

international
VIEWPOINT
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The birth of a rebel International?

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A south-east wind

SEVEN years ago, the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas began. On Sunday, March 10th, 2001 the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) concluded its march "for indigenous dignity" in Mexico City, where it will open negotiations with the government of the new president, Vicente Fox.

**SERGIO RODRÍGUEZ
LASCANO**

ON February 24, 2001 the delegation of the EZLN, composed of 19 comandantes, four sub-comandantes and sub-comandante Marcos set off on the "march for indigenous dignity" — the most significant social mobilization in the modern history of our country.

Tens of thousands of Mexicans lined the roads, the squares and the streets to welcome and salute the Zapatistas, symbols of rebellion in a country whose history is full of acts of rebellion. The Zapatistas have engaged in a dialogue with the other indigenous peoples of Mexico, with the workers and peasants, and above all, with the youth who are the heart and soul of these mobilizations. It is all the more important given that during the recent elections the immense majority of youth voted for the new president, Vicente Fox.

The media have been astonished by the march's success, as have the layer of pro-state organic intellectuals who had told us incessantly that the Zapatista phenomenon was in serious decline. They failed to see that in the course of the last seven years the EZLN has drawn very close links with that part of Mexico which does not feel itself to be represented by the traditional political system or which, while supporting a political party, in particular the Democratic



Revolutionary Party (PRD), understood the process of political participation as involving something more than simply representative democracy. Two legitimacies confront each other in Mexico today: that of Vicente Fox, who has succeeded in profiting from the social discontent produced by 70 years of domination by a single party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and who wishes to oversee the constitution of a new ruling "political class", where the bourgeoisie not only rules but also governs; and the legitimacy of the EZLN and the indigenous peoples in struggle, the only sector never domesticated by the old Mexican political regime. After having vainly attempted initially to throw some spanners in the wheels, the government now claims to support the rising wave of mobilization in the hope of profiting from it.

Credibility

The EZLN represents the only political force that can tell Fox that he enjoys no credibility among the indigenous peoples and that the Zapatistas are among the most resolute adversaries of his Puebla-Panama plan. The confrontation of these two legitimacies is beginning to affect the social climate. Employers, some of whom have made declarations favourable to the recognition of indigenous rights, are very concerned with the development of this march, which crystallizes the unity of Mexico's poor — official statistics estimate them at 71 million, out of a total population of 100 million — and danger-

ously threatens the stability of the nation. The goal of the Zapatista march is to gain the constitutional recognition of the rights of the 15 million Mexicans who form the indigenous peoples.

While they have constituted the material and spiritual base which allowed the foundation of the Republic, they have never been considered as bearers of rights, nor recognized in their culture, their forms of social organization, their specific jurisdictions, or their languages; in a word, they have never seen their right to autonomy recognized and this has been the political cause of the some 200 uprisings which have marked the history of the indigenous peoples of this country. The success of this march shows also that the ideas of the left remain capable of gaining mass social support, on the condition they remain independent of the regime and its mechanisms of control. The defeat suffered by the Mexican left until the appearance of the EZLN stems from the way in which the regime has succeeded, through a generalized corruption, of emptying the plebeian and emancipatory discourse of socialism of all legitimacy. It is not for nothing that the Zapatistas stress that it was the privatisation of agriculture carried out by Salinas de Gortari, with the support of a good part of the Mexican left, which played a key role in the decision to organize the uprising of January 1994. It can be said without exaggeration that the future of the country and the left is at stake in this massive mobilization of the poor of Mexico. ★

For more on the Zapatista march, go to the site: <www.ezlnaldf.org>

Political challenges

THE programme that the EZLN has come to defend in the capital has three points: withdrawal of the army from Chiapas, liberation of Zapatista political prisoners, and introduction of the legislation on indigenous culture and rights negotiated in the framework of the San Andrés accords agreed with the previous government

On the two first points, Fox has partly conceded. On the third, he has left the doors open. The ruling PAN parliamentary group wishes to vote legislation through, but not that negotiated with the Zapatistas in the framework of the Commission of Reconciliation and Pacification. The PRD is for, while the PRI is hesitating. The most probable outcome is that Marcos will return to Chiapas, while a delegation of the EZLN remains in Mexico City to negotiate, undoubtedly under the leadership of comandante German.

More or less ridiculous obstacles, like the question of whether he must take off his ski mask inside Parliament, have been lifted, with the obvious approval of Fox. In a televised interview, Fox practically took as his own the slogans of the demonstrators: "welcome, subcomandante Marcos, welcome Zapatistas to the political arena and the discussion of ideas". Marcos even had the opportunity to turn down an invitation to visit the president at his residence.

The big question concerns what the Zapatistas will do with this relationship

of forces. Use it for the defence of the demands advanced on the rights of the indigenous peoples, that much is obvious. But will they go further, towards a refoundation of the left on a nationwide scale? That is very much less sure: not much remains of the preceding attempt to build the FZLN and Marcos' whole philosophy is based on opposition to the party form and the seizure of power. In an interview published by *Proceso* on the day of his arrival in Mexico City, Marcos defines himself as a rebel, not a revolutionary: "if Marcos and Zapatism were to be transformed into a revolutionary project, in other words something which gives birth to a political actor inside the political class, then this would be the immediate defeat of Zapatism as alternative project".

The Zapatista march creates, then, a new relationship of forces, but also a vacuum, underlining the absence of an independent left capable both of supporting the struggle of the Zapatistas and putting forward a left alternative to a profoundly neoliberal government. In the absence of the emergence of such an actor — the PRD of Cardenas can no longer play such a role — there is even the possibility that the PRI will be reborn from the ashes, a little like the former Communist parties in some eastern European countries.

All these questions are posed or will be posed, but in a framework profoundly modified by the superb initiative of the Zapatistas. ★

Michel Husson

an expression of rebellion, protest and revolt against the tyranny of the market but as a multicolour mirror of the plural and massive experiences of struggle and, above all, as the desire to construct a popular and democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist alternative.

2. The Zapatista movement has been a key factor in this change of climate. From its initial uprising in January 1994 and then through calling the first Intercontinental encounter for humanity and against neo-liberalism, the EZLN has become an unavoidable political and moral reference point. All those who, on the basis of their own struggles, oppose the conservative counter-reforms carried out in the name of "modernisation" are part of the same process. Without doubt, the EZLN has been a fundamental protagonist in this movement for "another world is possible". This movement became visible at Seattle but had in truth

March 2001

Mexico

The Zapatista march
Sergio Rodríguez Lascano and Michel Husson plus Fourth International resolution

Globalization

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Ernesto Herrera

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International Viewpoint

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News closing date: 23 March 2001.

"A world where all worlds fit in"

THE following resolution was adopted by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, the worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists, at its February 2001 meeting.

1. TODAY, neo-liberal globalisation faces ever broader, more sustained and radical social resistance. The idea that "another world is possible" was asserted strongly at the recent World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. This was not only

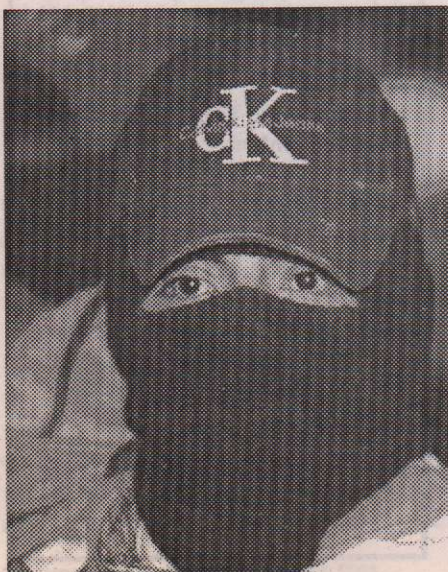
★ Mexico

been gestating for some years previously, with struggles that reject concessions like that of the Zapatistas and the expression of struggles of the indigenous, peasant, trade-union movement, the movements of the unemployed, of women, for human rights and many other popular sectors.

3. Now the EZLN is beginning a new phase of struggle with the launch — after the historic defeat of the PRI — of a challenge to the new government. It is marching to Mexico City to demand the fulfilment of the San Andres Accords and their translation into legal and constitutional reforms. The EZLN sees this as a decisive step towards a peace with dignity, one that respects and recognises the rights of the indigenous peoples of Mexico. They see the fulfilment of the San Andres Accords as necessary for a political exit from the conflict, along with the release of Zapatista prisoners and the withdrawal of the federal army from their communities.

4. Struggles against capitalist “neo-liberal globalization” such as the struggle of the Zapatistas, but also experiences like the Participatory Budget in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the recent victory of the popular and indigenous movement in Ecuador, or the campaigns against Plan Colombia and the imperialist project of AFTA, show that there is a growing movement of resistance to the powers-that-be which can actually win some victories and struggle for “a world where all worlds can fit in”.

5. The Fourth International reaffirms its solidarity with the struggle of the EZLN, its March and its demands, and also salutes the Indigenous National Congress which is currently meeting. This militant position will be expressed both through the work of our comrades in Mexico and also in the field of internationalist solidarity. ★



Meeting of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (ZNLA), ATTAC and the Farmers' Federation

SATURDAY, March 11, 2001, Xochimilco, Mexico, last stage in the Zapatista National Liberation Army's (ZNLA) march before a triumphal arrival in Mexico City the next day, Zapatista leader, Subcommander Marcos, surrounded by 23 men and women of the rebel ZNLA, met with a French delegation composed of José Bové, spokesperson for the Farmers' Federation, Bernard Cassen, President of ATTAC and Danielle Mitterrand, President of the French Freedom Foundation. The purpose of the meeting had been decided upon in Chiapas in a recent discussion between Marcos and Ignacio Ramonet, Director of *Le Monde diplomatique* and Honorary President of ATTAC.

Subcommander Marcos stated that, once the Mexican government fully fulfils the contractual obligations it made in the 1996 San Andrés agreements and, in particular, sends the Indian Bill of Rights and Culture to Congress, it was his intention to create a political organization in Mexico in which everyone will be able to act openly and, unlike political parties, will oppose the devastating effects of neo-liberalism and globalization. The Subcommander stated that this organization, even if it does not bear ATTAC's name, will act in consort with ATTAC's international network as it presently exists in Europe, Africa, America and everywhere citizens' movements exist to oppose globalization.

Marcos reaffirmed his total support for the initiatives undertaken by the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre and his intention, in particular, to take an active role, as soon as circumstances permit, by visiting Porto Alegre — a name which has come to symbolize resistance to globalization. For the immediate future, Marcos and the French delegates proposed to organize a first international meeting in Mexico City on April 14 and 15 prior to the second WSF to take place in Porto Alegre. Captioned, “Porto Alegre Contra ALCA (FTAA),” the meeting will bring together the speakers and participants who came from every corner of the globe to the first WSF and the intellectuals and representatives of the Mexican citizens' movement. It is scheduled to take place one week prior to the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City and one week after the demonstrations that are expected in Buenos Aires when the Ministers of Finance from the countries negotiating the FTAA will meet. José Bové, speaking on behalf of Via Campesina, then proposed that a seminar be held, as a second phase, in Mexico, in around August, in preparation for the World Social Forum 2002 in Porto Alegre on the topic of peasant farming. This seminar will take place immediately after the Latin-American Congress of Via Campesina. Organizations representing farmers from other continents will be invited to attend with their Latin-American counterparts. Together, they will draw up an inventory of cultivated lands in the world and work out precise proposals which will be presented at the WSF.

Subcommander Marcos announced his intention, furthermore, to participate in the initiatives to be taken by ATTAC, Via Campesina and other citizens' organizations in the world as a whole to scuttle the plans for increased “liberalization” of international trade. Such plans are on the agenda of the next ministerial conference of the WTO scheduled to take place in Qatar in November 2001.

Bernard Cassen proposed that Marcos and other members of the ZNLA form a delegation which will be invited to France and other European countries by ATTAC, the Farmers' Federation, the French Freedom Foundation and *Le Monde diplomatique*. Marcos accepted this invitation in the hopes that the situation in Mexico will evolve and permit him to quickly honour his commitment. ★

**Mexico City, March 11, 2001,
José Bové, Farmers' Federation,
Bernard Cassen, ATTAC**

Translation: Patricia Lansdown, volunteer translator & Sophie Devin coorditrad@attac.org

You can find photos of the meeting along with this document at the following: <http://attac.org/fra/asso/doc/doc51en.htm>

After the success, the same dilemmas

THERE'S no doubt about it. The winds have changed and the horizon is clearing. Only a few years ago, when the neo-liberal counterrevolution was at the height of its arrogance, a World Social Forum (WSF) of such a magnitude and impact would have been unthinkable. In this sense, the enormous popular mobilization at Porto Alegre in January 2001 witnesses to the breadth and radical diversity of the resistance to capitalist-imperialist globalisation, as well as the impasse in which the conservative hegemony finds itself.

ERNESTO HERRERA

THE scenario of struggle is changing favourably, developing a renewed internationalism, solidarity-based and combative. Social antagonisms are accelerating at the same rhythm as political instability, above all in the so-called Third World. On the other hand, a new and decisive relationship of forces has not yet been shaped.

The dilemmas continue. How do we translate struggles and civil disobedience into a movement of re-foundation? How do we pass from an alliance against "neo-liberal globalisation" to an anti-capitalist alternative? How do we combine the breadth of a heterogeneous social and political composition with the necessary programmatic rigour? In this sense, any illusion that we are going through a similar experience to that of Marx and Engels in relation to the First International does not fit in with the reality of the WSF. Among other things, because we are separated by more than a century's distance.

Various forums took place simultaneously. One in the camps of the peasants, the indigenous peoples and youth. Here the mood was one of rebellion and barricades. The talk was of "all methods of struggle" and "moving on to action", with a utopian air. It was different in the workshops, where discussion centred on concrete and immediate demands. Social activists, trades unionists and rank and file militants monopolized the discourse. The desire and concern to sketch out possible alternatives supplanted the grand narratives. At the same time, there was an

absence (or criticism) of the party political elements — the same was true in the camps.

In the conference hall, it was different again. The key themes were announced on the agenda: a new organization of production, a more equitable trade, regulation of the circulation of finance capital, the agrarian question. Attendance was massive. Theoretically solid expositions, with debates, consensus and disagreements between the panellists and many questions raised from the body of the hall. Here the political-programmatic issues and the nature of the "alternative project" are central. The question of democracy occupied a privileged place — understandably, since the Forum took place in the cradle of the democratic-popular experience of the "Participatory Budget".

Richness and tension

Obviously, then, there were distinct sensibilities, which brought both richness and tension to the Forum. The demands that would alter the dominant economic order — and that have the greatest impact on mobilisations — were the total cancellation of the foreign debt of the countries of the Third World and the imposition of the Tobin tax as a levy on international financial transactions (which amount today to two billion dollars a day). Less defined demands, like "fair trade" and the "ecological debt" that the rich countries should pay to "reduce inequality" were also put forward.

The arguments in favour of these "measures of global impact" are based on shared and dramatic analyses. The countries of the South now owe four times what they owed in 1980 and six times its initial value. On this theme, Eric Toussaint, president of the Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt, did not spare his criticisms of Lula and left leaders and economists who support an "audit" rather than a cancellation of the debt.

One of the broadest consensus was around opposition to genetically modified products, as much through concern for the environmental risks as with the defence of the health of consumers and the peasants who struggle against the monopolization of seeds by a few transnational companies. Also free trade and privatisation drew general disapproval, as factors leading to unemployment, greater inequality and less access to the public services. Other proposals contemplated stretched from opening the frontiers to workers to considering water and seeds as the common heritage of humanity; thus their privatisation, including though the purchase of patents, is inadmissible.

Divergences

However, divergent roads and ideas were also expressed. There was a growing clamour against the agricultural subsidies which block off the markets of the rich countries and depress the prices of the main exporting countries of the South. On the other hand, the poor farmers, represented by the international organization *Via Campesina*, decided to act against the importing of food, which is detrimental to their activity. "Agriculture is not a business" and food should not be treated as a commodity, but as a human right, argued the leaders of the movement, like the Brazilian Egidio Brunetto, the Honduran Rafael Alegría and the Frenchman José Bové.

The division between radicals and moderates was evident, for example, in relation to the difference between those who proposed the abolition of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, like the Filipino Walden Bello, and the "realists" who advocate its reform, like the Brazilian economist Luciano Coutinho. An example of the first group are the defenders of the Universal Minimum Income, as a lifelong right for everybody, breaking with the dominant culture that considers that only work legitimates a remuneration.

Behind many questions lay the differ-

A festival of multicolored plurality ... unlike Davos

NO repressive brutality. No riot gas. Neither blows nor arrests as in the mountainous Swiss bunker. Porto Alegre, on the contrary, was a multi-color fiesta of an insolent, chaotic, resistant plurality. Everything was permitted. Social movements, NGOs, ATTAC groups, community networks, committees for the cancellation of the foreign debt, trade union and peasant coordinations, ecologists, Black and Afro-identity movements, Feminist and lesbian-gay organization, human rights activists, alternative media, punks, "moradores de la rua" (street dwellers), neighbourhood movements, Christians for liberation, musical bands, all mixed up together. Parties of the left and centre left in different variants. Intellectuals, academics, economists, parliamentarians, "social entrepreneurs", a few ministers. Historic figures of the anticolonialist struggle like the Algerian Ahmed Ben Bella. Personalities like Danielle Mitterrand. Well known individuals like Cuathemoc Cárdenas, Ricardo Alarcón, Eduardo Galeano, Frei Betto, Buenaventura de Souza, or the irrepressible Hebe de Bonafini, president of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Old guerrilla chiefs like the Venezuelan Douglas Bravo, some nationalist military figures like the Ecuadorian Lucio Gutierrez, and radicals from Euskal Herritarrok. Also some notable absences: among others US intellectual Noam Chomsky, Portuguese writer and Nobel Prize for Literature winner José Saramago, Germany's Gunther Grass, the president of the Frente Amplio of Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez and the Zapatistas. The agenda was scarcely affected by the ridiculous act of the Brazilian Federal Police who sought to deport José Bové for participating in the destruction of genetically modified crops in a plantation owned by the multinational Monsanto.

There were 4,702 delegates from 117 countries, 165 special guests, 2,000 youth and 700 indigenous people camped in the city parks, 764 media outlets represented by 1,870 journalists. Around 20,000 people were on the march through the main streets of the city which opened the event.

There were more than 400 workshops, oficinas and panels.

The organization of the WSF would not have been possible without the support of the state of Rio Grande del Sur, governed by Olivio Dutra and the prefeitura (municipality) of Porto Alegre — both ruled by the Workers' Party (PT). In particular, all the press coverage emphasized the role played by vice-governor Miguel Rossetto and his collaborators, mostly supporters of the Democracia Socialista tendency of the PT. ★

ence between the partisans of a strategy of anti or extra-institutional resistance, of accumulation of forces and radical civil disobedience in a perspective of "popular power", and those who believe in gradual changes for the deepening of democracy and participation, as well as a pragmatic and realistic strategy of "culture of governance".

The question of the social subjects also was absent from the agenda. Many referred to "civil society", though, as François Houtart notes, society continues to be divided into classes.

There was no shortage of polemic either. In particular, when government ministers from the French Socialist Party were present at some of the conferences and debates. Jean-Pierre Chevenement had to listen to the reading of a card signed by activists and militants — led by the MEP and leader of the LCR (French section of the Fourth International), Alain Krivine — which

accused him of being responsible for an anti-immigrant law. Francois Huwart also received his just desserts, for being the "representative of a country which subsidizes its agricultural products against the Third World" and which "bombs African countries".

The utopian viewpoint of some, with medium term goals, contrasted with the urgency of others, like the movements against Plan Colombia, or the acceleration of the project of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, or anti-imperialist solidarity with the Cuban revolution.

The presence of a delegation from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) drew the attention and enthusiasm of hundreds of participants, particularly youth and political activists. Javier Cifuentes, member of the International Commission of the insurgent organization, stressed the importance of the WSF: "We agree with its ideal. We believe that

a better world is possible. This is the struggle of the FARC in Colombia. We are present also to denounce Plan Colombia and call attention to the question of Amazonia. The Brazilians must not allow the United States to appropriate Amazonia for itself".

Meanwhile, trade unions and social networks insisted on the necessity of raising a barrier to the USA's project of re-colonisation. The Continental Social Alliance called for participation in the Second Summit of the Peoples which will take place in Quebec City in the Canadian state from April 16-21, and for the continuation of debate on the strategies of resistance to FTAA, adding that "a first step in this direction will be the mobilizations which will take place in Buenos Aires at the beginning of April, parallel to the meeting of the FTAA trade ministers".

Statements

There was no "final declaration", a decision that appears reasonable. The plurality of the political and social composition of the WSF would have complicated its drawing up and a single document would not have adequately reflected the hundreds of debates, reflections and proposals. On the contrary, there were several statements: by the social movements (see box) the Parliamentary Forum, the workshop of the World March of Women, and so on.

In all these statements there is a challenge to the elites and the hegemony of capital. The necessity of building a broad alliance against "neo-liberal globalization", the intention of continuing and strengthening resistance and organized mobilization.

This change in the situation is expressed in the declaration of the parliamentarians which not only denounced the "re-colonisation of the world", but associated itself with campaigns "against the mechanisms of the immoral debt and for the abolition of the debt of the poor countries; for the establishment of taxes on speculative movements of capital with the installation of a Tobin type tax; for the elimination of tax havens". It does, for sure, maintain the illusion of "a profound reform of the WTO and the international financial institutions", but the statement is nonetheless favourable in general terms.

Clearly, we will have to see whether the majority of these senators and deputies who, in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, largely

belong to parties of the Sao Paulo Forum - and who have adopted the road of an institutional pragmatism- will finally take up the cudgels in their respective parliaments for what was agreed in Porto Alegre.

The statement from the women's workshop reaffirmed: "No to the current neo-liberal capitalist globalization ... Yes to the alternatives of solidarity" and denounced a "sexist globalization" that "accentuates the massive and growing feminisation of poverty and exacerbates the multiple acts of violence against women". Overall, there was little integration of the question of women in the central axes of the Forum, although the interventions of Buenaventura de Souza and Frei Betto related the emancipatory political project to a multicultural and feminist dimension.

Another world is possible, but which?

Bernard Cassen, director of *Le Monde Diplomatique* and one of the main organizers of the WSF said: "We are here to discuss ideas. Then we have to seek forms of translating them into struggles. In some years we will be ready to propose measures". (*Zero Hora*, Porto Alegre, January 24, 2001). He added that he was "more interested in concrete actions of organized movements than in polarizations between right and left", which in his view "have lost meaning".

Ignacio Ramonet in his article "Porto Alegre" (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2001), put forward a similar view. The purpose of the WSF is not to protest "as in Seattle, Washington or Prague ... but to try, this time with a constructive spirit, to propose a theoretical framework and practice that allows us to advocate a new globalization and affirm that a new world is possible, less inhuman and more solidarity-based".

Nonetheless, there were protests and proposals for mobilisation in Porto Alegre, not to mention the beginning of a theoretical and programmatic reflection that refers to the class dimension, the labour-capital antagonism and the social appropriation of the means of production. In other words, the premises to establish a theoretical framework that can establish political frontiers and clarify in what manner "another world is possible".

If the "anti-globalization" movement is reduced solely to opposition to the more undesirable effects of commercial interchange, the horrors of the payment of the foreign debt and the conditions imposed by institutions like the WTO,



World Bank and IMF, it will remain hostage to some problems relating to disequilibria in the "functioning of the market". The critique of commodity fetishism and the commodification of all human and social relations would lose a great deal of its force.

The breadth and radical nature of today's struggles do not merely confront the adjustment plans of the "neo-liberal model" and their consequences. They place the relations of power and property on the agenda of daily combat: when to take over a factory, invade a *latifundio* (plantation), occupy a housing block or set up a "pirate" radio. That is, when those at the bottom take back their rights which have been expropriated by capital. Each struggle, in its own manner, places the question of power on the agenda, albeit sometimes only tendentially. This makes it necessary (and urgent) to develop instruments of organization and political strategy. The resistance to capitalist-imperialist globalization amounts to a formidable laboratory of experiences of struggle, political, theoretical and programmatic reflections for an international movement like the WSF that aims to create an alternative to the globalization of capital.

The "Rebel International"

In August 1997, the First Meeting For Humanity and Against Neo-Liberalism took place. Called by the EZLN, it sought to build, according to Subcomandante Marcos, a movement where there would be a place for "all the worlds". Thousands of activists and sympathizers of Zapatismo gathered in Chiapas, in the majority social movements and NGOs. There was talk of an "International of Hope". A seed was planted, although the attempt did not prosper, mainly because it was a movement of solidarity with a localized struggle.

The international context was at its most unfavourable, and the breach

between the social and the political had reached its apogee.

Seattle changed the framework. In particular because of the profile given to the social resistances, and because it had been preceded by a significant victory: the defeat of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

The itinerary of protests and "antiglobalization" revolts assumed a greater continuity from Seattle onwards and the failure of the "Millennium Round" in November-December 1999. A little later came Ginebra and Colonia, then London, Bangkok, Davos, Washington, Geneva, Prague, and Nice. The chronology is impressive and creates difficulties for those who had succumbed to "ebb", "defeats" and "ideological regression" — in some cases, to justify demoralization and systematic adaptation, in others, to conceal impotence and a political incapacity to grasp the changes in reality and in the dynamic of the class struggle. In both cases, the fall of the Berlin wall weighed heavily on their shoulders.

Latin America has not been absent from this process of resistance and counteroffensive, including before Seattle. Strikes, uprisings and popular mobilizations have followed, one after the other. Governmental instability was (and is) the distinctive characteristic of the region.

The breach between social polarization and political expression has been closed. This is shown in an unequivocal manner by the political advance of the left in Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, or the struggle for human rights and against impunity, the recent and formidable victory of the indigenous movement in Ecuador or the continental mobilization against Plan Colombia. The Zapatistas, meanwhile, have retaken the initiative and have marched to Mexico City.

In all cases, it is obvious that the conditions for the recomposition of the radical left and an anti-capitalist programmatic reconstruction are increasingly present today, on condition that political objectives and theoretical definitions are clarified.

The WSF was defined by some participants and journalists as a new "Rebel International". Its organizing principles and instigators are not persuaded on this point. The next meeting (Porto Alegre 2002) will indicate whether things will advance in this direction or whether, on the contrary, the Forum becomes the "antiglobalizing" interlocutor of "neoliberal globalization". ★

Social movements call for mobilization

SOcial forces from around the world have gathered here at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. Unions and NGOs, movements and organizations, intellectuals and artists, together we are building a great alliance to create a new society, different from the dominant logic wherein the free-market and money are considered the only measure of worth.

Davos represents the concentration of wealth, the globalization of poverty and the destruction of our earth. Porto Alegre represents the hope that a new world is possible, where human beings and nature are the centre of our concern.

We are part of a movement which has grown since Seattle. We challenge the elite and their undemocratic processes, symbolised by the World Economic Forum in Davos. We came to share our experiences, build our solidarity, and demonstrate our total rejection of the neo-liberal policies of globalisation.

We are women and men, farmers, workers, unemployed, professionals, students, blacks and indigenous peoples, coming from the South and from the North, committed to struggle for peoples' rights, freedom, security, employment and education. We are fighting against the hegemony of finance, the destruction of our cultures, the monopolization of knowledge, mass media, and communication, the degradation of nature, and the destruction of the quality of life by multinational corporations and anti-democratic policies. Participative democratic experiences — like that of Porto Alegre — show us that a concrete alternative is possible. We reaffirm the supremacy of human, ecological and social rights over the demands of finance and investors.

THE World Social Forum was attended by supporters of the Fourth International from a variety of countries: France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, the Spanish state, South Africa, the Philippines, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, not to mention our Brazilian hosts.

In all cases, as members and activists of social organizations, trade unions, groups from the ATTAC networks, committees of solidarity, community radios and us political militants. The workshops, camps and conferences saw them participating as animators, coordinators, organizers and panellists. Simultaneously, various activities took place. On January 26, there was a discussion on the book "Marxism, Utopia and Modernity" by its authors Daniel Bensaid and Michael Lowy, with an attendance of more than 350 people and Emir Sader, Isabel Loureiro, Raúl Pont, and José Correa Leite among the panellists. On January 31 at midday, a comradely lunch and in the evening a meeting where comrades Alain Krivine, Pierre Rousset, Christophe Aguiton and Raúl Pont spoke to 400 people on their first impressions on the Forum and its challenges.

Throughout the five days of activities, 3,000 copies of the publication "Resistances" in three languages (Portuguese, Spanish, English) which included the draft resolution on "Resistances to Capitalist Globalization" which will be put to the vote at our next World Congress, were distributed. In the prologue there was a text by Michael Lowy entitled "What is the Fourth International?" which summed up our position in relation to the WSF.

"The Fourth International is present at the World Social Forum through its militants, its parliamentarians, trade union leaders and activists from various social movements. We bring our contribution: the internationalist revolutionary Marxist viewpoint, but also we are here to listen to and learn from the experience and thinking of others. Because we know that it is through combats in the streets like Seattle and meetings like this in Porto Alegre that the seeds of the internationalism of the 21st century are being planted".

Also, 500 copies of the review "Desde los Cuatro Puntos", edited by the Mexican comrades of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, were distributed, as were the draft resolutions for the FI's World Congress, the resolution of the International Executive Committee on Plan Colombia and the campaign of solidarity with the political and social organizations of this country.

For their part, the comrades of Democracia Socialista brought out a special edition of 1,500 copies of Raúl Pont's "Participative Democracy: the experience of Porto Alegre".

The press of the Fourth International, Inprecor and International Viewpoint, was sold on the stand of the Partido de los Trabajadores, as were new editions of the books "The Place of Marxism in History" by Ernest Mandel, and "Democracia, Participación, Ciudadanía" by Raúl Pont.

Dick Nichols, a leader of the Australian revolutionary organization the Democratic Socialist Party, which has fraternal relations with the Fourth International, also participated in all these activities. ★

At the same time that we strengthen our movements, we resist the global elite and work for equity, social justice, democracy and security for everyone, without distinction. Our methodology and alternatives stand in stark contrast to the destructive policies of neo-liberalism.

Globalisation reinforces a sexist and patriarchal system. It increases the feminisation of poverty and exacerbates all forms of violence against women. Equality between women and men is central to our struggle. Without this, another world will never be possible. Neo-liberal globalization increases racism, continuing the veritable genocide of centuries of slavery and colonialism which destroyed the bases of black African civilizations.

We call on all movements to be in sol-

idarity with African peoples in the continent and outside, in defence of their rights to land, citizenship, freedom, peace, and equality, through the reparation of historical and social debts. Slave trade and slavery are crimes against humanity.

We express our special recognition and solidarity with indigenous peoples in their historic struggle against genocide and ethnocide and in defence of their rights, natural resources, culture, autonomy, land, and territory.

Neo-liberal globalisation destroys the environment, health and people's living environment. Air, water, land and peoples have become commodities. Life and health must be recognized as fundamental rights which must not be subordinated





to economic policies. The external debt of the countries of the South has been repaid several times over. Illegitimate, unjust and fraudulent, it functions as an instrument of domination, depriving people of their fundamental human rights with the sole aim of increasing international usury. We demand its unconditional cancellation and the reparation of historical, social, and ecological debts, as immediate steps toward a definitive resolution of the crisis this Debt provokes.

Financial markets extract resources and wealth from communities and nations, and subject national economies to the whims of speculators. We call for the closure of tax havens and the introduction of taxes on financial transactions. Privatisation is a mechanism for transferring public wealth and natural resources to the private sector. We oppose all forms of privatisation of natural resources and public services. We call for the protection of access to resources and public goods necessary for a decent life.

Multinational corporations organise global production with massive unemployment, low wages and unqualified labour and by refusing to recognise the fundamental worker's rights as defined by the ILO. We demand the genuine recognition of the right to organise and negotiate for unions, and new rights for workers to face the globalisation strategy. While goods and money are free to cross borders, the restrictions on the movement of people exacerbate exploitation and repression. We demand an end to such restrictions.

We call for a trading system which guarantees full employment, food security, fair terms of trade and local prosperity. Free trade is anything but free. Global trade rules ensure the accelerated accumulation of wealth and power by multinational corporations and the further marginalisation and impoverishment of small farmers, workers and local enterprises.

We demand that governments respect their obligations to the international human rights instruments and multilateral environmental agreements. We call on

FROM April 17-22, 2001 the Summit of the Americas will take place in Quebec City. The Quebec summit is an important step on the road to implement the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) — an expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) implemented on January 1, 1994 to cover the whole of the western hemisphere. FTAA is scheduled for implementation in 2005 and discussions about its development began at the Miami summit in 1994, immediately after NAFTA itself came into effect.

Trade ministers from 34 countries — that is all countries in the hemisphere apart from Cuba — were involved in the discussions. However little actually happened until a second summit took place in Santiago in April 1998, which set up an ongoing Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) consisting of vice ministers of trade from each of the states. Nine working groups were also agreed, which deal with the major areas covered by the project: agriculture, services, investment, dispute settlement, intellectual property rights, subsidies and anti-dumping, competition policy, government procurement and market access.

These bodies have been meeting on a regular basis — every couple of months — to agree proposals on these distinct areas and prepare a first draft text which was completed last December. The Quebec City meeting will be the first opportunity to consider this work — essential if the 2005 implementation is to be achieved.

No texts from these debates are publicly available — the negotiations take place essentially in secret unless you happen to be a representative of big business. Over 500 corporate representatives in the US have security clearance and access to FTAA NAFTA expansion documents. Organisations such as the Organisation of American States (OAS), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), collectively known as the "Tripartite Committee", also provide direction.

There is no voice for civil society — demands of NGOs to have access were rejected and instead a Committee of Government Representatives on Civil Society was established to represent the views of civil society to the TNC. Essentially this will be an extension of NAFTA itself to a larger region — it is already reported that a whole number of the preparatory texts are literally based on the equivalent NAFTA texts, just with more countries added in. This is why activists preparing for Quebec have been drawing out the lessons of NAFTA to make clear what will be at stake if we don't stop this neo-liberal roller-coaster. ★ **Veronica Fagan**

people everywhere to support the mobilizations against the creation of the Free Trade Area in the Americas, an initiative which means the recolonisation of Latin America and the destruction of fundamental social, economic, cultural and environmental human rights.

The IMF, the World Bank and regional banks, the WTO, NATO and other military alliances are some of the multilateral agents of neo-liberal globalisation. We call for an end to their interference in national policy. These institutions have no legitimacy in the eyes of the people and we will continue to protest against their measures. Neo-liberal globalization has led to the concentration of land ownership and favoured corporate agricultural systems which are environmentally and socially destructive. It is based on export oriented growth backed by large scale infrastructure development, such as dams, which displaces people from their land and destroys their livelihoods. Their loss must be restored.

We call for a democratic agrarian reform. Land, water and seeds must be in the hands of the peasants. We promote

sustainable agricultural processes. Seeds and genetic stocks are the heritage of humanity. We demand that the use of transgenics and the patenting of life be abolished.

Militarism and corporate globalisation reinforce each other to undermine democracy and peace. We totally refuse war as a way to solve conflicts and we oppose the arms race and the arms trade. We call for an end to the repression and criminalisation of social protest. We condemn foreign military intervention in the internal affairs of our countries. We demand the lifting of embargoes and sanctions used as instruments of aggression, and express our solidarity with those who suffer their consequences. We reject US military intervention in Latin America through the Plan Colombia.

We call for a strengthening of alliances, and the implementation of common actions, on these principal concerns. We will continue to mobilize on them until the next Forum. We recognize that we are now in a better position to undertake the struggle for a different world, a world without misery, hunger,

★ Globalization / Ecuador

discrimination and violence, with quality of life, equity, respect and peace.

We commit ourselves to support all the struggles of our common agenda to mobilise opposition to neo-liberalism. Among our priorities for the coming months, we will mobilize globally against the:

■ World Economic Forum, Cancun, Mexico, 26 and 27 February

■ Free Trade Area of the Americas, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6-7 April and Quebec City, Canada, 17-22 April

■ Asian Development Bank, Honolulu, May

■ G8 Summit, Genova, Italy, 15-22 July

■ IMF and World Bank Annual Meeting, Washington DC, USA, 28 September - 4 October

■ World Trade Organisation, 5-9 November (Qatar)

On April 17, we will support the international day of struggle against the importation of cheap agricultural products which create economic and social dumping, and the feminist mobilization against globalization in Genova.

We support the call for a world day of action against debt, to take place this year on July 20. The proposals formulated are part of the alternatives being elaborated by social movements around the world. They are based on the principle that human beings and life are not commodities, and in the commitment to the welfare and human rights of all.

Our involvement in the World Social Forum has enriched understanding of each of our struggles and we have been strengthened. We call on all peoples around the world to join in this struggle to build a better future. The World Social Forum of Porto Alegre is a way to achieve peoples' sovereignty and a just world. ★

Porto Alegre, January 28, 2001

Hundreds of organizations have signed this call. To see the endorsements, please check <http://attac.org/fra/asso/doc/doc502sign.htm>. If your organization wants to sign it, please send an email to attacint@attac.org mentioning your endorsement and giving all useful information.



Ecuador: indigenous mobilization defeats neoliberalism

THE agreement signed between Ecuador's President Noboa and the powerful National Confederation of Indigenous peoples of Ecuador (Conaie) on February 7, 2001 represents a new victory. In the course of three years, the radical mobilization of the peasant-indigenous movement, alongside the popular urban sectors, has overthrown two neo-liberal governments, divided the Armed Forces, and won a popular plebiscite against dollarisation of the economy and the payment of the foreign debt.

Now the struggle has prevented the implementation of the most anti-popular economic measures like the increase in gas tariffs and fuel prices. The Conaie has ensured the cancellation of the debt owed to the state by the body responsible for rural social security, together with the establishment of a policy of protection for Ecuadorian emigrants (in particular those going to the EU) and a credit mechanism for the poorest agricultural workers.

They have also ensured the non-participation of Ecuador in "Plan Colombia", a political decision which is fundamental for the entire region. Conaie president Antonio Vargas stressed that this agreement was a victory that can be attributed "to our struggle, which is not only that of the indigenous peoples ... it is one step more on the road that leads to the end of poverty and exclusion".

During this new popular uprising organized by the Conaie, the National Peasant Coordination, the Popular Front and the Pachakutik movement, the Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelical Indigenous Peoples rallied to the movement for the first time, allowing, as its leader Marco Murillo stressed, "the complete unity of the indigenous people".

This uprising was marked by the death of four indigenous activists, with more than 50 wounded and 300 demonstrators held. Unlike the mobilisation that overthrew the government of Jamil Mahuad in January 2000, this movement set itself more modest objectives: to block the government's neo-liberal measures.

Some 8,000 indigenous people, trades unionists, and students confronted the police, blocked the roads, organized strikes and occupied the universities and churches, showing

once again the depth of popular discontent and the inability of the ruling class to establish a system of political domination which allows the implementation of the IMF programme with any chance of success.

The persistence of this indigenous radicalism influences other social sectors and feeds a growing politicisation of struggles and demands. There is no longer a real division between social and political questions. The mobilizations which initially affected the provinces and the peasant communities then spread to the national level, witnessing to the spirit of revolt of the indigenous peoples and, beyond this, the whole of the Ecuadorian people, against a cruelly inhuman economic policy.

Dollarisation has bought neither stability nor improvement of the quality of life. It has not revived growth or reduced inflation. The economic situation is still further degraded. According to the National Institute of Statistics, the rate of inflation, which could exceed 35% this year, is linked to the policy of dollarisation that has pushed up the price of goods and services, aligned on international rates, and increased the speculative search for available dollars.

This has led to an unprecedented concentration of incomes; the rigidity of rates of exchange has made exports less competitive and encouraged imports, ruining thousands of companies, with more than 200,000 people thrown into unemployment. The foreign debt is expected to reach 1.2 billion dollars, the equivalent of 30% of the public expenditure budget and nearly 8% of GDP.

Ecuador is in a situation of social emergency: 20% of the population lives on an income of less than a dollar a day and poverty affects 85% of the country's inhabitants; the poorest 10% of the population receive 0.6% of income while the richest 10% get 43%; nearly 50% of children suffer from malnutrition; half the indigenous population is illiterate and three children out of four leave school before the end of the primary stage.

This recent victory, beyond immediate conquests, underlines the decisive political importance of the indigenous movement, in terms of the relations of forces and the definition of a project on a national scale, but also in the construction of a vast network of solidarity, on the scale of the country as well as on the international level. ★

Ernesto Herrera

The Attac phenomenon

IN France, the Attac¹ association was set up in June 1998, immediately finding an echo that surprised even its initiators. After two and a half years of existence it had 28,000 individual members (in addition to its founding organizations) and 180 local committees. Some 200 local initiatives are taken each month. On the national scale, Attac has become a new actor in French political and social life; it has also rapidly won a significant international status.

PIERRE ROUSSET*

ONCE officially launched, the association struck out simultaneously in a whole series of directions, at a very sustained rhythm and often under highly spontaneous forms. This was, however, no flash in the pan and Attac now seems effectively here to stay. Admittedly, to be sure of that, maybe we have to see how it deals with its first crisis (which is bound to arrive one day).

Let's begin by assessing the "Attac phenomenon", at least as manifested in France. Attac was created, with the participation of a limited number of personalities, by a spectrum of organizations of diverse forms: trade union federations, movements of the unemployed and peasant confederations, editorial boards and citizens associations, international solidarity movements, collectives around issues like women's rights or development and NGOs.

Action

Its chosen field of action was a new and rather difficult one: the taxation and control of speculative movements of capital, resistance to the dictatorship of the markets. While unitary processes generally take some time to come to fruition, Attac only took 6 months to set up.

In December 1997, *Le Monde diplomatique*, a monthly influential in progressive circles, published an editorial by Ignacio Ramonet proposing the organization of resistance to the international financial markets. The response of the readers was immediate and enthusiastic, which led the newspaper's editorial board to convene a meeting to get the project started.

Agreement was rapidly reached on forming a legally declared association, rather than a de facto coalition, as is often the case. Although created initially by organizations, Attac is open to individual members. Applications for membership

immediately flooded in and continued at a rate of a thousand per month, leading to the setting up of a growing number of local committees. Of course, not all members are activists (and not all are up to date with their dues), but this process is nonetheless striking in its breadth and spontaneity.

Dynamism

Attac's original dynamism was not only apparent by its impact in France. By any logic, the association should have celebrated its first anniversary with a major national initiative, to consolidate its implantation. However, Attac's first big gathering, in June 1999, was an international conference at Saint-Denis, in the Parisian suburbs. To prepare such an initiative outside of any institutional framework (of the UN meeting type) and in such little time was a gamble. However, we wanted to strike while the iron was hot and profit from the shock provoked by the financial crises of 1997-1998 to make as many links as possible. The results have been convincing.

To sum up, initially a range of collectives and organizations founded Attac. Then individual members joined in great numbers, local committees were set up, international links were made and Attac's scientific council created commissions to do in depth work on the themes of the campaign (Tobin tax, defence of pensions, opposition to pension funds and so on).



Then unitary mobilizations grew, reaching a peak at Seattle. Simultaneously, the institutional impact of Attac made itself felt. Some parliamentarians identified themselves with the association or took up activity in favour of the Tobin tax. Some municipalities supported Attac so as to express resistance to the world neo-liberal order and promote local democracy. The Appeal of Morsang was launched after the holding of a symposium in the commune of Morsang-sur-Orge on January 28-29, 2000.

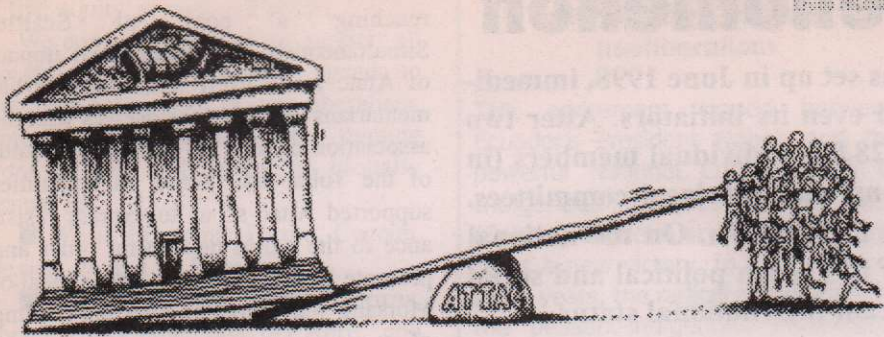
All certainly did not begin with Attac. In fact, many of the key ideas that led to the foundation of this association had germinated since 1995 in activist milieus engaged in resistance to the neo-liberal order. Diverse campaigns and initiatives prepared the terrain. Why, then is it around Attac that these ideas have taken form, that this new dynamic has been affirmed and with a particular strength?

Conjuncture

The conjuncture has obviously played a part. The moment was favourable. Attac was set up in the midst of the East Asian crisis, when the shock wave struck Russia, then Brazil, and threatened the USA (with the quasi-bankruptcy of an important speculative fund). Neo-liberal ideology still displayed all its arrogance, but in the actually existing world the neo-liberal model had already experienced its first major crisis. The will to tax and control speculative movements of capital — Attac's initial central aim — appeared as a timely demand, and a democratic challenge to the dominant order.

From a more general point of view, the creation of Attac responded to a broadly shared aspiration: to no longer passively accept the "dictatorship of the markets"; to place the social element back at the centre of political choices and preoccupations; to re-appropriate politics under new forms and with an approach based on ideas of citizenship. Attac's programme was never limited to the taxation of speculative capital and the association took as its own the rallying cry of resistance to neo-liberal globalization: "The world is not for sale".

If Attac could be created so rapidly and respond thus to events it is because it was able to benefit from a unitary tradition anchored in a part of the social movement, of the campaigns engaged during the 1990s against the international neo-liberal order and the lasting impact of the French public services strike of



November-December 1995.

Attac includes organizations which sometimes find themselves in a situation of competition, indeed of conflict, outside of the association. The case of the trade union movement is striking. Founding members of the association include the CGT federations, the Union syndicale-groupe des Dix, the FSU (main national education union) and some left CFDT elements. These diverse components of French trade unionism cooperate daily inside Attac and on questions which are far from being minor: response to neo-liberal policies, the question of pensions, attitude to the WTO, unity with the associative movement, and so on. The same goes for the main unemployed movements.

Unitary tradition

A unitary tradition has been forged in France for 15 years or so, which has allowed numerous organizations to learn to act together despite their divergences. It has also contributed to an important reorientation of campaigns against the international financial order.

This reorientation began in 1995, when the French campaign "50 ans, ça suffit!" ("50 Years is Enough" protesting against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) passed the torch to the "Autres Voix de la planète" ("The Other Voices of the Planet" campaign against structural adjustment and debt) the counter-conference to the G-7 (Group of seven industrialised countries) meeting in 1996: the social movements then began to play a more central role inside these campaigns.

For the first time, in 1996, demonstrations against a G7 summit were characterized by the presence of trade union contingents (during the demonstration by "Autres Voix" and the CGT's own mobilization). The perception of North-South solidarities changed, a kind of community, relative but new, affirmed itself against the universality of neo-liberal

policies. Recall that in the same year the Zapatistas organized their own world initiative against neo-liberalism.

The effects of the public service strikes in November-December 1995 were not unequivocal. They did not in fact lead to the victories hoped for in the light of their rare breadth, determination and level of popular support. However, they contributed to a collective awakening of consciousness, to the affirmation of a will to resist the dominant order, to a profound de-legitimation of the neo-liberal discourse. In 1998, the unitary campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the setting up of Attac showed, each in its way, that the spirit of December 1995 was not dead. The development of Attac responds, finally, to the crisis of French politics, and in at least two senses. Faced with a neo-liberal order which sanctifies the supremacy of the markets, the association, by its very success, reaffirms the primacy of democracy and citizenship, of political choices over the dictatorship of economic interests. It also offers a new framework of organization, education and action, at a time when many (potential) activists no longer feel empathy with the traditional forms of political activity.

Peasant role

Attac is not the sole vehicle of resistance to neo-liberal globalization in France. The specific role of the Confédération paysanne (Peasant Confederation - one of the founding organizations of the association) remains, for example, very important. The fact that a largely urbanized population can sympathize with the combat of a peasant trade union says a lot on the crisis of the dominant model of society and the way the link between public health and food production, ecological and social demands is perceived today. However, Attac did occupy a considerable political space, going beyond its own field of intervention.

Two and a half years after its foundation, Attac remains largely an organization in evolution, forced to invent itself anew in the course of experience. How should we define Attac? We often call it an action-orientated movement of popular education. Or a movement of political education. Attac is also the point where social demands (represented, let's say, by its founding organizations: trade unions, and so on) and citizen's demands (represented by the flood of individual membership applications) meet. It is, in this sense, a social-citizen movement. This dynamic is reflected in its programme and campaigns.

Thus from the origin, the battle for the Tobin tax was placed in a perspective which was simultaneously democratic (reaffirmation of the primacy of politics against the dictatorship of the markets), pedagogic and militant (critique of the financial mechanisms of neo-liberalism), social (taxation of capital and not labour), solidarity-based (utilization of the income from this tax to reduce inequalities, in particular North-South), and anti-speculative (limitation of the speculative movements of capital).

Struggles

From the origin also, the Tobin tax has been related to other struggles in a manner which has been progressively enlarged: against tax havens and unequal free-trade agreements, the structural adjustment plans of the IMF or the law of the WTO, for the cancellation of the Third World debt, against the creation of pension funds and for the defence of public services, against the introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in agriculture and the patenting of living organisms.

The will to oppose the dictatorship of the markets forms the basis of the unity of Attac's fight, in all its variety. It also allows the association to work actively for the convergence of all the resistances to the neo-liberal order. Attac in France has opened a new field of action, which has led, through example, to the creation of Attac committees in a certain number of other countries in Europe, Latin America, the Arab world or Sub-Saharan Africa.

Nonetheless, the association has never sought to occupy the terrain of anti-globalization only. It seeks on the contrary to bring about a convergence of the activities of the networks and campaigns intervening on the debt, the financial institutions, the WTO, agreements on

free trade — to build together a common home where the new internationalism of the citizen's and social movements can be expressed. Links have also been made in Asia, where no Attac committee has until now been created.

In this overall perspective, the international meeting at Saint-Denis in June 1999 also represented a point of reorientation. Its centre of gravity was among the trade unions and associations rather than the NGOs or lobbies. It initiated a process which deepened in 2000 at the meetings in Bangkok and Geneva, under the impact of Seattle.

Both inside Attac and in the framework of international convergences, a very broad unitary framework has been established, where the radicalism of the social and citizen's movements is now being expressed in a dynamic fashion. This dynamism is obviously not guaranteed for eternity; it must be sustained and the vital equilibrium of Attac must be preserved.

Attac, in France above all, is in fashion. The influence of the association is making itself felt in the institutional sphere (parliamentary, municipal and so on). Which is a necessary stage, if we wish the objectives we are fighting for to become law — like the taxation of speculative movements of capital, the suppression of tax havens or the cancellation of the Third World debt.

However, it is understood that the functioning and orientation of the association should continue to be determined by the founding organizations and the members organized in local committees. It is necessary to ensure that the centre of gravity of Attac remains an activist one. That does not however settle all the problems which affect the links between an activist movement and elected representatives. Conflicts can for example break out between a local committee and a municipality which supports Attac.

Quality

To a large extent, the future of Attac in France will be conditioned by the quality of the link between its "collective" members (trade unions, associations, editorial boards, and so on) and its individual members. The functioning of the association has begun to be adapted to its development: the council of administration, initially constituted uniquely from "founding members", has been opened to delegates from committees. The local committees are recognized as responsible for their own activities. The founding



organizations assure a great stability to the movement.

However, there are often differences between the individual members and the organizations which operate at the national level, but do not pay much attention to local work. Again, how can we find a common measure of democratic representation between a national trade union federation and a local committee? The question is not simple and there are few precedents on which to draw. A lot of new thinking needs to be done in this area.

Parties

Relationships with the political parties sometimes present problems. The latter were not integrated into the process of setting up Attac. Their members are welcome, but they are not represented as such in the association at the national level. Some parties are present in a certain number of local committees, which generates a debate on the coherence of the functioning of the association.²

Attac in France is not a cartel of political currents. Moreover, a good number of its members do not identify with any particular current. Some party militants are certainly members, but either through the constitutive organizations, or as individuals. This mediation, though desirable, is not a formal affair. However, obviously, Attac incorporates de facto a broad political spectrum.

Let's say, to simplify things, that one finds radically anti-neo-liberal positions stretching to radically anti-capitalist positions. Some elements of the radical left thus rub up alongside elements of the governmental left. However, this has not led to currents being constituted in the association nor has it challenged its unity. Perhaps because even members who support the PS-PC-Green government are happy to find a framework where they can freely express their opposition to the neo-liberal policies that their leaders implement.

The evolution of relations between different generations of activists probably constitutes another of the keys to the

future of Attac. Attac is not unattractive to youth, but its national structure is still led by relatively old cadres, some from the generation of May 1968 and the 1970s. Youth in France have not yet affirmed their own modalities of radicalization, as has happened in Britain, but this will come one day. Could it even be that Attac will begin this experience?

Generations

All generations come together in the big mobilizations called by Attac (the tens of thousands of demonstrators on the eve of the meeting of the WTO in Seattle), or in which Attac has actively participated (the demonstration at Millau in June 2000, in solidarity with the members of the Confédération paysanne who were on trial). Resistance to capitalist globalization is currently a terrain which favours unity, political or generational, but the modes of militancy should nonetheless evolve in the years to come.

Finally, will the dominant forces be capable of substantially reforming themselves? If so, they will put to the test the unity realized inside Attac. However, what is striking today is rather their inability to implement any reform of the system. A good number of experts are sounding the alarm. Neo-liberal ideology is in crisis. The international financial institutions are modifying their discourse, seeking to co-opt the NGOs. The functioning of many institutions is blocked. But in practice, the (ultra) neo-liberal course of contemporary capitalism is not being reversed. Which should contribute to the maintenance of the dynamism of the movements of resistance to globalization. ★

* Pierre Rousset is active in the international working group of Attac-France as well as the comité Attac des Institutions européennes. This article was originally written for the Spanish review *Viento Sur* October 2000.

1. Attac: Association pour la taxation des transactions financières pour l'aide au citoyen — Association for the taxation of financial transactions to aid the citizen.

2. Another question of a different nature concerns the fashion in which the political parties can be seen today in France, and the role they could play in the future in the elaboration of alternatives or the centralization of struggles (at least so far as the radical parties of social transformation are concerned).



Permanent instability

THE assassination of Laurent Desire' Kabila in January 2001 has not, at first sight, changed much in the Congo. The military apparatus quickly designated his son, Joseph Kabila, as successor, giving rise to a certain surprise as he had never had a prominent political role, but there was no significant resistance to the nomination. Certainly not among the people, who were indifferent to the announcement of the death, even if they were later mobilised for the funeral ceremony, and certainly not in a parliament nominated by his father.

But there are many dangers: the regime of Kabila, born in 1997 largely as a result of the combined military intervention of a number of countries, some of them unequivocally pro-imperialist, has not managed to give any sign of change. It has continued to rely on military support, primarily from abroad, even though the alliances have changed. Uganda and Rwanda, whose armies were decisive during the last stages of the struggle against Mobutu, had already stopped supporting Kabila in 1998, worried that the new government would continue Mobutu's policies (persecution of the Tutsi and relative toleration in relation to the militias of the Hutu of the Interhamwe, who were responsible for the genocide of 1994).

Together with Burundi and Congo Brazzaville, they had resumed their support for the "indigenous rebels" occupying between one third and one half of the vast territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo. On the other hand, Namibia, Zimbabwe and even Angola intervened immediately to support the central power in Kinshasa, even though this was for different reasons (the presence of the UNITA rebels in the oil extracting regions of the Cabinda enclave and along the border between the two countries).

To understand the logic of the conflict without being blown off course by the appeals to long ago anti-imperialist roles played by this or that country, it has to be remembered that six out of seven of the countries involved in the conflict have recently bought arms worth 125 million dollars in the United States through IMET (International Military Education and Training).

The rapid changes of alliance are due on the one hand to the temptation of various bordering states to take advantage of the crisis of the central



Laurent Kabila

power by accelerating the dismemberment of this enormous country (2,350,000 square km, nearly eight times the size of Italy), in order to take possession of the enormous mineral resources, in particular diamonds, and on the other to bring about the same objective through sustaining a central government which is obliged, in order to survive, to pay a very high price to those who are supporting it.

A myth has grown around Laurent Kabila as presumed successor of Lumumba, friend of Che, etc. Che knew Kabila during the time he spent in the Congo and had initially admired his intelligence, but he became severely critical of him when he realised that his words were not matched by deeds. For Che, the main reason for the defeat of the Cuban enterprise in Congo was the attitude of Kabila and the other leaders comfortably installed in Dar es Salaam, engaged in weaving networks with their continual travels to Cairo, Algeria, Moscow and Beijing but absent from the front line of the struggle.

In his memoir of the period he spent in Congo, Che makes several bitter references to Kabila, who was always announcing his arrival but never actually turned up. When in July 1965 he finally deigned to make a tour of the zone of operations he was nominally responsible for, Guevara and other Cubans were scandalised because he arrived with a large entourage, amongst whom were several attractive Guinean women and a large number of cases of whisky.

He stayed only five days before he left with a variety of contradictory excuses which convinced no one: "Kabila is now discredited" was Che's conclusion, observing that his departure led to a plummeting of morale among not only the Congolese troops but also the Cubans themselves.

This was during Guevara's times. So what about later? Gianpaolo Calchi Novati, one of the greatest Italian

experts on the left on the Afroasian countries, wrote in *Il manifesto* on 18 January, 2001 that "Kabila has never stop behaving like a politician of the long-ago sixties, when he was a militant in the ranks of Lumumbismo or of neo-Lumumbismo. But for more than twenty years he was mainly engaged in trafficking in the capitals of the Great Lakes region, where everything passed through, gold, diamonds, arms, drugs — and the nearest he got to political action was discussion in little circles".

Another expert on Africa, Carlo Carbone, who met Kabila on several occasions, and whose judgement of Kabila expressed in remarks to me were less severe than those of Guevara, wrote in no uncertain terms in a recent interesting book that "Kabila made sure that his anti-Mobutist rebellion was approved by the large multinational corporations that governed the extraction and trade of the Katangese minerals before he launched it" (Carlo Carbone, *Burundi, Congo, Rwanda. Storia contemporanea di nazioni, etnie, Stati, Cangemi*, Roma, 2000, p. 79).

So why was he killed? Probably we will never know, not least because the person who killed him can never tell, as he was himself immediately killed. Perhaps Kabila didn't keep the promises he had made to those who were supporting him? Or perhaps there was a plot inside the leadership group, which might explain why there was so little reaction among the population? Could the extreme rapidity with which the son was nominated as successor give credence to suspicions that he was involved in the assassination? It is hard to say, but any changes in the international relations and internal politics of the Popular Republic of Congo may shed some light on these questions.

In any case, whatever skills he acquired and relationships he established during his studies in Rwanda and his military training in China, it will not be easy for the young Joseph to govern a country in which his father was not able to create a political force distinct from the army, a country so big and disunited, and coveted not only by world powers but also by neighbouring countries which are smaller but better organised and therefore capable of successful military intervention with the leverage of the chronic instability and ethnic conflicts inherited from imperialism. ★

Antonio Moscato

The political economy of rehabilitation

THE all-India Conference of the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, Indian section of the Fourth International, meeting at Vadodara (Gujarat) February 10-12, expressed grief and solidarity with the victims of the terrible earthquake, which struck the people of Bhuj, Ahmedabad, and many other parts of Gujarat. The work of the Conference was cut short because comrades were busy with relief work. The conference issued this statement.

THE ordinary people of Gujarat and the rest of the country have spontaneously rallied round the afflicted people in their hour of agony. From the moment people heard the news they donated money, goods, and organised relief.

They had no faith in the government, which sat on the news for several hours, in order to allow the Republic Day parade to pass "undisturbed". This same approach has since marked the functioning of both state and central governments. Because the government did not co-ordinate relief properly, many local initiatives have been extremely chaotic. Fifteen days after the disaster, the chaos continues, for the government has still to organise and coordinate.

From the beginning, the government of Gujarat has tried to minimise the scale of the disaster and reduce the actual number of the dead. While people on their own initiative have been organising relief, government ministers and VIPs have been wasting time and money organising costly trips to enhance their image while doing nothing concrete. De facto the governments have abdicated their responsibility in a number of ways. They have appealed to companies to adopt villages. They have made a similar appeal to Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

If firms and NGOs are to adopt villages and rehabilitate the villagers, what is the role of the Gujarat government supposed to be? Perhaps the time has come for it to take voluntary redundancy, to be down sized, for truly this is one organisation which is doing nothing, and whose departure would be financially good for the country.

But the government is trying to project an image for itself, by talking about the need to form disaster management committee etc. They can do so only by hoping that the public memory is short.

Similar promises were made at the time of previous earthquakes – including one a few short months ago - but nothing happened. It is evident that the government is inefficient. This has been made amply clear by the mass media.

Privatisation

The government's response to its own inability to cope is to try to privatise the work of relief and rehabilitation. We oppose the proposal to hand over rehabilitation to industry and NGOs. They are donors, and they are not accountable to anyone.

Many of the companies are interested in such relief work because they want to create an image which they can subsequently utilise when issues like industrial pollution, anti-worker activities, or other economic charges are brought against them.

If these companies misuse the villages or the territories in the name of rehabilitation, then too they cannot be brought under control, since rehabilitation is not their duty, but a voluntary act. We do not consider NGOs in the same way as we look at business, but we oppose the move to hand over villages to NGOs too. This would absolve the government of all responsibility. All the work of relief and rehabilitation should be carried out by joint committees consisting of government representatives, elected representatives of people directly affected by the earthquake from all classes and communities, and representatives of people involved in relief work.

We demand that action be taken against those promoters who had built houses illegally, or had violated the house building rules, which contributed greatly to the scale of the tragedy. We oppose the Central Government's plan to raise a huge sum of money through a surcharge on the income tax.

We do this for three reasons. First,



such a move is regressive. It puts the burden of funding the rehabilitation on working class people. This is happening when there are large sums of money owed by big business in unpaid taxes. The government should declare that industries which have not paid their taxes should be either pay up immediately or have their properties taken over in this hour of disaster in the interests of the people.

Secondly, we oppose the plan to mobilise funds through income tax because there is no transparency in how the government utilises this money. Funds could easily be diverted to the nuclear programme or to other unpopular and anti-people aims of the government.

Finally, we oppose the call for income tax surcharge because as of now, the government is not even sure of the extent of the disaster. So the figures it is mentioning are sheer guesswork. The government is concerned about how much money industry is losing, or how much the Western Railways will lose, but it has no figures for how much working people will lose since they have been rendered effectively jobless. Nor has the government announced any plan to pay such people at their usual rate of earning till economic and social life is restored to normality. Class conflict, communal conflict, and anti-Dalit (so-called 'untouchables') feelings have not died with the dead of Bhuj. While any torn clothing and any kind of food will do for the working people, for poor peasants, for Dalits, upper middle class people with cars are getting priority for relief.

Especially sinister is the role of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (a Hindu communal organisation linked to the extreme right wing party BJP) and its affiliates. To common people, who see RSS activists bringing out dead bodies while many others refuse to do so, this may appear a harsh accusation. Yet we make this statement with full understanding. The RSS wants to show how committed to "serving the people" it is. It has

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disciplined cadres who will do what their leaders say. So they bring out the dead. But are they truly humanitarian? No, this too is an image building exercise. The RSS cadres have never expressed regret for those who died as a result of the mass riots during Advani's Ratha Yatra (a communal mobilisation), or after the destruction of the Babri Masjid (Muslim place of worship allegedly built on a Hindu religious site). The RSS have never expressed anything but joy at pogroms of Muslims or Christians. Today, also, their image building exercise seeks to conceal a grim reality.

Whenever they have dominated, and with government support and patronage they have all the advantages, they have discriminated between Hindus and non-Hindus, between caste Hindus and dalits. We condemn the mixing up of govern-

ment machinery with the RSS machinery. If the RSS wants to carry out a communalist and casteist relief policy, it should do so as a voluntary organisation, without government support. It was a great surprise, that all so-called experts absolutely ignored the human factors in this tragedy. It may be true that earthquakes cannot be predicted.

But the social consequences of such disasters are in our hands. The lack of a proper housing policy, of a proper long-term disaster management policy, or of a proper industrial policy, can all be felt. We demand a serious, scientific and transparent reassessment of earthquake zones all over the country. ★

Please send donations to working class aid for those affected by the Gujarat earthquake to: Ernest Mandel Memorial Fund, c/o PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU Money will be paid in rupees to the Samarthan Trust.

State, civil society and army in Israel

SINCE the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 the Jewish population has always been defined by military service. The Israeli citizen was ultimately there to serve the state in its war against the Arab world.

SERGIO YAHNI*

THIS definition of citizenship marginalised both the Palestinian Arabs and the orthodox Jews, neither of who serve in the army. The Palestinians were further exempt from the civic life of the state for ethnic reasons. In this ethnic/militaristic context an image has been created of the citizen who serves without protesting against national objectives and whose rights are defined by the very act of service. These include the right to education, health and social welfare. For this system to be viable, it was necessary as far as the state was concerned for a war to be unavoidable (at least in the eyes of public opinion) and that its objectives should be clear.

The war in Lebanon broke the agreement between the state, civil society and the army creating a social and political division in Israeli society that persists to this day. One of the main characteristics of the war was that its objectives were never really explained to public opinion or indeed to the Israeli government by its perpetrators – Ariel Sharon, Rafael Eitan and Menachem Begin.

The invasion of Lebanon was therefore central to the socio-political and cultural changes which took place in Israeli society in the 1980s and 1990s and to those changes that occurred in relations between Israel and the Palestinian people in particular. Furthermore, the position held in Israeli society by the army was devalued.

The Palestinian *intifada* of 1987-91 can also be seen as a further consequence. Up until 1982, the presence of Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip prevented the development of a political opposition to Israeli occupa-

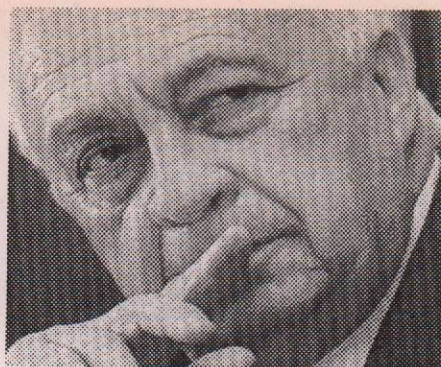
tion. Palestinian national leaders who had some public profile were arrested and often deported whether involved with armed struggle or not. This repression, part of the Israeli line of the "struggle against terror" was particularly effective against unarmed political forces and paradoxically created a vacuum where armed struggle became the only means of expression for the Palestinian national movement. This armed struggle was mainly directed by the PLO outside Palestine sometimes by means of orders to organizations within Palestine and at other times by means of attacks from Lebanon and Jordan.

The war in Lebanon also had consequences such as the reduction in numbers of effective military personnel in the West Bank and Gaza which allowed for the development of a Palestinian civil society which did not receive direct orders from Tunis as it had more urgent and immediate problems of its own to deal with. This incipient civil society was formed by popular organizations, human rights groups, trade unions and student organizations and so on five years before the outbreak of the *intifada*. It can be said therefore that the *intifada* was as much a response to the political and military institutions of the Israeli state as it was a repercussion of the war in Lebanon.

Trauma

The peace movement and the protest against military policy in Israel emerged as a consequence of the trauma of the war of October 1973. Until then, the Israeli population had total confidence in the government, the army and the policy of military security. In the 25 years of the state's existence this policy had led to three wars (1948, 1956 and 1967) which not only demonstrated Israel's military superiority over her neighbours but also added territories under Israeli control. This was not the case in 1973 when the armies of Egypt and Syria surprised the Israelis with a joint attack in which they recaptured territories occupied in 1967. During the counter attack, Israel managed to cross the Suez Canal but they were unable to retake all the land recovered by Syria and Egypt.

The so-called "Yom Kippur trauma" was caused by the element of surprise in the Arab assault together with the large number of dead or injured in battle. After the war, demobilized Israeli soldiers demonstrated against "the irresponsible policies of the Golda Meir government". This movement never criticized the



Ariel Sharon

Israeli military system but rather the political leadership of a state which had failed to foresee or prepare itself for war.

One of the chief political consequences of the 1973 war was the loss of power of the Labour Party which had held power in Israel since the foundation of the state. The government fell after a split within the party and the subsequent administration was formed by the Likud bloc. This was a major trauma for Labour which had not only led Israel's political direction but was identified with the state itself. The army, security services, trade unions and industry organized within the Histadut and the academic community was in one form or another maintained under their hegemony. For the ruling class, above all its bureaucratic leadership, the electoral defeat was almost on a par with the loss of the state itself.

With Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977, the Israeli-Egyptian peace began under the auspices of then Prime Minister Menachem Begin. In March 1978, after a frustrating meeting between Begin and Sadat in Ismaelia, Egypt, when it seemed the process was entering an insuperable crisis, a group of reserve officers declared in an open letter to the Israeli premier; "A government which prefers an Israel within the borders of "greater Israel" to peaceful coexistence based upon good relations with her neighbours creates serious apprehensions for us. A government which prefers to create settlements beyond the "Green Line" creates doubts with respect to the justice of our cause. The strength of the IDF resides in the identification of its soldiers with the fundamental direction of the state of Israel".

The letter was signed by 350 reserve officers. At the end of March, the organizers of the letter announced they had obtained 10,000 additional signatures and convened a demonstration for April 1 in which 40,000 people took part. The demonstration gave birth to the creation of a movement now known as "Shalom Achshav" or "Peace Now". This movement stood out during the Lebanon war and the *intifada* as an extra-parliamentary

opposition to the government generally expressing the political line of centre left Zionism.

"The officers' letter" was the first time in the history of Israel in which a relationship was expressed between government policy and the motivation of officers to carry out military service. Peace Now was not simply an opposition force but also expressed the sentiment of a large part of the Israeli population who believed the state had been "usurped".

Since 1982 the ideology of this "responsible opposition" maintained an active opposition to the policies of the Likud government, expressed above all in mass participation in demonstrations, meetings, and rallies against the war with the expectation that its cadres would continue to be the leadership of the armed forces. The idea of refusing to obey orders was incompatible with this notion.

Today the situation is radically different. Refusal to serve in the army is considered a personal choice. There is no precise data but various sources have announced that only 20% of reserve soldiers comply with their annual service and around 30% of young men refuse to comply with their compulsory military service.

This change took place as much due to the Lebanese war as the *intifada*. The Lebanese war along with the liberalization of the national economy ended the old relationship between state and civil society, creating for the first time within the Jewish population of Israel the idea of an individual whose interests, like citizenship, are or could be different to the interests of the state. The army, which at the beginning of the Lebanese war was still a total expression of the symbiosis between state and citizens where one could sacrifice everything, even one's life, was the institution inside of which this rupture was most evident. This development was no spontaneous reaction to the war in Lebanon but was dependent upon the emergence of soldiers who openly challenged the automatic obedience to military orders that contradicted individual conscience.

Haig's visit

The roots of the invasion of Lebanon can be found in the visit of Ronald Reagan's secretary of state Alexander Haig to the Middle East in April 1981, when the latter proposed an anti-Soviet bloc in the region. From the point of view of the US, the USSR's main ally in the Middle East was Syria. Israel's role, then,

★ Israel

was to create an anti-Syrian bloc, and thus the Israeli government and its chief of staff, the then general Rafael Eitan interpreted this policy as a green light to escalate the tense military situation in Lebanon with regard to the PLO and Syria. In June 1981, PLO artillery fire meant that Israel had to sign an indirect cease-fire with the Palestinians that held until June 1982.

For General Ariel Sharon, minister of defence in Begin's second government, elected in 1981, this was an opportunity to instigate a war which dovetailed with a megalomaniac plan to create a new pro-Israeli political order in the Middle East. Two months into his ministry, Sharon instructed his chief of staff to prepare a detailed plan for the operation, with the following objectives:

- the removal of Palestinian batteries out of range of Israeli towns in upper Galilee;

- the political and military destruction of the PLO in Beirut;

- the imposition of a government in Beirut prepared to sign a peace treaty with Israel

The conditions in which the war began in June 1982, with a government which was not totally legitimate in the eyes of many in Israel; the megalomaniac plans of General Sharon; an atmosphere of conspiracy – these were the factors that led to the massive reaction from opposition forces. On June 7, students from the Hebrew university in Jerusalem held the first demonstration against the war outside the Prime Minister's residence. The following day the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (led by the Communist Party) moved a vote of no confidence against the government in the Knesset. On June 13, 20,000 people demonstrated against the war in Tel Aviv and on July 3 Peace Now convened a demonstration of 100,000 in Tel Aviv. A day later 120 reservists who had returned from Lebanon demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's residence and on July 7 reservists of the "Chief of Staff's commando" demanded Sharon's resignation in a letter to the Prime Minister.

All these facts were new in a society where war was also the cradle of its collective identity. The most radical mass reaction was the attitude of those soldiers who objected to taking part in the war and organized themselves in the *Yesh Gvul* ("There is a limit") movement. Like the Peace Now activists, *Yesh Gvul* felt the state had been usurped and the war, in terms of its objectives, was illegitimate. They decided not to participate in it. This

position could be seen as a form of patriotism that objected to the use of the army for political ends that did not directly concern the defence of the state.

By July 1982 there was already one soldier in prison for refusing to serve in Lebanon, by the time of the withdrawal from Beirut between 170 and 180 were serving various terms for the same reason. What had begun as a patriotic stance had spilled over its own limits because on the one hand the Likud government was not a passing or accidental phenomenon but a constitutional part of the socio-political reality of Israel, while on the other the war in Lebanon became a part of daily reality. The attitude of *Yesh Gvul* opened up a breach where refusal to serve in the army became a legitimate alternative.

The war in Lebanon and the protest against it and later the *intifada* together with other developments were agents of change from a monolithic to a heterogeneous society where today it is almost impossible to find elements of identity common to all Israelis. The breach of legitimacy opened up by activists during the war represents a de facto transformation in the rights of the citizen to choose his or her relationship with the state and the army. The popular pressure created forced the army to accept the intervention of parents in having a say in the conditions of their sons and daughters doing military service. This can be seen in the emergence of the "Four Mothers Movement" which began following an air crash in Lebanon in which 73 soldiers were killed. Four of the soldiers' mothers demonstrated against the dangers of military service receiving popular support that forced all political leaders to promise a speedy withdrawal from Lebanon in the 1999 elections.

The occupied territories

The war in Lebanon cannot be separated from events in the occupied territories. Since 1967 Israel had followed a policy of economic integration of the territories designed to produce a rise in the living standards of the Palestinian population, weakening the tendency to resist occupation and allowing room for a political solution in which part of the area could eventually be annexed and the rest negotiated over in the context of a peace agreement with the king of Jordan. The PLO was the chief obstacle to the imposition of this policy. With this in mind successive Israeli government sought to destroy or at least divide the organization.

The primary aim was to divide the Palestinian national movement as attempted by Yitzhak Rabin in 1976 in calling municipal elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in which the PLO and its factions were not allowed to participate. Rabin's intention was to create a local political alternative to the PLO with which to negotiate a solution. However, things did not quite work out as planned as the candidates elected in 1976 stood as independents allied to the PLO in exile.

The strategy of the various factions of the Palestinian national movement was principally military. Within this strategy, southern Lebanon was the "Vietnam of the North" from where attacks on Israel were to be launched. In this strategy, the only role for the Palestinian population in the occupied territories was a passive one, holding their ground on the land and awaiting liberation. The war in Lebanon undermined this strategy and created space for a more central role for the Palestinians in Palestine, despite the leadership of the PLO. From the mid-1980s, Palestinian leaders in the occupied territories began to organize the population towards an uprising whilst the leadership in exile tried to organize itself in the area of Lebanon not occupied by Israel and sought to communicate with Israel through diplomatic means.

In 1980, as part of the implementation of the Camp David accord between Israel and Egypt with respect to Palestinian autonomy, the government of Menachem Begin unilaterally announced military order no 947 imposing a civil administration in the occupied territories which took over part of the military administration's responsibility which had existed since 1967. The PLO and the local Palestinian leadership set up the National Leadership Committee to resist this measure. The result was a major wave of protests in November 1981. The Israelis blamed the PLO in exile and reacted by dismissing nine elected mayors and launching an intense repression against the population, in which the Israeli settlers participated.

In the meantime Alexander Haig's proposals for the creation of an anti-Soviet bloc in the Middle East gave Israel the opportunity not only to attempt to smash the PLO politically and militarily but also to push on with its plans for the occupied territories. According to the Israeli leadership's analysis local PLO cadres were merely following instructions abroad and it would therefore be enough to smash the PLO leadership to disarm the local cadres and allow Israel to implement its policies.

The Israeli analysis with respect to relations between the PLO in exile and the resistance movement in the occupied territories at the beginning of the 1980s was basically correct. However, Begin's assumption that it would be enough to smash the former in order to impose its policies on the occupied territories was an error. As a leader of the armed organizations that existed at the time of the *intifada* explained, at the beginning of the 1980s they already had political cadres who could take responsibility in the struggle and who eventually did: "The crisis in the PLO after the invasion of Lebanon left us feeling like orphans. Because we were members of political parties we understood that we had to take responsibility and not wait for those in exile to tell us what to do. The popular organizations which had evolved since the 1970s were our first field of action and the parties left us to act as we felt to be right. That allowed us to listen to the people and to understand their combativity".

In this way the invasion of the Lebanon which had meant troop reductions in the occupied territories allowed the political cadres in Palestine to transform a population of passive subjects awaiting their liberation into active agents of liberation themselves. The political activities of these cadres escalated in parallel with the level of clashes with the occupation forces and reached its point of emergence in December 1987 in a general uprising known today as the *intifada* which surprised the PLO in exile as much as the Israeli authorities.

The Oslo agreement

The Israeli security forces were unable to crush the *intifada* but a change in international politics like the collapse of the Soviet bloc and Gulf War led to an internal crisis in the Palestinian national movement that led to the striking of the US brokered deal with Israel. From this perspective, the Oslo agreement can be viewed as a pact between the impossibility of the Israeli state to rid itself of its "Palestinian problem" and as an expression of the PLO's ability to survive the above political changes by aligning itself with imperialism. As a consequence of Oslo and autonomous Palestinian entity was created in approximately 18% of the occupied territories and a zone of shared authority (42% of the occupied territories) in which almost 80% of Palestinians under Israeli control resided.

When the Israeli army established

itself in its "security zone" in 1985, the Lebanese war disappeared from the concerns of Israeli public opinion for more than a decade. There were several reasons for this. From the political point of view, since 1984 Israel was ruled by a coalition government of "national unity" between the Labour and Likud blocs and this allowed the social and political basis of the protest movement to rediscover a certain confidence in the political leadership of the country.

The retreat of the army from the "security zone" amounted to both a quantitative and a qualitative change. The first was to significantly reduce the number of troops in the Lebanon. The second was the almost total disappearance of reservists, who had led the protest movement up until then, as most tasks would now be carried out by the South Lebanon Army (SLA) under General Lahud. This also reduced the IDF's casualties. Furthermore, thanks to the *intifada* the Lebanese issue was relegated to second place as public opinion was now centred



Ehud Barak

upon events in the occupied territories.

During this time, the military presence in Lebanon and the price paid for it was no longer widely discussed. In this framework a twofold change took place. On the one hand the refusal to fight in Lebanon ceased to be founded on an ideological objection and instead became an individual issue. As the only way to avoid regular military service or reserve duty in Israel is to invoke psychological or medical reasons, such reasons became familiar motivations. The Israeli press has also mentioned cases of regular soldiers who prefer imprisonment to service in Lebanon.

Under the government of Benjamin Netanyahu who became PM in mid-1996, the question of a "unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon" began to be broached. Besides numerous protest movements appeared political figures who spoke in favour of abandoning Lebanon, with or without an agreement. Yossi Beilin, minister of justice in the Barak government, was one of the first to voice this position.

The usefulness of the so-called "security zone" had disappeared, they argued, and Israel could defend itself just as effectively if not better from its internationally recognized frontiers.

What might seem curious is that in the course of the last year of the Netanyahu government this proposal received the support of the majority of Israel political leaders and military top brass. Support for withdrawal was most strongly expressed by the former general and artisan of the Israeli presence in Lebanon, Ariel Sharon. These coincidences merit a more developed explanation. Among other factors, attention should be drawn to the role of the mothers' movement for withdrawal mentioned above, which concentrated the phenomena of break-up of consensus within Israeli society.

The first characteristic to consider is the name of the organization – Mothers. That is, mothers of soldiers who took it upon themselves to question the decisions of the army and the ruling class. This may not have seemed so unusual in Europe but was far from the case in Israel only a few years ago. The second characteristic is bound up with the first in that the nucleus of the group was formed by women who demanded the right to take decisions which, while political, were primarily military. Yet another milestone in the destruction of the old social parameters. The third characteristic was the form of actions taken by the movement which used odd methods of protest like bicycle rides that toured various parts of the country. The fourth characteristic was in the very essence of the message; immediate withdrawal from Lebanon without specifying what should be done afterwards, a position that led the organization to dissolve itself a few days after the Israeli withdrawal.

Withdrawal

The years 1998 and 1999 were not ones of exceptional military activity in Lebanon. Hizbollah's military actions did not increase substantially and Israel's losses were kept to a similar level to 1995/6 (approximately 25 soldiers per year). However, as a result of the pace of social change and the changes in popular perception of the army and the validity of sacrifice in pursuit of national objectives meant that the growing clamour for withdrawal became one of the keystones of Israeli politics. The collapse of the Likud government in 1999 and the following elections produced an event unprecedented-

★ Israel

ed in Israeli politics. A former commander in chief of the armed forces stood for election under the slogan "withdrawal from Lebanon with or without a peace agreement before July 2000". Ehud Barak, the most decorated officer in Israeli history, now promised to end the war. It is beyond any doubt that the promise to end Israel's presence in Lebanon helped Barak to triumph in the May 1999 elections.

Barak's Lebanon policy was based on the fact that the Israeli population was no longer prepared to pay the price in blood of the occupation and Barak tried to implement a similar policy with regard to the Palestinian question. More than 60% of the Israel's population had accepted the Oslo accords as the only political alternative for the Israeli state while at the same time the existence of 400,000 settlers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip guaranteed that a complete return to the 1967 borders would be impossible.

The signing of the Oslo Treaty ushered in a new era in the relations between Israel and the Palestinians. Until this treaty, these relations were marked by a struggle between the Israeli occupation and Palestinian resistance. Following the agreement, this relationship was transformed into a process of negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian National Authority.

Meanwhile, the process of colonization of the occupied territories continued, modifying the final nature of the Palestinian entity that would emerge from a definitive agreement. Together with the expansion of the settlements, a network of roads has been created with the intention of dividing up the remaining Palestinian territory. There has also been a modification of international public opinion towards the Israeli presence in the occupied territories – if in 1993 the settlements were considered illegal, by 2000 they had become the subject of a debate, and the "occupied territories" had become the "disputed territories".

Barak dictates

During the Camp David 2 conference, Ehud Barak, who had already lost his parliamentary majority, tried to use every margin of manoeuvre possible offered by his public opinion before the Palestinian uprising. If these margins allowed for the creation of a Palestinian state, they did not allow for the dismantling of the majority of Jewish settlements on the West Bank or Gaza Strip nor allow for the slightest concessions on the question of

Jerusalem. Nonetheless Barak chose to dictate a "take it or leave it" agreement to Arafat, which would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state but whose nature and form would be unacceptable for any Palestinian leader. Moreover, Palestinian public opinion, including in the ranks of Fatah, had lost any illusions in the Oslo process. Its standard of living had plummeted; it saw a corrupt leadership negotiating an agreement for a Palestinian state that would resemble a South African Bantustan rather than a sovereign state. Moreover, it had the example of Hizbollah as an alternative.

In this context, the Palestinian uprising that began on September 29, 2000 was the resumption of the Palestinian people's struggle for independence. It was both a reaction to Barak's policy which took account of the weaknesses of Israeli civil society and a struggle for democracy inside Palestinian society where the people and the armed organizations took the place of the corrupt bureaucrats of the Arafat administration.

For his part, Arafat understood that his future implied distinguishing himself from the policy of his functionaries and situating himself as leader of the popular struggle. If he had not done so he would have completely lost his place inside the movement to the profit of popular Fatah leaders like Barghouti, and it is probable that the leadership of the movement would have passed into the hands of the Islamic organizations.

As we have said, Barak's policy was confined to the limits authorized by the Israeli political consensus, which also included the parties of the Zionist left. The Palestinian refusal to accept these limits was interpreted by Israel as a withdrawal by the Palestinian leadership from the peace process and the opening of a road leading to armed conflict for which the IDF had been preparing since September 1996 (since the conflict over the tunnel under the Haram al-Sharif).

The confrontation between the IDF and the Palestinian authority had different characteristics from past armed confrontations, including the Lebanon war, and reveals the weaknesses of Israeli society. In the first few months of the confrontation, the Palestinian struggle was above all a mass struggle, where at most one could hear some shots in the air. The Israeli response was deadly – IDF soldiers shot to kill, with no attempt to use less deadly methods of repression.

The military escalation mounted by Israel in the course of this period led to a corresponding escalation from the

Palestinians, in response to the deadly use of firearms, the Palestinians also began to kill soldiers and Israeli settlers. In response to air bombardments of Palestinian localities came car bombs in Israeli cities. Although the proportion of victims has not changed, the Palestinian actions have begun to inflict 2-3 Israeli deaths per week.

On the other hand, while the escalation has already reached the level of a low intensity war and that Israeli troops in the occupied territories are now at more than 10,000, the army has still not called up reservists. The reason is simple – unlike other periods, the civil population is not ready to pay the necessary price to continue the occupation and the army fears that the losses suffered by the reservists will rapidly lead to a turn by public opinion in favour of a total withdrawal from the occupied territories. For the same reason Israel is doing all it can to avoid confrontations which would lead to a war with the Arab world. In such a case it would have to mobilize the reservists necessary to fight a total war, but the army is not sure that they would respond to the appeal.

Low intensity war

Hence the government opted for a middle way, pursuing a low intensity war above all through aerial means, and taking precautions to ensure that the number of Israeli victims did not go beyond a certain limit. In other words, Israel's social and political impasse is the cause of the growing suffering of the Palestinian people and for as long as this impasse persists Israel cannot accept a peaceful way out of the crisis.

Whatever the outcome, it is likely to have an importance similar to that of the October 1973 war and will demarcate two distinct epochs in the history of the state of Israel. One can be nearly certain that the current crisis will lead Labourism to a historic defeat from which it will take some years to recover. It is also certain that the crisis will lead to a major polarization of Israeli society between the forces which prefer a better regional integration to the maintenance of the Jewish character of the state, and those who wish to strengthen again its exclusive Jewish identity. The same goes for the forces that favour peace in Israel – in their political practice, they must choose between Zionism and the struggle for peace. ★

* Sergio Yahni is a collaborator of the Alternative Information Centre. This article is based upon a piece previously written with Diego Crenzel. Translation by Gerard Brehony.

THE International Executive Committee (IEC), the leading body of the Fourth International between world congresses, met in Europe in February.

Around 50 members and observers participated in the meeting. On the agenda were a continuation of the debate on resistances to capitalist globalisation in the light of the success of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. The IEC also continued its debate on the evolution of the international political situation and the tasks of revolutionary Marxists, as part of the preparation of the 15th World Congress of the International. A commission was set up to draw up a resolution on "the world situation and our tasks", summarizing in a single document the draft resolution on the world situation adopted during the IEC of October 2000 and the draft resolution on tasks submitted for discussion at this IEC.

The IEC continued discussing the draft resolutions on ecology and lesbian and gay liberation, with a view to their adoption by the 15th World Congress, after having heard reports from the commissions charged with drawing them up.

The IEC also debated the evolution of the situation in the Philippines after the fall of president Estrada, political developments in Latin America (indigenous struggles in Ecuador and mobilisations against Plan Colombia) and the experience of the Left Bloc in which our Portuguese section is involved.

It also discussed the International's budget for the year 2001 and took some decisions intended to strengthen the common work of the sections.

So as to avoid clashes with mass activities in which the sections are involved and allow the maximum internal debate, the IEC decided to postpone the 15th World Congress to Spring 2002 rather than autumn 2001 as initially planned. Another plenary session of the IEC will be held in the autumn of this year to debate a number of subjects including the organisation of the World Congress and the invitations to other revolutionary organisations to participate in it.

Finally the IEC adopted resolutions on the Zapatista march in Mexico (see page 3) and the case of US political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal (see below) ★ [J. M.]

Justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal is well known around the globe as one of the worst examples of racist and class injustice in the United States, a nation which is among the world's leaders in executions.

From the European Parliament to Amnesty International, to former president Nelson Mandela of South Africa, to teachers in Brazil, world public opinion has loudly proclaimed its judgment that Mumia's original trial was a travesty, and raised the call that he be granted a new one.

The year 2001 is likely to prove decisive for Mumia's legal appeal, which will in turn determine whether this global demand for justice is granted or denied.

Federal District Court Judge William Yohn is faced with crucial rulings, including whether all the evidence of police and prosecutorial misconduct, witnesses who have recanted or changed their testimony, and others – including scientific experts – who were never heard by the original jury (the kinds of facts which have convinced international public opinion) will be considered by the federal courts as part of Mumia's appeal process.

It is therefore crucial for everyone concerned with basic questions of human rights and legal due process around the world to renew and redouble our efforts on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal at this time.

A victory for justice in this case is not only a victory for Mumia. It will also be a victory for the thousands of others across the U.S.A. who were convicted and sentenced to death in trials that came no closer to international legal standards than Mumia's did, but who have simply received less publicity, as well as for all class-struggle and political prisoners everywhere. ★

**International Executive Committee of the Fourth International
February 21, 2001**

A martyred people

IN the suburbs of Grozny, not a single building has been spared, although only some of them have been completely demolished. The closer you get to the center of town, the worse the level of destruction

XAVIER ROUSSELIN*

THE centre of Grozny is a field of ruins. Before the war, more than 500,000 people lived in the city. There were no more than 80,000 at the beginning of the autumn. There were certainly still less this winter. The inhabitants have no heating worthy of the name, in the glacial winter of the northern Caucasus. Access to running water and gas has still not been restored and the majority of the city's population does not receive food aid.

The battles are far from over. In the city, the military are omnipresent. They are on the roofs. They patrol in tanks or in jeeps, but more rarely on foot. They are at the entrance to all public buildings. They control all movement and have set up large caliber artillery. On the main roads there are checkpoints every 500 metres. According to the mayor of Grozny, who was nominated by the Russian authorities, there are between 15 and 20 people killed in the city every day. You can see that from the behaviour of the soldiers, who are obviously afraid.

All witnesses confirm the exactions of the Russian soldiers. In the eyes of the Russian soldiers the Chechnyan population is suspect. This war is not a war between a regular army and "terrorist" bands as the regime claims. It is essentially a war against the civil population carried out in the name of the struggle against "terrorism". It is the civilians who have been massively displaced and who are the victim of the actions of the Russian army. Thus, at the end of November, Russian soldiers, in the name of the struggle against "terrorism", used bulldozers and tanks to destroy the little market stalls at the centre of Grozny. This

★ Chechnya

market was one of the signs of the return of a less abnormal life, selling things like socks, oil lamps, soap, drinks and some foodstuffs.

This war has as its basis Russia's imperial grandeur, but it would be wrong to reduce it to a simple power quest by a central regime seeking to affirm itself. This region has been of strategic importance to Russia for a very long time. Since the Ukraine became independent the western part of the Caucasus controls Russian access to the Black Sea.

The east of the Caucasus concentrates formidable oil resources, while the port of Novorossisk is now the main point of exit by sea for Russian oil (670,000 barrels a day in 2000, or 60% of total exports by sea). The oil of the Caspian basin is normally carried by the Druzhba (Friendship) pipeline which runs through Dagestan and Chechnya. The Russian company responsible for managing the network of pipelines is constructing a bypass north of Chechnya with the help of the European Bank. Currently a good part of Baku's oil is going by train, because of the war.

Problem

However, the problem of the transport of energy will experience some important developments in the course of the coming years. Production of Caspian Sea oil and natural gas is projected to rise sharply, in particular by the USA, as is production of natural gas in Turkmenistan. It will, then, be necessary to build new pipelines. Where will they go? A range of projects are being floated. Turkey claims that the Bosphorus is already overburdened with oil tankers and that this poses big ecological problems. Hence it is proposing new pipelines passing through its territory. The problem is that this project could lead to the resumption of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The US is arguing for an Asian outlet. However, the choice is no longer easy. The pipeline will have to end up in Iran or Pakistan, after having gone through Afghanistan. It's obvious that the war in Chechnya is not without economic consequences. It is not a struggle between Cossacks nostalgic for the grandeur of "all the Russias" and "terrorist" bands more or less manipulated by the mafias. Solid and concrete material interests also determine the movements of the Russian armies.

The Russian (and for 60 years Soviet) desire to dominate the region has always come up against Chechen resistance. It needed a century of war for the Tsarist



armies to conquer this territory half the size of Belgium and for 50 years the Russians have launched big offensives seeking to destroy this million strong people. In 1944, Stalin deported all the Chechens to Kazakhstan.

When Yeltsin wished to weaken the central power in the USSR at the time of its death agony, he encouraged all the local regimes to take as much power as they were capable of. Chechnya proclaimed its independence in 1991, following the defeat of Ianaev's coup. The Red Army withdrew, leaving its lavish stocks of arms.

Process

The process of privatization of the economy in Chechnya had exactly the same consequences as everywhere else in the ex-USSR. Corruption developed. The private appropriation of the means of production created gigantic inequalities. The standard of living of the majority of the population fell by 50% and mafias of every kind prospered.

Doudaïev, the Chechnyan president, came to power on the basis of a nationalist and democratic upsurge. He was elected with 80% of votes and was regarded as a sort of "father" of the Chechnyan nation: he had led it to its independence. However, once in power he fell to enriching himself through trafficking in oil and weapons.

The Russian regime and its generals had never accepted the independence of Chechnya. Yeltsin waged an initial war against Chechnya in December 1994. It was a crushing defeat for the remains of the Soviet army. Grozny and Chechnya were seriously destroyed. But Russia was obliged to negotiate and officially recognize the country's independence, following which Aslan Maskhadov was elected president of the Chechnyan republic.

On the economic level the period after the first war was marked by the absence of any policy of reconstruction. The sole economic development was parasitic: trafficking in oil and arms. It is estimated that only 10% of the population

enjoys legal employment. Wages and pensions of government employees were no longer paid.

Direct levies from oil in the pipelines were exacted in an increasingly arbitrary manner. Criminality and kidnapping spread. There were up to 2,000 people held illegally in Chechnya. At the same time NGO workers became the target of choice for the hostage takers. Six members of the Red Cross were assassinated in 1996, and four British telecommunication technicians were decapitated in December 1998.

This period was also marked by the appearance of the Wahhabite current. It proclaims a fundamentalist version of Islam. It established itself in the beginning of the 1990s through pilgrims returning from Mecca. This form of Islam is very different from the very tolerant version of the religion (in relation to alcohol in particular), which had prevailed in Chechnya up to that time.

The Wahhabites experienced a certain success; they had money. Some accused them of being financed and manipulated by the Russian secret services. But they benefit also, undoubtedly, from petrodollars. And in the chaos of Chechnya in the years 1995-99, money is something rare. The Wahhabites recruited all the better because they could pay wages to those who joined them. They threw themselves into political combat and succeeded in imposing the legal recognition of the *Sharia* (Muslim religious law) on the government.

Independence began, then, to turn sour for the Chechnyan people. It was supposed to bring more freedom and ended up with the imposition of reactionary laws contrary to Chechen traditions of tolerance.

In summer 1999, Yeltsin dismissed his third prime minister of the year. He appointed Putin and the latter announced a merciless struggle against the Chechnyan bandits.

Deluge

Having learnt its lessons from the first war and NATO's strikes against Serbia, the Kremlin ordered a deluge of bombs on Grozny. The city, where 40,000 people still lived, fell after four months of intensive bombardments.

The majority of the population of Chechnya fled the combats and took shelter in Ingushya. There were as many as 600,000 refugees. Despite the return of some of them, there are still around 160,000 refugees in Ingushya and

170,000 in Chechnya itself, or 35% of the total Chechen population.

Since the beginning of the war, the big powers have not ceased to affirm their support for Putin's bellicose enterprise. Despite some verbal condemnations of Russian army excesses, the Western powers have let the Russian government wage this war as it wished. The EU-Russia summit held in Paris at the beginning of November allowed the normalization of relations between France and Russia.

All this happened as if the division of Europe remained. The frontier between East and West has certainly changed but each camp remains master in its own house.

Before yesterday the Soviet tanks could enter Budapest or Prague, without the "democratic" governments lifting a finger. Yesterday NATO took on the right to bomb Serbia, without the Russian protests changing in any manner the course of the "strikes". Today the Russian army can bomb Chechnya without any of the governments of the NATO countries doing anything. One imagines what the Western reaction would have been if Milosevic had used such methods against Kosovo.

Charm offensive

All the "sincere democrats" from Blair to Chirac to Clinton have on the contrary mounted a charm offensive towards Putin, saluting his modernity, his sense of humour, his youth. The head of the French employers' organization found "a very direct man, very athletic in appearance, young, who appears in the best of health, full of dynamism and very accessible." For Russia is also becoming a kind of *Eldorado* for international investors. The regime is proving its strength, restoring the confidence of capital while preparing a reform of the labour code which will suppress most of the rights of Russian workers.

From the Russian point of view, the war in Chechnya is at an impasse. The methods of total war push the majority of Chechnyan men towards resistance. All men from 14 to 65 are considered as potential combatants by the Russian army. To survive, the majority of these men have no choice other than joining the refugee camps or the combatants. If Russian military superiority is established, it remains incapable of stabilizing the situation, even in the short term.

The conclusion is that only a political solution can put an end to the war and

that such a solution can only emerge through the recognition of the legitimacy of the democratically elected Chechnyan president, Aslan Maskhadov. The opening of negotiations with him is the sole means of envisaging a peace process. Peace can only be established through recognizing the right of the Chechnyans to self-determination.

It was in this context that French trades unionists decided to set up a trade union convoy for Chechnya so as to bring 22 tons of flour to the refugees. This operation was an extension of identical operations carried out in Bosnia and Kosovo. It was based on two trade unions (Sud PTT and the CGT of the ONIC), an association (*Secours Ouvrier for Bosnia*) and activists in the Chechnya committee.

The journey was long (more than a month in total), littered with problems (11 days held up in customs for example) and police harassment (more than 17,000 roubles paid in various fines), but the flour reached its destination. It was distributed in Chechnya, by NGOs independent of the Russian authorities, to refugees who had received no food aid for three months.

This convoy did not simply aim to bring trade union aid to the refugees. It also had the ambition of making contact with the trade unions of the federation of Russia who opposed the war and monitoring the situation of abandonment of the refugees.

At the time of the passage of the convoy through Moscow, we were able to have a discussion of several hours with some members of small radical unions (Zachtchita, Sotsprof, Soviet Worker). The exchanges concerned the trade union situation in Russia as well as their position on the war. For them, in Russia, the workers' movement is not a single bloc. There is, certainly, much chauvinism, but the most radical and independent unions are clearly against the war in Chechnya, although, unhappily, Russian workers have no means of communicating with their Chechnyan equivalents.

Conflict

The radical unionists analyze the war as a conflict of interests between the Russian *nouveaux riches* and the barons of Chechnya. They believe that the intercommunal wars which are common in Russia are organized by the state to divert attention from everyday problems. It is not a war of peoples, it is the war of Capital, or, as it happens, of oil.

They say that 10 or 15 years ago Caucasian hospitality was celebrated in Moscow. Now people from the Caucasus are spoken of as if they were criminals or bandits. But the outlook of ordinary people is changing. The people have had enough of this war. Mothers no longer want their sons to be used as cannon fodder. Now public opinion demands that Russian troops are brought home and the Chechnyans left to sort out their own affairs. The current federal troops are not only composed of mercenaries. They also include the conscripts who live in very harsh conditions for minimal wages.

Despite their opposition to the war, these radical trades unionists think that the independence of Chechnya will bring nothing good to the Chechen people. Chechnya, they think, does not have sufficient resources to survive. It will only be a puppet in the hands of the great powers. However, they also think that Chechnya is profitable for Russia's imperialist policy, if not it would have been abandoned a long time ago.

Revision

In Russia, the legal guarantees and rights of trade unions are threatened by a revision of the labour code. The code currently in force is inherited from the Soviet era. The governmental draft extends the working day from 8 to 12 hours and encourages flexibility. It legalizes the non-payment of wages, removes any guarantee of employment for trades unionists and reduces dismissal to a simple formality. The FNPR (former official trade union) have developed an alternative draft that could serve as a trampoline to the adoption of a lightly reworked version of the government proposals. The alternative unions are all committed, in various degrees, to a fight against the new code. Some support a third alternative draft strengthening the rights and guarantees of workers, the so-called "Avaliani-Shein" draft.

The alternative unions have led numerous protest actions, including two national mobilizations (May 17 and December 1 2000) but employees are generally not very conscious of the legal aspects and mobilized weakly in most enterprises, with the FNPR asking them to wait patiently while the issue was settled by negotiations at the top level.

Whatever the union, they are all experiencing great difficulty, caught between the tentacles of the regime and the distrust of employees. Some trades

★ Chechnya

unionists have managed, nonetheless, to create a dynamic of regional significance. Cases like this exist in for example Astrakhan, with Zachtchita (defence industry), Nijni-Novgorod, with the Committee of Workers of Russia, Togliatti, with the "Edinstvo" (Unity, affiliated to Sotsprof) union, the car factory GAZ (Lada), or in the Siberian mines, around the Confederation of Labour of Siberia.

Another objective of the trade union convoy was to observe the situation of the refugees in Ingushya. We visited several camps. The Sputnik camp outside Sleptsovska is near the frontier with Chechnya; 8,954 people live there, under military tents in very bad condition. Two nights before our visit, four tents caught fire after a gas leak. Some people were wounded. We are welcomed by several women from the camp who despair at the silence of Westerners. However, when they learn we are French, they thank us warmly for being here with them. Thanks to those who demonstrate outside the Russian embassy in Paris, and who support the Chechnyan people, they say.

Mourning

Some mourn the loss of their families, their sons and husbands, forcibly taken by the federal army. They have seen their daughters raped, their children traumatized. "Only the Russians can kill or torture children" they tell us. Some men arrive. They tell us that they are ready to return to Chechnya to fight, to avenge. One of them tells us: "Look in what conditions we live. I am sure that in France, the dogs are better treated than us!" Very near here, we hear bombs falling at regular intervals. The women tell us: "They want us to return to our homes, but how? The Russians are still bombing what remains of our country".

Khazan Timiyeva and Zaina Idigova invite us into their tent. It is shared by seventeen people. One a little girl of 22 days, called Mecqua (Mecca) as a sign of hope. In this tent measuring approximately 20 square meters there are six beds of which two are stacked above each other. The floor is wooden. Four children are there who eat crusts of hard bread. A little later, a little girl arrives saying she is hungry. Despite her tears, nothing will change the situation. Three NGOs are working at Sputnik: Islamic Relief for food aid, PHO (a Polish NGO), which runs the kindergarten and Médecins de Monde, which has opened a little medical centre.

The camp at Bart is nearer to Nazran. In each tent about 30 refugees live, women, men and children mixed. In the bigger tents, there are up to 50 people. A school has been built where children from 7 to 12 are taken or around 600 children. A new school was to have been constructed for older children by January 1, 2001. The Hilfswerk (Austrian) organization is responsible for the building work and has received financing from the humanitarian body of the European Union. Overall the education situation of the refugees is as follows. Some 32,000 refugee children are between 7 and 12. Only 12,000 can go to school. The others receive no instruction because of lack of international aid. Things are still worse for children over 12. The situation of children of pre-school age is also bad; of 20 kindergartens existing in Ingushya before the war, 14 are partially or totally occupied by refugees.

As for food aid, only two NGOs (the Danish Refugees Council and Hifswerk) work in the Bart camp. They distribute 3.5 kg of rice, 4.5 kg of sugar, 1 litre of oil and 13.5 kg of flour, per month and per person. No meat or milk. Vegetables and fruits are only distributed to children of 1 to 7 and irregularly at that. The 1,370 children of less than 6 years receive also receive small pots of food. The Red Cross distributes bread (260 grammes per day and per person). Collective kitchens no longer function.

Disastrous

The tents are heated by more or less effective stoves. The Austrian association has promised to construct a town gas heating system. The hygiene situation is disastrous: the Red Cross brings drinkable water every day and a water line has been built through the camp with several taps. In summer the refugees lacked drinkable water. The other obvious problem seems to be washing clothes.

There are two cabins each with 12 showers, or 24 showers for 6,318 people. There are not enough toilets for the population of the camp and the few that exist are in an appalling state. Ironically, we were told that as the kitchens do not work, there is no need for toilets. The refugees also complain of lack of dustbins.

The state of health of the refugees, both physical and mental, is alarming. There is an infirmary with an Ingush doctor and one nurse. The distribution of medicines is very arbitrary. There is an epidemic of hepatitis and another of

tuberculosis. To separate the tubercolic from the other refugees, they are kept in reserved tents. Scabies is raging and the refugees suffer from anemia because of lack of vitamins.

The approach of a new winter without adequate heating and food could be catastrophic. "Without urgent assistance, some people will die," Ruslan told us.

International aid for the Chechnyan refugees is tragically weak. Comparisons with the aid (quite justifiably) given to Kosovo shows the level of Western cynicism. At Pristina, in November 1999, 326 international organizations were operating.

Worse

The situation of the people in Chechnya itself is still worse. Whereas the UN estimates that 190,000 people are "vulnerable", only 130,000 receive food aid. All the others receive nothing. In Grozny, the situation is particularly delicate. The population has very little or no work. It has no possibility of living from garden produce and as the town is bristling with mines, the simple search for wood for heating (indispensable for survival in the glacial Caucasian winter) is a very high risk activity.

The international organizations cite the dangerous conditions as justification for their absence from the region. However, the Red Cross, which has had six of its members assassinated in Chechnya, has resumed activities in Grozny with an office composed essentially of Chechens. Several NGOs are capable of playing a role in Chechnya. In addition, the representatives of the trade union convoy were able to get to Grozny without any special protection.

The alleged dangers have become an elegant pretext for doing nothing which will in any way annoy the Russian government. If the refugees and the inhabitants of Chechnya are alone it is because of Western complicity with this dirty war and not because of a perfectly manageable level of risk. ★

*Xavier Rousselin is one of the organizers of the Trade Union Convoy for Chechnya.



After Serbia's democratic revolution

AT first, the media described the fall of Milosevic as "a popular uprising against a tyrant." Then, mass mobilization was played down, and the movement to oust Milosevic was reduced to a staged drama with, behind the scenes, the puppet-master forces of the "West."

CATHERINE SAMARY

THE mainstream media have gone from depicting what they often described — during the bombings, to legitimize them — as a totalitarian state of an almost Hitlerian nature... to a quite vulnerable and even pluralist government. During the bombing of Serbia, they ignored or "forgot" the importance of Yugoslav civil society (while taking it as their target), or presented it as being ground down and straitjacketed by the Milosevic "fascist regime," also conveniently ignoring the fact that all the major cities of that government were already in opposition.

Today, the same voices are discovering that the opposition (supported by the West) is the decisive factor in maintaining victory and control. But now as then, this civil society is (in this reading) reduced to pawns which can be bought or manipulated — yesterday by Milosevic (since this civil society was against NATO), and today by NATO (since it voted against Milosevic).

Image and Manipulation

All of the probable underground machinations couldn't be traced, but some of them were pretty clear: the sudden influx of money received by the Otpor youth movement, whose buttons and provocative stickers became so well-known in the period before the election; the expensive polls commissioned, which "scientifically" predicted the winning candidate, and made attracting supporters to the DOS opposition coalition easier; the obvious campaign headquarters set up in Hungary and the excellent access all the opposition parties had to scrutinize the ballot boxes during the vote, to count the vote, and to prevent or at least to denounce any instances of fraud. Thus, the opposition had already in hand its legal positions to present to the Electoral Commission and then the Constitutional Court.

Finally, the interviews of some of the "muscular heros" (like the mayor of Canak and his troops) of the operation revealed how some of the apparently "spontaneous" actions were secretly organized well in advance. These events included the October 5 mass demonstration of half a million in Belgrade, sweeping aside the police barricades; the "taking" of the Parliament and the State Television studios, for example.

From all of this sudden truth, there arises a paradox, a silent and conspiratorial vision of history. Thus, there is a resounding silence on anything which tends not to support this vision of a



"NATO triumph." The U.S./NATO bombings were radically and bitterly criticized by many of Milosevic's opponents. Those who chose (and were amply rewarded for their efforts) to be U.S. and NATO mouthpieces, like the leader of the Democratic Party, Zoran Djindjic, were utterly discredited. That is precisely one of the reasons why Milosevic decided to hold elections in July 2000: the weakness of the opposition coalition then led by Djindjic (a coalition that the tiny Kostunica party did not belong to), allied to the mass apathy of those who were simultaneously opposed to the corrupt opposition, the Western bombing AND the Milosevic regime.

Their abstention meant that a simple majority would have been enough for Milosevic (with the new constitutional rules) to win a direct election as president of Yugoslavia, even if the Montenegrins

and Kosova Albanians boycotted the vote.

Did NATO Defeat Milosevic?

As the Djindjic case demonstrates, Western money and support did not guarantee (and therefore does not explain) the success of the Kostunica Party. On the contrary, the NATO war produced a massive patriotic reaction.

The fact that Milosevic's accusation as a war criminal occurred while the war was ongoing was perceived — and still is — as a political act designed to legitimize the bombings and punish Milosevic for resistance. The vast majority of Serbs were therefore more blind than ever to the crimes committed in their name, and saw themselves as the primary victims of the conflict. The 700,000 Serbs who fled Croatia, Bosnia or Kosova, taken in by relatives in Serbia, comforted this vision; Western silence on these "bad victims," especially as regards Croatian Serbs, the fact that the late Croatian president Tudjman was not indicted as a war criminal, and NATO's policies strengthen this conviction.

Western sanctions went even farther to discredit the coalition led by Djindjic when they took the form, in the winter of 1999 when there was a fuel shortage, of selective energy distribution by European governments to opposition towns and cities. This campaign, called "Energy for Democracy" was so immoral (vote in the right way or you'll freeze to death!) that the Renewal Party of Vuk Draskovic distanced itself from the campaign (an act which boosted its standing in the polls) and decided to go it alone.

What, then, produced the upheaval which led to Milosevic's defeat, beyond this bizarrely conspiratorial vision of history that the media wants us to swallow? In other words, what happened in this society?

Authentic Popular Upheaval

Wherever it got its money from, behind the real popularity of Otpor was a real movement of Serbian youth expressing a real, massive, and profound "ENOUGH — WE'VE HAD IT UP TO HERE!" This youth movement was prone to making its statements against the bombings with a darkly corrosive humor, but they also wanted just to "live normally," and to escape the fate of a whole generation sacrificed to nationalist wars (even if no real debate on those wars has yet taken place).

In the southern region of Serbia, zealous local bureaucrats of Milosevic's ruling Socialist Party sent a huge number of youth to fight in Kosova. That region is also where one saw, during the bombing campaign, mass demonstrations which even reached the untouchable bastion of the Army and the State, demonstrations whose central platform was a refusal to die for Kosova.

Tales of atrocities committed in Kosova began to emerge from within the Army's rank and file. As for students in the big cities, their angry refusal of "More Milosevic" was fueled as much by the absence of any real, different "future," the limitations on travel, and repression against educators who tried to resist the line laid down by the centralized regime.

When the State began, in Spring 2000, to put down Otpor and to hysterically accuse any youth wearing an Otpor badge of being a corrupt agent of NATO, its efforts backfired, bringing a whole generation of youth — and many of their parents — into the Otpor movement. Otpor's angry humor and its catchy slogans were enough to erase people's fears and let them express their desire for change — even if there was no real self-organization or real debate over what kind of new society should be organized. That Western money was there for a reason, after all.

Whatever the weakness of the organization, however, their now famous "Gotov je" (He's fucked!) was a rallying cry that expressed a real mass sentiment. Its attraction was such that the regime came to seem more and more an out-of-touch machine, locked into a repressive campaign which linked any opposition to "sell-outs and traitors in league with foreigners."

Working Class Anger

A year and a half after the war, it was the climate of political and social insecurity which was really at center stage. Certainly, in areas where the "socialist" vote was still the majority, farmers clung to their privileges, their private holdings distributed in the old Titoist days, and still under state protection. But in the factories, a rising tide of rejection was beginning to threaten the clientelism and corruption of "socialist" management, who had never bothered with an iota of respect for the workers in spite of the so-called "leftist" face of the regime.

The visible wealth of these powerful managers was in ever starker contrast to

the miniscule average wages of about 150 Deutschmarks (DM) — if you even HAD a job — or pensions of around 40 DM a month (with, of course, countless months of payment in arrears and delays).

Yes, people knew that the NATO sanctions had a certain effect, but that same moment of austerity was when they could see the government mafia stuffing their own pockets out of ordinary workers' misery.

People felt they could face poverty and isolation, and even injustice, as long as these ills are shared. That kind of sharing would happen in any real left wing government. But, behind the socialist propaganda and etiquette, privation and not shared misery was on the agenda for Milosevic or his wife, Mira Markovic, head of the JUL (Yugoslave Youth Alliance).

In the shadows, these two continued to pull the strings of mafia-clientelism, to order purges and promotions — activities which even undermined their alliance with the extreme-right Radical Party. The darkest part of their regime was Rade Markovic's freedom, as head of the Republican National Security (RDB), to organize a virtually private police force which could carry out any dirty work with total impunity.

A Crumbling Regime

Against the "victimized" self-representation of this regime are its crimes and attacks on diverse people, fiscal harassment and attacks on the opposition press, control over State Television, arrests of journalists, purges and other manipulation of judges, journalists, professors, based on repressive laws and decrees, all of which have strengthened a growing climate of insecurity.

On the other hand there has been, for the past ten years, the emergence of a certain pluralism much valued by Serbs, and shown by the ruling party's loss since 1996 of all the major Yugoslav cities, including Belgrade, as well as by the existence of independent unions, various social movements, especially the anti-war movement, and the movement in defense of all nationalities, represented for example by Ms. Natasha Kandic's Center, which now calls for Milosevic's transfer to The Hague.

The demonstrations against the regime's attempt to take back the popular vote were massive. That was the reason for the three months of huge demonstrations during the winter of 1995-1996 to enforce official recognition of the opposi-

tion's victory in the big towns.

And this growing social climate formed the context for the explosion of rage in September-October 2000 when the coalition in power tried to deny its defeat. The miners from Kolubara, a giant industrial complex near Belgrade went on strike to defend their vote. The DOS leadership went themselves to Kolubara to call for strike support on October 4, while the "socialist" government, for its part, sent elite troops against the strike committee.

The obvious fraternization that day between strikers and police, even taking over the mines, shows what was happening within all of the forces of repression: a sudden merging with ordinary people that went far beyond what can be "bought" (even though there were certainly those who WERE bought). That shift goes a long way to explain the hesitation and the weakness of the Army and the police on the next day [October 5, the day the uprising took Belgrade and Milosevic fell—ed.]..

The Role of Kostunica

Nonetheless, one cannot dismiss the role of the individual — in this case, Vojislav Kostunica — in the growing possibility of an enormous anti-Milosevic vote, and in the mobilization to defend that vote. Here we are not talking about a "leftist," a defender of the working class, still less someone who would rely on the masses to bring him to power. Yet Vojislav embodied an honesty and integrity in his unwavering denunciation of NATO and of corruption, whatever its origin, whether from the United States or Belgrade.

Kostunica was in Kolubara at the miners' side on October 4, even as he continued to follow the legal procedures that organized the transfer of power. That is, in fact, one of this legal scholar's tactics: to rely on the support of the Army and the aspirations of the people, but only within the framework of a "State of Law." People were ready to demonstrate to demand the recognition of the vote, but they refused the repeated incitement by NATO (and the calls by Zoran Djindjic) to overthrow Milosevic by force.

Of course, popular anger tends also to lead to using "revolutionary" means to accelerate the process of change, and to express something besides a simple vote for Kostunica: From a strike to defend their vote, the miners quickly went forward to demand the "resignation" of their manager, an example that was followed

in several other factories.

For several days, workers began to exert their power and use rusty or forgotten rights of "self-management" to put in place new managers linked to the new majority. The vote wasn't a blank check for the DOS, much less for those who really want to go full steam ahead with privatization — which is sadly the case for much of the leadership of Otpor and many of the independent unions.

Past and Future

Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, electoral change has meant simply new clients and new mafias under new labels, mostly "liberal" solutions. Nowhere has it meant the consolidation of workers' rights. Worse still is when right wing policies masquerade in socialist costume.

For the emergence of a true Left in Serbia, the end of the Slobodan Milosevic/Mira Markovic reign is a good thing, a necessary starting point. But behind the relative "ease" of the fall of this regime, we have to beware of an optical illusion caused by earlier mistakes. This government was neither that of a Hitler practicing "genocide" in Kosova, nor a progressive regime. That is why it had neither the repressive and totalitarian forces behind it of the former, nor the means to mount counter attacks from the right that the latter would have had.

If we leave aside the myths that demonize or sanctify Milosevic, it is clear that he was a man who was ready to look for his support and legitimacy in the ballot boxes, while he would also try to pull any strings he could to hold on to power.

First he tried to deny his defeat "legally" via the Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court that was to function to his orders; but apparently he also was also counting on the Army's support. Milosevic underestimated the fact that during the summer of the year 2000, eighteen opposition formations, including the leader of the Democratic Party, Zoran Djindjic, could come together to support Vojislav Kostunica (the only one of them with a chance to beat Milosevic legally) despite their internal disagreements.

He did not see how his regime's "arguments" against that candidate were weakening in the face of his government's clear criminal practices, and he underestimated the pressures on various key members of his government to at least stay neutral, if not actually go over to Kostunica. He faced pressure from the Russian diplomat who came to urge him



— and convince the Electoral Commission — to recognize the election results on October 5. And he underestimated the Kostunica vote in the Army and the Army's refusal to intervene against a majority popular vote.

It's easy to see why Western governments present Slobodan Milosevic's defeat as "their" victory. It would be more honest to say that Serbian popular opinion expressed in polls and then in ballot boxes forced the West to "choose" to support Kostunica, having failed to oust Milosevic by bombings, by war crime trials, by repeated appeals (given voice by Djindjic) for a general insurrection against Milosevic, nor by the political candidates who supported their policies.

Crises remain

The complex national and social questions of Yugoslavia remain. They are linked to internal and external crises related to the deep, ongoing process of political disintegration of the former and the current State. They remain, after Milosevic, as they existed under him, especially in Montenegro and Kosova: He acted to fan the flames, yes, but also helped to hide the real causes of the fire.

The DOS has left it to NATO to manage the growing tensions in three of the Kosovar areas where a new imitator of the former UCK (the Kosova Liberation Army) is demanding that villages in the "buffer zone" where the majority is Albanian become part of Kosova. And Kostunica, like Milosevic, demands that UN Security Council resolution 1244 be enforced — which places Kosova out of Serbia but still within Yugoslavia...

That is also why the great powers are worried about the independence movement gaining strength in Montenegro, since it would suppress the Yugoslav framework of the 1244 resolution: it could mean either a return of Kosova to Serbia — which is unthinkable — OR a real recognition of Kosova's independence (which they have thus far refused for fear of its effect on the fragile situation in Macedonia and above all Bosnia).

While president Kostunica is opposed

to the further dismantling of Yugoslavia, he will recognize the Montenegrin vote for self-determination in a constitutional framework — while Albanians still remain a minority without any right to self determination within the Yugoslav constitution.

But the recent normalization of relations between Serbia, Albania and Bosnia as well as this recognition of Montenegrin free choice opens a door to the hope that the disintegration of Yugoslavia could make way for a community of Balkan states — where a Republic of Kosova could find its place. All depends on the political evolution within Serbia itself.

Mira Markovic's JUL has disappeared and the Socialist Party has undergone both a dramatic crisis and a steady hemorrhaging of membership. It has no more than 37 seats of the 250 in the new Serbian Assembly. The far-rightist Seselj's Radical Party has 27 and the Serbian Unity Party, which was led by the now dead paramilitary Arkan, broke in with 14 seats. The DOS has 175 deputies, and as a united bloc has attracted a measure of popular support which none of its constituent parts could possibly rally. That maintains together this very heterogeneous group.

The ousting of the chief of the secret police, Rade Markovic, and the nomination of Dusan Mihajlovic, the head of "New Democracy" (ND), as Minister of the Interior (Mihajlovic knew Milosevic's praetorian guard "intimately" as he'd been around them for five years) are seen as a turn towards reining in the endemic corruption.

Apart from Kostunica, who has stayed at the top of all the polls, the economists Mladjen Dinkic, new governor of the Central Bank, and Miroslav Labus, Vice Prime Minister of the Federal Government, are the most popular politicians, doubtless because they are seen as "experts" who stand apart from the discredited parties, and because the effects of their neoliberal policies haven't been felt concretely, yet.

They plan many information meetings with the unions. And they claim that Yugoslavia has already gone through its crisis of the "transition" (to capitalism), and that therefore all of the negative social effects are over and done with. Now will come the positive effects. Only a radiant future awaits. That rosy vision is anything but evident. ★

Catherine Samary is the author of *Yugoslavia Dismembered* (New York: Monthly Review Press). This article was translated for the March/April issue of the US socialist magazine *Against the Current* by Abra Quinn.

KKE holds 16th congress

THE CPG, taking advantage of the outrage about the bombings of Yugoslavia by NATO, got 8.7% of the vote in the Euro-elections in 1999 and 5.5% in the national elections in 2000, roughly maintaining its position. At the same time, DIKKI, a supposedly left, nationalist party failed to obtain the necessary 3% to reenter parliament. SYN, which split from the CPG in 1991 and has become a party with a mild parliamentary and "Europhile" social-democratic line, managed only with great difficulties to be represented, getting 3.1%.

The CPG is not only the biggest left party but also the only parliamentarian force that takes a clear position for the defense of workers' interests against the neoliberal offensive of the Greek and other EU governments and against the austerity policy supported by both PASOK and the right opposition in favor of the European Currency Union, to which Greece was recently admitted.

The CPG also played an important role in the anti-imperialist mobilisations against the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia, Clinton's visit to Athens and other opportunities, as well as in the mobilisations of the peasants against the agrarian policy of the government and the EU, the school occupations in 1999/2000, the protests against the "reform" of education that makes it much more difficult for students to get a school-leaving qualification and in some defensive struggles of the workers against the onslaught of government and capital.

Nevertheless the influence of the CPG in the trade unions has declined gradually in the last few years and only the union of the construction workers is still under its control. But the whole trade union movement, still largely led by a bureaucracy close to PASOK, is undergoing a sharp decline that nobody would have expected to this extent at the beginning of the 1990s.

So the CPG leadership made certain efforts to show a left profile in order to gain influence among the youth and to correspond to the mood of the party's rank and file. But there's no doubt that the main result of the party congress is the confirmation of the basically right, partially even reactionary, Stalinist-bureaucratic line of the party apparatus, and this, of course, "unanimously". There

THE 16th party congress of the KKE (CPG - Communist Party of Greece), still by far the biggest left political force of the country, took place on Dec 14-17, 2000.

ANDREAS KLOKE

was virtually no real controversial discussion at the congress and this, even for the CPG, is a novelty.

Return to classic Stalinism

The "unanimity" could be achieved only by the hardest bureaucratic measures against deviant opinions during the preparations for the congress. Trade union leaders Kostopoulos (ex-parliamentarian) and Theonas (Euro-parliamentarian), who had supported the opening of the party to collaboration with other political forces, were ruthlessly excluded from the party without having the opportunity to present their opinions according to the rules of democracy. Lots of articles were published in the party newspaper *Rizospastis* that branded the "deviationists" more or less openly as "agents" of the "class enemy". These repulsive methods guaranteed the seemingly total triumph of the leading clique around Papariga, Gontikas and Mailis at the congress. The background of this conflict is the sharpening sectarian line followed by the party leadership in the last few years. This line refers to certain elements of the "third period" policy that was the leading orientation of the Comintern in 1928-34, though the classical right line of the "popular front" remains in force.

One has to consider that the party leadership was confronted for the first time after decades with the problem of

forming its own point of view on so many difficult and complex issues of international affairs, for example on the end of the "socialist camp" itself. The party leadership "solved" this problem by a big leap back into the good old times of Stalinism, explaining the collapse of the Soviet Union mainly by "revisionist" developments since the 20th congress of the CPSU when Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes in a halfhearted way.

The CPG has tried to avoid the process of social-democratization that virtually all the European CP's underwent, some of them a long time before 1990/91 like the Italian PCI or partially the French PCF, and after 1991 more or less all the former Stalinist parties which had exercised power in Eastern Europe. But the CPG leadership has found no better explanation than old Maoist "theories" and uses now certain elements of allegedly "left" tactics applied in the far-off days of Stalinism. In the political practice of the last few years this meant that the CPG leadership did not even try to build up common fronts of struggle together with other political currents in the trade unions like PASOK or SYN or is even openly opposed to doing so. PAME, the so-called "front of workers' unity" supported by the CPG, doesn't mean anything else but unity of the party with itself and, though not yet applied consistently, the preliminary stage of purely "red" unions of the CPG. What cannot be achieved by these tactics, of course, is a real workers' front against the escalating attacks of the ruling class on their rights and standard of living.

Anti-imperialist rhetoric

In the last years and particularly since the wars in former Yugoslavia broke out, the party propaganda focused on a specific form of "anti-imperialism". The CPG misses no opportunity to blame NATO and the imperialist powers for everything that happens in the Balkans and in the world. The party congress decided to construct an "Anti-imperialist Anti-monopolist Democratic Front" (AADF) as central core of the party's political orientation.

The "solidarity" of the party leadership with the peoples of the Balkans in the 90s was, however, very one-sidedly limited to "friendship with Serbia" which, in fact, consisted of an uncondi-



tional support for Milosevic's regime including all its wars and crimes that were committed at the expense of all the other peoples of former Yugoslavia and the Serb people itself. Except Milosevic's regime, all the other governments of the area, like the Albanian, Macedonian ("FYROM") and all the political forces of the Kosovars, were and are "agents" and puppets of NATO imperialism.

With this assessment the CPG leadership manages to avoid any serious analysis of the national and social problems of the peoples and all its wisdom is largely limited to the position that the borders of former Yugoslavia should not have changed and at least be conserved as they are now. In this latter point its position coincides with the viewpoint of the NATO imperialists.

The "AADF" means in practice a codification of the party's "united front" policy with the most backward circles of the right, certain petit bourgeois layers and nationalist intellectuals who instinctively reject some *ideological consequences* of EU-integration and capitalist "globalization" and have partially adopted an anti-Western attitude characterized even by hostility towards the Enlightenment. This spectrum includes the extreme and fascist right, the recent church hierarchy led by Athenian archbishop Christodoulos, nationalist circles in PASOK and "New Democracy" as well as smaller parties and even parts of the so-called extreme left and groups of Trotskyist origin which in fact have surrendered to a particularly aggressive version of Greek nationalism – in the name of "anti-imperialism", of course. The CPG leadership has recently tightened its links with these circles and nationalist journalist Liana Kanelli was elected as member of parliament for the CPG last year.

"Patriotism" and nationalism

Criticizing the economic policy of the government, one of the principal accusations of the CPG leadership is the "sell-out" of the national economy to the interests of European monopoly capital. As far as foreign politics are concerned, an important component of the party's criticism is the alleged policy of abandonment to Turkish "expansionism" under the pressure of US imperialism. This concerns mainly Cyprus and the Aegean Sea. The CPG supported the deployment of Russian S-300 missiles in Cyprus (which were deployed in Crete finally) and in this way more armament in the divided



island. As general secretary Papariga said in a TV interview years ago, the CPG supports defense of the fatherland "tooth and nail" showing by this how far the party is away from its ideological origins in the early 20s when it was strongly opposed to the wars of the Greek establishment and the communists resisted Greek imperialism as they said at that time.

The recent CPG leadership argues that Turkey is particularly aggressive and is supported by international imperialism. From this point of view, the huge armament programs and the enormous money Greece spends every year for this purpose are simply measures for the defense of "national independence and sovereignty". The "patriotic" viewpoint of the CPG leadership is rather illogical, however, since it also blames the Greek governments for their subordination under the dictates of the big imperialist powers in NATO and EU. But why should we support a government and an army of such a state in the event of war? Is Greece more underdeveloped or colonial than Turkey?

The CPG leadership is strictly against buying weapon systems from NATO countries and suggests instead further construction of the "national" armament industry. As the case of the S-300 missiles shows, it has no objections to buying weapons in Russia.

Last year archbishop Christodoulos mobilized ten thousands of people against the intention of the government to abolish the recording of religious denominations on ID cards. This ID record was originally introduced by the Nazi occupation authorities in order to find out who was Jewish. It means a clear discrimination against minorities that are not "Greek orthodox", i.e. "reliable citizens" but belong to potentially "dangerous" sections of the population like the Turks (so-called Muslims) and Pomaks in Thrace but also Catholics and others. The CPG leadership took a "neutral" stand on this conflict and contented itself with stating that both sides were trying to distract the attention of the people from their actual problems.

During the last 10 years, since the borders to the Eastern European countries

were opened, a deep transformation process of the Greek working class has taken place. Hundreds of thousands of "illegal" immigrants, mainly Albanians but also many from other Eastern European countries, Asia and Africa, virtually all of them without political rights, without social security or trade union protection, are today a constant component of the most oppressed layers of the working class, particularly in agriculture. The more or less "illegal" immigrants are estimated to constitute some 15-20% of the work force today. The official police terror against these absolutely underprivileged people but also the rise of racism combined with nationalist tendencies in broader layers of the population have become everyday reality. The "Theses" of the party's CC presented to the party congress, a text of 48 pages, have literally nothing to say about all these problems.

The theses of the CC

The "Theses" of the CC are entitled: "Struggle has a prospect – with a strong CPG – Popular Front". The terms "popular power" and "popular economy" dominate in the important chapter on the "AADF". It is the task of the AADF to struggle for the realization of these two goals and "to take a firm stand for the international orientation of the country, for the development of new ways concerning collaboration in trade and economy, to break at the same time with the imperialist blocs (that means EU and NATO) and to oppose them, in a world that will not only be ruled by imperialist domination but also by the strengthening tendencies of confrontation, independence and emancipation." (Thesis 20) Therefore the CPG aims for stronger economic collaboration not only with countries it considers to be still "socialist" (China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba) but also with other countries that follow an "anti-imperialist" line (whatever that means) like Milosevic's Serbia and Russia. This perspective, however, seems to exist only in the imagination of the CPG leadership.

How can the suggestions of the CC and the goals of the AADF be implemented in reality? Thesis 20 explains that "a revolutionary government (...) as power of the working class and its allies" could be created in "a revolutionary situation". But in the following section it says: "Under the conditions of class confrontations and decline of the influence of the bourgeois parties and their allies

★ Greece

while the conditions for a radical overthrow and revolutionary transition have not yet developed, a government of anti-imperialist, anti-monopolist forces can emerge on the basis of parliament.”

So it's quite obvious that the CPG leadership, despite its recourses to tactical elements of the “third period” and despite its “left” and anti-imperialist” rhetoric, remains trapped in the logic of class collaboration and the classical version of the popular front. The goals of “anti-monopolism” and “anti-imperialism” can be achieved without breaking with the institutions of the bourgeois state and the capitalist profit system altogether! This world of true democracy of middle class employers and shop owners can become reality if Greece cuts its links with EU and NATO. This means an important theoretical achievement: 10 years after the collapse of “real socialism”, “socialist camp” and, in the final analysis, of Stalin’s reactionary idea of “socialism in one country”, the CPG leadership discovers the possibility of a “non-monopolist”, petit bourgeois democracy in one capitalist country (or some capitalist countries).

The theses actually do not offer important elements of an analysis of the international situation or the conditions in Greece from a Marxist viewpoint but “mediocrity, intellectual indolence, detestation of theory, open contempt and vulgarization of scientific and theoretical research are being promoted. (...) There is no serious analysis of the most important contemporary contradictions but it is simply stated that they are sharpening as, incidentally, in the last 200 years. No social-economic relations are analyzed but simply consequences registered.”¹ It's sufficient to appear as the only party that seems actually to resist and that is the real *raison d'être* of the recent party leadership.

“The bureaucratic apparatus of the cadre (...) understands that the resources of the past are not sufficient any more while the old generation with its intensive militant experiences from the time of the ‘petrified years’ is getting smaller and smaller. The apparatus tries with all its might to find ways to survive and uses by now the instinct of self preservation as guideline.”²

The weight of the party apparatus

According to *Rizospastis* “59.1% of the delegates at the party congress were high level and highest level cadre (38.8% members of district committees, 3.8% of



the CC and the Central Economic Control Committee, 2.3% parliamentarians). In other words, those who should have accounted to the congress for what they did, were the overwhelming majority at the congress. They want to have their cake and eat it or, one and the same person who treats, drinks”³ as a Greek expression says. 24.2% were members of other regional committees, that means middle party cadre, so that the CPG's rank and file with some 17% was entirely underrepresented.

The political development of the party was characterized by a permanent tendency to the right until the end of the 80s. This tendency reached its climax in 1989 when the CPG formed a coalition government together with the right “New Democracy” in order to overthrow the PASOK government of A. Papandreou and to guarantee a so-called “cleaning” of political life with the help of bourgeois courts. Since 1991 the CPG leadership tried to adopt a left profile without actually breaking away from its deeply reformist daily routine and its parliamentary orientation.

“Without any critical reassessment of the precedent period of classical ‘front’-policy that culminated in the government of Tzanetakis (1989), without any critical approach to the policy of the party when the workers’ movement was on the rise after the overthrow of the Junta (1974) but the CPG battled fiercely against the movement of factory and enterprise unions and subordinated the trade union movement to the GSEE bureaucracy, without any reference to the deep changes concerning working conditions which are going on since one million immigrant workers came to Greece in the last ten years, without, finally, any attempt to make a deeper analysis of the reasons for the collapse of the ‘socialist’ regimes, the party bureaucracy leads the CPG thoughtlessly and only under the dictate of its own narrow interest to survive into a ‘leftist’ entrenchment of the party’s forces.”⁴

There is no doubt that the position of the party leadership largely hinders the construction of an actual independent class front against the policy of massive cutbacks of government, capital and EU. The recent orientation of some bigger groups of the non-parliamentarian left like NAR (New Left Current) and SEK (allied with the British SWP) which also tend to a “united front” policy with themselves or a very limited circle of smaller groups leads in the same direction.

The bigger parties of the left like the CPG and SYN are undergoing a deep and continuous crisis but also most organizations of the far left are facing similar problems. The workers’ movement as a whole has not yet found a way out of the crisis.

Some left groups, one of them belonging to a left current of SYN, recently presented a project of “reconstruction” of the entire Greek left including all reformist parties and more leftist organizations. To us it seems that this pretension does not correspond with reality and, first of all, neglects to confront the actual tasks concerning the workers’ movement and the forces of revolutionary Marxism: the construction of a united workers’ front.

This can only be achieved if broader layers who follow so far reformist parties including PASOK can be motivated to get involved in the struggle. At the same time, it will be necessary to reinforce the efforts to construct a revolutionary workers party rooted in the working class and based on the methodology of the Transitional Program. This party will have to separate itself clearly from nationalism and all the reformist parties that have led the workers’ movement into the recent deep crisis and dangerous impasse. ★

1. Dimitris Kazakis: “The ‘historical achievements’ of the 16th Party Congress of the CPG”, in: *Spartakos* 58, Jan. 2001

2. Nikos Menegakis: The Popular Front in the version of the 16th Party Congress, in: *Spartakos* 58

3. Nikos Sterianos: The apotheosis of bureaucratic degeneration, in: *Spartakos* 58

4. N. Menegakis: The Popular Front ..., see above

A sea change in Scottish politics

LESS than two years after the first elections to Holyrood,¹ Scottish politics has undergone a sea change. With a British general election on the horizon in a few weeks or months, ALAN MCCOMBES* looks at present and probable future developments.

IN a famous incident some years ago, an American sports commentator observed that "only an earthquake can stop the San Francisco 49ers now". A few moments later the stadium began to tremble violently and the game was hastily abandoned. Attempting to predict future political developments can be as hazardous as trying to forecast the result of sporting events. Even the outcome of the next general election, generally assumed to be a foregone conclusion, has occasionally been thrown into doubt by unexpected twists.

For example, the fuel crisis in autumn 2000 for a time shattered the complacency of New Labour, exposing in the most dramatic fashion imaginable how rapidly the political climate can change. Having successfully weathered that particular storm, the government within three months found itself battering down the hatches once again as the fall-out from the Peter Mandelson resignation scandal rained down.

Yet despite the potential landmines that are strewn in the government's path, the odds remain heavily stacked in favour of another Tory defeat and a second term of office for Blair.

Of decisive importance in Labour's strong showing in the polls over the past four years has been the strength of the UK economy. Back in 1997, when Labour first took power, it appeared likely that the new government would soon run aground on the rocks of a recession or slump. In the event, the Blair government managed to avoid the type of economic crisis that engulfed Major in the early 1990s, Thatcher in the early 1980s, and Callaghan in the mid 1970s.

This has not been as a result of adept economic management, as some pro-Labour economic journalists claim. Rather, the New Labour government has benefited from changes in the world economy that allowed the growth cycle to be prolonged beyond its normal life expectancy.

The New Labour government has also been bolstered by the crass ineffectiveness of the Tory opposition under Hague, who has failed to provide the inspirational leadership necessary to roll back the 1997 Labour landslide. Nor has Hague been capable of dispelling the bitter, lingering memories of the last Tory government.

Although Blair looks comfortably on course to win a second term of office, the atmosphere is now entirely different to that of 1997. At that stage, there was a certain air of desperation to get rid of the Tories. There were also widespread illusions in New Labour, particularly among pensioners, health service workers, local government employees and others who had borne the brunt of Thatcherism and Majorism. Four years on, that sense of hope has evaporated. In contrast to the euphoria of 1997, a Labour victory will be welcomed with a mixture of relief, indifference and cynicism.

Devolution

In Scotland, the mood is complicated further still by the national question. Those Labour leaders who imagined that devolution would resolve the problem of Scotland once and for all have been proven spectacularly wrong. Lord George Robertson in particular, now the boss of NATO, must qualify as the Ally McLeod² of Scottish politics for his prediction, when he was the Scottish Labour leader in 1997, that devolution would "kill separatism stone dead".

Initially, the establishment of a Scottish Parliament did partially defuse national tension. The delivery of a Scottish Parliament was held up in positive contrast to the pig-headed, bureaucratic intransigence of the previous Tory government. But less than two years later the flaws and anomalies of the devolution settlement are beginning to heighten national tension across the UK.

Tory ideologist Gerard Warner may not be the most sober or balanced of com-

mentators. Nonetheless, when he says that "the realities of the devolution settlement are starting to generate the conflict that will end the United Kingdom" (*Scotland on Sunday*, January 28, 2001), he is reflecting growing unease at the highest levels of the British political establishment. Warner goes on to cite the example of David Davis, the Tory Chair of the House of Commons' public accounts committee who has called for Holyrood to be given control of income tax, customs and excise and between 66 per cent and 90 per cent of North Sea oil revenues. "When the Tory chairman of the most powerful parliamentary committee at Westminster recommends turning over oil revenues to the Scots, we know that the party is over," says Warner. "You can strip the blue segments out of the Union Flag now."

Another hard-line unionist, veteran Labour anti-devolutionist Tam Dalyell, recently denounced a proposal by the Scottish Executive to change its name to the Scottish Government as signifying "the end of the United Kingdom". Like Gerard Warner, Dalyell is prone to exaggerate the immediate dangers that confront the British establishment. Nonetheless, a series of recent conflicts between Edinburgh and London have exposed the inherent instability of devolution.

Concessions made by Holyrood over student tuition fees, teachers' pay and most notably, the rebellion over care for the elderly will be mercilessly exploited by the Tories in the coming general election. Inevitably, they will seek to whip up indignation over Scotland's higher share of public spending, and call for an end to the Barnett formula which enshrines this arrangement. The Tories have also begun to resurrect the old West Lothian question.³ "Why should a Scottish Labour MP be allowed to vote against free elderly care in England — while their Holyrood colleagues back free elderly care in Scotland?" they ask.



★ Scotland

Perhaps the most dangerous outcome of the next general election from the point of view of the ruling class would be the return of a Labour government dependent on Scottish and Welsh votes for its majority. If the Tories were to win in England but lose in Britain as a whole, the stage would then be set for a massive escalation of national conflict, with the Tories whipping up anti-Scottish and anti-Welsh hysteria at every turn.

Divergence

Any future conflict over the United Kingdom will not be a simple rerun of the battles that raged through the 1980s and early 1990s. Devolution has replaced the centralised Union as the new status quo. Not even the Tory Party would now dare call for a return to a centralised UK state.

People like Warner, who hanker for a return to the glorious days of Thatcher, are like those retired colonels who spend their last days dreaming of the restoration of the British empire. In the real world of Scotland and Wales in the 21st century, any suggestion by the Tory leadership that the devolution settlement should be scrapped in favour of a return to the unitary British state would consign the party to utter oblivion.

The terms of the debate have moved on. Paradoxically, instead of calling for a return to Thatcher-style centralisation, the Tory Party could begin to move in the opposition direction, towards a form of UK federalism, as flagged up by David Davis. This would mean retaining the trappings of the United Kingdom, especially in the fields of defence and foreign affairs, while compelling Scotland to stand on its own two feet financially. The idea of an English Parliament could also gain resonance among the Tory faithful, especially as the party begins to close the gap with Labour in England. Ironically, one reason why a section of the Tory Party may be prepared to move in the direction of devolving more power to Scotland and Wales is because they have politically written off both countries as a lost cause.

Writing in the London *Times*, political commentator, Peter Riddell, points out: "Scottish politics has always marched to a different beat, as Baroness Thatcher discovered to her frustration in the 1980s. Collectivism has deeper roots and Blairism has had less appeal north of the border except when coated in the traditional Labour language of Gordon Brown." He goes on to explain that "The

Labour leadership in Scotland is also under pressure from the Left, both within the coalition from its Lib Dem partners and, more publicly, from the Scottish Nationalists, the Greens and the Scottish Socialists."

There is no question that, at this stage, the New Labour leadership feels secure in the knowledge that in England, its traditional support has nowhere else to go. But in Scotland, and to a certain extent also in Wales, the position is more complicated. In both countries, the main opposition to Labour comes from the nationalist Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales), both of which are to the left of Labour on issues such as trade union rights, nuclear disarmament, privatisation and defence of public services.

In Scotland, there is the additional ingredient of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) which will mount a national challenge across all 72 seats in the general election — a phenomenal achievement for a small, working-class party barely two years old. This stands in contrast, for example to the SNP which fought every seat in Scotland for the first time in 1974 — exactly 40 years after the party had been founded. The SSP still has a long way to go, but is already providing a focal point for the most militant, radical and politically conscious sections of the working class and youth.

In England, although there will be localised left challenges, especially via the Socialist Alliances, working class protest against New Labour will mainly take the form of large-scale abstentionism, along similar lines to the United States.

This coming general election is unlikely to usher in big changes, either in Scotland or in Britain as a whole. It is

likely that Labour will hold power in Westminster with a reduced majority. In Scotland, both the Tories and the SNP will probably make some advances at the expense of Labour and the Liberal Democrats (liberal capitalist third party).

Meanwhile it is likely that the election will confirm the SSP as Scotland's fifth political party; and possibly even as the fourth party across most of the densely populated central belt. The election is almost certain to see the SSP achieve the biggest vote since the Second World War for a socialist party standing to the left of Labour. Never in its history did the Communist Party (CP) succeed in winning more than 25,000 votes in Scotland in a general election. Even in its glory years of 1945-50, when it had an MP in Fife and 20,000 members in Scotland — and was basking in the afterglow of the defeat of Hitler at the hands of the Red Army — the CP never broke through the one per cent barrier. Although it would be a tall order and would require over four per cent of the popular vote, it is not entirely ruled out that the SSP could even get the biggest socialist vote in Scottish electoral history by surpassing the 111,000 votes for the Independent Labour Party (ILP — left reformist party) in the 1935 general election, at a time when the ILP had four sitting MPs who had broken with Labour three years before.

However, the most important developments in Scottish politics are likely to take place in the period following the general election. For most of Scotland's political parties, the Westminster election is being viewed as a prelude to the much more serious electoral struggle that will unfold in two years time when the second elections to the Scottish Parliament take place.

2003

Over the past two years, the focus of politics in Scotland has shifted remorselessly from London to Scotland. The profile of Westminster MPs has plummeted since the Scottish Parliament was established. With all the bread and butter issues such as health, education, transport, housing and local government funding now being dealt with in Edinburgh, the media spotlight has increasingly centred upon Holyrood. This gravitational pull on the media has been further reinforced by the instability and volatility of the Scottish Parliament, where no single party commands an absolute majority. Scotland's political

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parties are already looking further ahead towards 2003, an election which even now is shaping up to become one of the most ferociously contested electoral battles in Scottish political history. For the ruling class, the stakes are already piling up. The SNP is in a far stronger position than at any time in its 70-year history. The party has 35 MSPs (Members of Scottish Parliament), with probably a handful of Westminster MPs after the general election. It also has one lethal advantage over Labour and the Liberal Democrats — the advantage of being in opposition.

Following the 1999 election, a right-wing Labourite from Wales, Tim Williams, made a telling point in the *Scotsman*: "For devolution to lead to independence, it was essential for the SNP to do well in the election, but not as well as to form a coalition government."

That election was conducted under extremely favourable conditions for Labour. The economy was growing, North Sea oil prices had slumped to almost an all-time low, thus undermining one of the central pillars of the SNP's economic case for independence. The bombing of Serbia — opposed by the SNP leadership — helped Labour bolster support for the Union. The parliament itself was completely new and untested; this meant that some voters who would generally support the aim of independence were prepared to first give devolution a try before proceeding any further. Yet despite all of these advantages, Labour was only able to muster the support of 34 per cent of the Scottish electorate in the second ballot.

The battle for Scotland in 2003 will be fought out on much more difficult terrain for Labour. The party's reputation in Scotland has taken a pounding over the past two years. Even in the relatively benign economic, social and industrial climate of the past two years, the ruling coalition at Holyrood has lurched from one crisis to another.

The slump in Labour's popularity probably won't be reflected in the arithmetic of the coming general election. The UK election will be seen by many voters as essentially a battle between Labour and the Tories, between Blair and Hague. Because of the pressure to keep the Tories out at Westminster, Labour may not lose too much ground in Scotland in this general election.

But the Scottish election in two years' time will be seen by working class voters as a struggle for the future of Scotland — a fight between independence and the sta-

tus quo, between a right wing Labour Party and a left-leaning SNP. On top of that, there is the additional dimension of proportional representation and the prospect of further advances for the SSP and, probably to a lesser extent, for the Green Party.

Even now, some polls show the SSP running at 5-6 per cent with the Greens running at 3-4 per cent. Given that polls invariably underestimate support for small parties, and given also the big changes that are likely to unfold over the next few years, the combined support for both parties could potentially reach 15-20 per cent, which would almost certainly mean that pro-independence parties would command an absolute majority of votes and seats after 2003.

At this stage, there is no significant support within the SSP for the idea of entering a future coalition government with the SNP. On the other hand, if there was a hung parliament with the SSP holding the balance of power, this issue could become much more contentious within the SSP.

Now and in the future, *Frontline* will argue strongly against such a move. Although there are socialists within the SNP, the party itself is fully committed to a free market capitalist Scotland. Albeit in different circumstances, even the Liberal Democrats have discovered that sacrificing principles for the sake of short term gains can destroy a party's credibility. The SSP has a long-term project of building a socialist Scotland; but there are no shortcuts to that goal, and there is no possibility of smuggling socialism in the back door without winning a majority of the population to the idea of the socialist transformation of society.

Independence

On the other hand, that doesn't mean that the SSP should refuse to collaborate with the SNP and others on specific policies that could potentially advance the interests of the working class or further the cause of an independent socialist Scotland. For example, if the SNP were to emerge as the biggest party in 2003, they would almost certainly seek the backing of minority parties to introduce legislation for a referendum on independence. Even though the SSP's vision of a future independent Scotland is radically different from that of the SNP, the party should be prepared to back the demand for a referendum, in the course of which we would naturally make clear our distinctive programme for an independent

socialist Scotland. It would be impossible at this point to predict the outcome of a future referendum. But whatever the short term ebbs and flows, there is now a clear, and possibly irreversible, long-term trend towards Scottish independence and the break-up of the United Kingdom.

The historian Norman Davies, author of *The Isles*, a scholarly history of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, makes the point that "the 300-year old British state is now in terminal decline." He points out that for an older generation the idea of being British meant standing up to Nazism, pride in the Royal Family, a welfare state and an NHS that was the envy of the world and a long, unbroken tradition of parliamentary democracy that contrasted sharply with most of Europe. But that sense of pride in Britain has gradually diminished over the generations. In 1999, a poll in the *Economist* magazine found that only one in five Scots — mainly pensioners — identify with Britain, while four in five identify with Scotland.

What processes could intervene to cut across or reverse this momentum towards independence? Some socialists, who oppose independence have suggested that a rerun of the big all-Britain industrial battles of the past would tend to draw together the working class across Britain into a single cohesive force with a united class identity.

Certainly, movements such as the miners' strike of 1984-85 tended to marginalise the national question. On the other hand, there were other factors involved, notably the weakness of the SNP who only had two MPs at that stage — both right-wing traditionalists with little appeal to radicalised workers and youth. It should also be noted that the first serious electoral advances for the SNP took place during the late 1960s and especially the early to mid 1970s, during a period of bitter industrial conflict.

Moreover, there have been far-reaching changes in the structure of industry and the trade union movement over the past fifteen years or so. Most of the big nationalised industries which were the chief battlegrounds during the big all-Britain industrial battles of the 60s and 70s have now been privatised and broken up. For example, the rail industry is now a patchwork quilt of dozens of separate companies, each with their own separate bargaining structures. Complicating the picture further is the existence of the Scottish Parliament, which now negotiates wages and conditions in most public services, including local authorities. All

★ Scotland

of these changes together mean that the vast majority of Scotland's 650,000 trade unionists work for Scottish employers, including the Scottish Parliament, local government and Scottish companies such as Scotrail, Scottish Power, the Bank of Scotland, the Royal Bank of Scotland, and others.

During most of the 20th century, there was a trend towards the unification of the trade union movement on an all-Britain scale. In the 1920s there were more than 60 separate Scottish trade unions; by the 1980s only a few survived, notably the teachers' union, the EIS. This merging of the trade union movement reflected the growing integration of the British economy as a result of the concentration of capital on a British scale and the large-scale nationalisation of industries such as coal, rail, steel and shipbuilding.

But from the 1980s onwards, a combination of the general collapse of traditional British industry, the privatisation programme of the last Tory government and the creation of a devolved Scottish Parliament has led to a breaking down of the all-Britain employment structures that had prevailed from the 1940s onwards. This general shift was further complicated by globalisation, which has meant that, in manufacturing, for example, Scottish workers are as likely to be employed by a Japanese, Korean or American company as by a British company.

While there are important exceptions — for example the civil servants' union, the PCS, negotiates primarily at a British level — the changes are likely to lead to a loosening of the ties between trade unionists north and south of the border. In the future there could arise a powerful mood in certain unions in favour of much greater autonomy, especially if national bureaucracies begin to act as a brake on action by their members in Scotland. Instead of trying vainly to turn back the calendar, socialists have to be prepared to face up to the changes that are taking place. In particular, we should support moves towards increased autonomy for Scotland within unions such as UNISON, as part of the general struggle for greater rank and file control over the apparatus of the trade union movement.

That doesn't mean arguing for the break-up of the trade union movement along national lines; there are battles that still have to be fought at UK level, for example against the anti-trade union laws, and on issues such as the level of the national minimum wage. There will also be local struggles which will gener-

ate solidarity across the UK and internationally. But the general pattern of trade unionism is likely to alter in the future, reflecting the wider changes underway in society as a whole.

For socialists, the prospect of the rupture of the British state should be viewed as an opportunity to advance the cause of socialism rather than as an obstacle standing in our path. The national question is not a problem for the Left; it is a problem for the British ruling class. It would certainly become a serious problem for socialists, if Scottish nationalism were to take on a right wing xenophobic character. But the strength of the Left in Scotland means that is unlikely — unless the Left were to make the mistake of isolating itself from the most radical sections of the Scottish working class and youth by defending, or being perceived to defend, the United Kingdom.



Economy

How swiftly events move in Scotland, Britain and the rest of Europe will be partly dictated by economics. Over the past eight years, as part of a general economic upswing across the Western world, the Scottish economy has forged ahead. Official unemployment has fallen to a 25-year low. The figure for those in work has reached its highest level since 1966. Day in, day out economists jubilantly brandish new sets of statistics to demonstrate the robust health of the Scottish economy.

The real position is not quite so buoyant as the bare employment statistics suggest. Claimants today face a much more brutal regime than ever before. From the day they sign on, they are harassed and pressurised into the most menial and low paid jobs, whatever their qualifications or previous experience. A whole range of short-term training projects have been devised for the purpose of keeping people off the streets and reducing the unem-

ployment statistics. Comparing the figures today with those of 25 years ago is like trying to compare the Brazilian football team with the All-Blacks; it is not to compare like with like.

Nonetheless, this period has been strikingly different from the economic ice age of the 1980s, when the *Proclaimers*⁴ captured the sense of desolation across Scotland in their song "Letter to America": "Bathgate No More, Linwood No More, Lochaber No More."

There is no straightforward mechanical relationship between politics and economics. Since the turn of the millennium, for example, there has been a worldwide explosion of anti-capitalist protest, even against a background of continued economic progress. Instead of engendering a sense of universal optimism, this long upswing has generated mass revulsion, especially among younger people, against the free market and globalisation. In the past year, one of the biggest selling books worldwide has been Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, an onslaught against consumer capitalism.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to underestimate the difficulties that this boom has created for socialism. In Britain, the total transformation of the Labour Party into a pro-big business, pro-free market operation would have been far more difficult if economic conditions had been less favourable for capitalism.

That upswing has also left its imprint on the SNP. In the early 1990s, the party put forward what was, in effect, a left reformist programme, which included re-nationalisation of the privatised utilities. Although the SNP still stands to the left of Labour on a number of key issues, the economic programme of the party has shifted steadily to the right over the past decade, with all the earlier references to public ownership and re-nationalisation rooted out of its policy statements. In less prosperous times, the SNP leadership would have found it much more difficult to swing the party behind such a blatantly free market economic strategy. Right now there are storm clouds gathering on the horizon. In the US politicians and business leaders are beginning to brace themselves for a sharp slowdown or recession, which will have worldwide repercussions, not least for the UK economy. The Scottish economy, which is heavily geared towards the export market, would be especially hard-hit by a serious slowdown in the United States.

This in turn could have profound implications for Scotland in the run-up to the next Scottish parliamentary elections

in 2003. Even now the success of the SSP, during a relatively stable period for capitalism in Scotland, is being observed closely by the political and media establishment.

In a full-page article in the *New Statesman* (January 29, 2001), former Scotsman editor and one-time adviser to Donald Dewar, Tim Luckhurst warns: "The SSP has become a real force, at least in Scotland's battleground central belt. Sheridan's tireless campaign for 'an independent, Socialist Scotland' can no longer be dismissed as an amusing diversion. The statistics prove it." Luckhurst then goes on to cite statistics showing the electoral advance of the SSP, which he compares with Ralph Nader (Green Party Presidential candidate in the recent US elections) and points out that, in contrast to New Labour and the SNP: "The Scottish Socialists sound authentic. In the parts of Scotland that prosperity left behind, the SSP has credibility. There are lots of parts like that."

Even now a significant and growing minority of people in Scotland identify with socialism. At this stage, Scotland is far in advance of the rest of the United Kingdom and, arguably, far in advance of most countries in Europe. The relative strength of socialism in this country is partly a product of Scotland's radical traditions, its recent history of struggle, and the overwhelmingly working-class social composition of Scotland. The national question has been an additional ingredient that has helped to heighten political consciousness in Scotland.

However, the specific role of the SSP over the past two years should not be underestimated. Politics is not dictated solely by uncontrollable economic and social processes. At certain stages in history, the role of political parties, even of personalities, can be decisive. The timing of the launch of the SSP and its activity over the past two years has helped shape public opinion in Scotland. The cumulative effect of the mass propaganda, the meetings, the election campaigns, the press statements and the written material of the party has been profound.

Of course, it's necessary always to retain a sense of proportion. The SSP is still in its infancy. It has at its disposal a bare fraction of the resources of the mainstream parties. It is not on the brink of taking power. On the other hand if, as now seems likely, the economy begins to stagger into a new economic recession or slump with rising unemployment, diminishing tax revenues, escalating poverty, and an increasing strain on the welfare

SSP holds conference

THE second conference of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) took place in Glasgow on February 10-11, 2001 attended by around 250 people. Its main focus was to launch the party's ambitious General Election plans. The conference agreed that the target should be to stand in each of Scotland's 72 seats in the next Westminster elections — to give every Scottish voter the opportunity to vote socialist.

The conference gave a real sense of the breadth of positions within the party on the Scottish national question, ranging from supporters of independence to federalists. The leadership and most members of the party have positions somewhere between these two. It was also healthy to see that in practice the existence of organized platforms within the party allows it to attract broader forces and to conduct serious political debates without this at all cutting across its effective operation on the ground either in campaigns or elections.

Conference went on to debate the programme on which the party will stand — which will be delivered to every voter in the country in the form of an 4 page newspaper. The programme was in general non-contentious — it is a serious document, which is very well thought through and extremely accessible.

The conference took place in the context of two major developments on the far left in Scotland. The majority of the leadership of the SSP are supporters of the "International Socialist Movement" and were for-

merly supporters of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI). There had been long standing disagreements between most of the Scottish people and the CWI leadership in London which had finally culminated in a break by the Scottish majority. The resulting tension was evident during the conference, particularly in the session that discussed the question of tendency rights within the SSP.

The other main context for the conference was the discussions which have been taking place between the SSP and the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP — the largest far left organisation in Britain). The SWP had increasingly recognized that there was little political logic in it remaining outside the SSP while playing a pivotal role in the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales. At the conference itself it was clear that there was some suspicion from the base of the SSP as to the extent to which the SWP has broken from its sectarian past. However, experience of the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales demonstrates that the SWP are becoming more prepared to put the need to build common projects above their own narrower interests and the party's entry into the SSP was agreed.

The Scottish Socialist Party faces many challenges in the months and years ahead. There can be little doubt that the party will continue to grow and strengthen through its activities in defence of working people's rights and through its election campaign. ★ **Terry Conway and Gordon Morgan**

state, the forward march of socialism in Scotland could accelerate dramatically.

The International Socialist Movement, which publishes *Frontline*, has over the past few years played a vital role in establishing, building and politically developing a united socialist party in Scotland. We are 100 per cent committed to this project and, along with others, will continue to work tirelessly to turn the SSP into a mass party capable of transforming society in Scotland. ★

* Alan McCombes is a leading member of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and edits its newspaper, *Scottish Socialist Voice*. This article was written for the first issue of *Frontline*, a new magazine published by the International Socialist Movement, a Marxist tendency inside the SSP, (*Frontline*, c/o Peter Johnstone, 25, Merker Terrace, Linlithgow EH49 6DD, Scotland, subscription 14 pounds sterling, cheques payable to "Frontline").

1. The site of Scotland's devolved parliament in Edinburgh.

2. The notoriously over-optimistic manager of the Scottish soccer team during its disastrous campaign in the 1978 World Cup.

3. The "West Lothian" question was initially posed by the aforementioned Tam Dalyell — he argued that it was inequitable that he, as the Westminster MP for the Scottish seat of West Lothian, should have the right to vote on issues affecting England whereas MPs representing English constituencies would, under a devolved system, have no corresponding right to vote on Scottish issues.

4. A left nationalist pop group.



Solidarity with the Daewoo Motor Workers! Condemn the Kim Dae-jung Regime!
 The following statement has been released by Power of the Working Class (PWC), a revolutionary organization in South Korea.

The workers of South Korea have suffered yet another violent and brutal crackdown at the hands of Nobel Peace Prize-winner President Kim Dae-jung. On the afternoon of February 20, over 4,000 armed riot cops stormed Daewoo Motors' Bupyong plant, which was being peacefully occupied by several hundred striking workers and their families. Many were viciously beaten and 76 were taken in for questioning. The cops have detained 7 union leaders and are out to arrest 29 more. The very next day, on February 21, Daewoo's creditor banks gave the company a pat on the head for the crackdown by extending the credit period and providing it with even more funds. This shows who this is all basically for, whose interests the whole vile affair is all about. As this is being written, arrest warrants are also being drawn up for the top leaders of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions. The Bupyong workers had begun a strike on February 16, in opposition to the company and regime's mass sacking of 1,750 workers. What's more, many of this 1,750 are the key union activists and militant workers in the plant - an open attempt to destroy the union in Bupyong. This sacking comes on top of some 3,500 that have been laid off since last November, and thousands more since the collapse of the Daewoo empire in late 1998. The completion of Daewoo Motors' restructuring and its sell-off overseas is vital for the onward march of the regime's neo-liberal "reforms", which are nothing but a desperate bid to salvage a deeply crisis-ridden capitalist economy at the enormous expense of working people's living conditions and democratic rights. Its result is billions of dollars of handouts to the corporate robbers, while working people suffer more and more unbearable hardships. And when workers resort to mass struggle to defend even the little they still have, the regime thunders down with batons and boots. It is nothing short of a war on South Korean working people.

However, since the crackdown, the workers have courageously begun to regroup. They are holding daily rallies in Bupyong and attracting the support of other workers and organisations. In response, the regime has deployed even more cops and are attempting to suppress any attempts at protest. It is almost like a return to the days of military rule when we had to converge at pre-arranged locations to hold surprise demonstrations.

We urgently call on the international workers movement to take immediate solidarity action to place international pressure on the vicious Kim Dae-jung regime. We request protests and industrial action to target the South Korean government's embassies and consulates, Daewoo Motors outlets and service centres, as well as any other South Korean government representative institutions and figures.

- Stop the mass sackings! ■ Kim Dae-jung regime Resign Now!
- Release the Arrested Now! Nationalise Daewoo Motors! ★

LPP leader arrested

ON March 21st the Pakistani government arrested the leadership of the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), including Farooq Tariq, the secretary general of the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP). The ARD leaders were arrested while meeting to finalize arrangements for a demonstration for the restoration of democracy in Lahore on March 23rd. The government action followed the arrest of several thousand activists the previous night. The LPP has announced its determination to go ahead with the demonstration and is asking that e-mails protesting against the arrests should be sent to the Chief Executive Pakistan at ce@pak.gov.pk.



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THE ELECTRONIC INTIFADA, a resource to help counter myth, distortion, and spin from the Israeli media war machine, can be found at <http://electronicIntifada.net> To join the mail list, which will let you know what updates are being added to the site, and alert you to new action items, please send a blank e-mail to eIntifada-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Please help spread THE ELECTRONIC INTIFADA!

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