist movements, with his loving family, and with friends too numerous to count, we have lost a powerful voice.

Joe's son Dani told the Toronto Star that Joe "became a communist and a mechanic at about the same time, at about (age) 15". His ideas took him from his native Brooklyn, New York to the Middle East where he joined an Israeli Kibbutz in the 1950s. His principles compelled him to break with Zionism, and to champion the fight for Palestinian self-determination. In the mid-1960s, Joe returned to North America, lived in Winnipeg and briefly in Montreal, and became an important figure in the movement against the war in Vietnam and on the socialist left. Joe settled in Toronto in the early 1970s. He became a provincial organizer for the left-nationalist Waffle movement in the New Democratic Party. I believe that one of his political assignments was to counteract the radical socialist wing of the Waffle in Ontario. Some of its key elements exhibited the growing influence of Marxist and Trotskyist ideas.

But a funny thing happened to Joe between the meeting hall, the library, and the bar. He became convinced that the Canadian nationalist and left-reformist leaders of the Waffle were wrong, and that the young revolutionaries, fresh from the anti-war, student and feminist movements, were much more his political cup of tea. Always an ardent internationalist, this was no great leap for Joe Flexer.

He helped to found the Red Circle, a Marxist group within the Waffle. It was in this period that I met Joe. This was the beginning of a thirty year friendship between us, one that matured into a very close political collaboration and comradeship, one that intensified over the past five years. Joe, as a person, was the biggest single political influence on my life.

The Red Circle helped to found the Revolutionary Marxist Group in 1973, which in turn joined forces with the League for Socialist Action and the GMR, a Quebec Trotskyist group, to launch the Revolutionary Workers' League in 1977. The membership of organizations to which Joe belonged looked to him as a central political leader, a theoretician and a labour movement coordinator. For years Joe led an internal tendency which strove to orient the membership towards the working class movement, to speak the language and to live the struggles of rank and file workers.

Joe left the section of the Fourth International in the Canadian state in the early 80's, as the RWL succumbed to sectarian policies and practices. But his renowned labour activism continued. During the break up of the Soviet Union, Joe joined the Canadian CP for a brief period, hoping to link up with leftward moving militants. He became a member of a split-off group, the Cecil-Ross Society, and he encouraged its archival and publication projects.

In the Fall of 1995 Joe decided it was "party building time". He asked to join Socialist Action, and immediately became a member of the editorial board of Socialist Action newspaper. He took special pleasure in helping to found the NDP Socialist Caucus. He was proud of the leading role he played in the writing of the Manifesto for A Socialist Canada, and in being a federal co-chair of the Socialist Caucus.

Joe Flexer walked on countless picket lines, spoke at countless rallies and demonstrations, and touched countless lives. Everywhere Joe went he fearlessly argued, and patiently polemicized, always keeping to the highest Marxist standard. Everywhere he earned respect – even amongst his most steadfast political opponents. ★

The final result of the US presidential election remains uncertain as IV goes to press; we print below excerpts from a statement by the US socialist organization 'Solidarity'.

THE ELECTION OF 2000 has produced a virtual deadlock between the two bourgeois parties—a probable Electoral College victory for Bush (pending the Florida recounts and lawsuits), a tiny popular vote margin for Gore, Republican majorities in both houses of Congress shrunken to near zero. For the capitalist ruling class of America, of course, “divided government” is no fundamental threat when both parties are firmly right-of-center corporate-dominated organisms, especially when profits are high at home and there is no huge crisis for imperial global management. While there will be plenty of bitter partisan rhetoric—over the size of tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, the pace and degree of social security privatization, campaign finances etc.—the bipartisan consensus on the program of corporate neoliberalism at home and abroad will ensure that U.S. politics stay the course set by the ruling class. Should the Democrats or Republicans stray from that program, unelected bodies like the Federal Reserve will impose the necessary discipline to guarantee fiscal austerity and deregulation, and to prevent restoration of social programs. What does unsettle the elites is the prospect of a drawn-out struggle over who actually won the presidential election, resulting in a new administration with gravely weakened legitimacy. The longer the dispute continues, the more time for bigger questions to be raised—the role of money, of the corporate media, of the rigged “debates” in choking off alternative voices and closing rather than opening up discussion of issues. That is why the system needs to preserve the reputation of “the process” more than the actual result. In a closely divided Congress, for example, it is unlikely that a Bush administration would undertake initiatives, such as banning union campaign contributions or imposing abortion rights restrictions, that would enrage key sectors of an electorate when the next Congressional elections are only two years away. At the same time, whether Bush or Gore are eventually declared the winner, there will be no meaningful debate on fundamental structural questions.

For Solidarity and other socialists and radical activists in the labor and social movements, the results of this election are a mixed bag. We are proud to have supported a candidate, Ralph Nader of the Green Party, who told the truth—the truth about corporate power and a political system purchased by corporate lobbies, about human rights and workers’ rights, about the basic causes of environmental degradation. We do not regret in the slightest that Ralph Nader’s vote exceeds the slim margins of difference between the bourgeois parties in several states, notably Florida. We congratulate the Green activists and the nearly three million Nader voters who stood firm in the face of the repulsive scare tactics of “liberal” Democratic party hacks. We are delighted that in a number of states the Nader campaign has solidified ballot status for the Green party. On the other hand, we are of course disappointed that Nader’s vote fell considerably short of the 5% national threshold (even though we don’t know how much of the vote for him was actually counted). It has never been clearer how urgently needed is a big break from the Democratic Party—a deep, decisive and permanent break that will be seen as serious by those crucial sectors who have been rightly cynical about the whole system but who equally justly feel genuinely threatened in their own lives by right-wing Republican policies. Did the Ralph Nader/Green 2000 campaign contribute to such a break? Time will tell. For the first time since the mid-1960s, a social movement may be producing a generation of activists prepared to move to independent politics. For us, as socialists and as activists, the struggle continues—the struggle to build both independent politics and most important, the social movements that give those politics energy, momentum and hope. For the bourgeois parties, this election is a dead heat and the result will be more politics of a “dead center.” For those with a pro-working class agenda, especially those with a perspective for abolishing corporate power instead of tinkering with it, the job has just begun. ★

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