

international
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“Market socialism” in China – Hong Kong

One country One system



The June 14 EuroMarch demonstration in Amsterdam exceeded all expectations. Organisers counted 35,000 participants, the Dutch police estimated 50,000. All EU countries of the EU were represented.

This four-hour demonstration was the culmination of 18 marches against unemployment, job insecurity and marginalisation which had converged from all corners of Europe in the nine weeks leading up to the EU Inter-Governmental Conference in Amsterdam.

The Fourth International played an important role in the organising efforts in most countries. The 50,000 who attended the final rally in Amsterdam also included reasonably-sized Green contingents and a fair number of anarchists and "autonomous" currents. Other Trotskyist and Maoist groups also mobilised for the final demonstration.

This is certainly a success. But in itself it is obviously not enough to shake the European Union to its foundations. While EuroMarch organisers were generally very happy with the final results, they regret the lack of interest in the campaign from the left wing of the social democratic movements. And Italy's Refounded Communists, Germany's PDS and the Greek Communist Party were the only Communist Parties to give significant support to the campaign.

The motor for the campaign was the French AC! unemployed movement, and radical networks in the French and Italian trade union movement. Areas where Fourth International supporters have played a major role in recent years. The EuroMarches were a further sign that a significant minority of the European labour movement is now organised largely or completely independently of the old social-democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies.

The political and media impact of the EuroMarches exceeded the expectations (and the real weight) of the movement which has been built up around the campaign. In fact, the bulk of support for the EuroMarches came from the radical left. In most countries, the reformist left was interested in the marches, but rarely contributed more than moral or minimum practical support.

The march co-incided with a five-day counter-summit, now a traditional response to the bi-annual summits of EU heads of state. About 2,500 people attended workshops and meetings on a wide range of questions: employment, ecology, militarism, the third world and feminism. Most of the participants were Dutch, but the organising committee built on the experience of previous counter-summits, and invited an impressive range of speakers from both European and non-European countries.

The most striking aspect of the "Summit from Below" was not the pluralism of style and opinion (which is now a normal part of this kind of meeting) but the common ground which has been established. This testifies to a step forward in the Europeanisation of the social and political movement.

Jean Dupont

EuroMarch v unemployment



Christophe Aguiton and Robert Cremieux*

Eighteen European Marches against Unemployment, jobs security and marginalisation set off on 14 April, and converged in Amsterdam two months later. Their success, even their existence, is an unprecedented event. From Luxembourg to Finland, pluralist march organisation committees were established. These brought together whatever unemployed organisations existed locally, and a current of trade union support, mainly dominated by the organised left.

During the marches, 1,000 meetings between unemployed and working people were

held across Europe. The passage of a march was usually an important moment for joint activity by local groups working against unemployment and exclusion. In Paris, the National Bank was briefly occupied.

The marches had an impact outside the borders of the European Union. Committees were set up in Switzerland and Norway, and one of the marches was launched in Sarajevo and Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina. As well as eight Bosnian marchers, the final gathering in Amsterdam included delegations from Turkey, Albania, Arab-speaking North Africa, and even the Americas!

The march and rally in Amsterdam on June 14 is the most important all-European demonstration to date. The march for jobs

ent reaches Amsterdam

organised in Brussels earlier this year, to protest the de-localisation of the Renault-Vilvorde plant to Spain, was larger (70,000 participants). But almost all came from Belgium itself, and neighbouring France. In contrast, the EuroMarch demonstration in Amsterdam included thousands of French, Belgians and Germans, hundreds of Greeks, Spaniards, Danes, Swedes and British, and over 100 Finns.

This unprecedented breadth of participation illustrates the growing recognition on the left of the real importance of EU-related negotiations between the governments...

After left electoral victories in Italy, Britain and France, and a growing concern about social issues in Germany, the EU's largest, richest and most populous member state, the Inter-Governmental Conference in Amsterdam *ought* to have re-discussed the social priorities of the EU. But as always, social questions passed into the background, while European leaders debate the extension of the common market.

European governments will become even more obsessed with the practical steps to take as the new single currency is introduced in early 1998. They will discuss which countries can and should adopt the *euro*, and decide whether or not to soften the criteria for participation, so as to allow Spain and maybe Italy to participate.

This debate on European Monetary Union will continue to dominate the continent's newspapers. The Italian and Spanish governments consider a block on their participation as an insult. The French Socialist Party won the recent election on the basis of a call for softer convergence criteria, and the participation of the south European countries. Meanwhile, in Germany, the suggestion to revalue the country's gold reserves, so as to "magically" reduce the budget deficit, has provoked a serious confrontation between Chancellor Kohl and Germany's powerful national bank, the Bundesbank.

A different Europe

A commitment to social progress in Europe would mean tearing up not only the Maastricht Treaty, which fixes the criteria for European Monetary Union (EMU), but also the Stability Pact signed in Dublin at the end of last year. This second agreement re-enforces the economic convergence criteria, even after EMU, confining participating economies in a neo-liberal straight-jacket for years to come.

Another policy in Europe is possible! A policy prioritising employment, and facilitating a co-ordinated reduction in the working week. This would give the unemployed and marginalised the chance to work, at a decent salary. It could reverse the growing job insecurity in European

countries. *This* is the real European debate for the months to come.

The EuroMarch organising committees took a clear stand on these issues. The Maastricht Treaty convergence criteria are unacceptable. They are arguments to justify severe cuts in social budgets all over the European Union: even in countries which will not be in the "first round" of EMU.

Common demands

The social movement for "a different Europe" first sketched its alternative priorities during the June 1996 Counter-summit in Florence, Italy. Associations and trade union currents there initiated what became the EuroMarch committees. These finally met in Brussels in February this year. Over 500 militants from across the continent widened the "Florence demands," establishing areas of broad agreement between the social movements in the different countries.

There is, for example, general agreement around demands for immediate measures against social marginalisation, and ensuring that the unemployed have decent living conditions. In most countries, EuroMarchers support campaigns to prevent the eviction of the unemployed from their homes, the disconnection of their gas, water or electricity. The tendency is to recognise a series of fundamental rights, and demand that resources be found so as to ensure all can benefit from housing, education, health care and so on.

There is also general agreement on the main demands, which everyone recognises must centre on the sustained reduction in the unemployment rate. There must be massive job-creation programmes, particularly in sectors like health and education, where there are massive, unsatisfied social needs. And the working week should be cut, right across Europe. Without reducing the earning power of working people!

There is agreement on these issues, despite the real differences in political culture and national priorities across Europe. In Britain, there is no minimum wage or legal limit on the number of hours you can be asked to work. While British EuroMarchers are obviously in favour of a reduction in the working week, they prefer to stress the importance of a decent income and full employment. In other words, a reversal of the reforms of the Thatcher years. Meanwhile, German unemployed groups are most concerned about "forced labour" — new regulations forcing the unemployed to accept any job offered, whatever the conditions, or loose

* Christophe Aguiton co-ordinated the EuroMarch secretariat. He works for the new French postal-telecom union SUD, and is a member of the AC! unemployment campaign. Robert Cremieux is a member of France's National Movement of Unemployed and Precarious (MNCP)

contents

the event

- 2 EuroMarch reaches Amsterdam
• C. Aguiton and R. Cremieux

europa

- 5 Albania: The insurrection continues! • Georges Mitralias
- 6 Turkey: Fundamentalist fall? • Erdal Tan

americas

- 8 Canada: More of the same
• Harold Lavender • Strategic crisis in the nationalist movement (p.8) • National question won't go away (p.9)
- 10 March against poverty in 2000
- 10 Colombian guerrillas free captive soldiers •
- 11 Ecuador: Pouring oil on troubled heads • Jean Dupont
- 12 Mexico: End of an era for state unionism • Dan La Botz
- 13 USA: Geronimo Pratt "free at last"

China and Hong Kong

- 14 One country -- one system
• October Review
- 14 Capitalist restoration in China
• Lau Yu Fan
- 17 Labour under "market socialism"
• G. Greenfield and Apo Leong

asia

- 19 Australia: All together against Hanson • Melanie Sjoberg
- 20 Indonesia: Building the alliance against Suharto • PRD interview
- 23 Morocco: Union leader assassinated
- 23 Korea: Revolutionary violence?
• Terry Lawless
- 24 Japan: NGOs immigration protest

africa

- 25 Congo-Zaire's first reforms
• Interview with Health Minister
- 25 Freeze Mobutu's assets!
• International campaign
- 26 South Africa: general strike

Feature: Che Guevara

- 25 The spark that does not die
• Michel Löwy
- 26 Re-thinking Che Guevara
• Janette Habel

regular features

- 34 book notes • *Gays and the left*
- 36 NetWorking • Internet action
- 36 well read • the radical media

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part of their unemployment benefits. In western Germany, mass unemployment is a recent phenomena, and a larger part of the population believes that those without work are not really looking, compared to most other countries.

Obviously, there is no fundamental contradiction between the priorities of the British and German unemployed movements. But it takes time to establish a common platform.

The second 'great debate' in the Euro-March campaign was over the nature of the European integration project. Participants from Denmark, and from the EU's newest members, Sweden and Finland, see the European project as a handicap to popular aspirations. They insist that movements like the EuroMarches should make no demands leading to the reinforcement of the European Union's institutions (such as European legislation on collective bargaining).

Reforming the European Union?

In other continental countries, many EuroMarchers consider that the struggle for "a different Europe" should take the path of

elaboration of pan-European demands. If satisfied, such demands would expand the existing European Union structures, particularly in the social field.

There is no quick solution to this differentiation. But the form that popular mobilisations take in the coming months and years will have a clear influence in the strategic debate. If mobilisations remain essentially within the national framework, then this is the level at which people will perceive the political and social confrontation. But if it is possible to develop pan-European struggles, then it will be easier to put forward collective demands, thus elaborating another strategy for "really building Europe."

If Europe is to develop in the direction we want, we need pan-European social movements. It may even be that such movements are essential for any type of European construction. A Europe built only on a free market of merchandise, services and capital, and only reinforced by a bureaucratic technocrate in Brussels, would probably crack at the first real shock. Imagine a second French public sector strike, like in November and December 1995. But this time confronting decisions made by the European Commission and the new monetary authority in Frankfurt, Germany, rather than the French state. In such a situation, the French government would surely withdraw from the common monetary mechanisms, just like Britain and Italy withdrew from the European Monetary System (EMS) a few years ago. This shows how fragile the European construction still is.

European identity

A European identity can only be built through common struggles, and common protests. In this sense, 1997 will probably be remembered as the year when truly European mobilisations emerged. Previous pan-European initiatives, like the co-ordinated railway strikes in 1992, have been few in number, and usually confined to a specific professional group. The impact on public opinion has been very slight.

In contrast, the first half of 1992 has seen a succession of events. First came the protests against Renault's decision to close its car factory in Vilvorde, Belgium, in favour of a lower-wage site in Spain. The vibrant protest of Renault workers struck a cord in public opinion, mainly in Belgium and France, but also further afield. Then the European Trade Union Confederation [a pressure group of national trade union leaders — Ed.] organised an EU wide day of protest on 28 May. Finally, the EuroMarches assembled 50,000 Europeans in Amsterdam to protest against unemployment, job security and marginalisation.

These challenges to the neo-liberal and technocrat management of European integration have forced the question of social measures at the European scale into the political centre-stage. And they have made credible the idea of pan-European political mobilisation.

For the EuroMarch network, the priority now is to develop a horizontal network which can support trans-European mobilisations. Not to compete with the existing structures — the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Network of Unemployed (ENU) But to reinforce them. ENU, for example, contains unemployed groups with very different practices. EuroMarchers have learned to respect these differences, to learn from diversity, and to build a coherent, pluralist campaign. The march on Amsterdam also helped consolidate national federations of unemployment organisations in countries like Italy where they did not previously exist. ★

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The insurrection continues!

The Socialist Party has won the parliamentary election, but Sali Berisha's regime is still in place.

Georges Mitralias analyses the situation in Albania, and the risk of a military intervention in the south of the country, where the insurgents' Popular Committees still control most towns.

[This article was written before the election results were published.]

President Sali Berisha's counter-offensive includes a daily diet of terrorist attacks. As in Algeria, "blind" terrorism can often be traced back to the secret service and the police. The aim is to terrorise the population, eliminate their leaders, and persuade western governments that, love him or hate him, there is simply no alternative to Berisha.

There are some similarities to the "strategy of tension" employed by Italy's far right in the 1970s. Except that Berisha's violence is increasingly open and systematic. The pro-Berisha press has even *announced* both the target of terrorist actions, and the reason for their destruction, days before the event.

There is no real attempt to hide responsibility for such outrages. On the contrary, Berisha wants to leave no doubt in peoples minds that he is determined to go "all the way" in pursuit of his criminal goals.

As well as these "signed" attacks, the Presidential troops have been increasing their punitive expeditions against insurgent-held towns and villages. On 23 May the Presidential Guard used tanks to attack Cerrik, south of Tirana, to punish inhabitants for having refused to allow Berisha to hold an electoral rally in the town the previous day.

Not surprisingly, the western press describes all this as "bloody confrontations between police forces and armed bandits." The media of the "free world" was, however, surprisingly quiet when the Presidential Guard burst into Tirana's military hospital, beat doctors and nurses, and destroyed equipment, apparently in protest against doctors failure to save the life of a soldier badly injured in the (failed) attack on Cerrik. Nor did Western media give much coverage to the subsequent strike of 600 doctors and nurses, demanding the punishment of those responsible, and the dissolution of the presidential guard.

These are just a few examples of the daily events which illustrate, beyond any reasonable doubt, the state terrorism of Sali Berisha, and the blood-bath which threatens Albania if the regime succeeds in regaining control over the insurgent regions.



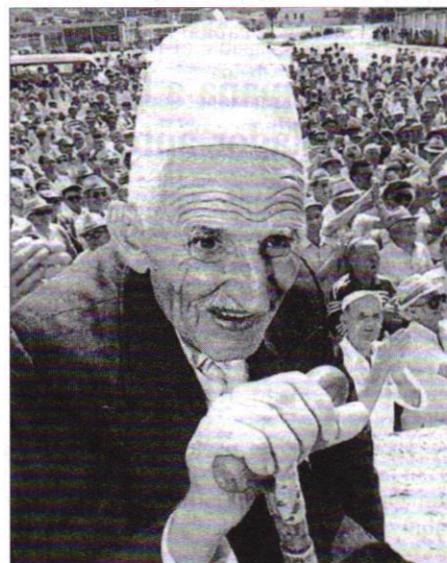
The great paradox in the Albanian situation is that, at the same time as this slow-motion civil war, both poles of power — the regime and the popular committees — continue talking about their desire for elections which will allow a return to democracy, stability and normal life."

Government of national confusion...

This curious situation is the result of the equally balanced forces of the two parties to the conflict. Neither side is capable of forcing a decisive victory. As the crisis has drawn out, there has also been the emergence of a "third pole" led by Socialist (ex-Communist) Prime Minister Bashkim Fino. Obviously, — the "government of national reconciliation" is an illusion. But it continues to exist because of the support it receives from the European powers and the USA, and because of the political limits of the insurrectionary movement. With the mass of insurgents refusing to demand state power for themselves, the existence of dual power creates a vacuum which politicians like Fino can exploit.

The Government of National Unity has non of the aspects of a government. It controls nothing of importance, and can only speak to the nation when Berisha gives it space in the media he controls. The main function of this "virtual government" is to absorb the shock of the country's main conflict — between the Berisha regime and the insurrection. Its secondary function is to legitimise, and legalise the Berisha regime) to which it has pledged allegiance. It also serves to reinforce the illusions of the insurgents in the country's legal system and legal means of protest.

It was Sali Berisha who invented the Government of National Unity, in the moment when his back was closest to the wall. It has helped him win time, and provides a valuable domestic and international cover for his bloody and tyrannical regime. Composed of the former opposition parties, and dominated by the former ruling Socialist Party, Bashkim Fino's virtual government has distinguished itself by total



blindness towards the manoeuvres of the President-dictator, and total servility to the representatives of imperialism.

Berisha pulls the strings

The relations between Berisha and Fino are a game of cat and mouse. The president accepts a few minor concessions, which he overrules or contradicts a few days later. Berisha has total control over the rump parliament, and his Constitutional Court is extremely quick to challenge any concession won by the Government of National Unity. This farce would be amusing if the future did not seem so tragic.

This government was created "to save the country from chaos," after an insurrection in which only about 100 people had died. Three months later, the death toll is closer to 1,700. And despite the partial consolidation of the regime, the fundamental balance of forces is unchanged. A large majority of the people of southern and central Albania continue to support the insurrectionary Committees, as do the inhabitants of a number of northern towns like Scutari.

Despite their persistent illusions in Fino's 'government,' to which they have ceded some powers, the insurrectionary committees continue to prove their strength by resisting Berisha's repeated incursions into their territory. It is not impossible that the insurrection will enter a new, radical phase. Particularly if Berisha decides to attempt a generalised attack against the south.

The right rediscovers Berisha

While the internal balance of forces has changed little, the international forces supporting Berisha are much more consolidated than in the early weeks of the revolt. The president is no longer isolated internationally. And while US president Bill Clinton still considers him an obstacle to the "normalisation" of Albania, the dictator again has the (virtually unconditional) support of Europe's right wing parties.

Berisha's first success was in exploiting the hesitation and inexperience of the insurgents to gain time. His second exploit was to exploit the contradictory interests of the imperialist powers, so as to present himself as the only force capable of re-establishing capitalist order in Albania.

This solid international support has had an important influence on the role of the Multinational military force in Albania. Formally introduced to "protect the distribution of humanitarian aid," these troops quickly "forgot" their supposed neutrality, and recognised the "legal authorities" — ie Berisha. Contacts with the insurgents have been reduced to the absolute minimum. And western generals and politicians continue to present the "anarchy in the south" as the main obstacle to the restoration of democracy.

There is no doubt: the multinational force is not in Albania to protect the distribution of humanitarian aid. Western troops look on calmly while "humanitarian aid" is openly sold, to finance the reconstruction of the police force and the Albanian army. Nor are western troops on the scene to protect lives. Many more people have died since they arrived than in the "chaos" beforehand.

In reality, the western forces in Albania are helping reconstruct the Berisha regime. In particular, they are preparing the ground for the final "neutralisation" of the insurgents.

Irrespective of the election results, the balance of forces in Albania prevents any short-term stabilisation of the system. Berisha is preparing a blood-bath, with western support. But there is still hope. As long as the people continue to demand the removal of Berisha and the dissolution of the secret police. And as long as the insurrectionary committees refuse to surrender their arms. ★



Fundamentalist fall?

The military, and public opinion, have forced Turkey's fundamentalist and nationalist coalition government to resign.

Conservative opposition leader Mesut Yilmaz has formed a new government — a 'non-clerical' coalition with the social democratic opposition.

Erdal Tan

Military and public pressure in recent weeks de-stabilised former Prime Minister Tançu Çiller's conservative True Path party (DYP) to the point where fifteen deputies switched their allegiance to the opposition. But the governing coalition between the DYP and the larger, Islamic fundamentalist Prosperity Party (Refah) survived a vote of confidence, by four votes.

Many wavering deputies were won back to the government benches by Çiller's husband, who's shady role between government and business circles has earned him the nickname "Mr Ten Percent." Some deputies were tempted back by fat commissions, others blackmailed with threats of exposure of their past corrupt deals.

Nevertheless, Çiller and Refah leader Necmettin Erbakan had less and less room for manoeuvre, in the face of the opposition of Turkey's powerful generals to the fundamentalist's continued presence in government. Recognising the precariousness of their situation, they called a new general election. Erbakan even promised to surrender the post of prime minister to Çiller, whose DYP was the junior party in the government.

By inviting Mesut Yilmaz to form a new government, Turkey's president Suleyman Demirel has blocked this plan. A conservative opposition leader, Yilmaz has the agreement of both social democratic parties, and dissidents from Çiller's party, to form a new, non-clerical coalition, which can count with the support of the army, the bourgeoisie and the media.

The generals v Refah

The crisis is far from over. What is certain, however, is that the army, which represents the general interests of the regime, has gone too far in its struggle against the government to be able to pull back.

The army recently convinced the Public Prosecutor to request that the Constitutional Court dissolve Refah, which he accuses of "wanting to provoke a civil war" and "install an Islamic regime," in contradiction to the non-clerical framework installed by modern Turkey's founding fathers after the first world war.

This is the first time in history that a Constitutional Court will consider the dissolution as anti-constitutional of a party which is in government, on the basis of 21% of votes in the last general election. A party which includes both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice. At least this proves that the Turkish judicial system is independent of some parts of the executive!

The army has also accused the government of "cutting off funds," by refusing to finance the recent intervention into Northern Iraq to combat the separatist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). [Official Turkish sources report 2,000 PKK deaths]

As in any other self-respecting bourgeois state, denying the army the resources they need to defend the motherland is equivalent to treason. If the current crisis ends in another military *coup d'état*, this could be a pretext for the imprisonment or even execution of Erbakan and Çiller. But the short term objective was more modest — to spread panic among deputies from Çiller's DYP party, and encourage them to support the opposition against their former colleagues.

Last round

A merciless struggle is underway between the generals and the Çiller-Erbakan grouping. In the short and medium term, the balance of forces seems more favourable to the generals. So the main question is whether they will be able to remove the current government by "democratic parliamentary" means, or at least by manoeuvres which will protect the democratic facade of the regime, without threatening the major capitalists' projects for closer integration with the European Union. Or whether there will be another *coup d'état*, which in the current situation could degenerate into a semi-civil-war.

In the long term, everything depends on the capacity of the bourgeoisie and its political personnel to reform the political and institutional system to the point where they can present a new bourgeois alternative, sufficiently credible to win the passivity of the masses.

In the immediate, all depends on how many of Çiller's deputies can be frightened into voting against their own party, even if this means losing their place at the trough, and having their past misdeeds publicised by "Mr Ten Percent."

The "enemy within"

As the recent military alliance with Israel shows, the Turkish general staff has modified its global strategy in recent years. After 50 years of strategy designed to contain a "principle threat" defined as "the external communist danger, with a Fifth Column inside the country," the new preoccupation of the armed forces is the "threat posed by the internal enemy and its external supporters."



Moslem heads of state met in Ankara on June 15 (from left to right) Nigeria's industry minister Lt-Gen Mohammed Haladu; Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hassina; (then) Turkish PM Necmettin Erbakan; Iranian president Hashemi Rafsanjani; Turkish president Suleyman Demirel; Indonesian president Suharto; Egypt PM Kamal Ganzouri; Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif; and Malaysia PM Mahathir. They inaugurated the Developing Eight Group (D-8). This was an initiative of (then) Turkish PM Necmettin Erbakan to increase co-operation between Moslem countries.

This threat has been openly described by top generals as "Kurdish separatist terrorism and the fundamentalist threat."

The entire "security" apparatus (police, judiciary, defence forces, secret services and diplomatic corps) has been instructed to adapt itself to this new overall strategy. The ideological propaganda machine is toning down the anti-communism, and stressing unitary nationalism and the non-clerical principles of "the father of modern Turkey," Mustafa Kemal *Atatürk*.

In foreign policy, the new "enemies" are those who support the PKK and the Islamic fundamentalists: Syria and Iran. The Turkish state intends to impose this global strategy on each and every bourgeois government which the country may elect, whatever the nuances

of programme and outlook between the political parties concerned!

Ruling class divided

The current crisis reveals a triangular struggle within the bourgeoisie. The main actor is the large, traditional industrial bourgeoisie, and its allies in the small business sector, the army, the media and the parliamentary opposition (including the social democrats). The political project of this fraction of the bourgeoisie is the integration of Turkey with the European Union, and a bourgeois democratic set-up more or less comparable with those of the European countries. This fraction of the ruling class seeks to gain the support of the working class and the progressive intelligentsia for this project, by

ÖDP • HADEP • DISK • KESK

"No to the fundamentalists!"

"No to the generals!"

Over 35,000 people attended a rally in Istanbul on 26 May, opposing both the fundamentalist-conservative block and the growing military threat.

The event was organised by the Liberty and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), a regroupment party which includes most currents of the 1970s far left, including the Fourth International current, *Yeniyo!*

The event was also supported by the left-wing trade unions DISK and KESK, and the Kurdish nationalist party HADEP, which mobilised some 3,000 sympathisers. A number of famous intellectuals, artists and journalists also supported the initiative.

At a moment when Turkish politics seemed polarised between pro-military and fundamentalist-nationalist poles, this audacious initiative is widely considered as the high point of the ÖDP's one-year existence.

It demonstrated the legitimacy of the "third way," and stressed democratic

demands at a time when some "democrats" are increasingly sympathetic to a coup d'état. It was the largest autonomous far-left inspired demonstration since the 1970s.

The demonstration took place in Sultanahmet square, scene of an earlier demonstration of 100,000 Refah supporters, protesting the army's intention to close most of the religious secondary schools.

The ÖDP subsequently called a "press conference" in downtown Ankara, which attracted 25,000 people. A similar number had joined the ÖDP contingent at Ankara's May Day parade earlier this year. Party leaders talk of "a rise in the movement, these last several months."

The ÖDP is not yet seen as a credible alternative to the big parties. But thanks to initiatives like this demonstration, it is increasingly perceived as a serious, legitimate pole to the left of social democracy. [ET] ★

frightening them with the spectre of Islamic fundamentalism. By offering "democratisation," they hope to win the left's support for privatisation and re-structuring. The process has certain parallels to Spain's "Moncloa Pact" which ensured a stable transition from dictatorship to bourgeois democracy.

The second force in this triangular struggle is the Islamic fundamentalist sector of the bourgeoisie, which is particularly strong among middle-size companies in central Turkey. This current, politically represented by the Refah (Prosperity) party, is trying to win the support of the pauperised and semi-proletarian layers of urban society, and the Kurdish peasantry, in the name of an elusive "religious fraternity and solidarity." The fundamentalist wing of capital hopes to break the power of the grand, classical bourgeoisie, by creating a reserved "Islamic economy," based on "the specific consumption patterns and lifestyles of the Islamic ghettos." Internationally, Refah would like Turkey to distance itself from the European Union, and adopt a neo-protectionist economic system. The middle east and south-east Asia would become Turkey's preferred markets. The Islamic bourgeoisie probably controls a turnover of US\$2 billion, with \$800m. of exports, mainly to the Middle East.

The third sector of the bourgeoisie exists in the "parallel" or Mafia economy. This sector grew rapidly in the Kurdish region thanks to the "dirty war" [against the PKK], and all over Turkey during the neo-liberal "miracle" of the late 1980s and early 90s, under President Turgut Özal. This sector looks for support to lumpenised (depressed) sectors of the proletariat and intelligentsia, appealing to them on a "nationalist" basis. The police force and landowner layers are also a fertile base of support for this current.

Tançu Çiller's DYP used to be allied to the grand bourgeoisie. But under the growing threat of investigation for corruption, Çiller switched alliances, and formed a coalition with the fundamentalists. Much of her party's support now comes from this "parallel" sector. Çiller's switch is at the origin of the current political confusion. Even the fascist Grey Wolves (MHP) have been thrown into a crisis of orientation, deepened by the death of their historic "*fihrev*" Türkes.

The working people of Turkey, and the Kurds, stand to pay the costs of this internal, confused battle between bourgeois factions. Unless, of course, they can develop a pragmatic, intelligent strategy to compensate for the unfavourable balance of forces.

Without a clear orientation of class independence and the defence of democratic and social rights, the working class may be side-tracked into one of several possible false, catastrophic alliances, or slumber in criminal passivity. ★

Canada: More of the same

The June 2nd general election results were good news from a capitalist perspective, reports **Harold Lavender**. The horizon shows no major threat to rapid economic restructuring or government austerity budgets. But tensions around the Quebec national question suggest storm clouds ahead.

Canadian imperialism increasingly sees its future in prying open the global economy for foreign investment and exports (by extending the North American Free Trade Area NAFTA to the rest of Latin America and above all by developing Asia-Pacific integration via APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation)).

Domestically a drive to become "internationally competitive", and "fight the deficit" through neo-liberal cutbacks federally and provincially are driving down popular living standards.

In office since 1993, Jean Cretien's Liberal Party have succeeded in imposing the most draconian cutbacks in social spending in the post-war era. Responsibility is being passed to the provinces through multi-billion dollar cuts in transfer payments for health, post-secondary education and welfare. Despite promises of job creation, official unemployment under the Liberals is still nearly 10% (and much higher for youth). The lot of the poor is increasingly desperate because of major cutbacks in eligibility for unemployment insurance and welfare.

None of this has led to a mass radicalisation or political shift to the left by the majority of the working class.

The Liberal's parliamentary majority and share of the popular vote (38%) was less than expected. The result suggests an undercurrent of mass insecurity and disaffection — although anti-elitist anger is currently being expressed in very fragmentary ways. Public lack of confidence in politicians and politics was reflected in falling voter turnout. At 67%, this was Canada's lowest turnout in more than 50 years.

The Liberals sought re-election on the basis of their economic record: success in reducing the deficit," coupled with promises for the gullible of better times ahead. They suggested jobs would increase in a favourable business climate and that once the war on the deficit had been won there would be fewer cuts and more money could be freed to address issues like child poverty.

The most overtly right-wing parties, the Conservatives and the Reform Party, raised issues like tax cuts for the wealthy and law and order. But they failed to make an electoral breakthrough. The Liberals largely stole

their economic agenda, and particularly in Ontario, the most populous province, the right-wing vote was evenly split between Reform and Conservatives.

Among the issues largely ignored in this election were the negative impact of global capitalist economic restructuring, massive government cutbacks in social spending, mass joblessness and underemployment, deepening poverty, no future for youth, attacks on affirmative action on women's and gay lesbian and rights, racism against visible minority immigrants and first nations, first nations' right to sovereignty and accelerating environmental destruction.

Social democracy

The vote of the social democratic New Democratic Party rose modestly from seven

to eleven percent. But it scored a breakthrough in the Atlantic provinces. Canada's poorest region has been devastated by mass unemployment and government cutbacks. The NDP succeeded in its very limited goal of electing more NDP members to Parliament and regaining its official parliamentary party status. But it failed to win back most of the working class votes lost in 1993, when its support plummeted from 21 to 7% of votes.

The NDP criticised Liberal promises as utterly worthless given their past record, and demanded "real targets on jobs" and greater commitments on social programs. But while the NDP campaign reached some people, it failed to have an impact in most regions.

The irrelevance and failure of social democracy was particularly evident in the industrial heartland of Ontario, where the

Québec

Strategic crisis in the nationalist movement

Bernard Rioux of *La Gauche* newspaper explains the crisis in the *Parti Québécois*

Support for the Bloc Québécois fell from 49 to 38%, half a million less than last time. As a result, pro-federal parties won a majority of votes in 64 of Quebec's 75 constituencies... This decline is the direct result of the anti-social policies of the Parti Québécois government. Pursuit of the zero deficit, and massive cuts in education, health, public services and local government by a pro-sovereignty government has discredited not just the Provincial government, but the pro-sovereignty option.

On the national question too, Prime Minister Bouchard has made a series of concessions. He withdrew his pledge to call a snap election if the federal government challenged the constitutional legality of any future referendum on sovereignty. He promised that there would be no new referendum for three years, at least. He has retreated on the defence of the position of the French language in Quebec. The Parti Québécois administration is even participating in the "Team Canada" commercial mission!

In short, the hegemonisation of the

pro-sovereignty movement by the neo-liberal current which is in favour of free trade with the USA has seriously undermined the coherence of and popular support for the referendum struggle for sovereignty and independence.

The main factor preventing the disintegration of the pro-sovereignty bloc was, paradoxically, the intransigence of the federal government and its determination to refuse Quebec the right of self-determination...

The crisis is so deep that a debate on the strategy of the pro-sovereignty movement cannot be avoided. The left-wing of the independence movement is trying to link the struggle for independence to the struggle against neo-liberalism.

This strategy places the struggle for independence in the perspective of the creation of an egalitarian society, an alliance with the indigenous peoples, and the working and oppressed classes across the Canadian state. Such a strategy implies a total rupture with the Parti Québécois, and the construction of a pro-independence workers party. ★

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Do the workers have a country?

by José Iriarte "Bikila"

◆ £2.50/\$4. Cheque payable to P. Rousset, IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 Amsterdam, Netherlands.



NDP won no seats and only 11% of the vote. In Ontario last year, some 200,000 people took part in a Toronto protest against the "slash-and-burn" policies of the Harris provincial government. However, this failed to translate into electoral support for the federal NDP.

This partly reflects the capitalist stranglehold over the media and political discourse. But it also points to a host of political problems. This includes a recent impasse and downturn in mass struggle against the Harris government due to a split within the labour bureaucracy and a retreat from organising days of action, as well as a lack of broader political radicalism of the movement, which has focused on the policies of a particularly reactionary provincial government without making the links to federal cutbacks let alone the capitalist roots of the attacks.

Voters also remembered the NDP provincial government in Ontario which bowed to the neo-liberal agenda and imposed an anti-worker social contract. Since being defeated, the NDP has shown itself unwilling and unable to play a positive role in building mass extra-parliamentary struggles. Nevertheless, the NDP continues to survive as limited parliamentary force and it is not about to disappear.

Many on the left feel extremely dissatisfied with the NDP. But the question remains, How to create a mass political alternative?

Talk of creating a new labour party has died down. The NDP maintains its social democratic character as a reformist workers party with a pro-capitalist program. In the campaign, party leader Alexa McDonough did speak out for jobs and against cutbacks, especially in health care and education. But she also identified with the record of NDP provincial governments, which have imposed

cutbacks and attacked the poor while in office.

There is little reason to expect a major change. The NDP did well enough, especially in McDonough's Atlantic region, that a leadership challenge seems unlikely.

Most of the labour bureaucracy remains loyal to the NDP, even though, in many cases they are unable to convince their members.

But there is little real renewal of the NDP, whose membership is growing increasingly old. It is certainly failing to win over a

Québec

National question won't go away

Support for the Bloc Québécois was lower than in previous elections. But the unresolved national question continues to generate instability and turbulence.

The election result revealed an ongoing high degree of polarisation around the Quebec question. This was coupled with regional antagonism and very extreme variations in regional voting patterns. The Liberals swept Ontario, Canada's most populous province and centre of finance and industry. The right-wing populist Reform party dominated the West, in part by openly fanning the flames of anti-Quebecois racism and national chauvinism.

The results indicated quite clearly that there is no possibility of reforming the Canadian federation to accommodate Quebec's national aspirations. (In a 1995 referendum, over 49% of Quebecers voted for "sovereignty").

The Chretien government asked for voters' trust in national unity. They portrayed the Liberals as Canada's only national party. Only the Liberals, they claimed, are capable of holding Canada together and defeating the threat of "Quebec separatism."

Unwilling and unable to implement any meaningful reform of the Canadian federation, the Chretien government's sole response is challenging the legality of Quebec's right to declare independence. Chretien declared in the election that a Yes vote of 51% of Quebec voters would not be enough to declare sovereignty.

Many people in the rest of Canada are fed up with 30 years of failure to solve the Quebec question while their own insecurities and problems go unaddressed. Reform Party leader Preston Manning deliberately exploited that alienation. The tactic succeed in solidifying Reform's stronghold as a western regional party, although it failed to work in Ontario where Reform won no seats.

Manning campaigned on "zero tolerance for Quebec" — absolutely no concessions to Quebec if it stays in Can-

ada, and a hard line on terms and conditions of separation if it leaves. Reform promotes a totally distorted concept of equality, in which Canada would become a federation of ten provinces with exactly the same rights; at the same time, a Reform election advertisement appealed to voters not to vote for a prime minister from Quebec.

Partition of Quebec?

Manning also pushed the idea of partitioning Quebec in the event of a Yes vote in a future referendum on independence. Other proponents of partitioning include both the Cree and Inuit First Nations of northern Quebec and English-speaking enclaves in and around Montreal.

Quebec's Parti Québécois government and its Bloc Québécois ally in the federal parliament insist that the borders of a future Quebec state are indivisible. But they weaken their own case for national self-determination by denying the same right to aboriginal nations in northern Quebec. In contrast, many Quebec socialists and part of the French speaking population in Quebec accept the right of national self-determination for First Nations.

But there is no sense in a "right of self-determination" for Quebec's largely privileged English-speaking minority. "Les anglophones" in no way constitute a nation. Any attempt to partition Quebec, following the Northern Irish model, can only be totally reactionary.

A majority of English-speakers in the rest of Canada undoubtedly favour a peaceful solution. But in the absence of any kind of campaign to respect Quebec's right to self-determination and freely determine its own destiny, chauvinist forces could easily gain ground if the Quebecers do one day force their independence. ★ [HL]

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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Women's lives in the new global economy

Penny Duggan & Heather Dashner (editors)

◆ \$4/\$5/35FF. Cheque payable to P. Rousset, IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 Amsterdam, Netherlands.



new generation of youth, which is increasingly cynical and despairing of the existing political process.

No consensus on the far left

Mirroring the general extreme fragmentation of politics in the Canadian state, there is no consensus among individuals and the very small socialist groups to the left of the NDP about how to respond.

Some radicals campaigned for specific NDP candidates, "to have more critical voices in Parliament." Some said one should vote NDP, but that working inside the NDP and the election campaign itself were largely irrelevant to social change which must come from independent mobilisation and grass roots organising from below. Others weren't prepared to vote NDP, pointing to the strongly pro-capitalist record of the NDP in provincial governments.

The creation of significant alternative socialist campaigns was hamstrung by a shortening of the campaign period, increased financial barriers, election rules that requires groups to run at least 50 candidates to be a legally registered party and above all Canada's first-past-the-post electoral system.

There is growing support for proportional representation, partly because of the extreme regional distortions in the federal result. The Green Party, which seems to be consolidating a small electoral base in British Columbia where environmental conflicts are hottest, could have won representation under some PR systems. But for now the large majority on the left will probably focus their attention on extra parliamentary issues, building a diverse series of movements and seeking to strengthen resistance to the multiple fronts of the capitalist offensive.

Facing up to the national question

However, the left in English-speaking Canada could face a severe challenge if developments in Quebec lead to the break-up of the federal state. Given the weakness of independent working class politics and the left, such a split would almost certainly take place in an unfavourable climate.

The NDP's Canadian nationalism leads it to hostility and a total lack of sympathy to Quebec nationalism. In return, the NDP was totally repudiated in Quebec, winning only 2% of the vote. The NDP is formally in favour of Quebec self-determination, but not unconditionally. For NDP leader McDonough, "it all depends."

The NDP's evasion of a principled, unconditional defence of self-determination extends into much if not all the labour movement and the broad left, which is very reluctant to take up the issue. This reflects a widespread lack of consciousness in English Canada on the history and political significance of national oppression of the Québécois within the Canadian state. Most of the left and the labour movement have failed to distinguish politically between the current highly unattractive pro-capitalist nationalist leadership of the Quebec struggle and legitimate national demands. ★

Women

March against poverty in 2000

The Quebec Women's Front (FFQ) has "four or five times as many individual members as a couple of years ago," according to Jacqueline Loiselle of the public sector alliance (AFP) and the far left Parti de la Démocratie Socialiste. The FFQ This growth is due to successful campaigns like the 1996 Women's March against Poverty. Unfortunately, no such campaign is planned for this year, apparently for lack of financial resources.

Nevertheless, a working group within the FFQ is preparing a women's march against poverty for the year 2000. According to Loiselle, "it's a strong group, not afraid of saying things as they are. They spoke of the capitalist economy as the root cause of neo-liberalism, though they didn't use such terms in the written materials. They are confident that the project will get off the ground"

The front, which recently withdrew from the Quebec government's recent Socio-Economic

Summit in protest at the neo-liberal policies being implemented by the ruling Parti Québécois, held its annual assembly on 24-25 May. "Representatives of groups of women in poverty, and trade union women, demanded that the FFQ define itself as a campaigning organisation, rather than a representative one," Loiselle told *La Gauche* newspaper.

Source: La Gauche website



FARC

Colombian guerillas free captive soldiers

With banners and a revolutionary anthem, FARC rebels freed 70 captive soldiers in front of reporters, international observers and thousands of townspeople on June 15th. Colombia's main guerrilla group staged the elaborate ceremony in the remote southern town of Cartagena del Chaira in a bid to win political respect and capitalise on their biggest military victory in decades.

Guerrillas took the opportunity to declare they want a lasting peace, but prospects that their gesture could presage an imminent end to one of Latin America's oldest conflicts seemed dim. "The armed struggle will always be relevant in a country like Colombia," said rebel commander Joaquin Gomez. Rebel demands include land reform and redistribution of Colombia's oil wealth to help the poor.

In the government's most embarrassing defeat in more than 30 years, FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] killed more than two dozen soldiers and captured 60 in an 30 August 1996 attack on a military base. Ten marines were seized in an attack in January this year.

As part of the release deal, President Ernesto Samper agreed to temporarily demilitarise a 13,000 km² jungle zone, including Cartagena del Chaira on the Caguan River.

The clean-shaven and healthy captives arrived aboard Russian-made MI-17 helicopters provided by the government. They were accompanied by their rebel captors and Red Cross workers.

FARC rebels, wearing arm bands with the national colours of red, blue and yellow, handed out leaflets urging any young people in military service to join their fight. "Desert at the slightest opportunity, preferably with your army-issue weapon," the leaflets read.

The freed soldiers did not complain of mistreatment and said the guerrillas loaned them radios. They jogged, ate pasta and rice, slept in crude bunks and endured insect bites.

Several rebels also used the occasion to meet with family members, before hoisting their knapsacks and heading out of town back toward their remote forest camps. ★ [AP]

Source: Associated Press, 16 June 1997
See also: FARC:<http://members.tripod.com/~farc>

Pouring oil on troubled heads

On 25 May Ecuadorians voted in a 14 question referendum. The formal purpose was to ratify the removal from office of President Abdalá Bucaram in February, after massive demonstrations, and a parliamentary vote that the President was mentally unfit to hold office. But the country's elite also used the referendum campaign to re-legitimise the traditional institutions, and reduce the "constitutional" importance of the massive popular mobilisation which brought down the Bucaram regime.

President Fabian Alarcón is the winner, but the results show that the crisis has not been resolved. The spirit of the popular mobilisation is still tangible, even if the democratic movement is on the defensive.

Jean Dupont*

The radical democratic mood in the population following the February victory revealed the existence of two proposals for solving the country's crisis: the traditional, conservative strategy of little reforms which do not threaten the status quo, and a popular strategy of demands, most clearly expressed in those heady days of February.

But while the country's dominant sectors began actively re-building a wide bourgeois coalition, the popular masses, and the democratic currents, seemed to lose all orientation. The conservative strategy came centre-stage.

In early February, more than three million citizens participated in public demonstrations demanding the departure of President Bucaram. Two weeks later, a large majority of parliamentarians voted to approve the establishment candidate, Heinz Moeller, as President of the National Congress.

Only three deputies swam against the tide.¹ Rosendo Rojas, of Democracia Socialista rejected the claim that Moeller's election "represented the culmination of the popular mandate."

This vote made it more difficult to maintain the independent popular mobilisation, and increased the dynamic towards a conservative solution to the crisis.

The parliamentary re-shuffle was more than the selection of a new establishment



candidate. For the first time, the main forces of the social and political left entered into a system of co-government with the country's right-wing forces. In doing so, they disarmed themselves.

The May referendum was an important confirmation of the institutional solution to the political crisis opened when mass protest toppled Bucaram. As *Hoy* newspaper commented the morning after the referendum, "This result consolidates the authority of the current government, and converts the transformation which took place in February into an exceptional series of events, which cannot be taken as a precedent for any type of political manoeuvres [in the future], because those events have been co-validated in the ballot-box — the main source of democratic power."

In fact, most voters voted against their own interests, becoming the victims of left leaders who saw in the events of February nothing more than a great opportunity to win minor, ephemeral positions in the power hierarchy. All "types of political manoeuvres" will indeed take place, but the referendum has reserved this privilege for the dominant classes, giving them the right to interpret the events of February as they see fit.

The day after the referendum, *Ecuador Radio* reported the demands of "the business community" that Alarcón react firmly to the strikes in the health sector and elsewhere. With the referendum over, "Alarcón should govern. Nothing should stop him now. The country cannot continue to be paralysed." Twenty-four hours later *Ecuavisa* television news hardened its own tone in reports on the health strike. The following day, most media reported favourably to Alarcón's tough economic measures to reduce the public sector deficit.

Painting over the cracks

Faced with an upsurge in popular self-management, and self-representation, the elite is searching desperately to close all cracks in the system from above. The masses must not be allowed to participate in power in anything other than a subordinate role. Closing ranks, Ecuador's elite has taken a range of measures to reform, and re-assert, traditional authority.

- Attacking parliamentary corruption, by targeting 17 deputies, (though not the most important) and beginning corruption investigations against Bucaram and some of his closest collaborators (most of whom have disappeared).
- Consolidating control of the key functions of the state. No changes to the Armed Forces and Police leadership.
- Consolidation of a new, pro-government majority in parliament, led by the Social Christian Party. Elimination of obstacles to the presentation of a united right-wing front. In the next elections presenting a single candidate of the right, as moderate as possible, "in the spirit of February 5th".
- Constitutional reforms, but from the top down only. Heinz Moeller wants no kind of constituent assembly, and nor does the government majority in parliament.
- Co-option of most of the political and social left. Most of the opposition (and many former Bucaram supporters) have effectively pledged subordinate allegiance to this majority.
- Re-starting the privatisation programme, and promising a range of neo-liberal economic "adjustments."

Bucaram is not the root of the problem

The crisis in the political system didn't

start with Abdalá Bucaram, even though Alarcón and other of the former President's former associates would like to re-write history that way. The leprosy of Ecuadorian politics began in 1995, when vice-President Alberto Dahik fled to avoid corruption charges. Ever since then, the traditional system of authoritarian government, and an almost non-existent popular opposition was threatened. Bucaram's populist, corrupt politics was one response to this crisis. But during his brief rule, the economy did not

recover from the shock it suffered under Dahik. As a result, the ambitious privatisation programme ran in to objections from within the elite, which combined with resistance from below, to block the programme.

Stability

For the elite, the "problem" with Bucaram and his government was that its excesses threatened the continued hegemony of the bourgeoisie. To restore "governability," the ruling class now wants those on the bottom to join an active consensus with those in power. The popular opposition is condemned to return to its previous virtual non-existence.

The massive Popular Consultation (referendum) was a skilful mix of questions. First came the ratification of the removal of Bucaram by the Congress, under popular pressure. Question two ratified the election of Alarcón as President, again by Congress. These questions are two sides of the same coin — Media hammered home the message that a yes vote on both questions was the only way to ensure stability, and prevent Bucaram from returning to power.

Alarcón invoked the need to send reassuring signals to foreign investors. But his main preoccupation was to strengthen his already powerful government, which is already determined both to implement the "required" neo-liberal reforms, and deal with an signs of "anarchy" from the popular masses. Not surprisingly, since Bucaram was toppled, there has been a growth of partial struggles, particularly a long strike by public health sector workers.

Alarcón hoped that a yes vote in the referendum would not only legitimise him, but reduce the popular legitimacy which those who led the radical currents during the February movement still hold. In other words, the government proposed the referendum not just to weaken Bucaram, but also to weaken the left-wing coalition Pachakutik-Nuevo Pais, the only force which represents a left opposition to the new regime. Pachakutik called for a no vote on the second question.

To try to maximise popular support during this period, the Alarcón government has increased import tariffs (to the displeasure of the "international community,") and created a new Secretariat of Indian Affairs.

Results

Results

For the government and media of Ecuador, the poor hardly even exist. Those in power showed little interest in the 40% of citizens who did not bother voting in the referendum. Though these were the same people as marched in the streets on 5 February.

Nevertheless, the deep effects of the February mobilisation did show through.

- Over 74% of voters approved the destitution of Bucaram.
- The February movement called for a National Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. A partial victory was achieved with the 59% support for proposal three in the referendum, which called for a National Assembly to do the same. This will provide some scope for popular mobilisation, though less than in the initial demand for a Constituent Assembly.
- A majority of voters rejected the main parties' proposal to restrict proportional representation in parliamentary elections (Question 7). This will help block the creation of a rightist political monopoly,

Mexico

"End of an era" for state unionism

Fidel Velazquez Sanchez, head of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) died on June 21, at the age of 97.

Dan La Botz

Velazquez probably did more than any other single individual to keep Mexican workers in a position of subordination to the Mexican government, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the employers."

"Don Fidel's" death will lead to a succession struggle within the CTM, and could open the way for a more democratic labour movement in Mexico. The Mexican labour movement has recently divided into three different currents: the CTM, the rival Foro group of unions, and their allies in the May First Inter-Union group. Velazquez's death will encourage the process of political redefinition and reorganisation taking place in the labour movement.

The death of Velazquez, so soon before the July 6 national elections, will also hurt the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party and help the principal opposition parties, the National Action Party (PAN) and the Party of the Democratic or Revolution (PRD). The PRD and its candidate for mayor of Mexico City, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, have the most to gain from Velazquez's death.

Velazquez spent over 60 years as one of the principal leaders of Mexican unions and 50 years as head of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). He drew the unions into a close relationship with the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the Mexican state. He was twice elected Senator for the PRI.

Velazquez defended the PRI and the state against every progressive social movement that arose in the last 60 years. Velazquez backed the PRI-state in crushing the industrial union movement of the 1940s, supported the PRI-government in using the Mexican Army to break the railroad workers strike in 1959. He backed the PRI-government's use of the army in the massacre of 300

students at Tlatelolco in 1968, and supported the smashing of the electrical workers union and the Democratic Tendency in 1975. It was Velazquez who first called for expelling Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and the Democratic Current from the PRI in 1987. Velazquez also opposed the Chiapas Rebellion of 1994 and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) which led it.

Throughout his career, Velazquez was an opponent of all rank and file initiatives from below, and squashed any signs of independence or autonomy on the part of the workers. Under Velazquez the CTM became famous for "protection contracts," negotiated to protect employers from more militant unions, for "ghost unions," known only to the state and the bosses and unknown to the workers, for the use of gangsters and thugs to beat and even assassinate democratic or independent movements. By the 1990s, Mexicans were the lowest paid industrial workers in the world, most earning between three and ten U.S. dollars per day.

Velazquez's square head, dark-rimmed glasses, and big cigar became over the decades a symbol of the conservative, corrupt, and violent labour bureaucracy, and of the most reactionary sectors of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Velazquez came to be seen as the biggest and oldest of the "dinosaurs," who represented all that was worst about Mexican labour unions and politics.

Velazquez's successor as head of the CTM, Leonardo Rodriguez Alcaine, 78 years old, continues the policies of his predecessor. But Rodriguez Alcaine may find that the CTM organisation begins to crumble beneath him, now that "Don Fidel" is gone. ★

Source: Mexican Labor News and Analysis tel. (525) 661-33-97 www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/ e-mail 103144.2651@compuserve.com See also Miguel Angel Granados Chapa's *El siglo de Fidel Velazquez*, Mexico: Pangea, 1996.

in close collaboration with business interests.

- A majority of participants voted to include the people's right to depose their rulers in the constitution.

On the negative side, 65% ratified Alarcón's election. This has enabled the new President to present himself as the unique representative of the popular mandate of February 5th. Apart from Pachakutik, and, for their own reasons, parts of the establishment led by Vice-President Rosalía Arteaga, there was little real opposition on this question.

Candidates for election to the National Assembly must be proposed by parties and political movements. This obviously represents a defeat for the social movements and citizens' groups. The right has majority control over the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. This too will ensure the continued hegemony of the major parties.

So why did most ordinary people vote the way their enemies wanted them to? Assuming that they bothered to vote at all, of course. Mainly because they had no clear alternative before them. No proposition which would have maintained the radical democracy of the February movement. As a result, when facing uncertainty and crisis, and without "their own" political organisations to act as a reference point, people vote for whoever seems to offer stability.

The left fails to present an alternative

The left, in Pachakutik-Nuevo Pais, failed to establish a credible mass leadership, both during and after the February mobilisations. We administered our own little pre-occupations, and were unable to make an overview of the interests of the whole popular movement. As a result, we contributed to the strengthening of the clientelist, reformist and parliamentarist phenomena

which have dominated the opposition in Ecuador and elsewhere.

As so often before in the country's history, most of the opposition is unable to resist the offer of a government job, or a few seconds on television. This kind of outlook has enabled the regime to refresh the make-up on the face of the state. The situation is now more favourable than before for the introduction of neo-liberal policies. And the ruling classes have successfully drawn the wind from the sails of the popular movement of February.

But this government victory does not guarantee them a solution to the crisis facing the country. As before, Ecuador waits with its unsatisfied social demands, while the political class reforms itself.

The struggle for a democratic rupture with this political system continues. Though the conditions for the popular cause are worsening. The immediate struggle is for a National Constituent Assembly, and against privatisation. In this struggle, we must strive for popular unity and independence of the major parties, so as to be ready when the next elections come.

Those in the movement who had forgotten that we were living in a context of class struggle should wake up. The bourgeoisie in Ecuador never forgot this basic political truth. ★

Note

1. Fourth International supporter Rosendo Rojas of Democracia Socialista, and two deputies from the Movimiento Popular Democrática.

* Based on an article by Fernando López in *Revolución* #2, June 1997 (published by Democracia Socialista, Ecuadorian section of the Fourth International)



Transformation and regroupment

The collapse of Stalinism and the continuing capitalist crisis has contradictory effects. Myths and illusions connected to the restoration of capitalism in the post-Stalinist societies have dissipated, faced with the actually existing market economy. But reactions to the socio-economic crisis all too often take the form of reactionary tendencies of an ethnic, nationalist, racial or religious character. Hence the urgent need to rebuild a world-wide movement of anti-capitalist struggle, taking account of the recomposition of the workers' movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

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

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

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USA

Geronimo Pratt "Free at last"

The former Black Panther was released on bail on June 10, after 27 years behind bars for a crime he didn't commit.

In 1970 Geronimo Pratt was framed for the murder of a schoolteacher, and (two years later) sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. He was "railroaded" for the killing as FBI and police sought to undermine the Black Panther movement in California.

The conviction was overturned when a judge ruled that prosecutors had failed to tell the defence that their key witness, who claimed Pratt confessed, was an paid infiltrator and informant for the FBI and police.

Stuart Hanlon, one of Pratt's attorneys, said his client's release still doesn't justify the American legal system. "The

justice system that kept him in jail for 25 years can't be justified by one judge's ruling. It's been a long struggle," he said.

Eldridge Cleaver, the 61-year-old former minister of information for the Black Panthers, said Pratt's release and reversal of his conviction would help to solidify the party's reputation in history. "We will be judged as having made a positive contribution," he said. "We stood up for freedom and justice." Of Pratt, Cleaver said: "His legacy is one of endurance, of always saying no to the attempts to subvert him." ★

Source: Associated Press, 10 June 1997

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China and Hong Kong: One country – one system

Capitalist restoration in China

On June 30, 1997, British colonial rule in Hong Kong ended. In the 155 years of occupation, British rule was politically repressive, and exploitative of labour. Activists fighting against imperialism and colonialism suffered severe repression through laws and regulations like the Public Order Ordinance.

Why did British rule over Hong Kong managed to continue until almost the end of the 20th century, rather than ending soon after the Second World War, like many other British colonies? Above all because the ruling Communist Party of China chose to tolerate its continuation!

After the 1949 revolution, economic development in mainland China was slower than in Hong Kong. Not because of the superiority of British rule, but due to a combination of many factors. Including the hard work of ordinary Hong Kong workers. Similar economic "take-offs" took place in Taiwan and South Korea, neither of which were under British rule.

The removal of the constraints of British colonial rule **should** have given the people of Hong Kong greater mastery over their lives. But such possibilities have been thwarted by the imposition of domination and repression from the Beijing authorities who now control Hong Kong.

Undemocratic and anti-democratic

The formulation "one country, two systems" is used to promise no changes in the Hong Kong social system. Though the formulation and implementation of the policy — from above — is in itself a deprivation of the right of the people of Hong Kong to decide on the social system they prefer.

The whole process of transition was undemocratic. The Basic Law Drafting Committee was appointed by Beijing. Not surprisingly, it proposed laws in the interests of Beijing bureaucrats and corporate capitalists. Hong Kong's new Chief Executive and Provisional Legislature were not elected democratically.

Some repressive parts of the old colonial Public Ordinance Bill have even been restored! The clear intention of the new authorities is to intimidate and restrict struggles by the people for their rights.

The change-over will not mean that the majority of the Hong Kong people will enjoy more rights and freedoms, liberated from the fetters of colonial rule. Instead, rule by a small minority of Beijing bureaucrats and corporate capitalists means a new period of repression of political freedoms and social and economic rights.

The social and political struggle

The incoming government has already demonstrated its reluctance to improve social welfare or increase public expenditure on health, education or housing. Even though Britain has transferred the colonial government's US\$90 billion reserves to the new Hong Kong government.

While the new regime has explicitly rejected more spending on social welfare or social concerns, "Celebrations" of the hand-over cost horrendous amounts of money. The fireworks display on July 1 alone cost US\$40 million.

The people of Hong Kong must actively take matters into their own hands rather than wait for benevolent changes from above.

Political and social issues are closely linked. Struggles for more spending on health, education, housing and social welfare cannot be separate from the struggles to safeguard the political democratic rights of decision-making, access to information, free expression, free association and political organisation, and so on.

Democracy for Hong Kong!

An appropriate focus for the struggles for political and economic rights could be the demand for the democratic election of a Hong Kong People's Congress. This body should make the major decisions relating to Hong Kong.

The people of Hong Kong are now much more linked to people on the mainland. Now that they face common enemies, joining hands against the rule of bureaucrats and capitalists will be much easier. But it will be a hard struggle. ★

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There is no doubt that the Chinese Communist Party will keep its promise of 'one country two systems' now that Hong Kong is again part of China. As **Lau Yu Fan*** explains, Beijing has the upmost respect for the British administration's free-market policies.

Beijing has appointed a local tycoon, Tung Chee Wah, as the chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR). It has also appointed a Provisional legislature, in which the majority are business men and women. The reason for this, according to the former head of the New China News Agency who fled China after the Tiananmin Square massacre is that "preserving capitalism in Hong Kong means capitalists ruling". The Chinese Communist Party forged a holy alliance with the Hong Kong bourgeoisie a long time ago. Their common aim is to crack down on the civil liberties of Hong Kong people, and to wipe out any potential threat of grass root movement.

The ruling party's Hong Kong policy is extremely right-wing. It equates any increase in social welfare expenditure to "the addiction of opium". According to China's Communist leaders, the rights of Hong Kong people to gamble on horse racing and speculate in the stock market will be guaranteed, while freedom to criticise the Party will not be tolerated. New laws on public order and the right of associations, which became effective on 1st July, crack down on the right of assembly and associations. Any political organisation which merely has a 'link' with foreign political organisations will now be breaking the law.

Only the naive could still believe the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) claim that China remains a socialist state, and that its market economy is "socialist with Chinese characteristics".



“Deng the Short” and his fake socialism

When Chinese leader Deng died, the bourgeoisie media all over the world praised him as a great man who opened up China and reformed her economy, so that for the past 15 years, China experienced an impressive annual growth rate of 9%.

Inside China, people had for several years been singing a bastardised version of the famous pro-Mao Song, ‘the Eastern Sky is red’. The new version went “The western sky is red, the sun is going down. In China rises a man, Deng the short. He seeks fortune for himself, he teaches people to be everyone for himself.”

The Gini coefficient, a measure of inequality rose from 0.31 in 1979 to 0.434 in 1994. The latter figure is higher than USA. Yet some Chinese scholar even suggested that the figure is well past 0.5 today. In this sense one may regard Deng as the chief architect of capitalist restoration, with terrible bureaucratic distortion. In the words of another popular rhyme, “a deep rooted feudalism, a fake socialism, a hidden capitalism.”

The development of private capital

The CCP ‘proved’ its adherence to socialism through upholding public ownership. According to officials, although the state sector today only accounts for 40% of Gross Domestic Product, the collective sector (which accounts for a slightly higher proportion) must also be regarded as a form of public ownership, which would make “socialist public ownership” the dominant element of the economy.

According to official statistics, most of the private sector falls into the category of self-employed or family ownership, and there are only about 430,000 capitalist enterprises in the whole of China (except Hong Kong), accounting for only 10% of gross industrial output.

These are very deflated figures. From the beginning of the market reforms, the ‘Communist’ regime deliberately gave a very loose definition to “self-employment”, defining those employing up to seven workers as self-employed. “Small capitalists” would be a much more accurate description.

Furthermore, much of what is formally described as collective ownership is also fake. Some sources estimate that as much as 83% of rural industrial collectives are in fact capitalist enterprises.

Given that the CCP deliberately hides the facts, no one knows the exact figures. But it is clear that the weight of private capital far exceeds the modest levels

- Even official statistics reveal the limited size of the state sector in industrial output and commerce. [see table on Ownership]
- The total assets of the capitalist sector,

privately owned stocks, and foreign investment, are an estimated 1,000 billion Yuan, which means that private capital amounts to 1/4 of state assets.

- China also has an estimated 1,600 billion Yuan worth of private financial assets. Around 600 billion Yuan, 40%, belong to capitalists and those officials who engage in business, directly or indirectly. This social group numbers 30 million, or only 2.8% of the population. The strength of the capitalist class is clear.

Pro-bourgeois “Communism”

The rapid development of private capitalism is a direct result of the Chinese Communist Party’s pro-bourgeois policy. This is more than a ‘live and let live’ policy. It has been a green light for the bureaucracy to pump resources from the state and collective sectors into the private sector.

The earliest privatisation could be traced back to rural reform in the early eighties, when the People’s Communes were being dismantled. Much of the collective property, such as agricultural machinery, was privatised by the officials.¹

But it is in industry and commerce where the capitalist economy has developed the fastest. Capitalist continue to hire labour, and buy land and various means of production from the state and collective sectors, generally at rock-bottom prices. Every year the state loses an estimated 20-30 billion Yuan because of the under-pricing of land in sales to private interests.

The existence of a Chinese capitalist economy is the only explanation for a situation where the country consistently experiences high growth rates, yet only 1/3 of state firms are profitable!

One of the reasons for China’s success, relative to the former Soviet bloc, is that China is much more backward. The weakness of China’s state sector has been transformed into an advantage — not for the state sector itself, but for the capitalist sector.

Rapid industrialisation in 1949-78 failed to modernise the rural sector. The state could hardly provide the rural with sufficient industrial goods. Peasants still mainly used manual labour. In 1949, 89.5% of the population were peasants. By 1978, the proportion had declined only slightly, to 87.5%. While the rural world was formally organised in collectives, in productive terms the rural economy was still dominated by the small peasant sector. When the communes were dismantled in the early 1980s, the rural world immediately returned to its “true” situation: a sea of individual economic activity. It was through the economic polarisation of this individual economy that capitalism began to flourish. A rise of productivity and a rise in purchasing prices of agricultural products contributed to a growth in the peasantry’s purchasing

power. The country’s new capitalists thus benefited immediately from a largely expanded market.

The resurrection of bureaucratic capital

Private capital is only one (major) component of the capitalist sector. Another important component is “bureaucratic capital,” (the private assets of profit-oriented officials and those assets which belong to the state in name but in fact are freely controlled by the profit-oriented official in charge, and of which officials are able to ‘pocket’ considerable portion.)

Indeed, what is so different from the pre-reform period is that today’s bureaucrats are not content with appropriating consumer goods. Nowadays they want to appropriate profit, and to achieve this they have to appropriate capital. This is the origin of bureaucratic capital.

They achieve this accumulation either through setting up their own business, or through utilising state funds in a profit-oriented way. In the context of the “socialist market economy”, more and more state firms and all levels of government bodies are madly investing in high return sectors anyway, so the bureaucracy can easily manipulate state funds and reap huge profits.

Planned investment now represents a negligible proportion of total investment. [see table on Investment] The biggest sources of investment are now the self-raised funds of local governments and state firms. It is this source of capital which is responsible for China’s repeated crisis of over-production in various branches of industry, from televisions, refrigerators, washing machines and the plastic industry to real estates.

Privatisation

Privatisation in the narrowest sense: the direct sale of state assets into private hands, is still relatively small, although recently it has been accelerating. Li Peng has just announced that up to 240 thousand medium or small state firms will be transformed into joint stock companies, contracted out or sold. Needless to say, most of these privatisations will take place at rock-bottom prices. In Xian state, one state firm which worth 60 million Yuan was sold at 3.85 million. Land in particular is often “forgotten” or undervalued when the assets of a state firm are assessed prior to privatisation.

In any case, the main form of privatisation in China is not the outright sale of state firms, but rather the establishment of joint venture companies using state resources and private capital. Outright corruption and theft would come close behind.

When state firms enter into joint ventures with private capital, especially with foreign investors, it is common for the officials in charge to transfer a large part of the assets to

the private firms in questionable or illegal ways, including deliberately deflating the amount of state assets, refusing to take into account intangible assets like patent, brand name, and sales network, or agreeing to distribute a lower dividend to state shares than to private ones.

An estimated 90% of state assets are not taken into account when joint ventures are founded. In 60% of China's 10,000 joint venture formations to date, there was no prior assets assessment at all! The estimated loss to the state is about 60 billion Yuan. Only 60 joint venture agreements have taken into account the intangible assets (brand name, patent and so on) of the state partner.

Through these channels, bureaucrats have pumped enormous state assets into the hands of private capital and the bureaucracy itself. Indeed, a substantial number of joint ventures are fronts, fake companies set up by officials for the sole purpose of cheating the state.

Nobody knows just how many state assets have been privatised by the bureaucracy. Several years ago one source estimated that between 1982-1992, as much as 5 billion Yuan went 'astray.' More recent estimates have been in the region of 800 billion Yuan. But some specialists believe that the real figure is much higher than this.

Some left commentators have argued that capitalism has not been restored by a long way in the former Soviet bloc, because the private capital needed to privatise the state sector is lacking. This is certainly not the case in China. Private capital on the mainland is already strong enough to buy a substantial portion of state assets. With the addition of Hong Kong capital, this is truer than ever.

But this is not the main point. The bottom line is that, in a country where there is no tradition of rule by law, let alone democracy, the bureaucracy and the capitalists need not wait until they have saved enough money before asking for privatisation. They can just go ahead, and privatise state property through outright corruption and theft.

The invasion of foreign capital

China now has 170,000 foreign enterprises, accounting for 12.8% of gross industrial output. As much as 30-50 billion US dollars flow into China every year. Before 1984, foreign investment generated less than 4% of annual fiscal revenue. But in 1995 and 1996 it generated more than 60% of taxes and other fiscal revenue.

The inflow of foreign capital means bankruptcy for more and more local enterprises. This often takes the form of the "collapse" of a state enterprise into a joint venture with a foreign partner which takes more than 50% of shares in the new company. As a result, many traditional or famous Chinese products have already disappeared from the domestic market.

The detergent industry is now mostly controlled by the multinationals. The output of 15 joint venture now accounts for half of gross output. Popular Chinese brands like Panda and Twin Cat have vanished, to be

Ownership

sales	assets		output
	%	%	
State	54	34	30
Collective	16	37	19
individual	13	13	30
Joint venture	0.6	0.4	--
Other	16	17	20
HK, Macau Taiwan	4		
other foreign	8		
other categories	4		
Total	100	100	100

Investment during 1995, by ownership
Source: *Pioneer Review*

Investment

	1978	1995
	%	%
State budget	62	3
Domestic loans	2	21
Foreign invest.	4	12
Self-raised funds	--	52
Other	32	12
Total	100	100

The origin of investment in fixed assets of state owned units. Source: *Pioneer Review*

replaced by the products of Proctor & Gamble, Unilever (British) and Kao (Japanese).

In the beer industry, 70% of plants with an output exceeding 50 thousands ton a year have become joint ventures. In most cases, the joint venture agreement specifies that the Chinese brand becomes the property of the multinational partner. It is then withdrawn from production. Foreign beers like Carlsberg are rapidly driving Chinese brand like Shanghai and Swan from the market.

There are at least 1,000 joint venture and foreign-owned companies in the medical industry. These companies now control the production of 40 of China's best selling medicines.

The 200 joint venture companies in the bicycle industry are driving Chinese brands like the Flying Pigeon and Everlast off the road. The same phenomenon is occurring in sectors ranging from television manufacture to paper, tyre, integrated circuit, and household electric appliance production.

And yet, China has no "objective" economic need to surrender its economic sovereignty. As well as the largest domestic market in the world (in human, if not dollar terms), the country has a savings rate of 45%, and private capital assets of 1,600 billion Yuan.

Market, socialism, and Hong Kong

Until the 1980s, China's economy was excessively restricted. But now there is a market for means of production, a labour market, a partial capital market, and the monopoly of foreign trade has been largely dismantled, to the point where multinationals are beginning to dominate whole sectors of the economy. Capital flight from China is

accelerating.

The Chinese Communist Party still claims that the country has a "socialist market economy." This is clearly false. In an economy where labour, land, capital and others means of production can enter the market, major production and accumulation decisions will inevitably be guided by the rate of profit. A market, but not a socialist economy. There has already been repeated over-production in many branches of the economy. The Party still maintains 'macro-regulation', but this is not evidence of a planned economy. Each and every capitalist government also uses economic levers like interest rate, fiscal policy or taxation for 'macro-regulation.' In China today, the state no longer directly allocates investment funds according to a conscious plan.

When the Sino-British agreement was signed in 1984, one leading tycoon remarked that, 'politically Hong Kong will be annexed by China. But experience will prove that economically it is China which will be annexed by Hong Kong'.

To a certain extent this prophecy has come true. Because of its strength, the Hong Kong bourgeoisie has contributed greatly in promoting the change of nature of the CCP. Hong Kong's population is only 0.005% of China's, but its GDP is 20% of China's.

Since the 80s, the economic fusion between Hong Kong and China has been going on rapidly. In just 10 years, more than half of Hong Kong industry moved into southern China to exploit the cheap labour there. In 1980, there were one million industrial workers in the colony. By 1992 there were only 400,000. Hong Kong capitalists now employ more than 3.5 million workers in southern China.

Capital from China is flooding into Hong Kong. The city has returned to its old status of an entry port for China, as it was before the 1949 revolution. What is new is that Hong Kong has also become a financial centre for mainland China's new capitalists and bourgeoisified bureaucracy.

A process of convergence has been taking place, ever since the policy of "one country two systems" was announced, to the point that China is no longer one country and two systems. It is one country one system. One capitalist system, to be precise.

The perspective of mass movement

China amended its constitution in 1988, to legalise the capitalist economy. But, of course, the state character of China had already started to change. In the economic arena, the capitalist restoration is now largely completed, in the sense that the rate of profit has become the chief regulator of the Chinese economy.

Does this restoration of capitalism mean that the Chinese working class has suffered a historical defeat? That for a long time to come we should not expect the upsurge of the working class? We not agree with such a position. The further degeneration of the CCP is of course a blow to the working class. But this does not mean that the working class has been defeated in the struggle for power.

In reality, the Chinese working class never took hold of state power. They cannot be said to have lost something that they never had.

The bureaucratic socialism developed by the Chinese Communist Party brought certain advantages to the workers. But it never reinforced the political strength of the working class.

When the CCP abandoned bureaucratic socialism and adopted capitalism, the treatment that the workers receive worsened. But although workers now face rising unemployment and cuts in welfare, this does not, in itself, constitute a direct destruction of the political strength of the working class. In this sense, therefore, the restoration of capitalism has not brought about the demoralisation of the working class.

In fact, the political and economic struggles of the mainland Chinese working class have been very weak for decades. Workers have never been able to rise up on a large scale. They have experienced neither great victories, nor big defeats. The Communist Party is still afraid of workers' resistance. It dare not push too far and too fast.

Since the economy has been growing



rapidly for more than ten years, most workers have experienced a rise in their living standards. This is quite different to what has happened in the former Soviet bloc. What is more, the Chinese working class is still growing rapidly. An estimated 100 million peasants have become proletarian workers in recent years.

In other words, the potential capacity of the working class has not been decreasing,

but increasing. The class has not suffered any historic defeat. The struggle is still ahead. It is quite possible that in the medium term there will be an upturn of the Chinese workers movement. Countless economic struggles against closing of plants and lowering of wages have been going on for some time. Some of these conflicts have been won. This is surely encouraging the growth of confidence of the workers.

Given that Chinese workers have already experienced many years of market reforms which have been against their interests, and are well aware of the failure of the market reforms in the former Soviet bloc, they will probably have less illusions about capitalism than workers in the former Soviet bloc. What is still lacking is an alternative. This is the challenge for socialists in Hong Kong and on the mainland. ★

*The author is an editor of the Hong Kong publication Pioneer Bimonthly.

China and Hong Kong: One country – one system Labour under “market socialism”

Labour resistance is growing in China's savage market economy. Those foreign Marxists with any illusions in “actually existing market socialism” should take a hard look at the facts.

Gerard Greenfield and Apo Leong*



We have entered an era of silence and forgetting. Silence and uncritical acceptance of the logic of capitalism, despite the economic violence and social and cultural destruction wrought by its neo-liberal vanguard; and forgetting that ‘actually existing socialism’ never was real socialism.

The collapse of authoritarian Communist regimes should have reinvigorated our commitment to revolutionary socialism, rather serve as a justification for compromise and retreat. Rather than ‘overcoming subalternity’, state socialist societies under Stalinist regimes (re)created new experiences of subordination and alienation, which were intensified and expanded in the capitalist transformations of the 1990s.

Instead, large sections of the Left have not only retreated in the face of the onslaught of neo-liberalism, but are undertaking a series of long-term compromises which dispel both the project of overcoming subalternity and the very notion that subalternity is a problem in the first place. Overcoming alienation, exploitation, subordination - this is stuff of times past. Under the compulsion of pragmatism, engagement, or plain common sense, we are supposed to believe that there is no alternative to capitalism or that any alternative we dare to imagine should use capitalism - not overthrow it.

Foremost among these proposed alternatives is so-called ‘market socialism’, particularly in its ‘actually existing’ Chinese and Vietnamese forms. When China's Four Modernisations programme was launched in 1978, it was announced that rapid development and growth would be achieved by ‘using capitalism to develop socialism’, necessitating the development of what would later be called ‘market socialism with Chinese characteristics’.

The ideological legitimacy of ‘Deng Xiaoping thought’ in the post-Mao era of market reforms relied in part on Lenin's New Economic Policy, which, it was claimed, proved that under certain conditions it was both necessary and desirable to facilitate

capitalism in order to further the socialist project. Most important of all, ‘Deng Xiaoping thought’ declared that exploitation would be tolerated, especially in the Special Economic Zones and ‘open cities’ which would act as ‘windows’ on the global economy, by attracting foreign capital to a disciplined and ‘competitive’ labour force.

There was a great deal of such tolerance, with over 30 million workers employed in these zones under the systematic repression of labour rights and unrestrained capitalist accumulation.¹ Those “market socialists” in the advanced capitalist countries who glorified the success of China's economic reforms all-too-often overlooked this, even after the massacre of students and workers in Tiananmen Square.

Chinese labour resistance

This tolerance for exploitation was not shared by the workers whose involvement in the mass protest was driven largely by the sentiment expressed in a worker's letter to the students in Tiananmen Square: that ‘the wealth created by the sweat and blood of hundreds of millions of compatriots is squandered by the bureaucrats, China's biggest capitalists.’²

Both before and after the 1989 events there were widespread public demonstrations. Self-organising among workers led to the creation of autonomous unions and genuine workers' associations. And there were riots and protests by hundreds of thousands of peasants across the country against

corruption, excessive taxes, and the continued abuse of privilege and power by the Party-state bureaucracy.

Violent repression by the Party-state, including mass arrests and the imprisonment of so-called 'subversives' occurred alongside ever-increasing tolerance for the displacement of peasants from their land and the unregulated exploitation of workers in a free labour market. While liberal human rights campaigners in the West have organised public campaigns around a few victims, labour activists and organisers who remain committed to Marxism and socialism are not among them.

Hidden violence

Market socialists and the liberal left, who have praised the reform process in China for its 'gradualism' and the ability of the Communist regime to prevent the economic decline and political chaos witnessed in parts of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, ignore the widespread resistance and protest by China's subordinate classes. They fail to understand that the very same 'gradualism' that the progressive Left has praised as a conscious decision on the part of China's policymakers to ensure that the transition to a market economy is not a violent and socially destructive process is itself a product of that protest and resistance forcing the political elite and the emerging capitalist class to modulate their strategy.

But however modulated, the violence of the market cannot be hidden amidst the dismissal of some 50 million workers from their jobs. The old three irons - the iron rice bowl, iron armchair and iron wage (representing job and wage security and lifetime employment) - have been replaced by the "iron heart, iron face and iron fist".³

Mass protests, such as the demonstration by 40,000 miners and their families in November 1996,⁴ as well as strikes and the activities of independent workers' movements continue to challenge both the neoliberal capitalist agenda and the privilege and power of the Party-state bureaucracy - the two elements of what constitutes 'actually existing market socialism' in China.

Although depicted as a gradual process of reform and readjustment, the 'market socialist' system has met with considerable resistance from below. Throughout the state and collective sectors, in Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) private enterprises and foreign joint ventures, growing resistance to new modes of coercion and exploitation has emerged to challenge the very logic of the capitalist regime of production.

Strikes increasingly common

In 1994 there were 135,000 reported labour disputes, and another 150,000 in the first six months of 1995. The All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) admitted that there were 25,000 strikes involving 450,000 workers in 1995. Although presented in the dominant development discourse as a manifestation of demands for higher wages under conditions of rapid economic growth, the vast majority of strikes in



foreign-invested factories, private enterprises and Township and Village Enterprises are due to serious violations of workers' rights, including forced overtime, beatings, and physical and sexual harassment.⁵

The predominance of the issue of workers' rights in these collective actions is exemplified by the 1995 strike by workers in the Japanese-invested Panasonic Corporation factory in Zuhai. They demanded that copies of the new national labour law (introduced a year earlier) be made available to them. A demand which led the official trade union to attack the striking workers.

In the Special Economic Zones, strikes have been undertaken in protest against unpaid or late payment of wages, not higher wages.⁶ The response of the new capitalists and state sector managers has been based on attempts to fragment the workforce and break down their collective social and cultural identity as workers. In the Special Economic Zones and open cities, migrant workers were initially hired from the same provinces, which enabled them to (re)establish a collective identity within factories based on their common dialect and notional kinship ties. This formed the basis of a powerful sense of common interests and a tendency toward collective action which often challenged the power of managers and supervisors. In response, managers have implemented policies of segregation, ensuring that workers from the same province are broken up into different sections in the factory.

While the strikes reflect a resurgence in workers' collective resistance to domination and exploitation by the Party-state and capital, the possibility that these sporadic collective actions will form the basis of an organised working class movement is severely limited by counter-mobilisation strategies aimed at displacing any forms of self-organisation. State power continues to be exercised through the centralised trade union apparatus, with violent repression of labour movements organised outside of these structures.



Official trade unions

Official trade unions have continued to carry out many of their functions from the pre-reform era: mobilising workers to raise productivity and output, enforcing labour discipline and consolidating managerial control over labour, in accordance with the productivist goals of Stalinist industrialisation. In the transition to capitalism these functions have been re-deployed to enforce capitalist discipline, and consolidate the power of the capitalist entrepreneurs aligned with or emerging from within the Party-state.

Hence the demand by the Secretary General of the ACFTU, Xiao Zhen-bang, in 1994 that 'unions must try all means to eliminate instability' and ensure that 'unexpected incidents' be prevented by working with the Party and state to consolidate control from above.⁶ These "incidents" of instability refer to the strikes and other self-organising activities of workers.

While the role of the trade union in defending workers' rights and interests was reiterated at the Twelfth National Congress of the ACFTU, it was also stated that trade union activities should not conflict with the 'legitimate rights of investors'.⁹

Official trade unions seek to manage workers' responses to the capitalist labour process, claiming to be protecting workers' rights and interests on the one hand, while having direct and indirect linkages to capital. The indirect links focus on maintaining labour discipline and industrial peace for the sake of national economic growth, while the direct linkages is through involvement in profit-making business activities with domestic and foreign capital.

There are isolated cases of local trade union officials actively supporting workers' demands once they have gone on strike. But trade union officials have generally sought to bring an end to spontaneous strikes as quickly as possible. State enterprise managers continue to be members of trade union committees and are seen by the ACFTU as a legitimate segment of its constituency. The ridiculousness of this situation is reflected in a labour dispute in late 1995 in which: "A young worker at the Hao Wang Dajiu restaurant in Shanghai decided to take her case to the local Labour Disputes and Arbitration Committee (LDAC), only to find that the chairman of her local ACFTU branch was representing the employer at the hearing!"⁹

Independent organisation

The implications of this for workers' self-organising activities should not be underestimated. Two independent labour organisers are currently standing trial for 'subversion', and if convicted will be sentenced to 10 years in prison. Li Wenming's crime was to have organised (along with Kuang Lezhuang and Liao Hetang) a workers' night school to teach literacy and to raise workers' awareness of labour laws and their rights. Though legal, the school was closed by the Public Security Bureau. Later they founded the Workers' Federation and Workers' Friendship Association and published a journal called Workers'

Forum. It was in this journal that the poem of one of the workers who survived the Zhili toy factory fire in 1993 (in which 87 workers were killed) was published. All three were arrested in May 1994 along with another activist, Guo Baosheng. Li and Guo are now standing trial, while Kuang and Liao have been sentenced to "re-education through labour".

"Neo-authoritarianism"

This system of state authoritarian trade unionism is reinforced by a global discourse on the political economy of development which sees the experience of the East Asian Newly-Industrialising Countries (NICs) as a model for economic growth and development. That is, rapid industrialisation overseen by authoritarian political regimes, and the exercise of state power to repress and displace working class struggle, creating conditions for the expansion of state capital and large agglomerations of domestic and foreign capital in partnership with the state.

Within China neo-liberal and market socialist economists alike are attracted to the East Asian NIC model because it legitimates the systematic state repression and coercion required to impose their agenda. Even dissident Chinese intellectuals in exile have begun to speak of the need for a 'new authoritarianism' to maintain stability during the period of 'shock therapy' and to break down the entrenched power of workers and overcome their lack of discipline.

Giving tacit support for the 'neo-authoritarian solution', Western market socialists such as John E. Roemer argue that not only have the authoritarian political regimes of the East Asian NICs exercised the sort of state management of the market economy proposed in the market socialist paradigm, but have successfully achieved the conditions for a transition to bourgeois democracy.¹⁰

In effect this argument converges with the demands of China's political and economic elite for even greater collective social and economic sacrifice by the mass of the working people in this period of market socialist 'transition'. For the subordinate classes this promises to be a permanent transition, and the market socialist vision of Western Marxists differs little from Deng's promise of wealth for all - eventually.

Western market socialists may still claim that unlike the incumbent Chinese Communist regime they promise an end to authoritarianism, since the wealth generated by market socialism will give rise to democratic processes. But the notion of democratic processes - like the labour process - is borrowed from capitalist experience.

As with 'liberal Marxist' opponents of the Chinese Communist regime such as Su Shaozhi, the forms of democratic participation envisaged by market socialists are derived from the institutional forms which exist in capitalist societies, and presumes a separation of the political and the economic that mimics the ideologies of capitalism.¹¹

The proponents of 'actually existing market socialism' in China offer us less a coherent conception of a feasible socialism,

than they do a political strategy and intellectual paradigm that obscures the social violence and exploitation inherent in capitalism, and gives it another name. For a socialist alternative to be imagined and realised a ruthless, sustained critique of capitalism in all its variants is as important now as it has always been. ★

Notes

* Gerard Greenfield and Apo Leong work at the Asia Monitor Resource Center, Hong Kong. A longer version of this paper was published as, "China's Communist Capitalism: The Real World of Market Socialism", in Leo Panitch (ed.), *Ruthless Criticism of All That Exists: Socialist Register 1997*. London: Merlin Press, 1997, pp.96-122.

1. 'Zone workers', *Asian Labour Update*, 18 (May-July 1995), pp.5-7.
2. 'A worker's letter to the students', Gregor Benton and Alan Hunter (eds.) *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire: China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tian'anmen, 1942-1989*

- (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995), p.270.
3. Changkai (ed.) *Laodong Guanxi, Laodongzhe, Laoquan: Dangdai Zhongguo de Laodong Wenti (Labour Relations, Labourers and Labour Rights: Contemporary Chinese Labour Issues)* (Beijing, Chinese Labour Publishing House, 1996), p.111.
4. Jasper Becker, 'Layoffs trigger rise in protests', *South China Morning Post* (November 28, 1996).
5. *Guangdong Labour News* (December 3, 1995); *Workers' Daily* (July 29, 1995). (Trans. Tim Pringle.)
6. Shek Ping Kwan, 'Labour disputes in China', *Change* (October 1996).
7. 'Repression of independent unions by the ACFTU', *China Labour Bulletin* (November 1995), p.10.
8. Apo Leong, 'Masters no more', *Asian Labour Update*, 14, January-March, 1994, p.1.
9. Original emphasis. Han Dongfang, "Workers: The Great Losers in China's Reform Process" (Hong Kong, unpublished mimeo, November 1996), p.5. (Trans. Tim Pringle.)
10. John E. Roemer, *A Future for Socialism* (London: Verso, 1994), p.129.
11. Su Shaozhi, *Democratisation and Reform* (Nottingham, Spokesman, 1988). See also *Su Shaozhi, Shinian Fengyu (Ten Years of Wind and Rain)* (Taipei, Times Cultural Publishing House, 1995).

Australia

All together against Hansen

June 12 saw Australia's largest demonstration yet against racist deputy Pauline Hanson. **Melanie Sjoberg** reports.

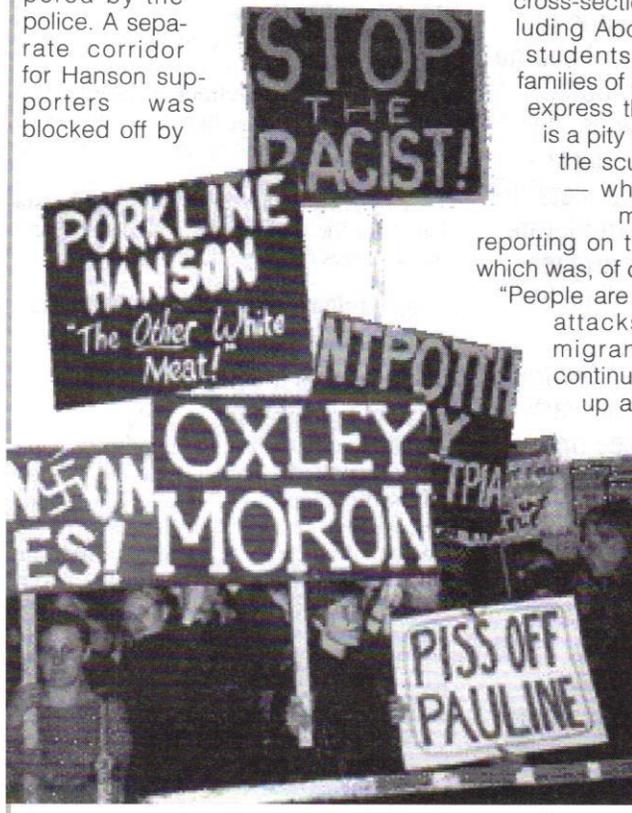
Adelaide — Up to 4,000 people protested outside a One Nation meeting in Adelaide. The protest was organised by a coalition of social justice and environmental activists around the theme "Extinguish racism, reject Hanson and [Prime Minister] Howard". "Hanson is a puppet; Howard pulls the strings" and "Asians are welcome; racists are not" were popular chants which continued well into the night. Only 600 people attended the reactionary meeting.

The efforts of the rally co-ordinators to keep the protest non-violent were hampered by the police. A separate corridor for Hanson supporters was blocked off by

police, who directed them to pass through the rally. At one point, a large contingent of National Action (a neo-fascist group with a history of violence) members pushed and kicked their way through the centre of the rally. Police stood by, refusing to take any action, and later stopped organisers from setting up a PA system, making it difficult for speakers to address the large crowd.

Extinguish Racism organiser Sam King told *Green Left Weekly* that the Findon rally was an enormous success because "it was attended by a large cross-section of the community, including Aboriginal and Asian youth, students, trade unionists and families of all ages who were there to express their views peacefully... It is a pity that the media focused on the scuffles with National Action — which lasted all of a few minutes — instead of reporting on the largely peaceful rally, which was, of course, less sensational."

"People are fed up with her lies and attacks on Aboriginal and migrant communities," he continued. "Hanson is whipping up a racist atmosphere which will only serve to deny Aboriginal people and migrants their democratic rights... It is important to directly challenge the message of racists like Hanson and Howard, so that it doesn't have the space to flourish." ★



Source: Green Left Weekly Home Page, <greenleft@peg.apc.org>

Indonesia interview

After a year of heavy repression,¹ the Suharto regime organised a "festival of democracy," culminating in fixed elections on May 29th. The victory of the ruling GOLKAR party was never in doubt. But the democratic opposition has never been more visible.

Progressive forces used the election campaign to mobilise support for the "Mega-star" coalition of democratic forces led by Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of the country's first president, who was deposed by a coup in 1965. Up to one million suspected Communists were slaughtered in the ensuing violence. Today, many poorer Indonesians associate Megawati with her father's populist policies. She was so popular, that the ageing dictator, General Suharto, manipulated her removal from the presidency of the opposition Democratic Party (PDI) last year.

Many PDI militants continue to support "Mega," who has become a symbol of the pro-democracy movement. In many homes, her picture is displayed as a declaration of opposition to the dictatorship. Supporters of the moderate Islamic PPP front also participated actively in election protests against the dictatorship.

The far-left *Partai Rakyat Demokrasi* (Peoples Democratic Party) also played a role in these protests. Leaders of the PRD, one of the few Indonesian groups supporting the independence of East Timor, recently received harsh sentences in high-profile subversion trials.² The party is now banned. Membership or association with it as well as possession and circulation of its materials is an imprisonable offence.

PRD Central Committee member Edwin Gozal, 24, talks to International Viewpoint correspondent B. Skanthakumar about the anti-dictatorship movement in Indonesia, and the particular role of the PRD.

• The show trials of PRD leaders ended harshly. Thirteen years for Budiman Sudjatmiko and lesser sentences for Dita Sari, Petrus Hariyanto and the others.

We were fully aware of the nature of the Indonesian justice system so we didn't waste our time complaining about the unfairness and bias of the legal system. Instead we planned on using the trials as a platform to make propaganda about the PRD and its political programme and our analysis of the real condition of Indonesian society.³

PRD President Budiman made a political speech in front of the court, exposing the anti-democratic "five political laws" [see box]. Dita Sari, President of the PPBI trade union (Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggles) didn't make a legal defence but read out the political manifesto of the PRD; educating the court as well as the public about our party and what it really stands for.

Our comrades were prepared for the death penalty. However Suharto's 'New Order' regime was faced by an international solidarity movement with the political prisoners and pressure from the international community over their human rights record and other abuses and so didn't impose the maximum penalty.

I believe that everyone in Indonesia knows of the trials of the PRD leaders and the sentences that were handed down.

* In addition to the PRD members, the leader of the independent SBSI trade union, was on trial for subversion in relation to these same events.

Mochtar Pakpahan was imprisoned for a year after the Medan riots in 1994, then released on appeal by the Supreme Court. But in Indonesia the judgement of the Supreme Court may be reviewed. After the July crack-down the Supreme Court revoked its own decision and then re-imposed the previous four year sentence.

Pakpahan's trial on the new charges has been postponed because he is in poor health. He is extremely ill and wants to travel to the United States for medical treatment but has been prevented from doing so by the New Order regime.

• What are prison conditions like?

The prisoners don't have free access to their families and friends. They aren't able to read the newspapers and magazines they would like but only officially approved materials. Even these are censored of their political news. Up to now they have had some limited freedom but recently Budiman Sudjatmiko was warned that if he continued to give interviews to the press he would be transferred to Nusa Kambangan. This is an isolated island which is off-limits to most people.

The families of the PRD prisoners have formed a committee to publicise the injustice of the trials and sentences and prison conditions. This is an important development. Even in 1965 after the massacres,⁴ people were too afraid to do anything like this. This could be quite embarrassing for the regime as these are elderly, devout and respectable people and don't look like the parents of "Communist subversives" - which is what their children are supposed to be.

• Are the comrades in contact with the Party outside?

We had to reorganise ourselves after the military crack-down because many of our leaders are in prison but the new leadership maintains close contact with the jailed comrades and they are kept fully informed of our activities and campaigns.

• The results of the elections of May 29th were a foregone conclusion...

The ruling party, GOLKAR, won over 70% of the vote. Just as it had "predicted." The purpose of these elections so far as the regime is concerned is to invoke some legitimacy and constitutional respectability for its authority. The PRD's response was to call upon the people to boycott this farce.

• Election related violence hit a new high in these elections. GOLKAR supporters were attacked. So were police stations and official buildings. The PRD was blamed. What happened?

These incidents of violence are an expression of the anger of the masses at this electoral charade. The Indonesian people know about their civil and political rights and their anti-Suharto dictatorship consciousness has also increased rapidly.

However what they don't yet have is an idea of a solution to this situation. How to overcome this dictatorship? They don't see a way out and so they make riots instead. It is a spontaneous outburst of anger and frustration and has nothing to do with conspirators or



masterminds!

We are used to these baseless accusations being made against the PRD by the regime. We don't bother replying to them.

We support the masses who have been agitating for a "Mega-Star-People" coalition between Megawati Sukarnoputri, the leader of the PDI who was removed by the Government and in whose place a regime loyalist was imposed, the other main opposition party the PPP (whose symbol is a star), and the aspirations and demands of the popular sectors.

We share their demands for the repeal of the Five Political Laws and to end the doctrine of Dual Function of the armed forces.

This demand reflects our own goal of building the widest possible coalition for the overthrow of the dictatorship and for popular multi-party democracy in its place.

This is an informal coalition which was sparked from the grassroots when the leader of the PPP branch in Solo went to visit Megawati. He proposed that the opposition instead of fighting each other should combine against GOLKAR. He was reacting to the sentiment of Megawati supporters who unable to bear supporting the legal faction of their own PDI preferred to support the PPP instead.

Mega gave no direct reply to this suggestion. She just smiled. When this was reported to the masses, they began carrying portraits of Megawati to PPP rallies and an unofficial 'smile coalition' was established.

The PRD decided to become involved in this mass movement. We supported it during the campaign. We agreed completely with its seven basic demands:

- build a coalition to oppose Suharto
- ending dual function of the military
- withdraw the five political laws
- investigate the wealth of the Suharto family
- end corruption
- increase the daily minimum wage
- lower the prices of basic commodities

• What is your analysis of the results?

Well we were not surprised that GOLKAR won the elections! The PDI vote collapsed to under three percent which shows how discredited their new leadership is even among its own members and is a vindication for Megawati supporters of her popularity and the illegitimacy of her removal. The PPP

vote received 23% which was good considering the electoral malpractice. This vote doesn't reflect their real support.

• The PRD called for a boycott...

It appears that our boycott call was not very successful. In spite of their hostility towards the government, and knowing the result would be manipulated, most people saw no option but to vote on the day. Many voted for the opposition parties wherever possible. But many millions were intimidated by their employers into voting for GOLKAR. [voting is compulsory in Indonesia]

What we did accomplish was mass political education on the true nature of these elections. We also explained that there are many ways people can oppose and struggle against this dictatorship and that the 1997 General Election is an artificial exercise.

We had called on people to protest in the streets on polling day instead. However when it became clear that the people would be voting we joined with the PPP and PDI (Megawati) in setting up election monitoring offices so that people could report malpractice and manipulations.

• What is the PRD's strategy now?

In the next eight months [until the presidential election] we intend to make

The repressive framework

The Five Political Laws and the Dual Function

The Indonesian regime rests on a barrage of repressive legislation. Restrictions on democracy are codified in the Five Political Laws of 1985, while the repressive function is assured through dwifungsi, the Dual Function doctrine of the role of ABRI (Armed Forces).

The first law gives authority to the Government to administer elections and screen candidates thus allowing them to interfere and manipulate the process and the result.

The second law creates two legislative bodies. The Peoples Consultative Assembly (MPR) and Peoples Representative Council or Parliament (DPR). These elections were for the DPR. Of its total membership 425 are directly elected while 75 members are drawn from the Armed Forces and appointed by the President. These 500 become members of the 1,000 strong MPR. The remaining seats are appointed by the President. In total 575 members are directly appointed by the President which gives the ruling GOLKAR Party and the Suharto regime an in-built advantage. The MPR also act as an electoral college to elect the President. So he never need fear losing his office!

The third of the laws permits only three legal political parties. They are the ruling party GOLKAR, the United Development Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). No one else can form alternative legal parties.

All three parties are under the control of the Minister of Home Affairs.

The fourth law is on referendums and stipulates that there must be a ninety per cent vote in favour of a proposition if any changes are to be made to the Constitution or legal system. So an unfair law or constitutional provision can never be modified in a democratic way.

The fifth law regards mass organisations. It states that in every sector of society from students and peasants to workers there can only be one organisation representing their interests. So only the state approved organisation is allowed to exist which of course represents the interests of the ruling class.

The doctrine of dwifungsi or dual function means that the military is permitted to have a role not only as a professional army but also to be in the fore-front of social life in politics, business and state administration. So for example the Head of the Supreme Court is from the military, as is Head of the Parliament, University Rectors and regional Governors. At every level of society from the village to the Cabinet, the military must be represented. ★

more propaganda through the media. This high anti-dictatorship consciousness must be channelled into some political outlet. We are agitating for the currently divided pro-democracy movement to come together in a Popular Democratic Coalition on the basis that everyone is committed to the overthrow of Suharto.

We believe that every sector of society should be represented and involved ranging from workers and peasants, to the urban poor, NGOs, the *Partai Uni Demokrasi Indonesia* of Sri-Bintang Pamungkas, Nationalists, Catholic Church, the middle class and of course those involved in the "Mega-Star-People" movement in recent months.

Our aim would be to overthrow Suharto and form a coalition government to introduce multi-party democracy. I must stress here that the PRD regards this as a transitional arrangement not a permanent electoral or programmatic coalition.

We have a major struggle ahead even after the removal of Suharto to create a political framework for open and free political competition. We need a transitional government to lead these changes with the objective of organising the first free election.

In a liberal democratic situation there will be the space for us to freely voice our own views and to organise ourselves and our mass organisations. We will go into that election with our own political programme which is anti-capitalist and for popular democracy and is based on mass action and aspirations of the workers and peasants.

• **The PRD has consistently taken a stance in favour of the self-determination of East Timor, illegally occupied by Indonesia.⁵ How did you arrive at this courageous position?**

The Indonesian people and the Maubere people of East Timor have a common enemy, the Suharto regime. Only the overthrow of the regime will create the opportunity for the freedom of the East Timorese. The Indonesian Government spends billions of rupiah on military hardware to crush the East Timorese resistance and to maintain its control there.

When some Indonesians disagree with us, one of our responses is to ask why the Government can find so much money for western arms but cannot fund our education system.

We try to use examples and arguments like this drawn from the everyday experiences of the masses to politically educate them and raise their awareness of this issue. Among students and youth there is a progressive attitude but the older generation is more difficult to convince.

However, when their fathers, husbands and sons come back dead from East Timor, they start to question the war there. Also many people are aware that the Indonesian government is frequently criticised in international fora for its abuses and occupation of East Timor so they realise something is very wrong.

When we sent an open letter to 15



leading pro-democracy individuals asking their support in our boycott call, the only one who replied was the jailed FALINTIL leader Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao. He said he supported us and that the East Timorese too should boycott these elections. We have good relations with the East Timorese resistance in Indonesia and abroad.

The PRD sees our struggles as linked and we often say that we must intensify the pro-democracy movement in the main islands to divert the Indonesian military from East Timor and thus give more space for the resistance there.

• **What do you hope to achieve in your summer '97 European solidarity tour?**

We intend by the end of the year to have an office and permanent representative in Europe. We already have an international office in Australia. Our intention is to build a network of like-minded individuals and parties in solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor.

We don't have much faith in the United Nations system or the international community of nations. If they genuinely support the freedom of East Timor they could have

prevented Indonesia's occupation twenty years ago. If they support democracy in Indonesia they could make it possible thirty years ago when Suharto took power. Western countries have their own economic interests in Indonesia and that is their priority.

The experience we are trying to learn from is that of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in the 1960s and 1970s when across the world there were mobilisations against US intervention in Vietnam.

It is that kind of protest that we would like to see develop around Indonesia and East Timor. In countries which supply arms to Indonesia, activists should be campaigning against the sale of weapons and military supplies or any military training.

Western trans-nationals which invest in Indonesia should be confronted on the human rights record of the regime and their support for it. Similarly western governments should be pressurised about the illegal occupation of East Timor and asked what they are doing about it.

Suharto's time is running out. There will be change in Indonesia. We have learned from the experiences of anti-dictatorship movements in the Philippines in 1986 and elsewhere. We don't want democracy for the few. We need your solidarity and support. ★

Notes

- 1 Max Lane, "Massive repression of the new left", *International Viewpoint* # 281, October 1996.
- 2 B. Skanthakumar, "Indonesian Show Trials: Act now to free the detainees!", *Socialist Outlook* (London) January 1997.
- 3 For information about the PRD and its political positions see, PRD/ASIET (ed.) *The Struggle for Democracy in Indonesia: Introducing the Peoples Democratic Party (PRD)*, September 1996. Available from ASIET PO Box 458, Broadway 2007 Australia. E.mail: asiet@peg.apc.org
- 4 In October 1965 the military led by Suharto crushed an abortive putsch using it as pretext to extinguish the Left through the killing of between 500 000 and one million people mainly members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and the jailing of tens of thousands, some of whom remain in prison till today. For analysis of Left strategy see Joseph Hansen (ed.) *The Catastrophe in Indonesia*, Merit Publishers: New York 1966; Olle Tornquist, *Dilemmas of Third World Communism: The Destruction of the PKI in Indonesia*, Zed Books: London 1984.
- 5 Will McMahon, "East Timor: Eighteen years of resistance", *International Viewpoint* # 250, November 1993.

Morocco

Protest after union leader assassinated

The bound corpse of Abdellah Mounacir was found in Agadir harbour on 31 May, four days after the local trade union leader had been kidnapped by unidentified men in the village of Ait Melloul. According to family members, his body bore the signs of "monstrous torture," which he had suffered before his death.

Born in 1956, Mounacir was a lifelong political and trade union militant. At the time of his death he was General Secretary of the sailors union *Syndicat des Marins et des Officiers de la Haute Peche*, affiliated to Morocco's *Confederation Democratique du Travail*. A founder

member of the union, Mounacir was, from 1993 to 1997 its (unpaid) full-timer. He edited the union's newsletter, *Boussola* (Compass), and *Agadir-Syndical*. An active member of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH), he had created its working group for the abolition of the proposed new labour code.

He was also active in left politics, always with the perspective of the construction of a socialist workers' party in Morocco. ★ [JD]

Messages of support can be sent to the Mounacir family at no.1, rue 491, Lotissement des Marins, Cite des Amicales, Agadir, Morocco. Tel/fax (+212 8) 22 88 28

Revolutionary violence?

Violence has taken centre stage in South Korean student politics, after two suspected police informers were beaten to death by militants of the radical student union *Hanchongnyon*. **Terry Lawless** reports from Seoul.

A five day battle between riot police and student supporters of the National Federation of Student Councils (*Hanchongnyon*) at Hanyang University in Seoul at the beginning of June led to two deaths, one of which was the result of the torture by students of a man suspected of being police spy.

At the same time, the *Namchonghanyon* grouping of student organisations in the traditionally radical south western provinces of Cholla, announced that eight of its members were responsible for a similar torture death of a 24 year old man whose battered body was discovered at Chonnam University on May 27.

Organisational crisis

These regrettable events testify to the serious ideological crisis in the organised student movement. Since the August 1996 disturbances at Yonsei University, 40 of the country's 156 student councils have pulled out of the national organisation.

An attempt to organise a one day student strike earlier in the spring term to protest the recent political scandals centring on the collapse of the Hanbo *chaebol* (conglomerate) and accusations of bribery and influence-peddling in high places was largely a failure, with most students choosing to ignore the boycott.

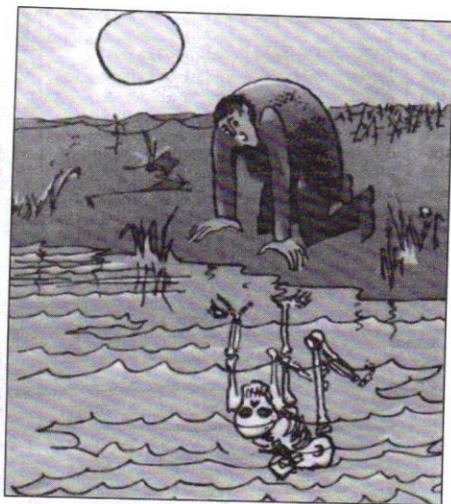
Nevertheless, at the beginning of June 1997, 6,000 students made the trip to Seoul in order to attend the inauguration of the new *Hanchongnyon* leadership. Violent confrontations occurred because riot police were under orders to prevent the ceremony from taking place.

Hanchongnyon had previously been outlawed under the National Security Law as being pro-North Korean, the most serious crime on South Korea's statute books.

Hanchongnyon called a halt to the violent demonstrations when a riot policeman was accidentally crushed by a police vehicle during a riot. But a second man, Lee Suk, died after two *Hanchongnyon* militants repeatedly beat him to force a confession that he was a police spy. Three students now face murder charges.

Repression

The ruling New Korea Party reacted by ordering the dissolution of *Hanchongnyon* by the end of July. A government spokesperson



suggested that only members of the central leadership of the organisation will be targeted, not member student council participants.

Central students leaders who are still affiliated on August 1st will face prison terms. Prosecutors have said that they will also close all offices of the student group in an effort to enforce the dissolution decree. Ninety-nine prominent *Hanchongnyon* members are currently on a police wanted list and face overseas travel bans.

Police say that 1,249 students have been questioned and 214 arrested for throwing firebombs or wielding steel bars during the course of the disturbances. Hanyang University is suing *Hanchongnyon* for 108.6 million won (\$121,000) in damages.

Myongdong Cathedral, a traditional focal point for student and worker protest, has urged 31 *Hanchongnyon* members to stop a sit-in protest begun on Thursday June 12 protesting Kim Young-sam's failure to reveal by how much he exceeded the legal financial limit in his successful bid for the presidency in 1992. Myongdong Cathedral has traditionally been off-limits to the police.

Solid support

Police estimate that the core group of *Hanchongnyon* numbers between 2,000 and 3,000. The organisation still wields considerable influence, particularly in the traditionally radical south-west and at key universities in Seoul.

The defection of 40 students councils is a serious blow, but also means that a large majority of the students councils remain supportive. Only 20 student leaders attended a recent meeting at Joong-ang University in Seoul following the announcement of the first torture death, and demanding that the leadership of *Hanchongnyon* resign.

It is too early to say whether the recent events mark the impending collapse of the organisation. But the South Korean student movement is clearly in ideological disarray.

These recent torture deaths indicate the seriousness of the crisis.

State violence

Ten years after the end of authoritarian rule, the political landscape in South Korea has changed enormously. The country is no longer a police state. The prison terms given to two ex-presidents are one sign of this.

These changes in the political system are affecting the manner in which struggle against the government is carried on, including the legitimacy of violence in student and other protests.

The basic problem is that in spite of the opening of the electoral process and the recent revelations about bribery and corruption, the manner in which the Korean government responds to protest has remained much the same since military rule ended 10 years ago.

Riot police are routinely despatched in large numbers to contain any student or worker political activity. Indeed, the potential force deployed against students has actually increased recently with helicopters being employed for the first time during last year's disturbances at Yonsei University.

Students and North Korea

It is difficult to know how much the current crisis in North Korea is effecting ideological debate among student activists. Some elements of the student movement do promote a Stalinist vision of socialism. This is hardly surprising. After all, both North and South Korean media call Kim Jong-il's Stalinist monarchy in the North "socialist".

Some within *Hanchongnyon* continue to insist that the prominent North Korean defector, Hwang Jong-yop, was the victim of a kidnapping — as North Korea originally argued. Some students also suggest that talk of famine in the North is merely propaganda invented by the South Korean CIA.

Part of the problem is the relative lack of Korean language publications offering alternative viewpoints — and those who publish such material run the risk of imprisonment under the National Security Law.

Violence will continue as long as the regime deploys riot police against the student movement. But student militants themselves must also re-examine their attitude to "revolutionary violence," including the treatment of suspected police informers.

One sign of this self-examination is the dissident poster put up by a group of *Hanchongnyon* supporters at Seoul National University after the first beating death. It read: "The strongest weapon in a student movement lies not in violence, but in the innocent means to attempt to create a society full of love. We must apologise to the people for what took place and make efforts so that such incidents will not happen again." ★

NGOs protest immigration rules

Japanese Non-Governmental Organisations in the refugee and immigrant support fields recently published the following "Statement of objection" to proposed amendments to the Immigration control and Refugee Recognition Law ("Immigration Law") approved by the House of Councillors on April 25th.

The legislative debate followed a rapid increase of Chinese illegally entering Japan since last year. But Justice Ministry seeks not only to strictly penalise brokers and smugglers, but also those who "assist," foreigners who illegally entered Japan (including those who entered with false passports). In other words, under the new law, support activities to undocumented migrants by NGOs and other organisations will also be subject to prosecution.

Migrant support groups have also expressed concern over the creation by police of an "Office to Counter Measures Crimes by Foreigners and the Headquarters of Special Measures Against International Organised Crimes" in Osaka. With these new police offices, the possibility that police will arrest migrant supporters reoccur. Furthermore, the revision will intensify Japanese prejudice against foreigners in general.

Because it is difficult for people from abroad to get permission to work in Japan, many people come and work without a proper visa. These people often face problems such as unpaid wages, hushing-up of accidents on the job, sudden firing, sickness, marriage or divorce, problems getting education for children, forced prostitution, discrimination and loss of human rights, and are unable to speak out against these problems. We, the NGO groups listed below, assist such people in solving human rights problems.

Since the beginning of 1997, a distorted image of ships packed with illegal immigrants landing in Japan with gangsters, has been created by the mass media. Targeting the syndicates and networks that support



such activities, the Ministry of Justice proposed Immigration Law amendments which were passed by cabinet on April 4, and is in the process of being approved by the House of Representatives. However, these proposed amendments may cause the following problems:

1. The new Article No. 74 makes the concealment of illegal immigrants an offence, and provides for punishment under related articles. The staff of NGOs and other organisations that assist such people, their church pastors, their friends and spouses, and the owners of the apartments where they stay, will be guilty of crimes under the immigration law, and liable to fines of up to 3 million yen and up to 5 years in jail. This is likely to lead to severe erosion of the human rights of foreigners in Japan.

2. Additions to Article No. 24. Foreigners with proper visas who offer hospitality to people from their own country, and Japanese spouses of "illegal" foreigners, will be liable to prosecution under the immigration law.

3. Definition of new crimes.

4. Problems with recognition of refugees. People who come to Japan without proper visas will be liable to fines or forced repatriation.

5. Problems with the present laws which have been shelved. In '93-94 there have been several cases of immigration department employees who have violently abused detainees sexually and otherwise. The immigration department has promised to revise laws to protect the human rights of prisoners, but the proposed amendments to the law do

not address this issue.

These proposed revisions can be used not only as a tool to pressure foreign migrant support groups, but also to increase Japanese prejudice against ordinary people from overseas. Even at present, there are cases of city and ward offices refusing to register the marriages and children of people from abroad who overstay their visa. These proposed revisions can only worsen this situation.

The number of people from abroad who are treated as coming for the purpose of working, and are refused visas at the point of immigration, has been increasing in the past few years; The number of people who overstay is said to be decreasing, but about 280,000 are overstayed. Justice administrators don't recognise that the increase of number of stowaways and illegal entrants is a result of people being refused visas.

We object to the revisions because they seek to make supporters of refugees and immigrants, human rights groups, ordinary Japanese, and people from abroad, who help migrants accessories to crime. The amendment will cause the situation to deteriorate, so we ask that they be rejected. ★

Source: Ajikon-Tshushin, May 1997. Aajian Journalists' Club Newsletter by Shigeo Yanagihara, Forum on Asian Migrants in Japan (FAMJ)
For more information: fmwj@jca.ax.apc.org.jp
Forwarded by ALARM, the monitor and co-ordinator of Asian labour actions alerts in behalf of the Asia Monitor Resource Center, Asian Migrant Centre and Committee for Asian Women. Please send you action alerts to: The ALARM Secretariat, 4 Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Tel (852) 23120031 Fax: (852) 29920111.24

Exclusive interview with Health Minister MB Sondji

Congo-Zaire's first reforms

Before becoming Health Minister, Dr. J.B. Sondji was director of Kinshasa Hospital, and leader of the Patriotic Front (Front Patriotique), the main radical left party in Kinshasa. Alain Mathieu asked him about the first weeks of the new government.

• What has happened to the remains of the Mobutu regime's repressive forces?

Most have been disarmed, and have surrendered their arms and uniforms. We discovered an incredible quantity of weapons in Kinshasa, in barracks, in the university, and in private houses. The officers of the Alliance are puzzled: why didn't Mobutu's soldiers defend the town, since they had all the military resources they could have needed? Many of Mobutu's troops fled to Congo-Brazzaville, contributing to the instability there. There will doubtless be some talk now about integrating part of Mobutu's armed forces into the new army, but it isn't planned for the moment.

• What relationship do the Alliance troops have with the population?

Generally, the relationship is good. These are young, but very disciplined soldiers. Obviously, there have been mistakes, like the famous prohibition of miniskirts and hot-pants. But these are isolated incidents, and the authorities have spoken on the radio to assure the population that there are no directives of this type, and that any victims of aggression from the Alliance troops should make a complaint in the offices which the new authorities are opening.

You have to understand that we still have 15,000 Alliance soldiers sleeping outside, because the former regime's demobilised troops and their families are occupying the barracks. We haven't expelled them, because there is nowhere for them to go. This is causing all kinds of logistical problems and, obviously, the occasional regrettable incident.

• How will you select delegates to the June 1998 Constituent Assembly?

We quickly realised that it would be impossible to organise a Constituent Assembly this summer, as we had promised. The democratic opposition's experience with the Sovereign National Conference a few years ago showed that, in a large country like this, you need time to organise any truly representative event. My own party is pushing for a speedy clarification and publication of the government's plans for this Assembly.



• Will there be a multi-party system? Or will political parties be suspended?

For the moment, we have suspended

party activities like large street demonstrations. But the parties themselves have not been banned or suspended. The Patriotic Front functions normally, and we continue to

COCAD/CADTM

Freeze Mobutu's assets!

The Brussels-based Campaign to Abolish Third World Debt (COCAD) has initiated a campaign demanding that governments freeze the assets of the Mobutu clan.

During the 32 years of Mobutu's rule, average income in Congo-Zaire declined by 65%. When the dictator finally fled earlier this year, the country's health budget was a meagre US 3.5 cents. The *Financial Times* (12 May) estimates Mobutu's personal fortune as over US\$ 4 billion, or enough to re-pay one third of the country's foreign debt. The dictator stole about half of the \$8.5 bn. which Zaire borrowed between 1982 and 1994. And only about 10% of diamond exports passed through the state accounts. The rest fattened the pockets of the Mobutu clan. Since 1978, the key company Gecamines paid all revenues from its monopoly in copper and cobalt exports to a special, presidential bank account.

According to COCAD, "this considerable wealth should be returned to the legitimate authorities in Congo-Zaire."

And the country's foreign debt should be cancelled immediately. "For years, the IMF, World Bank and the western countries have tolerated, even supported this regime of pillage. Do they have the right to demand that the people of Congo-Zaire must repay a debt which they did were not responsible for? We think that the people of Congo-Zaire have the right to reclaim the riches which were stolen from them, and the public finds stolen by the dictator and his court.

The demand to freeze Mobutu's assets abroad came from the opposition to that regime. We should support and amplify their call for the return of these resources to the new authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo." ★

To add your name to this statement, contact COCAD/CADTM, 29, rue Plantin, 1070 Brussels.

have regular meetings with the membership. In areas where there is an office of the Alliance, we have held a couple of joint meetings, and there has been no interference.

The new government has clearly said that there is no plan to ban political parties. But certain interests are spreading rumours to the contrary. It must be clear that, until the new authorities have mastered the situation, we must prevent these particular interests and the supporters of the previous regime, from blocking the installation of the new regime.

• What discussions led to the formation of the new government?

I can't say. But I do know that our party, the Front Patriotique, was the first group which the Alliance (AFDL) contacted when it entered Kinshasa. Since most of the Alliance leaders didn't know Kinshasa, and the political 'microcosm' here, we advised them that it would be premature to form a government in the first 72 hours. We suggested that they wait, and make a serious selection of the new members. In particular, we warned them of the interests grouped around Etienne Tshisekedi, and the danger that they prevent us from managing the country.

Most of public opinion, including within Tshisekedi's own party, the UDPS, is divided in its judgement of the Alliance. But most of the population is in favour of the changes which have taken place.

• What are the first measures planned by the new government?

Firstly, a rapid improvement in the public transport system. Then measures to help the jobs situation. We have created a kind of "infobank" to try to match unemployed people with qualifications with those who could employ them.

As Health Minister, I have been instructed to overhaul a number of medical establishments. In the first phase, I hope to establish six new centres, one in each province. I will also try to end the system whereby patients must buy their own medicines, outside the hospitals. This means supplying the hospitals with the necessary pharmaceutical products.

We are also determined to improve the security of the citizens and their property. In agriculture, we will take measures to improve the supply of food to the population. And we will reform the currency since, at the moment, the Zaïre monetary system has broken down, which makes exchanges difficult. The National Bank of South Africa will help us introduce the new currency.

• The Alliance says it wants a 'social market economy'. What does this mean?

Look. The "social market economy" is a market economy which tries to take certain social aspects into account. It is a capitalist type of economy. We in the Patriotic Front oppose this orientation, just as we said in the Sovereign National Conference.

We think that, now that the Alliance dominates a national government, composed

of various tendencies, that we should re-discuss and reconsider this conception of "social market economy." Let those who propose it, say exactly what they mean!

For the time being, it is hard to say what the Alliance really thinks, because they have been so preoccupied with organising and carrying out the war. Only now are the fundamental questions being asked.

• Is the recent privatisation of the railways an indication of the Alliance's sensibilities?

[The stations were being occupied by railway workers who had been sacked when the company was privatised -- Ed]

Absolutely. Generally speaking, the Alliance is quite left-wing — against privatisations, automatically suspicious of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and so on. But as I said, it is still too early to see how this standpoint will be translated into concrete policies.

• Can the USA, France and South Africa impose their priorities on the Congo?

No, not at all. The general tendency is in the other direction: clear independence, coupled with a willingness to work with all foreign parties in the search of the best solutions to our problems. The French media are wrong to say that Congo is switching over to the "anglo-saxon" zone of influence. We are

not a nation of amnesiacs. We remember perfectly well that the disastrous state of our country is due to Mobutu's role as valet of the Americans. After what we have just been through, we are hardly going to throw ourselves back into Washington's arms!

What we would like to see is the French people redefining their country's relationship with African countries. We are convinced that, in development questions, we can find a series of mutually advantageous agreements.

• What kind of solidarity can we offer?

We face a massive, well-organised propaganda campaign, led mainly by part of the French oligarchy, frustrated at the loss of one of their most faithful servants. What we would like to do is develop direct relationships with the French population, which was never involved in that unjust policy of their leaders. We hope that you, the left, will organise popular and trade union mobilisations demanding the seizure of Mobutu's assets, and the cancellation of our country's foreign debts. And direct links with your counterparts in Congo! These type of activities would be very useful to us, but for the moment we lack the formal contacts. ★

Interviewed in Kinshasa by telephone on 1 June 1997 by Albert Mathieu.

South Africa General strike over employment conditions

On 2 June, more than two millions workers responded to the call by COSATU for a 24 hour general strike in support of demands for better conditions of employment. In all cities and towns, workers also attended marches and rallies, except in KwaZulu natal where a stay away was called. Reports thus far indicate that well over a quarter of a million attended rallies and marches.

This was the third since the 1994 elections. As is often the case, most commentators have claimed that the action means that the Alliance [between the ANC, Communist Party and COSATU] is about to collapse. Nothing can be further from the truth. The ANC and the Communist party have supported the need for the broadest mobilisation of workers in support of the need for progressive legislation. In general, legislative proposals by the government are aimed at correcting the imbalances and injustices of the apartheid era."

COSATU's demands include

- a 45 hour working week immediately, and a phased reduction to 40 hours/week over five years. The confederation estimates that the reduc-

tion to 45 hours will benefit "more than 2 million workers most of whom are unorganised or vulnerable."

- Six months maternity leave of which at least 4 months should be paid. The government is only proposing an increase from 3 to 4 months. Women's social security (UIF) benefits should not be exhausted during maternity leave. "As a movement committed to women's equality, we will fight this one to the bitter end.

- resistance to "the potential of "downward variation" under the guise of "flexibility", which would be an erosion of workers' basic rights; and the extensive discretion of the Minister to vary (including potentially downgrade) the basic conditions of workers.

- "We reject the employers' demand that Sunday work be regarded as a normal day. In this regard we agree with the government approach even though there are areas that require tightening. ★

Source: COSATU press statement "Defend, Consolidate and advance transformation," 2 June 1997

Che Guevara

The spark that does not die

Years pass, fashions change, post-modernism succeeds modernism, democratorships replace dictatorships, and the Berlin Wall has fallen under the new Wall of Money. But according to **Michael Löwy**, thirty years after his death, Che Guevara's message is still a glowing beacon to those who know that a better world is possible.

There is something in the life and the legacy of the Argentinean doctor/guerrilla/Cuban revolutionary which still speaks to the generations coming of age in 1997. How else can we explain the mounting numbers of articles, books, films, and debates on Che? It is not simply in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of his death; who was interested in the thirtieth anniversary of Joseph Stalin's death, in 1983?

Like Jose Marti, Emiliano Zapata, Augusto Sandino, Farabundo Marti, and Camilo Torres, Che is one of those heroic figures who died still fighting, gun in hand, and who have become, forever, seeds of the future planted in the soil of Latin America, stars of hope in the heavens of people's aspirations and desires, glowing coals banked under the grey ash of disappointment and disenchantment.

In every upsurge of revolutionary movements in Latin America over the last thirty years, from Argentina to Chile, from Nicaragua to El Salvador, from Guatemala to Mexico and Chiapas, there are traces of "*Guevarismo*" -sometimes clear, sometimes faint. Not only in the collective visions of those who struggle, but also in their debates over methods, strategy, and the very nature of "the struggle".

Seeds of Guevarismo have been germinating over the last thirty years, in soil furnished by the political culture of the Latin American left. Now these seeds are bearing stems, leaves, and fruits Che's traces are one of the red threads of which people from Patagonia to the Rio Grand weave their dreams.

Are Che's ideas out of date? Is it now possible to transform Latin America without a revolution? This is the theory which some Latin American leftist theoreticians (calling themselves "realists") have advanced in recent years. In books like the journalist Jorge Castañeda's *Utopia Disarmed* (1993).

Only a few months after the publication of his book, Castañeda's own country, Mexico, saw the spectacular uprising of the indigenous people of Chiapas, under the leadership of an organisation of armed utopians, the EZLN, whose principal organisers come from the guevarist tradition. True, in



contrast to traditional guerrilla groups, the EZLN "Zapatistas", say that their objective is not "taking power", but providing inspiration and support for the self-organisation of Mexican civil society, with the ultimate goal of a profound transformation of the country's social and political system. Nonetheless, without the uprising of January 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) -still armed, four years later- would not have become a reference point for the victims of neo-liberalism, not only in Mexico but throughout Latin America and the rest of the world. Zapatismo is a mix of several subversive traditions, but guevarismo is a key ingredient in the bubbling stew of this unprecedented revolutionary culture.

In a recently published *Newsweek* article, Castañeda has begun to ask whether it is really possible to use non-revolutionary methods to take wealth and power out of the hands of the rich and powerful elite, thus transforming the long-standing social structures of Latin America. If this proves too difficult at the end of the twentieth century, he admits that the world will have to recognise that, "...Che Guevara had a point, after all".¹

The political is personal

Che was not only a heroic fighter, but a revolutionary thinker, with a political and moral project and a system of ideas and values for which he fought and gave his life. The philosophy which gave his political and ideological choices their coherence, colour, and taste was a deep revolutionary humanism. For Che, the true Communist, the true revolutionary was one who felt that the great problems of all humanity were his or her personal problems, one who was capable of "feeling anguish whenever someone was assassinated, no matter where it was in the world, and of feeling exultation whenever a new banner of liberty was raised somewhere

else."² Che's internationalism -a way of life, a secular faith, a categorical imperative, and a spiritual "nationality"- was the living and concrete expression of this revolutionary Marxist humanism.

Che often quoted Jose Marti's words that "any human being should feel on his own face the blows struck on the face of another". The struggle for this dignity was one of the ethical principles which would inspire all of his actions, from the battle of Santa Clara to the final desperate fight in the Bolivian mountains. What Che called "the banner of human dignity" is still an important term in the culture of Latin America. Its origins may lie in Don Quixote, a work which Che read in the Sierra Maestra, used in the "literature classes" that he gave peasant guerrilla recruits, and a hero with whom he identified in the last letter he wrote to his parents.

This value is no stranger to Marxism. Marx himself wrote that "the proletariat needs dignity even more than it needs bread".³

Consideration of Guevara's strategic thought has often been limited to the idea of the guerrilla foco (expanding nucleus) But his ideas on the revolution in Latin America are much more profound. In 1967 he argued that "There is no other change to make: either socialist revolution or the caricature of a revolution". In effect, Che helped an entire generation of revolutionaries to free themselves from the sterile prison of the Stalinist dogma of "stagism".⁴

Of course, one does find in his writings - whether on the Cuban experience or on Latin America- and even more in his tragic Bolivian episode, a tendency to reduce revolution to armed struggle; armed struggle to guerrilla struggles in rural areas, and guerrilla struggle itself to the small knot which formed the foco. This tendency has subsequently dominated the guevarist tradition in Latin

America.

But you can also find passages in his works which lent nuance to the guerrilla conception -for example in insisting on the importance of mass political work, or on the inadequacy of armed struggle in countries with democratic regimes. Not to mention his explicit refusal of assassinations or blind terrorism.⁵

The guevarist legacy, which left its imprint on the strategies of Latin American revolutionary groups from the 60s to the 80s, is still with us, as a revolutionary sensibility and an unyielding resistance to the established order on the part of the continental left, from social movements like the Movement of Landless Peasants in Brazil, to currents which call themselves socialist.

Socialism in the Americas, wrote Jose Carlos Mariategui in 1929, cannot be a copy, but a heroic creation. That is exactly what Che tried to do, in rejecting any possibility of copying the "really existing" models and in searching for a new path to socialism, a more radical, more egalitarian, more fraternal, more human model which would better fit a real communist ethic.

His ideas on socialism and democracy were still evolving at the time of his death, but in his speeches and writings, one can clearly see him taking an increasingly critical position on the self-proclaimed "real socialism" of Stalin's followers. In his famous "Algiers Speech," in February 1965, he called for those countries calling themselves socialist to "liquidate their tacit complicity with the exploiter countries of the West". A tacit complicity which showed itself in the unequal trade relations with countries trying to liberate themselves from the imperialist ghetto. He added "Socialism cannot exist if there is no transformation in our consciousness which leads to a new fraternal regard for humanity, as much at the individual level in societies which have built or are building socialism as at the global level, *vis-à-vis* all people who suffer imperialist oppression."⁶

In his March 1965 essay *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, Che analysed the models of constructing socialism that existed in Eastern Europe. Following his own revolutionary humanist precepts, he rejected a conception which claimed to "conquer capitalism with its own fetishes." "In pursuing the illusion of building socialism with the rotten weapons left to us by capitalism (commodities taken as economic units, profitability, interest rates as a stimulant and so on, we risk arriving at an impasse."⁷

According to Che, one of the main dangers of the model imported from the Soviet Union was the growth of social inequality and the formation of a privileged layer of technocrats and bureaucrats: in this redistributive system "it is the managers who profit. You only need to look at the latest project of the German Democratic Republic; the importance, there, of the director's management, or, even better, the rewards which the director receives for managing."⁸

Che's economic thought, especially concerning the transition to socialism, was both



passionate and problematic. Its passion is in its egalitarian and anti-bureaucratic stance, and in his criticism of commodity -or market- fetishism, including commodity fetishism in so-called "socialist" countries.

The Belgian Marxist and Fourth International leader Ernest Mandel sided with Che against the partisans of Stalinist economics (like Charles Bettelheim) and the Cuban imitators of the Soviet model in the economic debates of 1963-64.

But Che's reflections -obviously unfinished- are also problematic in many ways. Not so much in what they say, as in what they don't. Particularly Che's silence on the question of socialist democracy. Che Guevara's arguments for economic planning and against market categories are not wrong: on the contrary, they gain new force when measured against the crude neo-liberal "arguments" which dominate today. But his thoughts shed no light on the key political question: who makes the plan? Who makes the big choices in an overall economic plan? Who determines priorities in production and consumption?

Planning inevitably becomes an authoritarian and inefficient bureaucratic system of "dictatorship over needs", unless it is accompanied by

- political pluralism
- a free discussion of priorities
- a free choice by the population between different proposals and different platforms of economic alternatives

The history of the former Soviet Union provides abundant evidence of this. In other terms: the economic problems of the transition to socialism are inseparable from the nature of the political system.

The Cuban experience of the last 20 years also demonstrates the negative consequences of a lack of democratic and socialist institutions -even if Cuba has been able to avoid the worst totalitarian and bureaucratic deformations of other so-called "really existing socialist" States.

Che's polemic against market fetishism was completely justified; but his arguments in favour of planning would be much more

convincing if they were situated in the context of the democratic control by the workers over the planning mechanisms. As Ernest Mandel emphasised in another context, there is a third way out of the impasse of the market on the one hand, and bureaucratic planned economy on the other: worker's self-management, democratically organised and centralised, and self-government planned by associated producers.⁹ Despite his distrust of Soviet models and despite his strong anti-bureaucratic commitment, in this area, Guevara's ideas were far from clear.

Che Guevara died on October 8, 1967: a date which will live forever in the millennial calendar of oppressed humanity's long march to self-emancipation. Bullets killed the freedom fighter, but they could never kill his ideas, his hopes, and his dreams. To their rage and disappointment, those who killed Emiliano Zapata, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, and Ernesto Che Guevara have seen their victims' ideas survive and take root in the consciousness of new generations who take up the struggle.

The world today seems light years away from that of Guevara's life and struggle. But for those who do not believe in the pseudo-Hegelian "end of history", or in the eternal life of a liberal/capitalist market economy, and for those who oppose the appalling social injustices inherent in such a system and who oppose the marginalisation of people in the South by the "new world order", Che's revolutionary humanist message is still a window opening onto the future. ★

Notes

- 1) Jorge Castañeda, "Rebels Without Causes", *Newsweek*, 13 January 1997 "We may discover, by the end of the century (...) that Che Guevara had a point, after all".
- 2) Che Guevara, *Works, Volume III, Textes politiques*, Paris, Maspéro, 1968, p. 118.
- 3) *Communism and the Rhine Observer*, (Sept. 1847)
- 4) *Message to the Tricontinental Conference*, 1967
5. See for example E. Guevara, *Military Writings*, Paris, Maspéro, 1968, p. 162.
6. *Ibid.* pp. 266-267.
7. Che Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba", *Political Documents*, p. 283.
8. Che Guevara, "People and the Plan", *Works, Volume VI, Unedited Writings*, Paris, Maspéro, 1972, p.90.
9. E. Mandel, "In defence of socialist planning", *New Left Review*, no. 159, Sept.-Oct. 1986.

Re-thinking Che Guevara

Today Ernesto "Che" Guevara would be sixty-nine years old. On an island hemmed in by the constraints of the almighty dollar. In a continent ravaged by neo-liberalism. In a world order he never imagined. What would Che think? What would he rethink?

Janette Habel

Buffeted by a chaotic world, Che's image is trapped between nonsense and trivia. An empty myth or a totalitarian and suicidal utopian. A heroic but militarily incompetent guerilla for some, pure organizer for others, and, for some, a pitiless and masochistic puritan abusing his power. A man whose irresponsibility and political inflexibility would have led to disaster (like that of the Congo and the Bolivian campaign) and for the Cuban revolution, if it weren't for the pragmatic genius of Fidel Castro.

Now, at the end of the century, how can we get a sense of the fight carried on in the 1960s, that revolutionary decade? More is known about the end of his life than about his prodigious writings -held in Cuba where they remain largely unknown. His ideological development remains to be discovered.

The brevity of his political life (thirteen years, from the CIA's victory against Arbenz in Guatemala to his death in Bolivia, including eight years in Cuba, two before and six after the revolution) and the dizzying acceleration of the historical period in which he took part make the interpretation of some of his writings more complicated. Che's thought was constantly evolving.

Che denied being a theoretician, and never belonged to a political party before his involvement with Cuba. And yet, all those who knew him in Cuba agree: in the Sierra Maestra, and after they took power, he was one of the major inspirations -perhaps even the most central reason for- the radical shift taken by the Cuban revolution.

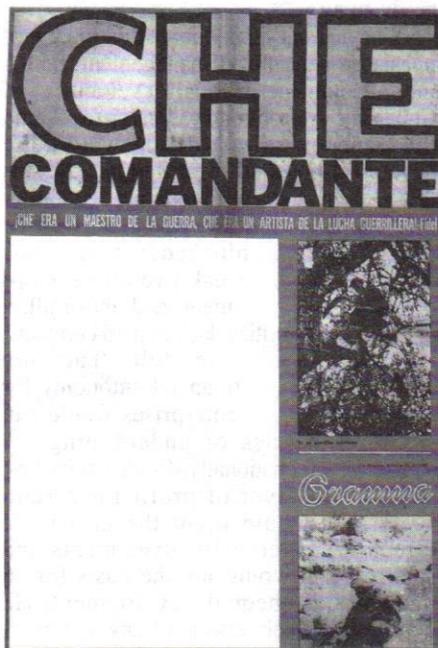
His political consciousness would evolve a great deal in the following years. Only six years elapsed between his positive allusions to countries "behind the iron curtain" (in a letter from the Sierra Maestra to one of the leaders of the July 26 Movement, Rene Ramos Latour, a letter he later called "idiotic") and his implacable critique of the USSR and Eastern European countries of 1964-65.

In October of 1960 he went to Moscow. Cuba was being strangled by the American trade blockade, decreed on October 13th. He got credits from the Soviet bloc, and an agreement to buy the majority of the Cuban sugar crop. China would buy the rest. Present



at the annual celebration of the October Revolution, he was given a standing ovation by the crowd. Convinced that an American invasion was imminent (the Bay of Pigs would take place four months later) he came back certain that "the USSR and all the socialist countries are ready to go to war to defend our sovereignty."¹

In October 1962 the Missile Crisis dealt a vicious blow to his illusions. The guerilla-Minister experienced for himself Soviet trade practices, and the diplomacy of Moscow-as-Superpower during the Missile Crisis. He discovered the sad reality of authoritarian and bureaucratic socialism and the privileges of those in power. In conferences at the Mini-



stry of Industry, he denounced what others would later call "really existing socialism".

His thinking was dominated by a humanism forged throughout his Latin American travels. Raised in Argentina, he was familiar with the populism and clientelism of the Peron regime. Later he would discover similar privileges among the "directors" and party leaders. "The New Man" he wanted to promote, the exemplary behavior he demanded and imposed as a leader himself, and the volunteer work he inaugurated were all at the opposite end of the spectrum from Stalinist practices.

Che was inspired by an ethical conception of power as a political necessity. When he announced to sugar workers in 1961 that conditions were going to get worse (meet and milk would begin to be rationed) he took a stand which electrified listeners and bolstered their enthusiasm: "In the new stage of revolutionary struggle, no one will receive more than another, there will be neither privileged bureaucrats nor rich farmers. The only privileged group in Cuba will be children."

The population was already suffering from many deprivations: resistance to the expected American invasion required a huge popular mobilization which would have been impossible without support for the revolutionary project. Only such support explains the Cuban victory at the Playa Giron (Bay of Pigs) the first defeat of imperialism in Latin America.

Far from the nepotism and corruption common among Latin American leaders ("caudillos"), Che introduced the image of an austere leader, demanding of himself as much as he did of others. The anecdotes are endless: he eliminated the food supplements his family received, and he explained publicly why when he was sick, he had temporarily stayed in a seaside house which his salary could not cover. Che quickly understood the need to struggle against privileges; the revolutionary project, according to him, must give birth to a new kind of leader who had no taint of corruption, who could reconcile his words and his actions. His personal austerity was legendary.

He led an unceasing struggle against the bureaucratization of the new administration, trying to create a radically new way of exercising power. He failed, and "the Argentine" as he was called with disdain by some bureaucrats, made many enemies.

His intransigence has sometimes been given a psychoanalytical interpretation. To do this is to fail to understand why, in Cuba, the new powers had to embody a radical break with the corruption of the old regime. Because the "natural" state of things recovers quickly: witness the guerillas of the July 26th movement who, after the strategic victory of Santa Clara, once Batista had been defeated,

confiscated police Cadillacs for the trip to Havana. They were immediately reprimanded by Che.

Today, some say that the sanctions and serious punishments of the period flowed from a specific type of Stalinism: the tropical gulag. This blurs the real difference between discipline imposed by guerillas in a struggle against a dictatorship supported by Washington, and Stalinist terror. True, the torturers of the Batista regime were executed in the Cabana barracks after the revolutionaries took power. But during the guerilla years Che also took care of wounded prisoners and let them go, afterwards. Those who served with him testified to his austere, but limitless generosity.

Unfinished thoughts

A rereading of Che's last writings in the great economic debate which opposed him to supporters of the Soviet economic reforms of the 1960s -the first version of Perestroika- of his essay on "Socialism and Man in Cuba", and his last speeches, especially the one he gave in Algiers in 1965 brings to light a critical and foresighted vision of the problems of the transitional society in the USSR.

In a book begun not long before his death, and left unfinished, he wrote "Many reversals await humanity before a final liberation but, I am convinced, that liberation cannot occur without a radical change in the strategy of the primary socialist powers. Will this change be the result of the inevitable pressures of imperialism or of the development of the masses of those countries, or of a combination of factors? History will tell. We must continue to carry our own small grain of sand even as we fear that the project is beyond our powers."²

He quickly became aware of the difficult risks Cuba would run, given its dependence on its Soviet "Big Brother". From the moment of taking power he understood the need to break with the sugar monoculture in order to reduce the country's dependence and to try to ensure a more autonomous economic development. The emphasis placed on industry reflected this concern. But quickly the iron law of the world market made itself felt: the drop in sugarcane production - the major export- meant that sufficient imports for economic development could not be guaranteed, especially in a country with no energy resources and whose only income had derived from this single product since the monoculture was imposed by colonialism in the 19th century. This had to change. "We wanted to speed up

industrialization. That was foolish. We wanted to replace all imports and make finished products here, without seeing the enormous complications that the import of intermediary goods entailed" Che told Eduardo Galeano.³

Trade with the Soviet Union, and especially the deliveries of oil after the total break with the United States, were to guarantee the stability of Cuba's import-export system, and maintain a trade balance between a tiny, economically dominated country and a nuclear Superpower which called itself socialist and which had just begun the conquest of Space.

Unlike other Cuban leaders, Che quickly understood the risks and fragility of such a relationship.

Transition and underdevelopment

Che also began to express doubts about the direction of domestic politics. The proposed market reforms introduced by Soviet economists (notably Liberman and Trapeznikov) were the subject of several debates, at a time when the island was already confronted with the need to redefine its development strategy.

The great economic debates of 1963-65 within the Ministry of the Industry, and then the whole Cuban leadership, had to do with building socialism. More precisely, they concerned the conditions for a transition from capitalism to socialism on an island locked into a sugar monoculture and directly subjected to the pressures of the international market. An island where development was hindered by a blockade mounted by the most powerful economy in the world.

The controversies included the role of the Law of Value during a transitional period, the degree to which companies should be centralized, the role of moral and material incentives. Those who underlined the importance of the Law of Value gave market mechanisms a large place in a planned economy, even to the point of granting a great deal of financial autonomy to companies, and holding that financial incentives were needed to increase productivity.

Che and his supporters placed more emphasis on centralized management, taking into account the unequal development of Cuba. The telecommunications network and the transport infrastructure were quite developed but there were few technicians

and a need for a tight control of scarce resources given the blockade; there was weak overall development, and above all, a critical lack of hard currency.

Che felt that any financial autonomy for enterprises would run the risk of undermining the nationally-decided priorities, in favor of profit for certain sectors. It would favor the growth of directors, in terms of investments and salaries, and would lay the basis for an uneven and unequal development. He doubted the likely effects of any system of



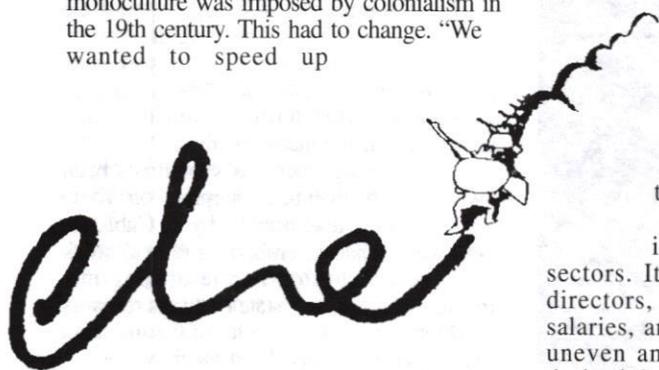
labor organization which based itself on cash incentives, and believed that social differentiation would be the inevitable result.

He wrote prophetically: "We will come back to market theory... The whole organization of the market relies on financial incentives... and every time, it is the managers who profit. You only need to look at the latest project of the German Democratic Republic; the importance, there, of the director's management, or, even better, the rewards which the director receives for managing."⁴ Twenty-five years later we have seen the consequences, as the masses of East Germany rose, disgusted with the economic morass they were in, with the lack of political freedom, and with the privileges of a corrupt bureaucracy.

Inspired by an acutely anti-bureaucratic sensibility and guided by social and political considerations, Che spoke out against the primacy given to monetary/market relations in building socialism, though he had no illusions about the possibility of brutally suppressing them.

Che insisted on the need for morale-building incentives, conceived as collective exhortations to work, went hand in hand with a wage policy closely linked to the development of skills. The most important being was "to carefully choose the instrument for mass mobilization". Without which, according to Che, the socialist project was doomed.

Equal rights, and the socialization of the





economy (despite the obvious excesses) were decisive in building popular resistance. Faced with foreign aggression, another world was being built in Cuba. A world which seemed to be worth fighting for.

Che always reserved the "right to be wrong", saying that if his ideas "became a dangerous brake on the development of the productive forces, we must draw the proper conclusions and return to more familiar paths."⁵

He believed that the development of a revolutionary consciousness and education would forge a communist attitude towards work. This is why he led by example - not through masochism, but by necessity. "The creation of a new man and the development of technology," would ensure that the transition to socialism would not be derailed.

The relationship between humans and socialism were at the heart of his concerns, man as the essential element in the revolution, "actor in this strange and passionate drama which is the building of socialism". Education and consciousness were at the center of a more just society. "In this period of building socialism we are taking part in the birth of a new man. His image is not entirely clear yet; it cannot be, since this change goes hand in hand with the development of new economic structures... It is the man of the 21st century that we must create, even if this is still an aspiration and not a worked out reality."⁶

Far from Stalinist deformations, Che's premises were both humanist and revolutionary. But it is true that he put too much of an emphasis on his critique of the economy, on the relative weight of market relations, and not enough on the repressive and police aspects of the Soviet political system. This is without a doubt one of the major weaknesses in his thought.⁷

This weakness goes along with a certain naivety. It was not until 1966, when, commenting on the Manual of Economic Policies of the USSR, that he deepened his theoretical thought. He wrote then "The terrible historic crime of Stalin" was to "have despised communist education and installed the unlimited cult of authority."⁸

Against dogmatism

In his diary in Bolivia, Che celebrated the July 26th movement as "a rebellion against oligarchies and against revolutionary dogmas." He vigorously criticized "the scholasticism which braked the development of marxist philosophy and systematically obstructed the study of any period of which the economic foundation has not been analyzed." (Socialism and Man).

His conception of the vanguard, guided by exemplary leaders, bore witness to a thought that was critical but incomplete, on the role and the place of the party in its relations with mass organizations. He wrote ironically "The Party has already decided for

you and you have nothing left to do but swallow it... We must not create paid functionaries who are submissive to official thought, or 'scholarship students' who live under the protection of the state budget while exercising their liberty in quotes"⁹

But he did not analyse the faults of the single party/State Party: his experience of six years in the State leadership was too brief. He was marked by the war, the endless conflict with Washington, and the specificity of the Cuban situation; in the Sierra Maestra he was opposed to the urban wing of the July 25th movement, identified as a more right-wing current. The existence up to 1965 of three distinct political currents (the M-27-J, - the PSP, and the Directory) became seen as an obstacle to the revolution. In fact, the single party was not built until 1975 because the fusion was so difficult. In the embattled climate of the early years of the revolution the key was resistance. Pluralism was left for later.

This did not stop him from putting into practice a political conception profoundly different from that introduced by the new power. In the first Conference on National Production in 1961, openness reigned: errors and those who were responsible for them were discussed publically. "You have just welcomed me with warm applause but I don't know whether you've done this as consumers or as accomplices- I think it is more as accomplices," he said in front of 3, 500

government officials.

He was the only one -at the price of a lot of criticism- to lead a public and controversial debate in the Ministry of Industry on the economic system of the country. The Ministry had been a refuge for those who found themselves cut off from their responsibilities: thus it included the former Minister of Communications, Oltuski, forced out of government in July 1960. The anecdote is even more telling when you consider that Che had conducted a bitter poliemic against Oltuski during the insurrection. A member of the left wing of the July 26th movement, Oltuski was judged too anti-Soviet once a *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union was the order of the day. In the same way, Che refused to give in to pressures from a trade union leader who demanded the firing of a bank employe accused of having been a Batista supporter: defending the honesty of the latter, Che denounced any possibility of a witch-hunt.¹⁰

In a very significant text, (*Un pecado de la revolucion; A Sin of the Revolution*), Che recalled the errors made in regard to the Second front of l'Escambray, left behind on the march to Havana. Errors which he believed led to the departure of many cadre. His self-critical reflections on unity relations before coming to power are the only ones published to date.

He was more aware than any other third-world leader at the time of the flaws in actually existing socialism. Hostile to the coded language of the apparatchiks, he did not hesitate to make public and harsh criticisms: in his public speech in Algiers in 1965 (his last official speech as a Cuban official) he denounced the "tacit complicity" of the Soviet leadership with imperialist exploitation and the continuation of unequal trade relations, in front of the Afro-Asian seminar gathered there.

It was also because he had foreseen the miserable difficulties that lay ahead of a tiny island trying to build socialism, and the need for other revolutionary victories that he raised his famous -and often caricatured- call for "Two, three, many Vietnams" at the Tricontinental Congress. Revolted by "the war of insults being waged by the two most powerful members of the socialist camp" he was seized "by the anguish of this illogical moment when humanity" confronted "the loneliness of Vietnam." Lucidly, Che sketched the historic evolution to come, foreseeing the dangers for isolated uprisings in a world configuration tragically dominated during the Cold War by imperialism and Stalinism, the death of the second of these already written in its trajectory.

Starting in 1962, one year after the official proclamation of the socialist nature of the Cuban Revolution and two years after the establishment of special relations with the USSR, the Missile Crisis destroyed his confidence in the solidity of the alliance and the strength of the commitment to aid. He was put in charge of negotiating for military aid from Moscow in the face of the ever increasing threat of American intervention after the failure of the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

The proposed installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba -Moscow's idea- was intended to dissuade the Pentagon from embarking on that level of aggression. The proximity to American territory aggravated the nuclear threat, making a Soviet attack, in any conflict, much more quick and reducing the effectiveness of an American response. Kennedy demanded the withdrawal of the missiles at the risk of provoking a thermo-nuclear conflict: the world was on the brink of war. The Soviet government accepted the dismantling of all offensive weapons in Cuba.

But the withdrawal of the missiles and the negotiations between Khrushchev and Kennedy were conducted in the grand style of Soviet bureaucratic diplomacy, consulting no one, with total contempt for Cuban sovereignty. The Cubans' surprise and indignation were enormous and the October crisis ("those shining sad days" invoked in his letter of farewell) marked the first breach in Soviet-Cuban relations.

20

BANCO NACIONAL

The USSR's foreign policy, particularly its very grudging support for the people of Vietnam strengthened Che's increasingly critical view of the "socialist camp".

20

GARANTIZADO INTEGRALMENTE CON EL ORO
CONVERTIBLE EN ORO Y TODOS LOS DEMAS ACTIVOS
ESTE BILLETE CONSTITUYE UNA OBLIGACION

The mystery of the departure

Why did he leave Cuba? Because he understood the impossibility of socialism in one island? Because he needed to go back to the battlefield? Because he needed to break Cuba's dependence on the Soviet Union, with Fidel's blessing? This sharing of tasks between the man of State affairs and management and the rebel insurgent was perhaps the result of a compromise. But such a division of labor analysis doesn't take into account the failures or the conflicts which took place before he left, and doesn't explain the sequence of events afterwards.

Was he aware that he had less and less of a place in the political system then being put into place? His demands irritated the functionaries and the leading party members, his lifestyle was in itself a challenge to the nascent bureaucracy, whose incompetence he criticized. The lack of trained cadre had a catastrophic effect on the management of the economy, but he also blamed himself for mistakes that were made: "We are guilty, and we must say this frankly. Does the working class want to condemn us for that? Let them condemn us, replace us, even shoot us -they can do what they want to. That's the problem."¹¹

He got angry with union leaders, the majority of whom had no support among the masses and who seemed to believe they had only rights, without duties. He said "Right now, unions could cease to exist and transfer their functions to the committees for labor justice. Only the union bureaucracy objects, because they would have to go back to work... most major business report that these people have been trade union officials for 18 years."

Che also took the lead in denouncing early on the corruption of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) which he accused of being nests of opportunists; he reminded members of the security forces that "a counter-revolutionary is someone who fights against the revolution. But someone who uses his influence to get better housing, and then two cars, someone who violates the





"The year we were no-where"

There is no doubt that Africa was of major importance in Havana's understanding of the conflict between the third world and imperialism. But it is doubtful that Che's personal involvement was part of the original plan.

Apart from the diplomatic problems, his presence could only cause difficulties for African leaders like Laurent Desire Kabila, who did not hesitate to tell him so. As daring as Cuba's foreign policy was at the time -and it was of an extraordinary audacity- it is very unlikely that the direct involvement of the major Cuban leader after Fidel Castro had been planned.

According to Taibo, in 1965, Che suggested to Nasser that he would eventually take part in the Congolese struggle. But he changed his mind, convinced by the Egyptian leader's arguments. What do these hesitations and shifts -so uncharacteristic of Che- mean?

A few months of being there convinced him that the situation was untenable given the weaknesses of the African liberation movements; he decided to organize his retreat. Clearly an attitude which undercuts any notion of his "suicidal" impulses. He opposed sending any more troops, which Fidel had proposed to do.¹⁷

His African journals (titled "Passages from a revolutionary war: the Congo"¹⁸) would only be published in excerpts, thirty years later. His letters to Fidel remain unknown.

The final chapter

He stayed for several months in Prague, "a place where he tried to decide what he should do."¹⁹ His presence was not publicized because he distrusted the Czech secret service. We know nothing of the reasons for his long stay, and nothing of his correspondence with Fidel. He came back to Cuba secretly for a few months and continued to lay low.

What preparations were made before his departure for Bolivia at the end of 1966? What was the role played by the Bolivian CP, despite its already conflicted relationship with him?²⁰

How are we to understand the flaws in his plan, "the lack of openness and the ambiguity of the project" according to Taibo II, when we know Che's typical rigorous style of organization and close attention to detail? Francois Maspero later discovered that he was the major support from the network outside Bolivia, Regis Debray scouted the terrain: a heavy responsibility for a young French student the selection of whom had already caused controversy.

According to Taibo II who cites a CIA report, the Agency was informed by the end

of 1966 of the guerilla preparations.²¹ This almost accidental chain of events, the premature discovery of the training camp which forced unprepared battles, are they enough to throw light on the dramatic unwinding of the guerilla campaign and the final result? No one today can answer these questions.

Deformed, mummified, Che still survives. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, among the debris of the revolutions of the twentieth century. He was both victor and vanquished. What is the source of his continuing message? A man of conviction, a warrior and a failed poet, insurgent and committed, Minister and then guerilla. He embodies the distrust of power, and redeems politics. There has never been, and still does not exist a guevarist model for building socialism.

But we still seek another way to organize society, for "los de abajo" (those on the bottom) and not "los de arriba" (those on top), as it is phrased today in Latin America. The bearer of an ethical conception of power, a new kind of political leader who reconciled his words with his actions, a ferocious critic of derailed "socialism", his modernity embraced this mixture of humanism and integrity. "Guevara has come, the masquerade is done!" shouted demonstrators in Montevideo in 1961. ★

Notes

- 1) Paco Ignacio Taibo II *Ernesto Guevara tambien conocido como el Che* Ed. Planeta Madrid 1996
- 2) Unpublished text in possession of Carlos Tablada
- 3) Quoted in Paco Ignacio Taibo II p. 424. At that time, the CEPAL suggested this "import substitution" policy for all of Latin America.
- 4) Ernesto Che Guevara *Ecrits d'un revolutionnaire* Ed. La Breche Paris 1987
- 5) Ernesto Guevara *A propos du systeme budgetaire de financement* Ed. Maspero Oeuvres III 1968
- 6) E. Guevara *Textes Politiques Le socialisme et l'homme a Cuba* Ed. Maspero 1965-1968.
- 7) R. Massari *Che Guevara pensero e politica dell'utopia* Ed. Associate 1987 Roma.
- 8) Unpublished. 1966. Mentioned in *Tercer Milenio* Juan Antonio Blanco p 83 La Havane 1995.
- 9) Unpublished manuscript in possession of C. Tablada.
- 10) cf Paco Ignacio Taibo II Op. cit
- 11) Ibid. p. 445
- 12) E. Che Guevara *Textes inedits Oeuvres VI* Ed. Maspero 1972 "L'influence de la revolution cubaine en Amerique latine" p. 149
- 13) Himself
- 14) Ibid. p. 451
- 15) Ibid. p. 435
- 16) Raul Roa telephoned Che when he returned to Havana in March 1995. He asked Guevara to receive Huberman et Sweezy, and congratulated him on his speech. "Eres uno de los pocos comierdas a quien le gusto ese discurso." Guevara replied (conversation with the author. Paris 1997).
- 18) Extracts from Ernesto Che Guevara *L'annee ou nous n'etions nulle part*. P.I. Taibo II, Froilan Escobar, F.Guerra. Ed. Metaillie. Paris 1995.
- 19) In effect the second volume of "Passages de la guerre revolutionnaire"
- 20) According to an agent of the Cuban secret service, as reported in Paco Ignacio Taibo II Op. cit.
- 21) Ibid. p. 614.
- 22) Ibid. p.635.

rationing system, someone who has everything the people don't is just as much a counter-revolutionary."¹²

The recent biography by Paco Ignacio Taibo II does a good job of showing the mounting tension caused by the gap between the lack of economic and human resources and the urgency of development in a country always under threat. "We live in a difficult moment: we do not have the luxury of punishing errors this year: maybe next. Who's going to fire the Minister of Industry¹³ who signed off on a plan to produce 10 million shoes and other stupidities?"¹⁴

He seemed to be consumed by an exhausting struggle, and poured forth criticisms and self-criticisms of a state planning system which demanded "immediate execution, unstated obligations... we begin to see people not as human beings but as soldiers, as numbers in a war that must be won. The tension is so high that we see nothing but our goal... and little by little we forget our daily reality... We must do something to make the Ministry a little more human."¹⁵

Che fought on all these fronts: at the same time that he was the motor force behind industrial reorganization he was mounting a theoretical polemic in favor of seeking out a different kind of socialism, more and more convinced of the failure of the Soviet Union. But the economic debate -the stakes of which were the strategies that the island would pursue in its whole development- ended in failure for Che. He left on a long trip. His Algerian speech, very critical of Moscow, was poorly received: many witnesses confirm this,¹⁶ and the whole text was not published in the Cuban press. One of the attachés at the Soviet Embassy, today living in exile (and wanting to remain anonymous) confirms that the Soviet government made it known that it felt this speech was unacceptable coming from a Cuban leader. Che was met by Fidel Castro at the airport, and the two were in discussion for two days. After this Che never appeared in a public role again. One month later, Guevara left quietly for the Congo.

book notes

Gays and the Left: Scratching the Surface

The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935), by John Lauritsen & David Thorstad, (Times Change Press, USA 1995), revised edition, \$9.95 paper.

Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left, edited by Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis & James Steakley, (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 1995), \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewed by Peter Drucker

The contemporary movement for lesbian/gay liberation was born out of the ferment of the New Left. Its leftist roots were openly acknowledged. Theorists such as Dennis Altman, John D'Emilio, David Fernbach and Mario Mieli. All identified with one socialist or communist current or another. All acknowledged their debt to Marxism as well as feminism and psychoanalysis.

Times have changed. Lesbian/gay movements have grown and won some significant victories in the past quarter-century, while the socialist left has shrunk to a shadow of what it was. Unsurprisingly, nowadays lesbian/gay spokespersons and theorists are less likely to identify with the anti-capitalist left than they used to be.

Back to basics

Lauritsen's and Thorstad's roots go back to the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. They broke with that group in the mid-1970s when the word came down from its leadership that lesbian/gay oppression was only a "secondary" contradiction for which members' energies often could not be spared. But

The 1995 re-edition of *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement* contains few major changes. Like the 1974 version, it treats the pioneers of lesbian/gay emancipation with only mildly critical sympathy and stresses the bright side of their alliance with leftist parties.

This makes the book useful reading for anyone who wants to begin by grasping a few basic facts. For example: in the years before the First World War, the German Social Democratic Party was in the forefront of the fight to repeal that country's anti-gay Paragraph 175. Eduard Bernstein defended Oscar Wilde (himself an iconoclastic socialist) in the pages of the SPD's theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit*. The Bolsheviks repealed anti-gay laws when they took power in Russia, and supported the pro-gay World League for Sexual Reform throughout the 1920s. The German Social Democratic and Communist parties were the gay move-

ment's best allies in the 1920s. These basic facts are worth reiterating, if only because some recent scholarship has managed to overlook them.

There is another side to the story. Trained in the Trotskyist tradition, Lauritsen and Thorstad have a keen eye for the (many) failings of social democrats and Stalinists. The German Social Democrats succumbed to the temptation to gay-bait when same-sex scandals among the German empire's aristocratic elite emerged; Social Democrats and Communists succumbed again when Nazi SA head Ernst Röhm was available as a homosexual target.

Stalin re-criminalised homosexuality in the USSR in 1934. Communists in many countries obediently turned their back on their earlier stands and began to identify gays with bourgeois decadence and even fascism. By the time lesbian/gay liberation went though its resurgence in the 1960s and 1970s, an uphill battle had to be fought against anti-gay prejudices inside much of the left.

Lauritsen's and Thorstad's focus on Germany helps them avoid noting that the left in other countries, like the United States and the Netherlands, fell short even of the German left's mixed record. Beginning their account late in the nineteenth century saves them from mentioning Marx's and Engels' homophobia, which surfaced not only in private letters but in published writings. Ending in the 1930s saves them from discussing the shortcomings of later, even anti-Stalinist Marxists.

Ambivalent left tradition

Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left has been put together with more scholarly thoroughness. It benefits from two decades of accumulating research, and suffers from no inhibitions about exposing the left's shortfalls. The result is a set of valuable investigations. The strong development of gay studies in Dutch universities (where two of the three editors are based) is well reflected.

The one contribution that focuses on the Netherlands (by Gert Hekma) is a useful demonstration of just how ambivalent early socialists were about sexuality. The anthology also does well to look at several different left traditions - "utopian" socialism, anarchism and Marxism - in a single volume. For anyone who wants to learn about topics

as varied as how André Gide squared his homosexuality with sympathy for the USSR, what the early Frankfurt School had to say about gays, or the complementary roles of East Germany's Lutheran Church and Stasi (secret police) in creating a gay movement there, this book is a good starting place.

Yet most of the authors are hampered by three major flaws in their approach. First, though many of them clearly have leftist sympathies, their methods owe little to the left. They work as empiricist historians; few of them seem to see how Marxism, feminism or any other radical paradigm can help them analyse societies. Second, the book as a whole is marred by a double standard, in which Marxist traditions are more harshly judged than others. Third, few of the authors have learned much from social historians' discoveries about the lives of ordinary gay men and lesbians, who after all made up past movements and parties.

Public vs. private

In their introduction, the editors say that "socialism is singled out for particular attention here because its project was, and is, to fulfil the emancipatory goal of the Enlightenment: the universal liberation of humankind from oppressive ideologies and exploitative social structures." (p.7) This argument for holding the left to high standards is absolutely right.

The editors are also right to criticise socialist credulousness about "scientific" biology and medicine, which contradicted the left's distinctive emphasis on historical and social factors, and to criticise socialist praise of working-class "manliness", which ignored the female half of the working class. But they fail to grapple with the difference between abstract application of principles and a project of liberation carried out by concrete historical agents emerging from really existing capitalism.

Ultimately, when the editors appeal to the classical liberal distinction between public and private realms, they are judging the left by criteria that are alien to the left. "The private sphere has enjoyed far less protection under socialist regimes than under liberal ones," they say. (p.16)

They do note in passing that liberals (in the European sense of constitutionalist, secular free-market advocates) were in practice usually even more anti-gay than leftists. But they fail to explain why. In fact the

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Women's lives in the new global economy

Penny Duggan & Heather Dashner (editors)

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liberal private-public distinction leaves straight male power in the family unchallenged. Women's and lesbian/gay liberation require transforming the family in ways that are bound to "interfere" in "private" life.

The authors' not very profound methodology sometimes limits their predictive ability. For example, in his article on contemporary France, Jan Willem Duyvendak moves beyond his earlier work in describing the difficult "balance between desires and interests" that gay movements need to strike. (p. 370) But lacking a deep analysis of how much those desires and interests are repressed in France today, he predicts continuing demobilisation of French gays - who in fact began mobilising in steadily more impressive numbers before the ink on his article was dry. [see "We might as well die shouting" and "Vulnerability and resistance," *International Viewpoint* #287, April 1997]

The book's liberal critique of the left's sexual politics is limited mainly to Marxists. Saskia Poldervaart's essay on utopian socialists and Walter Fähnders' on German anarchists are not just sympathetic, but almost wholly uncritical accounts, citing inspiring passages from their subjects' works without paying much attention to the reality of their movements

It is valuable to recover these lost voices of sexual radicalism, to note sex-radical insights in Fourier that Marx dismissed, or anarchist pro-gay positions that were better than those of contemporary Marxists.

Anarchist Hubert Kennedy exposes Marx's homophobic attacks on gay German Lassallean leader Johann Baptist von Schweitzer, though without shedding much light on the issues between Marxists and Lassalleans that probably concerned Marx more.

Richard Cleminson's careful, historically informed research on the Spanish anarchist magazine *Revista Blanca* sets a higher standard, in an article that shows how anarchist puritanism gave way in the 1930s to greater tolerance.

The articles focusing on Marxists mostly fall short of Cleminson's achievement. In fact, of the ten contributions that deal mainly with avowed Marxists, only two or three show much knowledge of Marxism. Four deal largely with Stalinist regimes or spies; twenty years after Lauritsen's and Thorstad's basic exposition, these articles make little distinction between Stalinist sexual politics and earlier Marxist positions.

Laura Engelstein, writing about Soviet legislation, ends up asking in bewildered ignorance, "Why did homosexuality escape the law between 1917 and 1934? That is the still obscure and intriguing tale." (p.173) Harry Oosterhuis, who chronicles anti-gay statements in Social Democratic and Com-

munist anti-fascist propaganda of the 1930s with justified indignation, blames the homophobia on Marxism as such; he either does not know or prefers to forget that earlier socialist positions were more pro-gay.

David Thorstad, who contributes the one article dealing with the U.S. left, is of course knowledgeable about Marxism. He lays out the reactionary positions of the CP and Maoists at the time of the 1969 Stonewall rebellion, cites the enlightened comments of Black Panther leader Huey Newton, exposes the limits of the SWP's position, and contrasts it with somewhat better positions taken by other Trotskyist groups.¹ He rightly criticises positions that in the best of cases tend to dress up defences of minority rights in radical-sounding verbiage instead of attacking the deeper roots of heterosexism.

Unfortunately Thorstad chooses as his decisive criterion agreement with his and Lauritsen's demand for repeal of age-of-consent laws. Thorstad and Lauritsen have every right to be bitter: The attacks on them not only by the FBI and Jesse Helms but also from within the lesbian/ gay movement have been appalling.

Sadly, this seems to sour Thorstad's vision of the movement as a whole. The same sourness disfigures the "Afterword to the Revised Edition" of *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement*. "The mainstream gay organisations of the present" are dismissed as "politically correct zombies," and the "radicalism of such groups as Queer Nation" as "bizarre and offensive behaviour." (p. 102) Substantive lesbian/gay radicalism is certainly on the defensive, but the scene is not quite as bleak as Lauritsen and Thorstad paint it.²

Class and community

Manfred Herzer's article on "Communists, Social Democrats, and the Homosexual Movement in the Weimar Republic" stands out in "Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left," not only for its sense for historical context but also because it points to new frontiers for investigation.

Herzer shows how other writers wrench quotations from the Social Democratic and Communist press out of context, simply editing out reaffirmations of opposition to anti-gay laws that are inconvenient for anti-Marxist arguments.

German gay leaders, he shows, whatever their personal politics, acknowledged the crucial support their movements received from the left. But he goes further and deeper, pointing out that gay leaders treated Nazis like Roehm with kid gloves and failed to mobilise their own members against fascism because a high proportion of their membership was right-wing. Herzer has no explan-

ation for the disproportionate right-wing sympathies of the gay movement's rank and file: this would require a far-reaching "social" history and analysis of the pre-war community.

Only in the last few years have gay historians begun to explore in depth the historical interaction of sexuality and class. George Chauncey's *Gay New York* makes a strong case that gay identity as it exists today emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a mainly middle-class phenomenon, while U.S. working-class men continued until at least the 1940s to identify only "passive" male sexual behaviour with "fairies" and to consider men who played an "active" role in sexual intercourse with either women or men as "real men."³

If this same pattern held true for pre-war Central and Western Europe, it could explain many things. It could explain for example why self-identified gay men in Weimar Germany came largely from middle-class backgrounds and largely shared the conservative politics of their social class. It could also help explain why more left-leaning gay groups, like Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, tended to put forward "old-fashioned" "third sex" theories, while a more "modern" approach was characteristic of more right-leaning groups like the Community of the Special.

All this is speculation. Although historians like John D'Emilio have already begun linking the social archaeology of emerging lesbian/gay communities in the post-war USA with the wellsprings of lesbian/gay politics,⁴ similar work on the pre-war USA and Europe has not really begun. There is certainly plenty to study. Left-leaning "sex reformers" like Margaret Sanger, Emma Goldman, Crystal and Max Eastman and Floyd Dell in the United States and the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in Holland were increasingly active in the 1910s, and networking internationally by the 1920s.

Studying sexual changes in the broader societies is difficult, given that almost everyone who was alive then is dead now. All the more reason why all possible sources should be sought out and the exploration begun.

Reprinted from the May-June issue of *Against the Current* (USA). Peter Drucker is an advisory editor of *Against the Current* and *Grenzeloos*. He is currently compiling an anthology on "same-sex sexualities and popular struggles in the Third World" for Gay Men's Press (forthcoming 1998). He has lived in Amsterdam since 1993.

Notes

1. Thorstad's resentment against the SWP leads him to dismiss all groups that resulted even remotely from SWP expulsions in the 1980s, including Solidarity (the group that sponsors *Against the Current*, the magazine in which this article first appeared). (346, n.14) People interested in understanding Solidarity's lesbian/gay politics should not rely on Thorstad, but read the section on lesbian/gay liberation in Solidarity's 1986 Founding Statement as well as its 1994 pamphlet, *Socialist Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Liberation*.
2. For another view of the U.S. movement, see Peter Drucker, "What is queer nationalism?" *Against the Current*, 43, March/April 1993.
3. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, New York: Basic Books, 1994.
4. John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

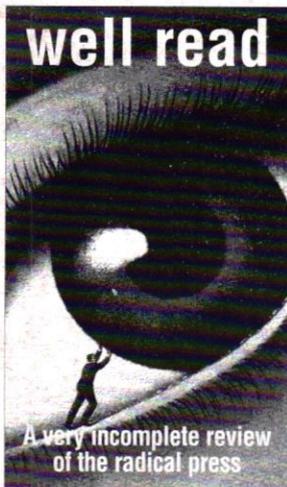
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Do the workers have a country?

by José Iriarte "Bikila"

◆ £2.50/\$4. Cheque payable to P. Rousset, IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 Amsterdam, Netherlands.





Russian Labour Review

Publication has been definitively suspended. It has been two years since the last issue appeared.

As an English-language journal published in Russia, RLR always depended on the ability of a small pool of expatriate supporters. This narrow base made RLR a highly unstable operation. Nevertheless, those of us who volunteered our ideas and energies believe that producing the journal was a correct initiative, and that our contributions were not wasted.

It is ironic that the closure of RLR comes at a time when labour disputes in Russia are experiencing an important upsurge. Workers who have gone unpaid for many months are now recreating the traditions of solidarity and struggle that were developed in Russia many decades ago.

Reports and commentary on these new battles are still available! Articles are posted on the Internet conference <labr.cis>, available in many countries from Association for Progressive Communications affiliates such as Peacenet in the U.S., and Pegasus in Australia.

Renfrey Clarke (Moscow-editorial) and Alex Chis (Berkeley-distribution).

Red Orange

Robert Cymbala writes "This is a new journal devoted to Marxist critical and theoretical inquiry into everyday life. It offers the reader a coherently integrated knowledge of seemingly disparate contemporary practices by locating these within the context of the dynamic, structured concrete global capitalist social totality in which these practices make sense and from which it becomes possible to conceive of and work towards substantial progress in the struggle for emancipation, justice & equality."

PO Box 1055, Tempe, AZ 85280-1055
web.syr.edu/rcymbala/ro.html

Viento Sur #32

In Spanish. Dossier on the public education system in Spain • Orlando Núñez (FSLN) on the left in Nicaragua • labour market reform • economics and ecology

Apartado de Correos 50.522. 28080 Madrid
<vientosur@nodo50.ix.apc.org

Le Monde Diplomatique

In French. The June issue (#519) includes "The Arab world: orphan of democracy" by Gilbert Achcar • debate on globalisation with Financial Times journalists • Islam in the media • Lourdes behind the facade

21bis rue Claude-Bernard, 75242 Paris cedex 05

Murros

In Finnish. Issue 2/97 of Finland's Communist Youth magazine includes: A strict no to EMU and NATO • German opposition to nuclear waste transport was wider than in previous years. • Opposition to conscription and alternative civil service. • Which firms support the Burmese dictatorship? • Boycott Shell! • Who was Lev Trotsky? • Early 20th Century Finnish working class culture • Vladimir Majakovskij • Spring meeting of Communist Youth

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Internet: www.dlc.fi/~komnuor/

Grenzeloos #39

In Dutch. The June/July issue includes: Treaty of Amsterdam: technocrats in power • Robert Went: Seven steps towards full employment in Europe • European steel industry: job loss and resistance • Countersummit: first steps in the Europe debate • Manure lake and piglet murder: the EU's failing agricultural policy • Student movement and transport cards: on the right track? • What is the Socialist Workers Party?

Published by the Socialist Workers Party, Dutch section of the Fourth International.

Inprekorr #308

In German. The June issue of our German sister-magazine includes most of the Europe dossier published in International Viewpoint. Other articles include "Zypern im Würgegriff der Nationalismen" by Andreas Kloke and a theoretical supplement on "the capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe" by Catherine Samary. This text is also available in French from our Paris office.

Contact: Verlag Neuer Kurs, Dasselstr. 75-77, D-50674 Köln. Price: 5 DM (trial sub. 3 months for 10 DM. One year 50 DM. E-Mail: inprekorr@oln.comlink.apc.org. Articles are also available through CL-Datennetz: /CL/MAGAZINE/INPREKORR.

Socialistisk Information

In Danish. The July 1997 issue (#109) includes: Danish semi-skilled workers' federation hosts 'global trade union summit' • Turkey: USA gives the green light for stepping up repression (by Kenneth Haar, International Commission of the Unity List - Red/Greens) • Mentally handicapped people face unequal justice • After Amsterdam: Interview with three activists 'for a different Europe' • Fourth International fund drive (6,000 DKK collected so far)

In Danish. Monthly magazine of the Socialistisk Arbejderparti (SAP). Danish section of the Fourth International. Contact: Box547, DK-2200, Copenhagen N, Denmark. eMail <socinf@inet.uni-c.dk>

NetWorking



Fame at last?

• Between March 15 and May 15 about 1,700 visits were made to the new *International Viewpoint* website. The site was visited from 32 countries on all five continents, and 30% of visitors came from the USA.

• A slightly higher number of visitors was recorded by the *Against the Current* (USA) website. Weekly "hits" ranged from 270 to 281. This increased to 310 after the site was reviewed in the "Gender Politics" section of *The Web*, a relatively new magazine.

The review reads: "Further evidence of the broad spectrum of feminist thought, Solidarity, a socialist/feminist organization, argues that capitalism is to blame for the social and economic oppression of women. While that broad-brush theory may make even riot grrls wince, this site offers a refreshing alternative to the tired rhetoric of mainstream women's groups, throwing a little class warfare into the mix."

Ratings (on a five point scale): Content 4, Design 5, Links 3, Overall 4
<http://www.webmagazine.com/>.

• During the same period, about 3,500 people visited the homepage of the Swedish weekly *Internationalen*. Only half (52%) were from Sweden itself. In the previous two months only 190 people had visited the site.

Red Flanders

Rood, the Dutch-language newspaper of the Belgian section of the Fourth International now has its own website, with links to other FI sites.

<http://titan.glo.be/geudens/rood>

Cancel the debt!

The Campaign to Cancel III world debt has changed address, and

updated its website with materials on the new situation in Congo-Zaire

>> cadtm@skynet.be

<http://users.skynet.be/sky74032>

Malcolm-X list

To subscribe, send an e-mail message containing the command: SUBSCRIBE MALCOLM-X your Full name to:

LISTSERV@MAELSTROM.STJOHNS.EDU

For addition information send an e-mail message to:

Malcolm-X-request@maelstrom.stjohns.edu

FARC

New homepage for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~farc-ep>

Ernest Mandel

This new website includes Mandel's last article about the world situation, "The relevance of Marxism."

<http://titan.glo.be/geudens>

International Viewpoint

Our own website now includes 50+ pages: articles from last month's special issue on Europe • Three articles on the new Congo • The Fourth International Youthcamp • Fourth International statements on Peru and Albania • More than 30 other articles from previous issues.

We also present the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam, and its Notebook publication series.

www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.htm

Our English listserv provides the full contents of this magazine, and articles from our associated publications.

International_Viewpoint@compuserve.com