

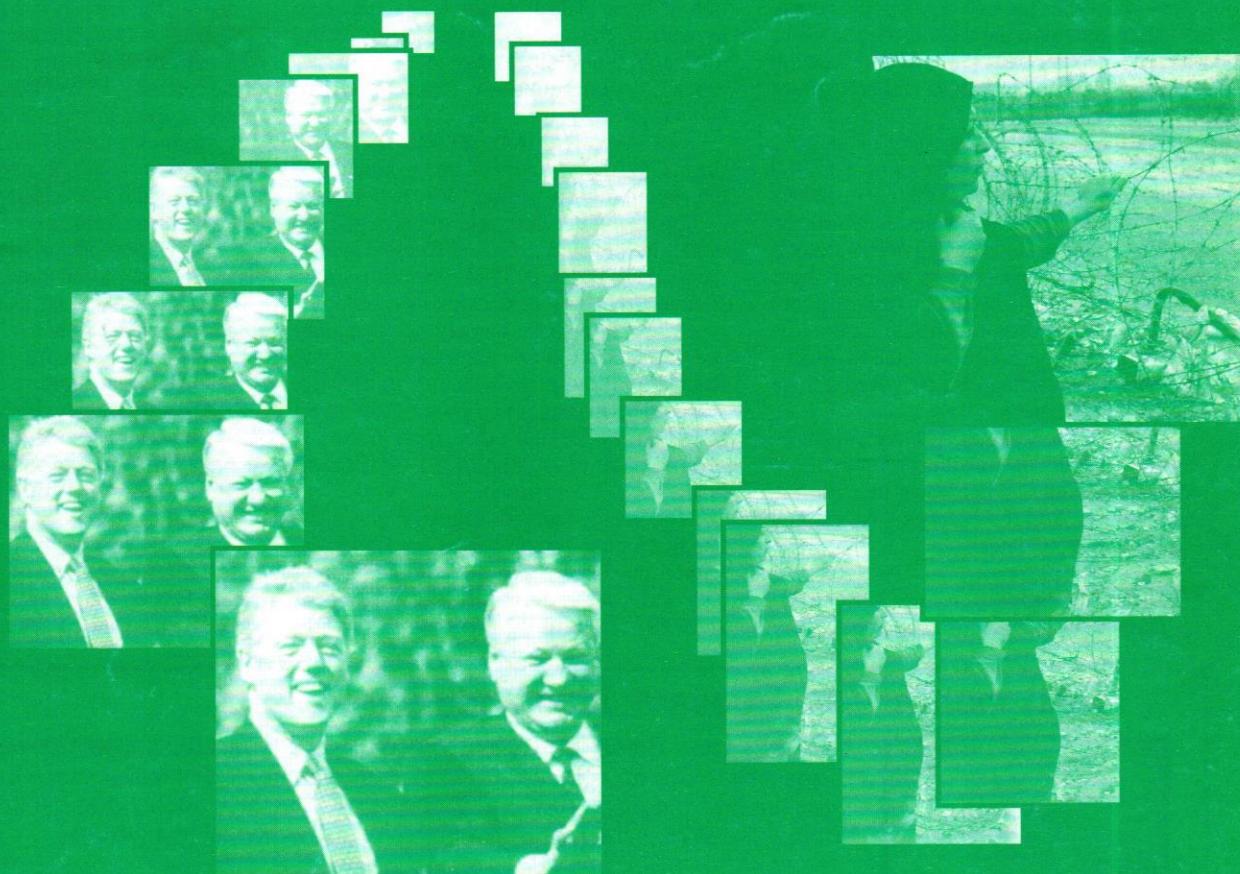
international
VIEWPOINT
October 1997 • No. 293



This rotten system

This rotten system

This rotten system



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Panic in Algiers

The Algerian capital no longer sleeps, since the massacre of hundreds of people in the eastern suburb of Haouch Rais. The population is arming itself, for protection against whoever is responsible for the waves of violence in the country.

Salhi Chawki

As a new wave of violence hits Algeria, Western powers are beginning to doubt whether the Zeroual regime is capable of assuring control, for itself and on behalf of the west, over the regions of Algeria where the fundamentalists are active.

The Algerian elite may have been reassured by the US ambassador, who, in the wake of the latest massacres, confirmed his country's support for "military measures" by the Algerian regime against its Islamic fundamentalist opponents.

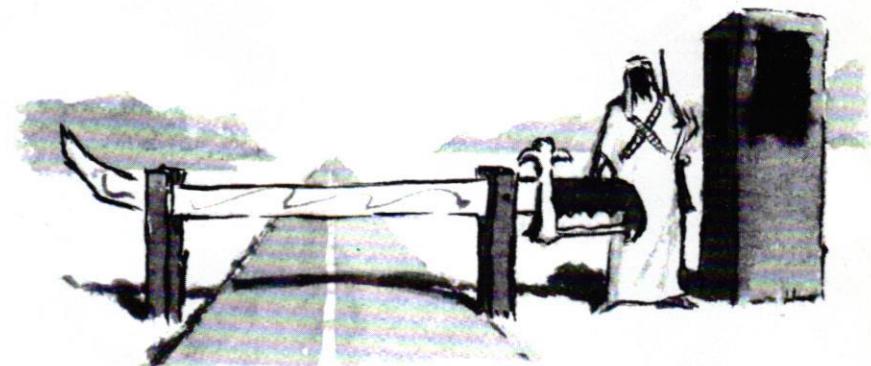
But only the elite will sleep safer. Outside a few, well protected rich districts, the people of Algiers now pass the night in their fields or on their balconies, armed in self-defence with stones, axes, kitchen knives and sometimes Molotov cocktails.

The Haouch Rais massacre came after months of systematic attacks on isolated villages in the regions of Tlemcen, Média and Blida. Planned massacres, with all the horrible details you have heard about. But the urban population was not as worried about this far-off threat as by the dozens of bomb attacks in busy urban settings. Collective panics regularly emptied the busiest streets, and unfamiliar parked cars provoked a huge number of false alerts.

And yet, life went on. The parliamentary election on June 5th was proceeded by thousands of meetings, squeezed in between the bomb scares. And the beaches were packed with people all summer.

Privatisation begins

Despite popular distrust, and public accu-



sations of massive fraud, president Zeroual succeeded in using the June election to give a varnish of respectability to his regime.

Immediately after the results were announced, and before the new government was formed, the most painful parts of Zeroual's neo-liberal reform programme were implemented. A range of enterprises in the construction, publishing and retail sectors were liquidated. The almost total privatisation of the chemical sector was announced, as well as the partial privatisation of the mechanical and electronic sectors. Everywhere, redundancies were predicted or announced.

Coffin-chasers from all over the world flocked to Algiers to divide up the remains of the state industrial sector. Most nationalised companies had been unable to overcome the isolation and withdrawal of foreign investment which began in 1994 when the Armed Islamic Group began attacking foreigners.

A few deals have already been announced. Daewoo will take over a truck factory in Rouiba and a television factory in Sidi Bel Abbès. The Korean group promises to invest \$2 billion. Pfizer and other pharmaceutical groups have also announced investment plans.

The International Monetary Fund is insisting that land too be privatised, something the regime has been nervous about attempting. The IMF also demands the lifting of Algeria's remaining protective barriers

around the national economy.

When the government presented this reactionary programme, most of the parliamentary parties, except the Berber minority's Cultural-Democratic Rally (RCD), expressed the population's concerns about the measures called for by the IMF. Ait Ahmed's Front of Socialist Forces (FFS), which used to encourage western economic pressure on the Algerian dictatorship, denounced the interference of IMF Chairman Michel Camdessus in Algerian internal affairs. Many Members of Parliament (MPs) from the government coalition (RND, FLN, Hamas) said they would only support Prime Minister Ouyahia if his government abandoned plans to privatise agricultural land and parts of the education system, and if it reversed the planned closure of a number of enterprises.

Social and labour struggles are again on the increase. After three months of strikes, workers at ENAL are increasing the number of sit-ins. Workers at the Sider metalworking complex in Annaba, near the Tunisian border, challenged management's announcement of 6,000 redundancies. In July, workers at the Rouiba truck factory, facing the loss of several thousand jobs, became the centre of unitary "days of action" involving 30,000 workers in Algeria's main industrial zone, just outside the capital.

This movement of protest grew and spread across the country, but had no spokesperson or organised centre. The UGTA trade

Next month: Che Guevara: man and myth



• Create two, three, many Vietnams!

Guevara's famous message to the Tricontinental congress, in which he set out his strategy for the global revolution

• Che's Congo expedition

Zbigniew Kowalewski explains why Che led an expedition of black Cubans to fight for Laurent Kabila in 1965

• Researchers and the legend

Janette Habel reviews four biographies of a personal history that has still not revealed all its mysteries.

• The 4th International and Cuba

Livio Maitan looks back at the Trotskyist reaction to the Cuban revolution, and Che's conflict with the USSR and China.

union federation, one of the bases of President Zeroual's new party, only exists during its "negotiations" with the regime, in the name of the working class. But here and there, local union bodies did emerge as the leaders of the protests, like in Skikda (a petrochemical and gas-extraction region) and above all in Rouiba, where the union played a central role in the mobilisation.

Obviously, these were expressions of defensive resistance, by groups of workers threatened by job cuts and the dismantling of the nationalised industries. Their pressure is above all an attempt to stop the flood of redundancies which have been announced. In general, the context of insecurity in the country reduces people's 'militant energy'. And economic policies which are dissolving the working class have atomised the workers. Nevertheless, this anti-liberal awakening, late as it is, is an important step in the possible reconstruction of the organised working class, in a way that will prevent the Islamic fundamentalists from capitalising on the widespread social despair.

The shock of Haouch Rais

These challenges to privatisation, on the ground and in parliament, showed that Algerians were increasingly able to contain the burden of fear under which they live within "manageable proportions." As public security pressures subsided, society began to live again. And to debate matters of great importance.

At this point there was a new series of bomb attacks in Algiers, and a wave of rural massacres, starting in Média and moving past Chréa closer and closer to the capital. Then came the terrible news from Sidi Moussa, an eastern suburb of Algiers itself. More than 400 people had been murdered. Their throats cut. Their bodies mutilated. The young women kidnapped. The cattle stolen.

Then, in the western outskirts of Algiers, on the road to the top-security residences of the elite, 63 residents of Beni Messous village were killed. This was the first in a series of attacks in and near the Bainem forest, normally a popular destination for day-trippers from Algiers.

Panic spread in the villages closest to the capital. In Baraki and Zghara, people from outlying houses began spending the night outside the nearest police station, rather than in their isolated homes. Rumours that the region was being infiltrated by Islamic fundamentalists, usually false, provoked panics.

Under pressure from the agitated population, the police agreed to distribute arms. And this time, without the political selection used in recent years to create the regime's Communal Militias. In Baraki, which already has a sizeable military presence, some 1,000 weapons were distributed to the population.

These new self-defence structures are being created in an atmosphere of fear and confusion. Women and children are moved to safer accommodation, while the men spend the night patrolling, or standing sentry. Most have only sticks and knives. The vigilance is not very effective: sirens wail at the slightest alert, throwing people into confused agitation.

While people used to accuse the army of being responsible for a part of the massacres, you increasingly hear people criticise the army for not having intervened. And in the streets, many people have resumed normal contact with the police, though the army is still distrusted and avoided.

Who is responsible?

It is hard to find the truth amid the cacophony of rumours circulating among a traumatised, sleepless population. The massacres themselves leave few witnesses. But it does seem that the army was not responsible for these latest massacres, as many people suspected.

Nor does the finger point towards the Communal Militias armed and controlled by the regime. They do seem to have been responsible for some other collective murders earlier this year. But these latest attacks were concentrated in the capital region.

The failure of the armed forces to protect the citizens is not evidence of a machiavellian plan [to collaborate in the attacks]. No distribution of police forces can protect 28 million people, spread over Algeria's two million square kilometres of territory. And in any case, the protection of the citizens is not the primary purpose of the repressive system. It exists to protect the ruling classes, and ensure their continued authority.

On the other hand, it is not impossible that some milieus, preparing for the privatisation of agricultural land, are trying to drive the peasants off the most fertile land.

The attacks certainly surprised the regime. It seemed to believe that the worst was over. On August 20th, President Zeroual had even announced "the end of terrorism."

The strategy of the armed fundamentalist groups has changed. They used to impose their own, brutal authority on whatever population they could control. But increasingly, their strategy has been to carry out punitive raids against an entire population that they consider to be *ettekfir* (unbelievers).

In this war against the godless, murder and pillage are justified. And virgin girls and cattle are legitimate booty.

These groups have taken refuge in inaccessible mountain regions like Chréa and Zbarbar. From these base-camps they organise punitive expeditions, local genocides, in order to remind the world that they exist, at a moment when the regime is proclaiming a military victory, and reasserting its political domination of Algeria.

In this desperate the growing structures of popular self-defence are the only act of civil dignity which can respond adequately to the horror facing Algeria. Armed self-defence is the only way to fight the type of aggression Algerians are suffering, providing that it can be properly armed and structured. ★

Correction

In the past, this magazine has incorrectly described the Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs as the "Algerian Section" of the Fourth International. The Leadership of the PST rejects such a description, stating that "reactionary legislation has obliged the PST to abstain from all membership of or affiliation to international organisations."

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A democratic advance

The British establishment hopes that Scotland's new parliament will modernise and stabilise the United Kingdom. Scottish nationalists and the anti-capitalist left have other plans.

Gordon Morgan

On 11th September, 74% of Scottish voters voted "Yes" in a referendum proposing a Scottish Parliament. Elections will be held in 1999, and the Parliament will begin its work during the year 2000. The new Parliament will technically be a "devolved Assembly," subordinate to the British Parliament. But it will be a separate legislative body with substantial autonomous powers.

It will have full responsibility for health care, education, local government, economic development, environment, transport, law enforcement, and prison. Scotland will continue to have its own civil law and much of its own criminal law. The new body will control a budget of around £14 Billion. (US\$22.5 bn.) As well as powers to change legislation and alter local taxes on households and business, it will have powers to vary the rate of British income tax paid by residents of Scotland.

The British parliament will still control foreign, defence, fiscal, economic and monetary policy, company law and social security

Modernisation

The Scottish Parliament has been promoted by Britain's Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair as the first of a series of steps to 'modernise' the British state, bring it into line with other European states. Scotland's new powers were often discussed in comparison

with those of Catalonia in Spain and German *Länder* like Bavaria.

Blair's modernisation project also includes ending the influence of the Trade Unions and the anti-capitalist left in the Labour Party, and replacing Britain's confrontational two-party system with an alliance between Labour and the smaller bourgeois Liberal Democratic Party

In the medium term, Blair wants Britain to join the European Union's single currency zone, so that he can better argue for British financial and business interests in Europe. To free his hands, he wants to retain corporate control of the United Kingdom state, while leaving local issues to the Scots.

Scottish History

Scotland 'gave up' her Parliament in 1707 to 'merge' with the English Parliament. However, many of the institutions of the Scottish state remain. There is a separate Legal System based more on Roman Law than the English System. Separate laws are passed at Westminster for Scotland. There is a distinct Scottish Educational system and even separate Scottish National Football and Rugby teams in international competitions.

In fact, Scotland already has separate Government. The Scottish Office presides over the administration of the Scottish State, and enormous discretionary power resides in the hands of Britain's Secretary of State for Scotland. But uniquely in the EU, (excluding the EU Commission) no directly elected body scrutinises the Scottish administration.

Opposition to the Union (of Scotland and England) has been continuous since 1707. And the demand for Home Rule has always been part of the Scottish Labour Movement.

Greece: test case for "anti-terrorist" measures goes to appeal

George Balafas is serving the fourth year of a ten-year sentence on charges of murder, drug smuggling, and membership of the "terrorist" November 17th group. The authorities have made him a symbol of their determination to beat down the extreme left, which in Greece has a strong "street fighting" component. [See December 1997 issue].

The United States, which has "advisors" at every level of the Greek security services, is using the case to spearhead their "anti-terrorist" drive. One of their latest proposals is for "terrorism" suspects to be brought before court only to hear the confirmation of the sentence — imposed during a trial in their absence!

According to Zoe Chalidisa of the Balafas solidarity committee, "the weaker the

case against George becomes, the more inflexible the judges become... The more people become convinced that he is the victim of a frame-up, the more the authorities and their US "advisors" intervene in judicial procedures."

Balafas will appear before the Appeals Court on October 22nd. Formally the court will decide whether he was once a member of a terrorist group. In fact, his appearance will be another battle in the extremely polarised confrontation between Greece's discredited judicial system, and a militant, anti-authoritarian movement in defence of civil liberties. [ZC/JD] ★

Send protests to: Ministry of Justice, fax +30 1 7758742, with copy to *Eleftherotypia* newspaper, fax 9028311. Contact: G. Balafas Solidarity Committee, Valtetsiou 35, Exarchia, 10681, Athens. ☎ +30 1 7753979, fax 6745302

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Keir Hardie, the founder of Britain's Labour party was also a leader of the Scottish Home Rule association. The Scottish Trade Union Congress, founded in 1897 as a split from the British TUC, and which continues to represent Scottish Trade Unionists, has continuously advocated Scottish Home Rule.

Since the rise of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in the 1960s, British Governments have repeatedly discussed the idea of a separate parliament for Scotland. In a sense, this issue has defined Scottish Politics for the last 30 years. In a 1979 referendum 51.6% of Scots voted for a Parliament. The legislation was on the statute book, but the new Tory (Conservative) Government of Margaret Thatcher repealed the Act. The Tories compounded Scots' feeling of national political oppression by introducing the hated Poll Tax to Scotland one year ahead of England - effectively using Scotland as a guinea pig for new forms of regressive taxation.

Party positions

The SNP (left Nationalists claiming to be Social Democrats with around 25% of the vote) support a Scottish Parliament as a stepping stone to Independence. Their leadership support the EU and have a policy for Scottish Independence in Europe. But their base, which is more left wing, increasingly opposes the Bosses Europe on social grounds.

Labour (which wins 45%-50% of Scottish votes in British elections) was split over devolution in 1979. Since then, a substantial nationalist wing has developed within the party. Whilst many in Scottish Labour are still Unionists, they realise that a substantial part of the party would switch to SNP if Labour didn't deliver on its promises for a Parliament. In the September 1997 referendum, Labour this time was united behind the Yes campaign. Doubters reluctantly accepted that this reform was the best way to defend the Union with England.

The Liberals (a bourgeois party with 10% of the Scottish vote, and increasingly aligned with Labour at the British level) have always supported Home Rule, and particularly the Proportional Representation voting system it will bring.

The Scottish Conservatives (14% electoral support) are formally opposed to the idea of a Scottish Parliament. But they accept the reality of its popular support. They may eventually back greater autonomy for Scotland, within the European Union.

The Greens also backed the Parliament, but have almost vanished as an electoral force in Scotland.

The Left

Most of the far left supported a Yes vote, even the SWP, which opposed the 1979 devolution campaign. Some very small groups called for a boycott, arguing that 'real self determination' was not on offer.

The anti-capitalist left in Scotland is fairly small. The only groups which contest elections are the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) and Socialist Labour Party. Both these groups have formed over the last two years, since Miners' leader Arthur Scargill led a

split from Labour.

The larger group, Scottish Socialist Alliance, has between 400 and 500 members mainly from Militant and the Scottish Socialist Movement. Many *International Viewpoint* readers are also members.

The SSA was prominent in arguing for "a Parliament which will take the powers needed to tackle Scotland's social and economic problems - against a Bosses' Europe." The SSA hopes for representation in the new parliament. Under the planned proportional representation rules, the group would receive one seat if it won 6.5% of votes in its stronghold, Glasgow.

Growing tension

The new Parliament will inevitably

become the focus for politics in Scotland. Conflicts between London and Edinburgh are most likely to occur over fiscal Policy, and European integration.

Scottish opposition to the EU is higher than in England, and can only grow. And while it supports the EU, the Scottish National Party is demanding 'a place at the table,' rather than trusting English interests to negotiate for Britain as a whole. They will not be satisfied with the minor influence on regional policy, which is what is being offered to Scotland at the moment.

And as Britain moves into depression and austerity, the SSA and other Socialists will demand that the Scottish Parliament take the necessary powers to oppose the Bosses Europe. ★

The other Europe

Reporting direct action is "conspiracy" say British police

In January 1996 editors of *Green Anarchist* magazine and the *Animal Liberation Front (ALF) Support Group Newsletter* were charged with "conspiracy to incite persons unknown to commit criminal damage" on the basis of news and comment they had published. The charges carry a maximum prison sentence of ten years. The trial, which began at Portsmouth Crown Court on August 26th, opens the way for similar attacks on any publication deemed to be in favour of direct action. If the reporting of direct action can constitute incitement this has very worrying implications for freedom of speech. "Public Interest Immunity" Certificates have been used to suppress evidence of secret service actions in the gathering of evidence.

A protest petition is being circulated by Corporate Watch, Reclaim the Streets, Squall, The McLibel Support Campaign, and radical publications. ★

Contacts: • Corporate Watch, Box E, 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RQ, ☎ +44 01865 791 391 Email <mail@corporatwatch.i-way.co.uk> • The GAndALF Defendants' Campaign, PO Box 66, Stevenage, SG1 2TR, Britain • McLibel Support Campaign, PO Box 62, Craftsbury VT 05826-0062, USA. Internet: <www.mcspotlight.org/> Email <cibrars@world.std.com> Phone/Fax 802-586-9628. To join the "mclibel" electronic mailing list, send a message "subscribe mclibel" to <majordomo@world.std.com>.

Class War no more

The Class War Federation has dissolved. The group emerged from England's anarchist scene in the early 1980s in opposition to "pacifist, middle-class, and anti-organisational tendencies".

Despite criticism from other anarchists, Class War celebrated violence against the ruling class and police, and built one of Britain's stronger anarchist federations.

Their newspaper inspired many other anarchist papers to adopt a more humorous and provocative approach. They published a book, *Unfinished Business: The Politics of Class War*, which was widely distributed.

The final edition of their newspaper is subtitled "an open letter to the revolutionary movement." The articles explain their reasons for folding the federation, and make many honest and sober self-criticisms. Class War is dissolving to clear the ground to try to build toward something new, but they don't say what.

The majority of the London Class War group disagreed with the decision to fold, and is continuing with the original project. ★

Source: *Love & Rage* Vol.8 #4, August-September 1997

Berlin squats evicted

The three major squats in East Berlin were evicted in the early hours of July 29. All had been squatted for seven years. Some 500 riot police took part in the evictions, including SEK special units with machine guns, dropped by helicopter onto the roofs of the houses.

According to the *Hausermob* squatters network, "these were just about the last squats left in Berlin. You can count the rest on one hand... People need to stop hiding in their shadows and complaining that there are no new perspectives. There won't be any unless we make them ourselves!" ★

Source: www.hou.net/hmob/

Diplomacy clashes with reality

The latest IRA cease-fire in Ireland was the result of secret diplomacy by the new Blair administration in London, writes John McAnulty.

The Sinn Fein leadership explains the failure of the peace process on the dependence of Britain's former Prime Minister John Major on unionist votes, and an unsympathetic regime in Dublin. Gerry Adams "dream ticket" was a strong Labour government in London, a Fianna Fail administration in Dublin, and an increase in Sinn Fein's own vote. In June all three elements came into play in a series of elections.

Unfortunately for the "peace process", this happy state of affairs also coincided with the annual British and Loyalist humiliation of the nationalist population, when Loyalists march through Catholic areas to remind them of their second-class status.

The future is Orange

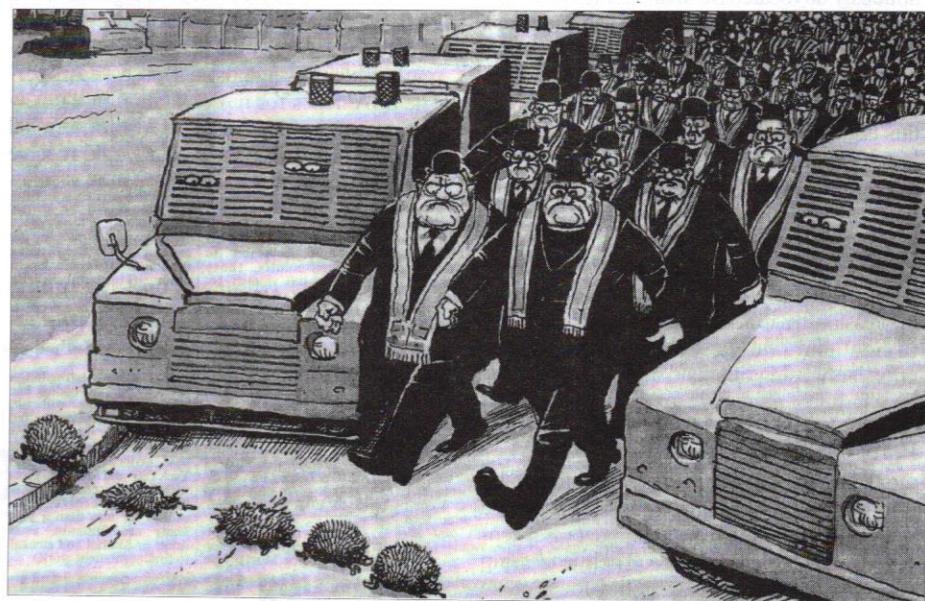
On the 6th July British forces moved in at dawn to attack the civilian population of the Gervagh Road in Portadown in order to support the "right" of local bigots in the sectarian Orange order to assert their supremacy over the minority population by staging their annual march through the nationalist area.

A leaked official document showed that the British had decided weeks before that this would be their policy, and that the "meet the people" policy of Labour's new Northern Ireland secretary Mo Mowlam had simply been a PR exercise. It seems that the new Labour administration has brought new energy to the peace process, but left no doubt about where Britain is taking the peace train, nor the price of a ticket.

A test for Sinn Fein

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams called the latest Loyalist marches "a test" for the British. But they were also a test for Sinn Fein. And they revealed a seriously disoriented movement. Adams briefly broke from the peace process, criticising the establishment parties and the trade unions for their silence and calling an open meeting to discuss mass action.

But by the time the meeting was held the republican leadership had closed ranks. A bizarre session was held where the audience was asked to make tactical suggestions without being allowed to discuss strategy or policy.¹ The strategy that finally emerged was one where the leadership held firm control over the nationalist "family," maintained their interpretation of the peace process, and continued to hoist the middle-class Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) onto their platforms.



The vehicle for opposition to the reactionary "marching season" are the local residents' committees. These are confined to areas directly under attack, with no attempt to build broader solidarity. They are the local expression of the "nationalist consensus", with concessions made to the Catholic church and the SDLP.

By their nature these are Catholic committees. This allows organisations like the trade unions to avoid involvement. Though obviously, the answer to Orange sectarianism is not a Catholic counter-organisation, but organisation of the workers' movement.²

Nevertheless, the nationalist demonstrations did try to broaden and generalise mass action. In the end this proved decisive, forcing the British and the Orange leadership into retreat and the cancellation of a number of marches through nationalist areas.

Political decommissioning

Within days a new cease-fire was announced by the IRA. They say that the road-block of "prior decommissioning," the British demand that the IRA surrender its weapons had been overcome.

What the republican leadership did not explain was that they had made a further political retreat around the question of the Mitchell principles.

These principles are Washington's contribution to the peace process. They call for the surrender of arms during negotiations and for the disbandment of the IRA.

Whatever assurances the republicans received about the question of arms, there is no doubt about the political aspects of the demands made by Mitchell.

The report demanded a commitment to

exclusively peaceful means, but it made it clear that this commitment did not extend to the state forces. It also made the demand that those participating accept in advance the outcome of the talks. For the Republicans, this is effectively a demand for political surrender.

The day before the cease-fire, Gerry Adams published an extensive document setting out the Sinn Fein programme. It lists a number of reforms in tackling discrimination and repressive legislation and calls for a renegotiation of the union.

Following criticism, Adams claimed he had been "miscontextualised". Emergency rallies were held in Belfast and Derry to reassure supporters that the primary aim of the movement remained a united Ireland.

What the speakers did not say was that the "primary aim" would not - and could not be - realised through the peace process, and that the drift to reformism meant that the more radical elements of their programme were being moved to a long and indefinite future.

So the cease-fire returned, but without the fanfare and support that existed at the base of republicanism in the past. The Unionists now have the initiative. ★

Reprinted from *Socialist Outlook*. John McAnulty writes on behalf of Socialist Democracy, the Irish supporters of the Fourth International.

Notes

1. It was clearly indicated from the platform that Socialist Democracy were not welcome at the meeting.
2. The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) contribution was to announce that it would kill Orangemen if they marched through disputed areas.

"Rise To The Challenge"

Interview with Irish Republican Army Spokesperson

- What changes in the political climate led to your latest cease-fire?

IRA: The key elements which influenced our decision were that the new British Labour government moved with some speed after taking office to deal with the need for all inclusive negotiations and the new Fianna Fail-led government in the south moved to help put a peace process back on the rails from an Irish point of view.

The previous British government, under John Major, had imposed a number of blocking mechanisms or obstacles to prevent inclusive and meaningful peace talks taking place. The new British government moved publicly and speedily to address these issues. They removed the precondition of decommissioning, they set a time frame for substantive talks of between now and May next year, they made it clear that such talks would be substantive and inclusive when they were convened on September 15 and that bilateral meetings would start almost immediately after any announcement of an IRA cessation. They also gave public commitments to move on a series of confidence-building measures, including POWs, the Irish language and issues of equality of treatment.

Both London and Dublin governments also committed themselves to the start of negotiations on substantive issues from September 15.

Do you believe there will finally be all-party negotiations?

Well, I believe that all-party negotiations are absolutely necessary for the resolution of the conflict between the British government and the Irish people. I therefore believe them to be inevitable. Those elected representatives who would refuse to participate in all-party negotiations are wreckers trying to hold back the tide of history. For our part, we took an initiative in August 1994 to enhance the potential for a meaningful peace process. That historic opportunity was run into the sand. We now have a second opportunity. We have played our part in restoring the total cessation [cease-fire] of August '94. It is for others to play their part and rise to the challenge this renewed opportunity presents them.

- Sinn Fein have affirmed the Mitchell principles. What does the IRA think?

Sinn Fein is a political party with a very substantial democratic mandate. What they do is a matter for them. But I

think all Republicans should understand and support them as they do what they believe is right and necessary to bring about a lasting peace. Sinn Fein's stated commitment is to secure a peace settlement which both removes the causes of conflict and takes all the guns, British, Republican, Unionist, Nationalist and Loyalist, out of Irish politics. The Sinn Fein position actually goes beyond the Mitchell principles. Their affirmation of these principles is therefore quite compatible with their position.

As to the IRA's attitude, well, we would have problems with sections of the Mitchell principles. But then the IRA is not a participant in these talks.

- Britain insists that reform is conditional on "the consent of the majority of the people in Northern Ireland."

There is no doubt that the British and Unionists have quite deliberately muddled what should be a clear concept by interpreting consent to mean a political veto [for the Unionist Parties]. In doing so they have tried to introduce a new precondition into the equation, in the same way as they previously tried to make decommissioning a precondition.

For Republicans any political consent requirement must have a straightforward 32 County [All Ireland] context. It must recognise the properly defined parameters of nationhood and self-determination as understood in international law. Any consent requirement must be defined within the context of British withdrawal and encompass all the people of Ireland. It cannot therefore be shaped with regard to outside impediment or interference. The idea that a minority grouping in Ireland, situated within the Six Counties [of Northern Ireland], should have a veto over political progress in the island as a whole is anathema to Republicans. Unionists, after all, are in the majority in

only three of the 32 counties of Ireland. I have no doubt both the Unionists and the British would be among the first to object if someone was to pick any other three counties and suggest they be afforded a similar veto.

- In the past the IRA have said there will be no decommissioning [of its weapons as a pre-condition of talks].

Has your position changed?

Not at all. And I don't think anyone has ever realistically expected us to agree to decommissioning before a political settlement. There is no historical precedent in Ireland for such a demand. Those who raised the issue in the first instance and who continue to hype it are interested only in creating an excuse for their own refusal to engage in meaningful negotiations. The seriousness with which they take the issue can be fairly well measured by their lack of focus on any need to decommission the guns of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the British army or the 100,000 and more other 'legally' held guns in the Six Counties.

Decommissioning on our part would be tantamount to surrender. It was irresponsible of the last British government to try to use the opportunity provided by our initiative in August 1994 to secure an IRA surrender. It would therefore be doubly irresponsible if the present British government went on that same fruitless pursuit again. Decommissioning should not be allowed to become a distraction from the need for meaningful negotiations.

Those with a genuine interest in developing a peace process which has the potential for producing a just and lasting peace will have no interest in decommissioning beyond the point where all guns are silent. ★

Source: *An Phoblacht/Republican News* - September 11, 1997 - www.irlnet.com/apn/

Deportation looms for Rosin McAliskey

A last effort is being made to prevent Germany extraditing Roisin McAliskey. The Royal Ulster Constabulary have fabricated evidence linking her to a bomb attack on British army barracks in Osnabruck, Germany.

The daughter of human rights leader and former British MP, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Roisin recently gave birth in a British jail to a baby girl named Loinnir.

Her case has been taken up by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Amnesty International, Liberty (The British Council of Civil Liberties), and Germany's Society for Threatened People. [JD] ★

Send your appeals to: The German Justice Minister, Prof. Dr. Edzard Schmidt-Jortzig MdB, Heinemannstr. 6, 53175 Bonn, Germany. Fax: +49 228 58 4525. Email <schmidt-jortzig@mdb1.bn.eunet.de>

Javier Solana's "new NATO"

NATO's pro-U.S., "realist" leader started his career as a firebrand Spanish socialist. Javier Solana's rise in the Atlantic Alliance is a metaphor for the transformation of Spain's Socialists into a true party of the establishment.

G. Buster

NATO had been without an effective leader since 1991.¹ This was a decisive period, in which differences emerged between the United States and EU members of NATO concerning the strategy the Alliance should take in the Yugoslav conflict, towards the Russian Federation, and on the possible expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe.

After a period of uncertainty, this new division of Europe was settled at the end of 1995, with the signing of the Dayton Accords on Bosnia, and the realisation by the Western powers that Boris Yeltsin might lose the 1996 presidential elections in Russia. With the re-division of the continent recognised, broadening the Alliance to include at least Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic became increasingly urgent. The goal, once again, was to "contain" the Russian bear.

In this new context, Solana (Spanish) was the "least problematic" candidate. The Ruud Lubbers (Dutch) had already been presented in 1994, but had failed to win support from the European members of the Alliance. Elleman-Jensen (Danish) was vetoed by France, after he condemned Paris' nuclear tests in Mururoa. In such a vacuum, Solana quickly became the preferred candidate of the Clinton administration. He also had the support of Germany, the EU's economic powerhouse, and France, which, like Spain, wanted to negotiate a return to the Alliance's unified military command structure.

U.S. President Bill Clinton wanted the successful candidate to project the new image of NATO, which is still the central tool of U.S. hegemony in the neo-liberal new world order. The Alliance is no longer obsessed with nuclear defence, and the static territorial confrontation of the cold war. The new NATO is supposed to intervene rapidly in the peripheral countries, where ethnic, religious or ideological conflict between the losers in the globalisation of the capitalist market economy threaten international "public order." Politically, NATO must ensure the consensus between the imperialist powers, and shift more of the cost of the structure onto the European countries.

Solana spent the Vietnam war years studying in the United States (on one of the Fulbright scholarships awarded after General Franco agreed to the establishment of U.S. bases on Spanish territory.) He opposed the

war on the same lines as Clinton (and current CIA leader James Woolsey). Like Clinton, Solana is "a pacifist who has realised how to evolve with time," according to *El País*. Who better to represent the post-Cold War Alliance?

A socialist defence policy?

In 1988 Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE) government signed a new defence agreement reducing the U.S. military presence, but committing Spain to supporting Washington's diplomatic and defence priorities. In opposition to the 1986 referendum that finally allowed Spain to join NATO, the government never asked if U.S. warships visiting the country were carrying nuclear

weapons. Spain also gave active logistical support in the Gulf War, and to NATO air strikes in Bosnia. One of the high points of the Spanish presidency of the European Union was the signing of a new Transatlantic Declaration. Socialist Party Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez convinced European leaders to accept a new definition of the relationship between the United States and the EU.

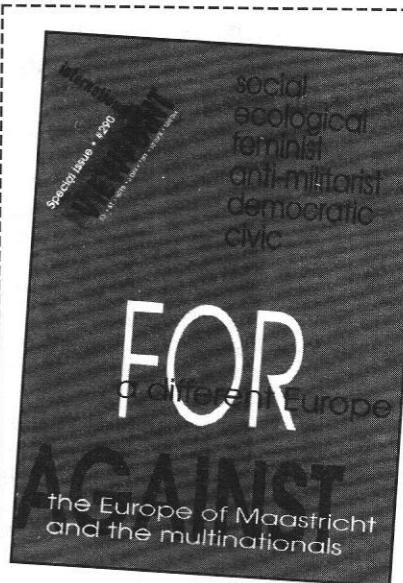
Solana has no clear position on foreign policy questions. His only priority seems to be to combine personal advancement with an increased Spanish presence in international affairs. When 35 U.S. Congressmen opposed his appointment because of his socialist and "pacifist" roots, Solana pointed to his party's role in the campaign for a "yes" vote in the 1986 referendum on joining NATO, and Spanish airforce participation in NATO's Bosnian bombing raids. Spain's failure to join NATO's unified command structure was explained as a "hangover from the past." "Speaking as an individual," Solana told the U.S. media he wanted to "overcome" this problem. And, to avoid any remaining doubts, Spain suddenly abandoned its campaign in the EU for a new dialogue with Cuba. With Clinton's backing, Solana was all set to become one of Europe's most important political leaders.

Being in is the main thing

Solana's "personal" enthusiasm for Spain's full integration into the NATO command structure was a specific guarantee demanded by the Clinton administration. Within Spain, PSOE leader Gonzalez reassured Socialist voters that no change was planned. After all, such integration is in explicit contradiction with the results of the 1986 referendum, in which the PSOE rank and file took a different position from that of their leaders.²

Gradually, however, Spain's political, military and media bosses have begun a sustained campaign on the need to end Spain's "exceptional" position in the Alliance. This campaign was reinforced when, in December 1996, Paris' ailing conservative government announced that France too wished to become part of the unified command system. Spain's 1986 decision not to join the unified command was the result of the last massive mobilisation in the country's transition from fascism to parliamentary democracy. France left the integrated command in 1966, when General de Gaulle decided that the country would instead develop its independent nuclear capacity, cornerstone of his "Great Power" ambitions.

French President Jacques Chirac claimed that, under Solana, NATO was a new, post cold-war Alliance, open to former enemies like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. France, he said, "must be present" in this "de-ideologised" Alliance. Fine words,



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if one forgets the context: France was in the middle of the largest strike since 1968, a massive international campaign was underway against French nuclear testing in the South Pacific, and the Bosnian government in Sarajevo was demanding the withdrawal of UN troops accused of corruption and failing to protect the civilian population against Bosnian Serb attacks.

Spain's "experts" picked up the French idea of a "new NATO." They claim that the historic circumstances of the 1985 referendum no longer applied. And that the referendum debate had "unnecessarily polarised" the country.³

Historical circumstances have indeed changed. So why not call a new referendum? This would be less easy to manipulate than the current opinion-poll politics on the question. A February 1997 poll reported that, of the 71% of adults expressing an opinion, 43% were in favour of remaining in NATO on the basis of the conditions set in 1986, and 27% were against NATO.

The issue in 1986 was to determine whether there was a popular consensus -expressed through parliamentary vote- on any decision that implied military obligations, the dispatching of Spanish troops (as in Bosnia and more recently Albania) and the loss of life. Staying outside NATO's Military Committee meant that the Spanish government had to discuss and adopt any decision made by NATO (i.e. U.S.) commanders before it became applicable to Spanish troops and territory. The historical situation may have

changed, but why should this mean abandoning this last guarantee of political sovereignty?

The terms of the current debate reflect the negative shift in the balance of forces since 1986. The progressive forces that came together in the campaign for a "no" vote on joining NATO are much weaker today. This is partly the result of the general crisis of the left and a decline in mass movement activity, and partly the result of the growing right-wing spin that successive governments, left and right, have put on foreign policy questions.⁴ A right-wing interpretation of "national interest" has been re-established. ★

Notes

1. Manfred Woerner died after a long illness, and Willy Claes was unable to shake off corruption accusations.
2. The socialist Government based its "new" support for NATO on non-participation in the integrated military structure; a ban on installation, storage or introduction of nuclear weapons on Spanish territory; and reduction of the military presence of U.S. troops in Spain.
3. Despite the "betrayal" of the PSOE, the heritage of the anti-Franco struggle sparked a massive peace movement, which finally persuaded 39.8% of voters to cast their ballots against NATO. The "Yes" proposition won with 52.5%. The referendum only succeeded when then Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez said the Socialist Party could not govern on behalf of "No" voters, threatening a governmental crisis, possibly opening the door to a right-wing government. Confronted with the "objective force" of the post-Franco state, the left realised it was defeated. This impotence contributed to the process that led to the formation of the Izquierda Unida (United Left) coalition around the Communist Party. People recognised the need for a force that could articulate the electoral response to radical social struggles, without again becoming a victim of right-wing threats, as happened with the PSOE.
4. Although the government has begun negotiations on Spain's full integration into NATO command structures, three of Spain's strategic interests provoke tension in the Alliance, and between the conservative government (which has failed to impose its priorities on NATO) and

certain traditional sectors of the right. While Spain shares most of NATO's goals, its particular concern is the capacity to defend its peripheral territories — the Balearic islands in the Mediterranean, the southern tip of the country, which faces Morocco across the Straits of Gibraltar, and the Canary Islands, a Spanish possession off the coast of Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara. This "strategic axis" includes Spain's two colonial trading posts on Moroccan soil, Ceuta and Melilla (Ceuta and Melilla in Spanish). Until now, this whole region has been split between two NATO subcommands, based in Naples, Italy, and Lisbon, Portugal. Spain would like to re-draw the command lines, establishing Spanish control over a NATO subcommand covering the whole "strategic axis." Spain also demands control over the NATO base in Gibraltar, a British colony on Spanish soil, controlling access to the Mediterranean.

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British colonialism after Hong Kong

Alain Ah-Vee*

The 65 island British Indian Ocean Territories (BIOT) was separated from Mauritius in 1965, as an illegal condition for the main island's independence.¹ The islands were cruelly "depopulated" by the British State. An editorial in *The Washington Post*² called it an "act of mass kidnapping".

Recently de-classified British documents³ reveal the 1964 Anglo-American survey, and the United States insistence on getting "the whole Chagos Archipelago." These "defence" documents also reveal the price of the islands. Three million pounds "compensation", and a US guarantee of a quota of Mauritian sugar being allowed into the US market!

Britain rents the BIOT to the United States Armed Forces. They, in turn, use Diego Garcia island not as a "communications station" as the British government at the time pretended, but as a huge, full-scale military base, literally bristling with nuclear installations.

Demilitarisation campaigns

One of the relative gains of the international peace movement has been the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed in June, 1995, which declares the Indian Ocean to be "nuclear-weapon-free". However, because of the occupation of Diego Garcia, the British and USA insisted that dotted lines be drawn around the Chagos Archipelago, which is thus once again "excised", this time from this supposedly epoch-making anti-nuclear-weapon pact.

Surely it would be in keeping with general anti-colonial sentiments and the commitments of the Labour Party that Britain at once begin a process of the return of this territory to Mauritius.

This would be particularly apt, as it was actually under Harold Wilson's Labour Government that the Chagos Archipelago was "excised" from Mauritius in 1965, by an Order in Her Majesty's Council. It was under a Labour Government that the shameful transfer of three million pounds was paid for the "resetting" of the residents. It was also under a Labour Government that, from 1970, hundreds of *ilois* (islander) families were tricked, then cajoled, and then removed forcibly from the islands. The last resisters imprisoned temporarily in Seychelles, which was also a British Colony. Had it not been for their demonstration on board the ship being used to deport them, they, too, would have been literally "dumped" in the slums of Port Louis, the Mauritian capital, to fend for themselves.

Labour in Mauritius also responsible

By strange co-incidence, the Labour Party of Mauritius finds itself in power in

Mauritius for the first time (outside alliances) since 1982. Back in pre-independence days, it was a Mauritian Labour Party "Government" which made the illegal "deal" for the detachment of the 65 islands. This kind of agreement is specifically outlawed by international law, because a colony (or any pre-Independence government) is not a separate entity, and is therefore unable to enter into any type of contract or treaty. In fact, what this kind of "deal" amounts to is the British state making a deal with a part of itself, its pre-independence Mauritian Cabinet.

Those on both sides of the illicit agreement are thus in power at the moment and are thus in a position to make historic amends.

As if to make the demand for re-unification of Mauritius all the more poignant, a Mauritian worker, Louis Cherry Anneea, is in prison in London, after having been tried in a BIOT court on Diego Garcia. He was working as a contract worker at the US base, and got into a fight with someone. Instead of being tried in Mauritius, he was tried by BIOT, and sent to prison in London.

Economic value

The Cold War was at best a weak pretext for the dismembering of a nation state, for the exiling of a people and for a savage mili-

tarisation of the Chagos. And any case, the Cold War is over. The USA is closing down many bases, and plans to close down still more bases. Recently Subic Bay and Pearl Harbour bases have been down-graded.

But Britain and the USA want to hold on to the BIOT for economic reasons, as well as military. This beautiful coral island, described by an Englishman shipwrecked on it in 1786 as "one of the wonderful phenomena of the globe" is now an Anglo-American military enterprise. The vast banks and shelves around the Chagos are probably a source of great riches. Riches which should not belong to the multinationals of the UK and USA but to the people who live here. ★

* This article is based on an open letter to British Premier Tony Blair which the author signed on behalf of the Lalit group, 153 Main Road, Grand River North West, Port Louis, Mauritius Tel/Fax: 230-208-2132. email: <clalmel@bow.intnet.mu>

Notes

1. The "excision" of 1965 was null and void because of being contrary to UN General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XXV) and 2066, the Constitution of Mauritius reads as follows: (Sec. 11): "Mauritius includes - (a) the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Tromelin, Cargados Carajos and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia and any other island comprised in the State of Mauritius".

2. *The Washington Post*, 11 September, 1975
3. file number FO 371/184523, as reported in the Mauritian magazine *Week End*.

Nigeria: Hunger strike by Ogoni prisoners

Twenty Ogoni men awaiting trial for the same murder for which the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed last year have begun a hunger strike. Some have been in jail for over three years. The Nigerian government refuses to grant them bail, much less bring them to trial. According to the *New York Times*, "General Abacha knows that executing them or even trying them will draw unwanted attention. Instead, he seems prepared to let them die in jail untried" (*NYT* 6 August 1997)

The Ogoni 20 are in prison because, like Ken Saro-Wiwa, they opposed Shell's dirty operations in Nigeria and the devastation of Ogoni land through 30 years of oil drilling activities.

Shell had a direct role in the arrest, detention, and subsequent torture of at least some of the accused. Shell's

security force, known locally as the "Shell Police" are accused of numerous incidents of repression of peaceful protest and harassment of activists. According to two of the accused, "Shell Police replied that nothing can make us free from their hand."

Since the Ogoni began a non-violent campaign against oil destruction, over 2,000 people have died at the hands of soldiers and policemen armed and paid for by Shell. ★

What to do:

Protest to Shell: in the US, call 1 800 845-5264 or fax 713-241-4044 and address Mr. Philip J. Carroll, CEO, Shell Oil Corporation, Houston, TX 77252. Email Shell at "awesome-shell@shelloil.com" and cc: "project-underground@moles.org" or visit their website at "www.shell.com"

Organise demonstrations at Shell stations. For more information, contact Steve Kretzmann, Project Underground, 1847 Berkeley Way Berkeley, CA, 94703; Tel: 510-705-8982; Fax: 510-705-8983; E-mail: steve@moles.org

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United States

The lean, mean, American university

In 1996 a National Labor Relations Board declared that graduate student teaching assistants at Yale University are, in fact, employees of the Yale Corporation—not just professional “apprentices” as Yale had claimed.

Yale had waged an assault on its own students, coinciding with a campaign to outsource and eliminate the jobs of unionised food service workers on campus. In both fights the University displayed unwavering commitment to its corporate mission: No less than the rest of corporate America, Yale wants an institution that is a lean, mean profitable machine.

Since the 1960s, student activism—taking different shapes at different moments—has incorporated an analysis of the university’s relationship to the imperatives of global capital. In the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of 1964, the most elementary right to collect money in support of the civil rights movement collided head on with the “mission” conceived by University of California President Clark Kerr.

That mission (a far-sighted one, in its own reactionary way) was to directly serve the needs of corporate capital through a well-structured hierarchy of educational institutions. The “multiversity” (Kerr’s term) produced elite “thinkers” at the top and trained technicians at subordinate levels. All knew their place in the machine.

Subsequent struggles around the country targeted universities’ complicity with draft boards and with military research during the Vietnam War; the bulldozing of low-income and African-American neighbourhoods for university expansion; the universities’ paternalist and exploitative relations with their own cafeteria and maintenance workers; and university endowments’ investments in *apartheid* South Africa.

The same period also saw demands to expand the culture of the university beyond the highly restrictive adulation of select, elite, Eurocentric patriarchal culture. These struggles have performed a valuable service by broadening the intellectual context—internationally and in insisting that women’s voices receive a hearing and place in the “canon”—and by demanding inclusion of plebeian culture. It is no surprise that these gains—along with affirmative action—are among the first to come under assault in a period of reaction.

Today, the combined trends toward educational downsizing, the bleak choice that students confront—total surrender of body and soul to the demands of the corporate world, or a jobless future—and the declining activism of the social movements of the 1970s and ‘80s, are pushing many toward the

labour movement. This represents both the natural channel for students’ idealistic aspirations, and a means of self-defence.

The Academy as battlefield

The Yale Teaching Assistants’ bitter struggle for recognition of their association marked a turning point. Similar battles are underway across the country.

Of course, institutions occupy different niches in the educational hierarchy. The graduate students at Yale and other elite institutions, while exploited as Teaching Assistants, retain a preferred status as apprentices and future tenured faculty. Those from lesser-prestige universities are more likely to become the wandering adjunct professors, paid hourly or by the semester with no benefits. Some PhD holders finish as cab drivers.

Their experiences highlight the insidious nature of the re-engineered, lean university: As funding disappears and tuition skyrockets, most students find themselves working harder and acquiring more debt toward a future which becomes less certain every day. It is a far cry from the free tuition City College of New York of the 1930s, or the California state system as recently as the 1950s and ‘60s.

At the University of Arizona, graduate students or part-time faculty teach 87% of undergraduate classes for a fraction of what it would cost the school to hire full-time professors. At the University of Florida a full professor makes \$60,000 teaching two classes for two semesters, while teaching assistants are paid \$16,000 for double the course load.

“Flexibilisation” on campus reflects the trend in the rest of the economy, where some people are working too much—multiple part-time jobs and overtime—while others are under-employed or unemployed.

Students and the New AFL-CIO

More and more graduate students are becoming active in defence of their interests as campus workers. At the same time, undergraduate students are being introduced to unions and recruited to become the “next generation” of union organisers through initiatives like Union Summer and “teach-ins with the labour movement,” featuring the new Sweeney-Trumka leadership of the AFL-CIO trade union confederation. This student interest in revived labour activism will shape the future of education institutions and labour.

Yet this new generation of activists must also rely upon another traditional component of student activism: healthy distrust of authority. A dialogue of organised labour with students and intellectuals is undoubtedly positive, but doesn’t the labour leadership need a dialogue with its own membership? Why, students may ask, are they—rather

than millions of unionised workers—being invited to a “teach-in with the labour movement”?

Can’t the union movement recruit organisers from among its membership? Doesn’t it trust them? Indeed, why do some older candidates going through the AFL-CIO’s Organising Institute find themselves rejected due to “previous organising experience”? Students may also wonder how it has come about that only 14% of the work force is organised; why some workers and not others are the focus of the “new” organising drive.

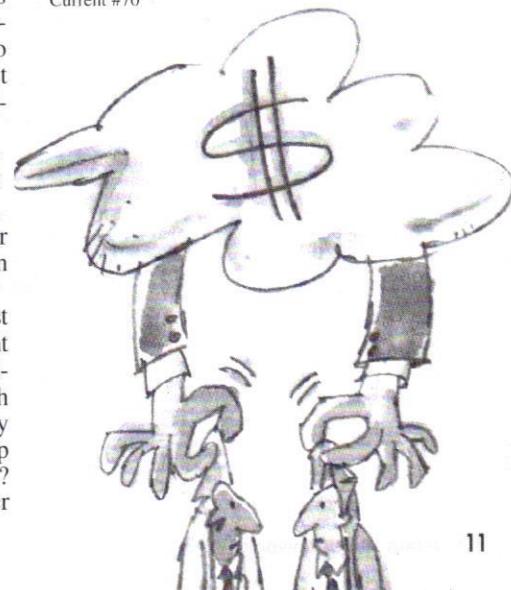
Graduate student organising, service sector organising and several unions’ fledgling campaigns to organise “workfare” workers are important initiatives. But why is the United Auto Workers leadership (for example) so backward in trying to get the non-union parts sector, to which so much work is subcontracted, organised into the UAW? And why does the UAW endorse a two-tier wage system, where parts workers and new hires receive substandard pay?

Student/labour activists will also do well to consider the poor track record of the union movement on internal democracy. Why has Teamsters for a Democratic Union never been accepted (let alone praised) as a model for union reformers?

Quite the opposite: In the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), janitors in Los Angeles hotels (mostly Central American immigrants) waged a heroic and successful organising drive, then had their local thrown into receivership when they organised a slate that displaced the old-guard white-dominated leadership.

Nonetheless, a new generation of student activists are being drawn toward the labour movement for all the right reasons, both off and on their campuses. And many of the same principles that apply in organising around graduate students’ rights as workers apply to a broad range of struggles. [ATC] ★

Reprinted from Against the Current #70



Mexico's lesbian feminist parliamentarian

PATRIA JIMÉNEZ
Para Diputada Federal
**Unidad para el
cambio democrático**

Lesbian activist Patria Jiménez was elected to the Mexican Congress in the July 1997 elections. A member of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), she was elected on the list of the centre-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD).

- You're a feminist, gay, and a revolutionary activist. Three serious obstacles to election, particularly in a Latin American country.

The PRD had decided to put forward candidates of a broad alliance who would represent a range of political currents and Mexican social movements. The PRT and PRD reached a political agreement for these elections, in order to help make a decisive step towards the fall of the PRI regime and the democratisation of Mexico.¹

Why me? Because of my political profile: as a feminist, a leader of the gay movement, and an activist in solidarity with the Zapatistas, I'm rather well known. The PRT put forward a list of eight names, from which the PRD chose me. I was relatively high on the list of PRD candidates for the part of the Congress that's elected by proportional representation.

The PRD decided to reserve half of their slots in these elections for non-PRD candidates, who would be representative of society. You have to understand that in 1996 the major parties (including the PRD) agreed to an electoral reform that made it virtually impossible for small parties and social movements to stand candidates. This reform shut out participation by civil society. In face of criticism, PRD leader Cuathémoc Cárdenas decided to open up his party's lists.

This made possible the formation of a broad political front, which includes for example the debtors' alliance *El Barzón* (a huge movement of indebted middle-class people and small business people which is fighting against the exorbitant interest rates charged by the banks), intellectuals (such as the publisher of the major left daily *La Jornada*), parties like the PRT, indigenous rights' organisations, trade unions, neighbourhood groups and so on. It's also worth noticing that the PRD set aside 30% of the slots for women. Taken as a whole this strategy contributed to the PRD's big electoral success.

• How do you interpret your election?

I waged a campaign focused particularly on the issue of gay and lesbian oppression. I held public meetings in a dozen cities. I ploughed through Mexico's gay meeting places (bars, meeting halls, etc.), presenting my candidacy and encouraging discussion. People reacted extremely well. It was extraordinary.

The gay movement is substantial in Mexico. Gay Pride on 28 June 1997 brought out more than 5,000 people in a very dynamic march. This dynamic explains why the PRD thought it was in their interest to have me on their list, and this is an important sign of recognition for the gay movement. I was

able to hold a public meeting with Cárdenas himself in Mexico City. The campaign created a kind of effervescence and made it possible to strengthen the gay movement, which now includes more than twenty groups in Mexico City and twenty others in the rest of the country.

It says in the PRD-PRT agreement that Patria will be "the first Congressperson who as a lesbian will openly defend the gay movement's rights and demands". By taking part in the PRD's parliamentary group I'll be able to propose laws against anti-gay discrimination and move the debate forward on these issues.

This will also increase the PRT's prestige. The PRT has always been very clear in taking gay people's side; it stood me as a PRT candidate as early as the 1982 elections, together with two other gay comrades.

• What is life like for gay Mexicans?

There's a serious climate of intolerance, particularly in the police and judicial system. There have been several killings in the last few years in which police were involved, in Chiapas state and elsewhere. The judicial system didn't make much of an effort to find the perpetrators, who have gone completely unpunished. Otherwise, it's the same story as everywhere else: families repress young people, the media presents caricatured, sensationalist images, there is discrimination in the workplace, and gay relationships are not recognised in civil law.

I'm going to introduce bills to change things in all these areas. The PRD's electoral platform stopped short. It talked about "freedom of sexual orientation" without going into more detail; we're going to try to push them to clarify their positions. We're demanding for example establishment of a gay community centre in Mexico City.

• What about AIDS?

It's estimated that 45,000 people have died from AIDS in Mexico since 1985, 70% of them men infected through homosexual contact. The problems with treatment are tragic. We don't know how many people have access to the new drug "cocktails" But it's certainly a minority.²

Non-governmental organisations are doing what they can to improve access to health care for people with AIDS, but the ministry of health is passive. After one ACT UP demonstration, the minister agreed to make basic treatments available to people with AIDS—but since the elections supplies seem to have run out, there's nothing to be found any more!

We're going to fight about this. We also want to get Mexico City Hall (which Cárdenas is going to head) to organise an active prevention campaign, not using grotesque imagery of crazy drag-queens and junkies but

New federation shakes Mexican labour politics

explaining intelligently that people should use condoms, not share needles, and so on.

• What has the Zapatistas' attitude been towards the gay movement?

Extremely positive! They've consistently invited us to join in their initiatives and speak from the stage. They give us a substantial political space. I'm going to Chiapas soon, to discuss my role as a Congressperson with the Zapatistas, and see how I can contribute to their struggle from my new position.

Gay issues have been raised in Chiapas: there are groups in three towns in the state.³

The Zapatistas talk about it openly. There are prejudices in Chiapas like everywhere else, but the EZLN has a very good position.

• How are the links between the feminist and gay movements?

It's been my concern to introduce gay issues into the women's movement. In 1992 we formed a lesbian feminist group called "Sister Juana's Closet", which organises workshops, political initiatives and parties. I'm also active in the feminist movement.⁴ For example I co-organising the Fourth Mexican Feminist Congress in 1996. I'm also a member of the National Women's Convention, which was formed on the Zapatistas' initiative.

The issue of freedom of sexual orientation has been well integrated by the feminist movement. However, we have to admit that things are more difficult going in the other direction, trying to get the gay movement to integrate feminist concerns. My candidacy was also supported by a feminist political impetus, but it was mainly carried forward by the gay movement. ★

Notes

1. In the previous congressional elections in 1994 Edgard Sanchez from the PRT was elected on the PRD list.

2. These are combinations of drugs (so-called 'protease inhibitors') which in some people with AIDS can drastically reduce the presence of the HIV virus in their systems and restore them to apparent health.

But besides the fact that a large minority of people cannot tolerate these drugs' toxic effects, they are extremely expensive, must be taken in large doses on a rigid schedule, and because they never seem to eliminate HIV completely, their effect lasts only as long as the patient keeps taking them. See the dossier in the April issue.

3. Las Margaritas, Tuxla Gutierrez and San Cristóbal de las Casas.

4. Patria was active in OIKABETH, the first lesbian political group in Mexico (1979-86). When the PRT stood Rosario Ibarra as their presidential candidate in 1982, not only was Ibarra the first female presidential candidate in Mexican history, it was also the first time that there were openly gay congressional candidates. A Lesbian and Gay Committee in Support of Rosario Ibarra (CLHARI) was formed.

Patria was one of several gay PRT candidates for Congress in 1982. In 1991 she stood for the Mexico City council. She is a member of the PRT Central Committee and of the editorial board of the journal *Cuadernos feministas*.

Mexico's independent and radical trade unions have agreed to form a new federation, to be called the National Union of Workers (UNT).

Over 300 delegates from 132 unions representing over one million workers met in Mexico City on August 22-23, and agreed to establish the new federation before the end of 1997.

The new federation grows out of the *Foro*, (Forum: Unions Face the Nation) a group of 26 unions which for the last two years have tried to develop an alternative to the government's economic policy and promoting a more independent and democratic labour union movement. The *Foro* involved both unions from the government-ruling-party dominated Congress of Labour (CT) and independent unions such as the Authentic Labour Front (FAT).

This movement for change in the unions was strengthened by the death of Fidel Velazquez Sanchez, general secretary of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), and the July 6 election defeat for the Institutional Revolutionary Party. The strong showing by the left-of-centre Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), and especially the election of the PRD's Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas as mayor of Mexico City, also strengthened the forces for change in the unions.

A Split in the *Foro* Unions

Nevertheless, some *Foro* unions opposed the plan to form a new federation. Nine unions, representing about 2/3 of the *Foro* group's mass base, withdrew from the planned assembly. They included the SNTE teachers union (1.2 million members), the Mexican Electrical Workers (SME, 46,000 members, mainly in Mexico City), and the Revolutionary Workers Confederation (COR).

The remaining 17 *Foro* unions, joined by the left-wing May First Inter-Union Group, went ahead and held the Assembly, bringing together 132 unions representing about one million workers.

Resolutions and discussion

The first meeting of the new National Union of Workers (UNT) will take place on November 28. Delegates also agreed that the new federation would break off all relations with the existing umbrella organisation, the Congress of Labour (CT), and refuse to participate in CT-led economic pacts with the employers and the government. These new positions would represent a substantial break with traditional Mexican union politics.

Out-going *Foro* president Agustín Fuentes Rodríguez won a big round of

applause when he stated that the new federation will not abide by labour laws which require the state to approve of union officers. "The make up of the new federation should be the free and sovereign decision of the workers," he said. The preamble to the statutes of the new federation proposed at the assembly calls after the exhaustion of other methods, for the use of strikes, boycotts and general strikes.

Radical demands

The May First Inter-Union Group made its affiliation to the new federation contingent upon complete separation from the Congress of Labour (CT). The May First group also called for the inclusion not only of labour unions, but also of peasant organisations and working class community organisations. The inclusion of non-union groups has been a bone of contention between the *Foro* and the May First group in recent months.

The May First group also called for undoing recent social security reforms, and for "a working class economic program as an alternative to capitalism and neo-liberalism." Delegates from May First group unions called on the new federation to oppose privatisation of state firms, to stand for the re-nationalisation of already privatised firms, and to call for a suspension of the payment of the foreign debt.

The birth of a new labour movement?

This decision is one of the most important developments in the Mexican labour movement in decades. It could signal the beginning of the end of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) control over the labour unions. If it can demonstrate genuine independence, organisational breadth, mass support, and political appeal, the National Union of Workers may one day become a rival to the state-dominated Congress of Labour (CT) and its most important member, the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). [DLB/SS]

Wages and Prices

Since the devaluation of the peso in December 1994, prices have risen 76.71 percent, while wages have fallen by 35.5% in real terms. Salaries of manufacturing workers fell by 44.8% in US dollar terms, while their productivity increased 20.4 percent.

Mexican Labor News and Analysis, 16 September. Contact: 3436 Morrison Place, Cincinnati, OH 45220, USA <103144.2651@compuserve.com>, tel. (+1 513) 961 8722

Massive welcome for Zapatistas in Mexico City

After a week-long, 750-mile trip from Chiapas, 1,111 Zapatistas rebels arrived in Mexico City on September 13. A massive crowd of supporters chanted "You are not alone".

The representatives of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) came to the capitol to demand that the government comply with the San Andres Larrainzar accords, which were signed in 1995. The accords provide the first small steps toward political autonomy for Mexico's Indian peoples.

This march also marked the formal founding of a broad-based, nation-wide civilian organisation in support of the Zapatista army, called the Zapatista Front for National Liberation (FZLN). The FZLN, which defines itself as a political force that is not an electoral party, claims more than 10,000 members in hundreds of local chapters throughout Mexico.

EZLN leaders had chosen the arrival in Mexico to coincide with Mexico's national independence day, September 16. While a Mayan Indian movement, the EZLN has

consistently defined itself as a patriotic, nationalist movement, and claimed Mexico's revolutionary tradition for itself. [DLB/JD] ★

Source: Mexican Labor News and Analysis, 16 September 1997, Contact: 3436 Morrison Place, Cincinnati, OH 45220. <103144.2651@compuserve.com>, tel. (+1 513) 961 8722

hope. If Zedillo is a man of his word, let him fulfil it and let the law recognise our rights as Indian peoples. If Zedillo cannot keep his word, let him make war on us and fill with bullets what he cannot fill with reason.

If he is not going to make war, then he should take his soldiers out of our communities. Those soldiers are far from their families, their mothers, their wives, their children.

Why does he keep them here if all they do is bring in prostitutes, alcohol and drugs to our communities?

While the federal soldiers persecute those of us who are Mexican, the great rulers are selling our nation to foreign capital. National armies should defend the people and not help the sale of our national sovereignty.

If Zedillo wants peace, let him keep his word given to the Indian peoples. And let him take his soldiers back into their barracks! ★

Source: Statement by EZLN Subcomandante Marcos, 12 Sept. 1997. Translated by: Cecilia Rodriguez, NCDLJ

EZLN statement: "Recognise our rights as Indian peoples"

We have come here to demand that Mister Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon [Mexican President] keep his word. We demand that he fulfil what he signed at the negotiating table in February of 1996. We demand that he pull back his soldiers from the indigenous communities of all of Mexico. [...]

We are not willing to return to our corner of abandonment and misery without

Brazil: United to defeat neo-liberalism

An electronic balloting system provided by the government of Rio de Janeiro was in use from the first moments of the 11th National Meeting of the Workers Party on September 1st. Jose Dirceu was re-elected president of the party by a narrow margin. Milton Temer, the candidate of the left-wing of the PT, won 46.5% of delegate votes.

"This insistence on a centre-left alliance is bringing programmatic confusion into the Workers Party."

Joaquim Soriano
Member of the PT National Executive

formalise Lula's candidacy for Brazilian president and present this to other allied parties. With this initiative, we would have a clearly defined popular and democratic starting point for an opposition to President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Unfortunately, the winning proposal postponed a decision until the end of the year."

Soriano criticises the re-confirmed PT leadership for its continued efforts to seek a broader alliance against Cardoso than that built so far in the National Congress and in mass mobilisations. "This insistence on a centre-left alliance is bringing programmatic confusion, forcing the PT, Brazil's major opposition party, into softening its criticism of neo-liberal reforms, and creating an alliance without Lula as its candidate. Do the "exiles" from the government bloc [which the PT leadership is wooing] have a programme? Do they have a candidate?"

As Soriano points out, "the government bloc does have a candidate, a programme and a definite strategy for 1998 and 2002. To confront it, we need defined objectives. The positive balance sheet of the Temer candidacy reinforces the idea that debate over the course of the PT is the alternative that strengthens the party as a whole. Warnings of splits trumpeted by analysts outside and inside the party did not prevent open debate among the activists and the deep roots of the PT among the workers and the people."

An Extraordinary Meeting at the end of the year will decide upon electoral tactics, alliances and a presidential candidate for 1998, and upon issues of party building that do not appear polemical. The next PT National Meeting will be held in the first half of 1998, preceded by state, municipal and branch meetings. According to Soriano, "this Meeting will decide on a political project to confront President Cardoso and build a just, sovereign and democratic country. The meeting may be declared a Congress of the PT."

"In 1998, we will confront our greatest electoral challenge, warns Soriano. "For the first time, we will put forward a project for a democratic and popular Brazil with an unfavourable balance of forces. One condition is necessary to properly fulfil this task: the unity of the PT."

The Meeting confirmed the correlation of forces in the party. According to Soriano, it will be remembered as "a landmark in the recomposition of our party around a programme, objectives and principles." "However," he continues, "it is necessary to re-establish the discussion of differences as a constituent moment of unity in action. It is necessary to reconstitute a united PT identity that resurrects the cry of the First International: 'Peace among ourselves, war on the masters.'" [US/JD] ★

Joaquim Soriano is a member of the National Executive of the PT. The *Democracia Socialista* tendency of the PT is associated with the Fourth International.

Give us your money!

Lots of important and worthy causes are seeking your financial support. But none of them do quite what we do.

The Fourth International is the largest international regroupment of revolutionary Marxists. We have members in over 40 states. In some, our comrades are one current in a larger party, like Italy's Refounded Communists or Brazil's Workers Party. In other countries we have independent organisations. Everywhere, we prioritise building the labour movement and libera-

tion struggles. Our annual European Youth camp is the continent's largest international gathering of young revolutionary socialists.

This world-wide network makes it possible to look beyond national preoccupations, and grasp the regional and global dynamics. We all learn in the process.

We help socialists, and all emancipatory currents facing repressive regimes to network internationally, to publish underground magazines, and to learn from comrades working in more open conditions.

For more details see www.outlook-international.org

During the 1980s we helped print and distribute Polish and Czech samizdat, while our Arab publication *Al Mitraqa* linked struggles in North Africa, the Middle East, and immigrant communities in Europe.

Our monthly magazine *International Viewpoint*, and its sister publications in French, German and Spanish, are a unique forum for debate within and between socialist/marxist movements. A typical issue contains material from twelve countries, so that English-speakers can link up with Brazilian, Algerian and Korean counterparts.

Because we try to be a catalyst of change in the broader movement, rather than just wave our own banner like some other left groups, our efforts are not always recognised. That doesn't worry us, but it does make it hard to raise funds.



What will your money be used for?

Most of our work is done by volunteers. But there are some international activities that can't be done without cash, and which only your donations can make possible.

- \$10 supplies a group in Congo or Sri Lanka with our hard-hitting monthly magazine *International Viewpoint* (or *Inprecor* in French)
- \$25 pays one day's board and lodgings for a third world participant in our month-long training sessions for militants, women's organisers and youth activists.
- \$100 buys a modem for one of our Latin American correspondents.
- \$500 brings a Senegalese or Philippine labour leader to Europe to build links with local colleagues, to learn, and to teach.

Invest in the future!

You can send your contribution through your local Fourth International group, or directly to PECL, BP 85, 75522 Paris cedex 11, France. Make British cheques payable to "Outlook International," US and Australian cheques payable to "International Viewpoint," and Canadian cheques payable to "Socialist Challenge."

Say 'No!' to Nike!

Saturday, October 18 will see an international mobilisation in support of the rights of Nike production workers.

Labour, human rights and community activists in Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Holland, Italy, Switzerland and the USA will leaflet at stores selling Nike products. US activists will target *Niketowns*—the company's new multi-floor superstores.

Dianne Feeley



Nike signs multi-million dollar endorsement contracts with sports superstars like Andre Agassi, Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods. Its advertising budget is US\$650 million. Yet a pair of Nikes selling for \$90 has a labour cost of \$1.20. Seventy percent of all Nike athletic shoes are produced in China and Indonesia. Nike has also signed with transnational contractors in the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Seventy to ninety percent of the workforce is female. The vast majority do not make more than \$2.50 a day—for which many are forced to work 60-80 hours a week.

Independent investigator?

Given the widespread labour abuse by Nike subcontractors in Asia, Nike Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Phil Knight announced last February that he was commissioning an independent investigation of its Asian operations, making all facilities open to a team of inspectors. He hired as the investigator former civil rights activist, mayor of Atlanta and US ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, and his recently founded firm, GoodWorks International.

At a June 24 press conference Andrew Young reported the findings of his organisation, saying "What we saw overwhelmingly was good." Nike bought full-page adverts in the *New York Times* and other major newspapers to publicise the report.

As several researchers have pointed out, Young did not speak the languages of the workers. He accepted Nike's proposal to use their translators—thus violating rules that have been established for the inspection of human rights conditions around the world.¹

Bob Herbert, a *New York Times* columnist who has written extensively on Nike labour issues, charged that Young allowed himself to be given a carefully guided tour: "The kindest thing that can be said at this point is that Mr. Young was naive. He spent just three or four hours in each factory." Young also chose not to consider whether Nike pays its workers the minimum wage, claiming that "determining what is a 'fair wage' in a foreign country is a very complicated process."

Just say "No" to Nike

As a high-priced athletic shoe, Nike sells more than its product—it also sells an image: Nike is about cool, about empowerment, for men and women.

One of Nike's strategies for gaining market share to sign contracts with the athletic departments at various universities. The *Kentucky Gazette* recently questioned the nature of Nike's contract with the University of Kentucky. The basketball coach there now earns \$150,000/year from the university and \$1 million from Nike. In exchange, Nike's swish logo appears on university sports uniforms.

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Walt Disney sub-contractor pulls out of Haiti

As the *Gazette* pointed out: "Nike wins two ways. For sharing its gold and silver, Nike receives more than endorsements—it also buys silence. What coach or sports hero paid to promote a product would do the opposite and kill the Golden Goose?"

"In fact," the newspaper continues, "the contract specifically states that Nike has the right to terminate the agreement if the 'University disparages the Nike brand...or takes any other action inconsistent with the endorsement of Nike products.'"

What happened in Kentucky has been duplicated in many other universities. Last year, Nike boss Phil Knight, now the sixth richest man in the United States, gave the University of Oregon \$25 million for a new law school, 15 professorships and a \$40,000 salary supplement for the university president. A few years earlier, he gave an undisclosed sum of money to remodel and expand the library, which now bears his name. Nike also has a \$7 equipment and advertising contract with the university's athletic department.

Students and faculty have organised to put pressure on Nike, saying that Nike contracts should not be renewed as long as the company allows its contractors to engage in labour abuse. The Associated Students at the University of California's Irvine campus have voted to boycott Nike, becoming the first major US university to "say 'No' to Nike." ★

H.H. Cutler, the Walt Disney Company's largest subcontractor in Haiti, plans to shutdown its operations in the poverty-stricken country this September. About 10% of the country's assembly sector workforce would lose their jobs. This would be a devastating blow to those workers and their families, given Haiti's extreme poverty and 80% unemployment.

H.H. Cutler currently employs 2,300 workers, earning starvation wages as low as 28c an hour. Quotas are high, and conditions miserable. Using the pretext of a "slump in demand," H.H. Cutler is in fact responding to criticism from human rights and labour groups for its policies of worker abuse. By relocating its factories to China and Indonesia, the company will not only pay cheaper wages (6c to 13c an hour), but benefit from greater levels of impunity, weaker trade unions, and even less scrutiny from Human Rights observers.

Batay Ouvriye, an independent

workers' organisation in Haiti, has called for immediate protests to urge H.H. Cutler not to pull out of Haiti and to meet the Haitian workers demands for a living wage, improved working conditions, and the respect of workers rights to organise. This call is backed by the US-based Disney/Haiti Justice Campaign. "It should be made clear to H.H. Cutler and to the Walt Disney Company that a pull out would lead to an immediate call for an international boycott of both Disney and H.H. Cutler products. Companies cannot be allowed to pull out just because they are faced with international criticism and attempts by workers to organise for their rights." ★

Phone, fax, mail or e-mail your protest to:
Thomas Austin, President, H.H. Cutler, 120 Iona Ave. SW,
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49503 USA. Phone: 616-459-9101. Fax: 616-459-2135
Michael Eisner, CEO, The Walt Disney Company, South
Buena Vista Street, Burbank, CA 91521 USA. Phone: 818-
560-1000. Fax: 818-846-7319
For more information contact: The Disney/Haiti Justice
Campaign, P.O. Box 748, Village Station, New York, NY
10013 USA. Phone: 212-592-3612

Yes to human rights! No to sweatshops!

Leading up to a National Day of Conscience on October 4, 1997, and a Holiday Season of Conscience in November and December, the National Labor Committee (NLC) is distributing petitions on which up to a million people are expected to sign their names demanding that the President and the U.S. Congress say "Yes! to Human Rights and No! to Sweatshops."

The petition states that "We the People...believe that in our global economy, human rights protections are every bit as important as corporate rights." It calls for wages to be tied to the basic cost of living and for workers to be free to organise to defend their rights. It will be presented to the White House Sweatshop Task Force which will be reporting to the President at the end of the year with its final agreement which will establish industry-wide human rights standards for the first time.

In order to show public opposition to corporate use of sweatshop manufacturing, on October 4th, there will be simultaneous actions in hundreds of cities and communities stretching across the entire country (and around the world)—vigils, candlelight marches, interdenominational services, leafleting, music, demonstrations, ringing of church bells, street theatre and much more. Students, from grade schools to universities, will be asked to play a major role.

On October 4, the coalition will announce the **Holiday Season of Conscience**, providing consumers the opportunity to shop with their conscience.

In the midst of the shopping season, the coalition will release a list of the companies with the worst record of human rights violations.

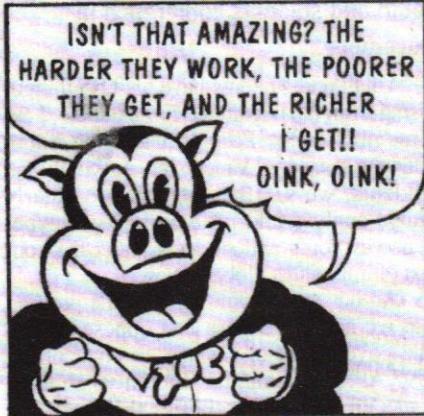
Charles Kernaghan, Director of the National Labor Committee, said in announcing the petition drive, "There is an enormous decency in the American people who would never knowingly purchase products made by children, or any exploited worker, forced to toil under sweatshop conditions for starvation wages. Our job is to help create a vehicle to free this voice of decency on the part of millions and millions of American people. If we do our job right, we will create a social movement which will put a human face back into our global economy."

The actions are sponsored by a broad coalition of religious, human rights, labour, student, women's and grassroots organisations, including (along with the NLC) the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (AFL-CIO, CLC), the United Methodist Boards of Church and Society and Global Ministries (Women's Division), the Presbyterian Church (USA), the People of Faith Network, Independent Congressman Bernie Sanders, and the State Senate of Vermont among many others. ★

Order petitions and brochures from the National Labor Committee, 275 Seventh Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10001; Tel: (212) 242-3002 or download from the NLC website: www.nlcn.org
Campaign for Labor Rights memberships: Send \$35.00 to CLR, 1247 "E" Street SE, Washington, DC 20003. For a sample copy of their newsletter, send your postal address to clr@igc.apc.org

Notes

1. In 1980 the International Law Association established the Belgrade Minimal Rules. Rule number 10 stipulates that analysts should provide all of their own experts.) The Campaign for Labor Rights will send a Nike action packet free via e-mail (clr@igc.apc.org). You can subscribe to the Campaign for Labor Rights newsletter for \$35 a year in the US, \$50 elsewhere. Also check Global Exchange's web page for Nike campaign alerts: www.globalexchange.org/watch/campaigns/nikecampaign.html Other sources include *Nike in Indonesia* (6 issues a year for \$20, contact Jeff Ballinger, Press for Change, P.O. Box 161, Alpine, NJ 07620, fax: +1 201-768-5812 and *IndonesiaAlert!* (\$4 issues a year for \$12, 1880 Jackson St. #301, Oakland, CA 94612).1



Reject APEC, build solidarity

The **No to APEC Coalition** is preparing for the November '97 Pacific rim leaders summit in Vancouver, Canada. Local organiser **Luningning** of the Filipino Canadian Youth Alliance (UKPC) explains.

• Why "No to APEC?"

The coalition includes over 50 grassroots organisations throughout Canada and the United States. We are saying No to APEC based upon marginalised people's experience with various 'free trade' agreements. Agreements like NAFTA here in North America, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). And, of course, the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

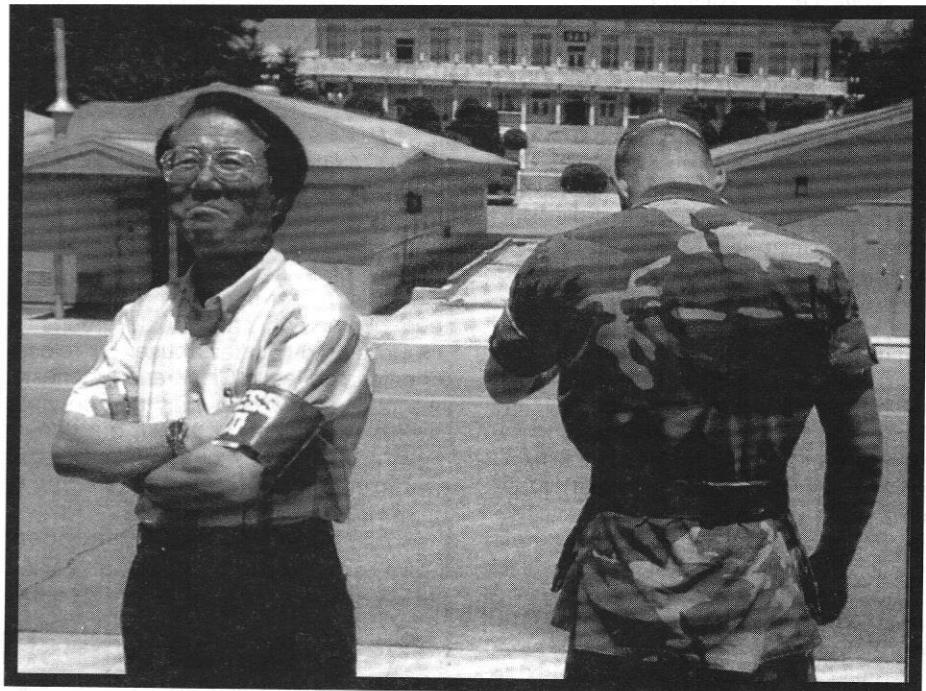
The lives of millions of people, in the Third World and in the industrialised countries of the North, have been negatively impacted by imperialist globalisation and its three elements of liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation. APEC is just one more manifestation of the whole globalisation process. So we really need to say No! to these 'free trade' agreements and Yes to building alternatives that will really satisfy people's needs and look at the needs of society as whole rather than looking at profits for corporations and continued imperialist control over people.

• What do you mean by "imperialist globalisation"?

The mass media basically say that globalisation is an inevitable process. That, because of the opening up of the world economy, countries have to compete with each other in the global market or "global village". So globalisation as a term has been popularised. But we want to use or popularise the term imperialist globalisation, because we see this process as neither benign nor inevitable. It is being pushed by the major imperialist powers in the world today — the US, Japan and Germany — to attempt to resolve the chronic crisis they find themselves in. So we in the Coalition speak of "imperialist globalisation" to address the root cause of who is really behind the globalisation process.

• What kinds of organising is *No! to APEC* doing in Vancouver?

We come from various sectors like the women, youth and students, people of colour, migrant workers, etc. We are also made up of solidarity groups. As organisations, we have been doing various types of organising in British Columbia (Canada's West coast



province). But since we have come together in the spring of 1996, we have focused on educating in the community about APEC and sharing people's experiences about free trade since the inception of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA. Mostly through popular education workshops with community and individuals. We have also had a series of public meetings about APEC generally, and on specific topics, such as education, privatisation and globalisation and the impact on youth and students. We have also been putting out a monthly newsletter, which gives updates about what's happening in various cities across North America in opposition to APEC, reporting on our activities and on the Canadian government's plans for the summit and the APEC process.

• A women's and children's pre-conference was held on June 13-15. What was achieved?

We had the theme Women and Children Resist Imperialist Globalisation, Women and Children Say No! to APEC. A lot of women's organisations have been involved in the Coalition since the very start — we actually grew out of a grass roots women's group in Vancouver. In our organising and education work, we have always recognised that the women's movement in Canada has been quite dynamic and quite strong. So we wanted to share our experience as women within the context of imperialist globalisation and put out our position that as women we are opposed to APEC and the process of imperialist globalisation.

We were able to involve over 100 women in the pre-conference, which was a real success. It was quite inspiring, too, to see a lot of young women looking for this political discussion and education and the opportunity to analyse their experience, not only as women, but as part of the marginalised people of Canadian society. Part of our objective in holding the conference was to build towards the November No to APEC conference. But we also wanted to draw on the strength of the women's movement. To really reclaim that militancy that has always been part of the tradition of the marginalised women's grass roots movement.

Hopefully we will continue to build international solidarity among women and children. We are hoping a lot of women and children will be able to come from the third world to attend the People's Conference.

• There will also be an international youth and students conference in November...

Youth and students have also been organising from the beginning. For example, I am a member of the Filipino Canadian Youth Alliance, based in Vancouver. As youth and students, we see the necessity to clearly grasp, analyse and reflect upon our experience as youth and students under the context of imperialist globalisation.

We have also come up with the position that we need to expose and oppose APEC. The government of Canada, as chair of the 1997 APEC summit, has chosen youth to be a special focus of activities this year. It's

really an attempt to co-opt youth into viewing APEC and imperialist globalisation as a benign and inevitable process and believing that in order to survive as individuals we really have to join with APEC and the free trade agenda.

I recently participated in a discussion at the University where the APEC leaders summit will take place. There was a debate about the benefits for youth. The APEC side said, for example, under APEC a student based in Canada could go over to Hong Kong, set yourself up with a fax, modem, and cell phone in a studio loft and that's how you further your career opportunities.

They are trying to sell APEC as a means for youth and students to advance their individual interests rather than look more deeply and broadly at the process of APEC and how it impacts on the majority of people.

We are also hoping to reflect on what has been our history as a youth and students movement in Canada. How can we learn from the example of youth and students in the third world? And how can we build a strong youth and student movement here in British Columbia?

• How does APEC affect workers in Canada and internationally?

In terms of the stated goal of APEC's Human Resource Development working group, they want to create a flexible labour force, which will be able to move freely from country to country. They want to facilitate the free flow, not only of goods and capital, but also of labour. Migrant workers become known as internationally shared human resources.

In the North there is the impact of the out-migration of cheap labour from third world countries. And in both the third world and the industrialised countries, there are attacks upon workers' rights to organise, and attacks on job security. A more flexible work force is being created through the extension of part-time work and the growth of service sector jobs.

The same thing is happening in the

Philippines. Private employment agencies specialise in five-month contracts: because after six months, under the Philippine Labour Code you are entitled to various benefits. Multinational corporations and Filipino capitalists are seeking to reduce their costs by avoiding paying these benefits. There is a general depression of labour because of the cheap supply available in the third world.

You still have the same type of export-oriented economies under APEC. But within the industrialised countries, the globalisation myth or the myth of free competition in the global marketplace is being used by corporations to downsize, to reduce wages, to again move towards more flexibilisation and contractualisation of labour.

• How does the approach of your People's Conference differ from that of the People's Summit, the other 'civil society' event in Vancouver?

If you look back at the history of APEC, there have been parallel NGO summits since the beginning. But it was only in Manila last year, at a grass roots mass conference, the People's Conference Against Imperialist Globalisation, when the position was strongly put out that not only do we want to critique and say we are anti-APEC, but we want to reject APEC and say that APEC is only part of the imperialist globalisation process.

There is really no hope of reforming or toying with the idea that we can change APEC to put a more human face on it or saying if we critically collaborate with APEC we can get something out of it for marginalised people.

I think the PCAIG last year and this year builds on the experiences of marginalised people, not only with APEC but going back to the structural reform programs of the IMF and World Bank, and saying this has been the people's experience with APEC and imperialist globalisation. We need to focus on educating, organising and mobilising our communities against the process and against imperialism.

• What are the specific themes for the Conference?

Last year, the People's Conference in Manila analysed the overall context of imperialist globalisation. We had various reports from both the industrialised world and third world countries. There were sectoral reports, discussions for example from women, indigenous people, workers, peasants, youth and students.

Because we view the Vancouver conference as a continuation of the resistance begun in Manila, this year we will focus more specifically on organising: what we can achieve as grass roots organisations and how can we use our educating and organising work among our communities. How can we really build genuine international solidarity on the basis of a critique of the imperialist system.

We are also planning to highlight three countries where there is a particularly strong anti-imperialist struggle: the Philippines, where there has been a revolutionary movement since 1968, Mexico, because of Chiapas and the impact of NAFTA, and South Korea, because of the strong and militant workers struggle that took place earlier this year.

After the case studies, we will look at the gains since last year's conference. Last year, over 100 international delegates attended from 34 countries. Since then, what networking and information exchange has there been? What have been the campaigns we have been able to support each other on? How can we learn from solidarity and organising? What are the experiences of mass-based organisations in different contexts of organising the resistance?

It's really critical for us in North America to begin to look at that kind of question, because we need to reflect on what kind of lessons we can learn from the anti-imperialist movement in the south, and to consider how can we really advance the anti-imperialist movement here? ★

Source: Socialist Challenge, Summer 1997 issue.
Contact: No to APEC, 451 Powell St, Vancouver BC, Canada. ☎ (+1 604) 215 9190, <notoapec@vcn.bc.ca>

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A knock-back for Canada's fundamentalists

Canada's fundamentalist right wing and their conservative allies are focusing on a new target.

In British Columbia, they are touring the smaller towns and suburbs agitating about the "queer threat to the family."

They hoped to build support away from the eye of the media. But the left was waiting for them.

Richard Banner

This kind of strategy has allowed homophobic groups in the US to win control of a number of towns and school boards. Once in power, they have passed local laws to prevent

lesbians and gays from teaching, and forbid all teachers from discussing homosexuality. In Canada, a group of activists from the religious right-wing, the "Citizen's Research Institute" (CRI) is having much less success.

Not because the fundamentalists don't know what they're doing. CRI executive director Kari Simpson has been touring the west coast province of British Columbia on a low-profile campaign to convince voters and school boards that tolerance to homosexuals means danger to kids. Another CRI director was elected to the Surrey school board as one of several conservative Christians, without declaring his CRI membership.

In April of this year, CRI began distribution of 10,000 copies of a "Declaration of Family Rights," encouraging parents to pressure schools to reject materials that discuss or portray "the lifestyle of lesbian, gay,

bisexual or transgendered individuals as one which is normal, acceptable or must be tolerated." The Surrey school board banned three books from school libraries that portray same-sex couples as parents.

A strong reaction

In spite of support for the bigots from some school board members and residents, queer students, teachers and their supporters have successfully countered her message with their own stories, and persuaded local boards to avoid a homophobic response. Some Surrey teachers and parents recently launched a court case against their school board, arguing that the board's intolerance amounts to discrimination.

An opinion poll commissioned by the BC Teacher's Federation suggested that almost 70% of adults believe that schools should promote acceptance of homosexuals. Editorials in the mainstream media have widely condemned CRI as a group that promotes intolerance.

The change in popular attitudes is also illustrated by the ease with which British Columbia's social democratic NDP government recently introduced legislation extending family rights to same-sex couples. It met only token resistance in the provincial parliament. Several years ago a similar proposal in Canada's most populous province, Ontario generated a huge campaign of resistance, including some NDPers.

The absent "moral majority"

The CRI's most dismal showing to date came on June 7, when it called on its supporters to gather in downtown Vancouver, "to stand together and send a strong message to the government that families will protect our children and our values." Less than 100 people showed up Robson Square, many of

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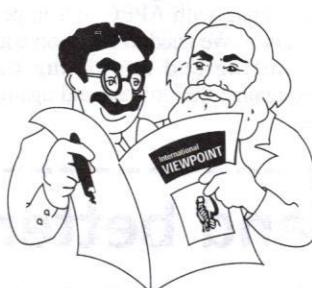
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The other America

them leaders of the conservative Christian movement. They were met with several hundred angry lesbians and gay men who shouted down their attempts to speak and forced them to leave the square without making a single speech.

No less effective was the response to CRI leader Kari Simpson's speech in the provincial capital, Victoria, a week later. Queer Victorians filled the hall, waving bright pink slips of paper at her whenever she made a homophobic remark, and cheering her references to the Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC. She was so unnerved she had trouble continuing her speech.

While these noisy, confident demonstrations have driven the fundamentalists off the streets, many on the left and in the lesbian and gay movement are worried that the excessively confrontational tactics of some sections of the far left actually make it harder to build a movement against the fundamentalists.

According to Will Offley of Socialist Challenge, the 'hard' tactics the far left traditionally proposes may be appropriate in opposing fascist and racist groups, but they are not always appropriate in campaigns against religious bigots. In spite of their prejudice, most supporters of the CRI are ordinary conservative Christians, who would probably reject the CRI if it were identified with physical attacks on lesbians and gay men.

The broadest progressive coalition

"Part of any strategy has to be to deny the Christian label to groups like CRI. We have to expose their agenda as being a right-wing agenda, not a Christian one. This makes it extremely important for us to build bridges to the progressive Christian community, and mobilise them into the struggle." The evidence in British Columbia is that it is possible to win majorities in favour of tolerance on school boards.

According to Offley, "to win, we have to create the broadest possible coalition uniting the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community, and extending to embrace the students, parents and teachers in districts where the religious right is seeking control of school boards, the left, the union movement, people of colour [especially the Sikh community] and others, to ensure that we win a durable victory, not just a transient success."

Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgenders have made real changes in people's attitudes and won broad support by fighting for basic human rights. In British Columbia, queer communities have proven that they can beat the organising strategies of right-wing homophobes. We can gain more and change society by pushing for full equality at every opportunity and challenging ignorance and prejudice wherever it appears. ★

Feminist Poet Rejects Arts Award

Adrienne Rich has turned down the 1997 National Medal for the Arts. The award is given annually by the National Endowment for the Arts, staffed by Clinton appointees.

Rich is the first artist to publicly reject the award for political reasons. She said that, "the very meaning of art, as I understand it, is incompatible with the cynical politics of this administration."

She said that art "means nothing if it simply decorates the dinner-table of power which holds it hostage." She also said that she is disturbed by the widening gap between those who have wealth and power and those who do not.

In addition to writing 15 volumes of poetry, Rich has written many political essays, such as the highly influential essay *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, which played an important role in challenging heterosexuality as the norm, on the left and in society. ★

Source: Love and Rage vol.8 #4 August 1997

Puerto Rico

A strong campaign against privatisation is underway in the USA's Caribbean colony. A general strike has been called for October 1st.

West Coast solidarity with Liverpool dockers

Port workers shut down all ports between Alaska and the Mexican border for eight hours on September 8, in solidarity with Britain's striking Liverpool dockers.

At Los Angeles-Long Beach Harbour 32 vessels were in port when longshoremen (dockers) walked out. Three ships were held up in Portland, delaying two trains. In Seattle six ships were delayed, and longshore workers aboard ships bound for Thamesport used the opportunity to discuss the Liverpool situation, which may have impacted productivity.

At least a dozen ships were delayed

in Vancouver, British Columbia, the largest tonnage port on the west coast.

Like in Liverpool, dock workers in Los Angeles, California are being threatened with privatisation and casualisation. The city has leased the coal-exporting Los Angeles Export Terminal (LAXT), to a private company that is attempting to run it with non-union labour. ★

Source: The Dispatcher, the ILWU newspaper.

Haitians in New York protest police brutality

Haitian community groups in New York organised an important meeting on September 9 to discuss "independent strategies against police brutality."

Some 400 participants heard Haitian, African American and Afro-Caribbean speakers denounce the long history of police terror in New York.

"Police brutality is an issue of overriding concern," said Reverend Daughtry, who hosted the meeting in his House of the Lord church. "There is not a Black or Latino family untouched."

Racism and police brutality has worsened under the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, a former prosecutor.

The meeting is the latest angry reaction of the Haitian and black community to the vicious beating and rape of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima by New York City police.

Louima's lawyer, Carl Thomas, told the meeting that public pressure has forced the NYPD to cancel plans to transfer the four policemen responsible to desk jobs. They remain suspended.

Ben Dupuy, co-director of *Haiti Progress* newspaper and a spokesperson for Haiti's National Popular Assembly, attacked the big-business media for pro-police coverage of the Louima attack. "We're fighting a system," said Dupuy.

As well as hearing from a number of victims and their families, the meeting discussed proposals for future organising against police violence, and in favour of "community control" over the police. ★

Source: Workers World, 18 September, via Arm The Spirit

The new far-right coalition

Australia's far right is increasingly influential. The rise of the racist and xenophobic One Nation party has given the country's small and divided far-right organisations the opportunity to regroup beneath a single banner.

The mainstream media treats xenophobic MP Pauline Hanson with kid gloves. Sections of big business are prepared for their own purposes to tolerate an openly racist presence on the political spectrum. And the government is sympathetic to some of the extremists' demands. According to **Norm Dixon**, there is no longer any clear line between the "ratbag right" and the establishment parties.

The election of Pauline Hanson as independent member for the traditionally safe Labor seat of Oxley, in Queensland, at the last federal election was unexpected. Hanson was an unremarkable Liberal candidate until her public expression of anti-Aboriginal racism forced the Liberals' state office to dis-endorse her just before polling day.

Hanson was not dumped for her crudely racist views, which are representative of the local members of the National and Liberal parties, now in government. She was only dropped because she lacked the sense to keep her racist remarks behind closed doors or out of earshot of reporters.

Despite her "dis-endorsement," Hanson was supported by the local Liberal machine. Posters proclaiming Hanson as "Liberal for Oxley" plastered the electorate.

After her victory, Hanson appointed members of the Liberal and National parties to her staff. But far-right groups immediately moved to ally themselves with her. They have had an enormous influence on One Nation's policies and ideology.

The far-right moves in immediately...

Within days of the election, Australia First leader Graeme Campbell dispatched a member of his staff, John Pasquarelli, to join Hanson as press secretary and adviser. "I saw the dingo-like attack from the media," Campbell told the *Australian Financial Review*. "I thought, hell, this girl needs help."

A former patrol officer in Australia's colonial administration of Papua New Guinea, Pasquarelli approved all Hanson's press statements and wrote her speeches. It was during this time that Hanson stated she



would represent only her non-indigenous constituents, that Australia was being "swamped" by Asians and that Asians were responsible for drugs and crime. Pasquarelli also wrote Hanson's infamous maiden speech, with its ill-informed anti-Aboriginal, anti-Asian tirades and conspiracy theories that echoed the views of another far right group, the Australian League of Rights (ALR). The speech remains Hanson and One Nation's manifesto.

Pasquarelli, who only left the Liberal party earlier this year, phoned Australia First leader Graeme Campbell several times a day. Members of Australians Against Further Immigration (AAFI) and Australia First also played an important role in the production of Hanson's book, *The Truth*, which includes claims that Aborigines were cannibals, found babies "delicious" and killed old women like livestock.

Australian League of Rights leader Eric Butler announced in October that his group would give Hanson "all possible support." The league financed the printing and distribution of tens of thousands of copies of Hanson's maiden speech.

Other far-right forces also threw their lot in with Hanson. The Queensland-based Confederate Action Party (CAP) quickly formed Pauline Hanson Support Movements and is now believed to have dissolved into One Nation. Bruce Whiteside, who in the 1980s stood as a CAP candidate on an anti-Japanese investment platform, launched a very successful support movement on the Gold Coast the day after Hanson's maiden speech in September. The neo-Nazi bully boys of National Action have also pledged their

allegiance to Hanson.

One Nation's organiser in Newcastle and would-be candidate Peter Archer helped organise a tour of Australia by a member of the right-wing militia movement in the US who also had close links with former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke.

Hanson has reached out to the disparate strands of the far-right. During the election, Hanson directed her preferences to Victor Robb, a former Queensland state secretary of the openly neo-Nazi National Front. In October, she was scheduled to address a Melbourne meeting of the Australian Reform Party, led by Sporting Shooters Association leader Ted Drane. In February, she was guest of honour at the launch of Campbell's Australia First, where she was given a standing ovation by a large audience in which members of the ALR and AAFI were prominent.

...but is not allowed to take over

Then there was a change of direction, apparently triggered by Hanson's fear that she was losing control of her movement.

Edwin Morris, editor of the right-wing *Bundaberg New Australia Times*, claims that Hanson had supported his proposal to form an umbrella group to bring all far-right organisations under one banner. "There is only a cigarette paper between each of them in their policies," Morris said. The plan was to hold meetings in each capital city, culminating in a final gathering in Sydney to launch the united party. Hanson had agreed to attend a meeting in Melbourne but pulled out, instead announcing her intention to form One Nation.

Pasquarelli was unceremoniously sacked on December 9, after Hanson reportedly found he was constructing a Senate ticket in her name. Given Pasquarelli's links, she rightly suspected that Australia First and AAFI, and through them, the ALR, would have benefited most.

Hanson's new right-hand man, David Ettridge, set about bringing the support group branches back under Hanson's control.

The One Nation Party is born

Since its formation on April 11, branches of Hanson's new One Nation Party have been closely monitored. On April 19, Ettridge warned that if groups like the ALR or the CAP tried to control One Nation, they would be expelled.

"We have no real interest in affiliations or alliances," Ettridge told the May 3-4 *Weekend Australian*. "We are the ones that are forging ahead at a great rate of knots and they [the other far-right parties] are the ones who have been running very slowly in the water... We have the Pauline Hanson phenomenon and they don't. We are big fans of Graeme [Campbell] but his movement [Australia First] doesn't seem to be getting any steam at all."

Hanson and Ettridge's differences with the other far-right groups are essentially tactical and organisational. On the level of policies and ideology, there is little conflict. ALR, AAFI and Australia First remain enthusiastic supporters of Hanson and, in reality, continue to launch, or participate in, new branches of One Nation.

Hanson and Ettridge know that in order to create a party capable of making a significant electoral impact nationally they must allow those far-right groups with resources and troops on the ground an important role.

According to Ron Boswell, "One Nation advertised in May for members in the anti-Semitic, racist and extremist rag *The Strategy*," which has links with the most extreme sections of the Australian and international far-right.

One Nation leaders want to avoid the impression that the party is an umbrella group for the nutty far-right. Their sights are set on two goals: attracting members and voters away from the far-right wing of the Coalition parties, especially in its rural heartlands, and winning support from sections of the urban working class with the most backward attitudes.

Defections from the "respectable" right

One Nation has already made progress towards the first goal. On May 9, David Oldfield, electoral secretary to Liberal MP Tony Abbott and a former Liberal candidate in the 1995 New South Wales (NSW) elections, defected to join Hanson's staff. Former Liberal Western Australia MP Paul Filing, now an independent, has aligned himself with Hanson and says other Liberal MPs are considering jumping ship.

Many other Coalition figures and bodies have expressed support for Hanson. Including Malcolm Brooks, NSW Liberal Party state executive member and Gosford branch

president; Peter Murray, federal vice-president of the National Party and Tasmanian branch president; and Joh Bjelke-Petersen, former NP premier of Queensland.

Flo Bjelke-Petersen, former NP Queensland Senator, told the May 12 *Australian* that "...so many of [Hanson's] policies are National Party policies but the Nationals can't always implement them because they are in coalition with the Liberals." When in office, both Bjelke-Petersens openly sympathised with the League of Rights).

The Liberal machine in Hanson's Oxley electorate remains loyal to Hanson. The Queensland state Liberals have announced they will direct preferences to Hanson, making her re-election highly likely, and a \$25-a-head function for Hanson was organised by the Goondiwindi branch of the Liberals.

Not surprisingly, the National Party is very worried. Queensland Premier Rob Borbidge warned that "the Coalition could be devastated by Pauline Hansons from one end of Australia to another," and National Party Senate leader Ron Boswell denounced Hanson and her links to the far right.

The Nationals' real concern is not that there will be a rash of "new Pauline Hansons," but that the Coalition's "existing Pauline Hansons," who riddle the organisation and openly sympathise with the views of the ratbag right, will desert them to join One Nation. ★

Source: "Ratbags in the ranks: Hanson, the Coalition and the Far-Right" *Green Left Weekly* #281, 16 July 1997. All rights reserved, *Green Left Weekly*. Redistribution permitted with this notice attached. Redistribution for profit prohibited. E-mail: greenleft@peg.apc.org Web: www.peg.apc.org/~greenleft

The other Asia

Sri Lanka: NSSP wins court case

The Supreme Court has supported a complaint lodged by the New Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) against police obstruction of their 1996 May Day rally. According to the Colombo-based *Sunday Times*, "in a powerful judgement that confirmed the supremacy of the constitutional right to freedom of expression over all subordinate laws, the Supreme Court reprimanded the police for prohibiting the NSSP May Day procession, while permitting other political parties to proceed with their rallies."

The NSSP demonstration was repeatedly attacked by police using batons and teargas. Police officers told the court that the Party, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International, was acting in defiance of a Presidential proclamation banning demonstrations because of an alleged threat from "terrorists" linked to the separatist Tamil Tigers.

The Judge noted that police took no action against May Day rallies by the LSSP and the SLFP, parties which support the Peoples Alliance government.

The plaintiff, NSSP Central Committee member P.D. Saranapala, was awarded costs of Rs 15,000 (\$268). ★

Source: *Sunday Times* (Colombo), 20 July 1997.

Indonesia-Timor solidarity conference

Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET) has fixed its priorities for the coming year. The Australian-

based group is one of the most dynamic Indonesia solidarity campaigns.

Resolutions passed at the 23-24 August conference called for the Indonesian government to demilitarise West Papua, and the Australian government to cease supplying arms and training to the Indonesian military forces there. British solidarity groups will be invited to co-ordinate campaigning on oil resources and the Timor Gap.

The conference recognised a "lack of follow-up work" in initiatives targeting Australia's labour movement. It was also resolved to build closer links to the Sanctuary Network, which helps refugees go underground rather than face deportation. Australian government recently renewed plans to deport East Timorese refugees to Portugal, the colonial power until 1974. [See September issue]

Initiatives focusing on women in Indonesia and East Timor will be developed to connect with the forthcoming International Day of Action against Nike and the Free Dita Sari campaign. The struggle of Indonesian and Timorese women will also be brought to the forefront in annual women's gatherings include Reclaim the Night and International Women's Day through leaflets, petitions and stalls.

ASIET will push student organisations to adopt political prisoners, and pledge their facilities as designated places of asylum for East Timorese refugees.

A wide range of organisations were represented at the conference, which had 124 participants. [A/JD] ★

Contact: ASIET, PO Box 458, Broadway NSW 2007, Australia. Tel: 02-96901230 Fax: 96901381 Email: asiет@peg.apc.org Website: www.apc.org/~asiет

Indonesia's new labour code

The Indonesian Government is proposing a new Manpower Bill which will consolidate the Government's repression of the labour movement and destroy any hope for legal labour organising and collective bargaining.

Jean Dupont

If passed, this new legislation will give the Government extensive control over every aspect of industrial relations, with unlimited power to intervene in labour disputes, and direct control over trade unions in the workplace. The new law will severely restrict workers' organising activities and reduce their collective bargaining power.

The Manpower Bill will repeal or amend six Ordinances and eight Acts.¹ Despite their limits, these regulations offer more protection than the new Bill.

The new legislation embodies all of the anti-worker legislation which prompted mass protests and strikes recently in South Korea and Australia. As members of the APEC free trade system, the governments of these countries have imposed a neo-liberal agenda which combines free trade and freedom for international capital with strong state intervention to repress workers' movements and systematically destroy workers' collective rights.

Labour standards in industrialised and newly industrialising countries are being driven down by global competition to attract transnational capital. Countries such as Indonesia are driving standards even lower by institutionalising their repressive labour practices. The proposed law only clarifies workers' rights to the extent that it's clear they don't have any.

If the Manpower Bill is passed, it will impose the following, severe restrictions on the right to organise and freedom of association, the right to bargain collectively

and the right to strike. Without these fundamental rights the provisions in the Bill concerning wages and working hours cannot be monitored or enforced.

Restrictions

- Restrictions on freedom of association and reinforcement of the system requiring unions to be registered with and approved by the Government (Article 34). This reinforces the Decree of the Minister of Manpower (No.PER01/MEN/1994) on the establishment of trade unions in workplaces, whereby all trade unions must register with the Ministry of Manpower and provide a list of names of trade union committee members. The Decree bans union pluralism in the workplace and states that trade unions must seek affiliation to the Government-controlled All Indonesia Workers' Union (SPSI).

- Severe restrictions on the right to strike, with unlimited power of Government intervention to end disputes. These restrictions include the requirement that workers seek permission from the Government at least 72 hours before strike action, and that the names of strike leaders must be submitted to the Government (Article 85).

- A ban on sympathy strikes and strikes which are not directly related to the company concerned. (Article 83)

- Article 84 further undermines workers' right to strike by stating that: "Workers shall have no rights to wages during a strike."

- Strike action is restricted to company grounds, and any strike action taken outside is illegal. This effectively prevents workers from participating in protest marches or public demonstrations. At the same time, Article 88 allows employers to expel workers from the company grounds: "All employers have the right to start a lockout."

- Collective bargaining rights are not guaranteed.

- Collective agreements only need to contain references to the "rights and obligations" of employers and workers, and company rules and regulations. Agreements do not need to contain specific provisions on wages, working hours, or working conditions. Also, employers can replace collective agreements with "company regulations" when a union "no longer exists" in the workplace.

- Collective agreements must be negotiated "without any pressure", which means workers cannot petition the management or threaten industrial action to enforce their demands.

- There is inadequate protection against unfair dismissal. In addition, Article 78 fails to guarantee the right to compensation for dismissed workers by stating that dismissed workers should receive severance pay or service money or compensation, when in fact workers should be entitled to all of these.

Indonesia: PRD Congress

The outlawed Peoples' Democratic Party (PRD) held its first National Congress in Jakarta on August 30-31. All but two of the regional (KPK) leaderships were present.

The congress was opened by a recorded speech [from jail] by the PRD chair, Budiman Sujatmiko. He said that the dictatorship had made the PRD their main target because "the PRD has the potential to grow strong."

Some delegates admitted that the PRD had rarely worked with other groups, but said that it had become more open since 27 July 1996. Others said that the PRD practical action was in contradiction with its programme of establishing a Peoples' Democratic Coalition. Use of "communist symbols" in some actions was also criticised by observers from other pro-democracy groups, who said this had strengthened the regime's accusations that the PRD are truly communists.

Delegates approved a report on the political situation which argued that: "The peoples' consciousness is already clear, that is anti-dictatorship consciousness; the peoples' [anti-regime] sentiment is strong and widespread; the people are already actively resisting the dictatorship through small confrontational and radical actions which the New Order regime calls 'riots'."

"Based upon this analysis," the report continues, "the objective political conditions can be categorised as [a period

when] the people are already actively [resisting the dictatorship]. When the people were still passive, our strategy was based on agitation and propaganda, with the aim of exposing the rottenness of the New Order and encouraging the people to resist. But now that they are actively [resisting], our strategy is to push for radical and confrontational actions, to turn revolts such as [those we have seen recently] into organised rebellions, which can become a nation wide uprising to overthrow the military dictatorship under Suharto. The task of our party is to provide vanguard leadership so that these riots are not diverted into issues of ethnic, religious, racial and inter-group conflicts, and direct them towards specific targets such as soldiers, military headquarters, government offices, and the houses of government officials."

"For this," the report concluded, "the party's programme is to build a structure of resistance. A structure of resistance is an organisational [structure] which prepares for radical and confrontational actions which have a mass base in the suburbs, local districts and factories and are co-ordinated nationally. This structure has the task of contributing to radical and confrontational mass actions and giving national co-ordination to them." ★

Source: PRD statement, translated by ASIET.



- There is inadequate protection of the rights of women workers, child and youth labour, Indonesian workers for overseas employment, and foreigners. This problem also applies to the provisions on health and safety.
- Several articles in Bill contain the qualification that regardless of the "rights" granted to workers, the Government has the unlimited (and unchecked) power to interpret and determine the application of these provisions. Examples include Overtime (Article 96) and Rest Times (Article 97)

Consolidating State Repression

Throughout the Manpower Bill there are references to "Pancasila Industrial Relations", which subordinates all labour issues to the decisions of the Government over national interests, unity and order. Article 24 of the Manpower Bill reinforces authoritarian control over workers and trade unions by asserting that all activities must conform to "Pancasila Industrial Relations" which is "designed to promote harmonious, integrated and compatible industrial relations" whereby "all workers shall promote a sense of belonging to and awareness of maintaining and preserving the business." This aspect of the Manpower Bill will give the Government power to enforce an existing Decree issued by the Minister of Manpower in 1994 which states that: "The trade union at the enterprise level is characterised by the principles of Pancasila" [the regime's nationalist ideology] and its role is "to ensure continued existence of the enterprise" and "increase the productivity of workers".

The Manpower Bill further diminishes workers' rights by expressly defining workers as a national resource and as goods to be used for national development, where "manpower development aims to regulate, supervise and control the activities pertaining to manpower." Whereas an employer is

defined in the Manpower Bill as "a person", a worker is defined only as "manpower".

Finally, the Bill excludes workers' organisations, trade unions and other labour organisations not registered with and approved by the Ministry of Manpower from providing support to workers in strikes, labour disputes or collective bargaining negotiations. This will leave workers relatively powerless in the face of government officials and pro-government union officials whose interests are aligned with foreign and domestic capital.

Taking action

In response to the threat this Bill poses to workers' fundamental rights and to the labour movement, a coalition of Indonesian NGOs and genuine workers' organisations launched a campaign in March of this year to express their opposition to the Bill. Their public criticism of the Bill and demands for significant revisions to include fundamental workers' rights has gained widespread support among workers and local communities.

The President of Indonesia has demanded that there be "no criticism" of the Manpower Bill. Independent workers' organisations and labour activists in Indonesia disagree! ★

Send letters of protest to:
1. The Office of the Minister of Manpower, Fax: 62 21 525 3913
2. The House of Representatives, Fax: 62 21 573 4804
3. President Suharto, Presidential Palace Istana Merdeka Fax: 62 21 384 5627

Send copies of your protests to: Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (LBH), Fax: 62 21 330 140
For further information contact: APEC Labour Rights Monitor (ALARM) by email: alarm@hk.super.net or fax Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC) in Hong Kong: (852) 2385 5319

Notes
1. Ordinance No.8 of 1887 on Recruitment of Indonesians for Overseas Employment 2. Ordinance No.647 of 1925 on Measures Limiting Child Labour and Night work for Women 3. Ordinance No.87 of 1926 on Measures Child Labour and Youth on Vessels 4. Ordinance of 1936 (State Gazette No.208) on Recruitment 5. Ordinance of 1939 (State Gazette No.545) on Repatriation of Workers who are employed or recruited outside of Indonesia 6. Ordinance No.9 of 1949 on Amending Regulation on Measures Limiting Child Labour 7. Act No.1 of 1951 on Labour Act No.12 of 1948 of The Republic of Indonesia bringing into operation throughout Indonesia 8. Act No.3 of 1951 on Labour Inspection bringing into force Act No.23 of 1948 9. Act No.21 of 1954 on Collective Labour Agreement between Trade Unions and Employers 10. Act No.22 of 1957 on Settlement Labour Disputes 11. Act No.3 of 1958 on The Employment of Foreigners 12. Act No.7 of 1963 on The Prevention of Strike and Lock Out in vital companies, public enterprises, and institutions 13. Act No.12 of 1964 on Termination of Employment in Private Undertakings 14. Act No.14 of 1969 on The Basic Provisions Respecting Manpower.

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The Maoist project tested in the struggle for power

Eric Toussaint and Peter Drucker (Eds.)



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Egyptian farmers protest against land reform

In the last five months the Egyptian countryside has been the scene of a mass movement of poor farmers, shaking the stability of the IMF-backed regime.

The struggle started after the publication of a new law regulating the letting of agricultural lands. Agriculture reforms in 1954 and 1961 permitted a farmer to sign a contract renting a parcel of land for his natural life. These contracts could be inherited by farmers' widows and children. Annual rent was fixed at seven times the official valuation of the land for land taxes.

After 1977, however, Egypt came increasingly under the influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Their first

advice was the suppression of price subsidies for basic needs, particularly bread. The reaction of the people was immediate, with bread riots in January 1977.

During the 1980s the privatisation of industry began, and was met with large resistance within the state apparatus and from the population. However, under IMF pressure, and desperate for new loans, the Egyptian government continued selling off the public sector for next to nothing. Multinationals profited from the corruption in the public sector.

In the 1990s Egypt's farmers became the latest victims of neo-liberal policies. By now parliament governed with a false majority, elected under the pressure of the use of violence by the state and the Mafia. This corrupted majority decided on a new land rent law. This stipulated that land owners were now free to determine the period of rent contracts and annual rents.

The majority of Egypt's landowners are no longer real agricultural investors, but people who live and work in the city. Their interest, reflected in the new legislation, is to

re-establish their control over the land, in order to sell it to the richest farmers. This can only lead to a concentration of agriculture, something international market forces have been demanding. An estimated five million poor peasants will then threatened with the loss of their homes and livelihood.

In many villages, poor farmers have started mobilising to demand the cancellation of this unjust law. Meetings and demonstrations took place to organise a national march to the capital. The reaction of the government was consistently violent. "Forces of order" have killed many farmers and at least 600 people have been arrested. In Cairo, many left-wing militants have organised solidarity committees with the farmers movement. Again, many have been arrested.

An increase in the level of violent confrontations and state repression are expected when the law comes into effect on October 1st. [HJD] ★

The national co-ordination of poor farmers in Egypt is appealing for international solidarity.
Contact: Hosny, c/o SUD, fax (+33) 144621234,
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Transformation and regroupment

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.

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Palestinian refugees protest UNRWA cuts

Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan and Lebanon struck and demonstrated on September 9 to protest cuts in the budget of UNRWA, the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees.

Students and teachers of UNRWA-run educational institutions went on strike in all refugee camps in the region.

This was the first time that Palestinian refugees dispersed in Palestine and in three Arab host countries succeeded in sending a united message to the foreign governments responsible for the current budget crisis at UNRWA.

Some of the donor countries meeting in Amman, Jordan on September 9 are diverting their aid from UNRWA to the Palestinian Authority. Others are simply cutting back on their aid to Palestinians. UNRWA's budget next year will decrease by more than 25%. Natural population growth, and an increase in the number of refugees, implies an annual 5% increase in demand for UNRWA services. Israel's prolonged closure of the occupied territories is also contributing to increased poverty among refugees.

In Palestine, the protest activities were conducted in all districts of the West Bank jointly by refugee students, UNRWA employees, the Union of Youth Activity Centres, the Service Committees in the Refugee Camps established by the

PLO/Refugee Department, local popular refugee committees, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and Palestinian political and social personalities.

In the Bethlehem district, approximately 500 students from the three refugee camps in the area (Deheishe, 'Azza, 'Aida) conducted a joint protest march to the UNRWA District Office. They demanded the immediate stop of the cuts of UNRWA services and repeated the refugees' demand for the recognition of their right of return.

The Gaza Strip witnessed strong protest marches with thousands of students participating. The protesters were joined by numerous officials from the Palestinian Authority and PLO. The strikers said that refugee protest will spill over to all countries hosting Palestinian refugees, unless donors change their policy.

In Jordan about a thousand representatives of women and student organisations in the refugee camps demonstrated in al-Baq'a refugee camp. Refugees held a sit-in in front of the regional UNRWA headquarters, demanding a rapid policy change so as to calm the explosive situation.

In Lebanon, hundreds of Palestinian refugees protested in front of the UNRWA offices located in Beirut. ★

Source: Union of Youth Activity Centres/West Bank



Ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem

Following the 1967 occupation of the remainder of Palestine, Israel decided to annex the eastern part of Jerusalem - in violation of international law and resolutions, such as Article 47 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Parallel to the unlawful annexation, Israel started a series of procedures aimed at the judaisation of the city and at erasing its Arab character. Israel began confiscating lands, building settlements, and transferring Jews to them, thereby violating Article 49 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits the transfer of civilians into occupied areas. At the same time, Israel prevented Arab residents from building, on the grounds that the areas were designated "green land" and not slated for construction. No building permits were issued to Arabs.

Although building violations exist in Jewish-dominated West Jerusalem, not one Israeli home there has been destroyed by the authorities.

Israel closed Jerusalem and prevents Palestinians from reaching Jerusalem to attend religious services, or to obtain treatment in the specialised hospitals. It also closed several Palestinian national institutions for absurd reasons.

Late in 1993, Israel came up with a new interpretation of the Israeli Law of Entrance Into Israel (1952). According to this new interpretation, Palestinian Jerusalemites are obliged to document that the "centre of their lives" is in the city. Based on this new policy, Israel has confiscated thousands of identity cards from Palestinian Jerusalemites and prevented them from living in Jerusalem. At the same time, Israel has prevented other Jerusalemites from returning to their city, claiming that they have transferred the "centre of their lives" outside Jerusalem; their family re-unification application for spouses have been frozen, their new-born children are not registered and the Israeli Interior Ministry refuses to issue ID cards to their teenage children.

Given all these dangerous violations of Palestinian human rights pertaining to the freedom of movement, the right to education and health services, and residency rights, and confronted with the Israeli policy of ethnic cleansing, dozens of Palestinian families gathered in a protest camp in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Siwana in August 1997. Unfortunately, we have not heard the voice

of the international institutions and organisations which are responsible for the implementation of international norms and conventions. Therefore, we the human rights organisations in Palestine demand that international organisations, human rights institutions and the UN all play their role in fighting Israeli policies of racist discrimination and ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem, and to oblige the Israeli government to respect international norms and conventions which oblige the occupier to maintain the status quo in any occupied city. ★

This statement was issued on September 9th by: Citizen's Rights Centre/ Arab Thought Forum Freedoms Defence Institute Palestine Human Rights Information Centre Alternative Information Centre-Bethlehem Defence for Children International/Palestine Branch Jerusalem Centre for Women Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling Independent Palestinian Commission for Citizens' Rights Addameer Centre for Democracy and

Who's the culprit?

South-east Asian currencies have come under repeated attack by financial speculators in recent months. **Sony Melencio*** explains the causes and effects of currency speculation in the region.

On July 11, the halls of currency trading in the Philippines reverberated with a mild shock brought about by unusually intense selling of the peso and buying of US dollars. The US dollar, which soared from an official exchange rate of P26 to P32 in a few hours.

The Philippine government then announced the official devaluation of the peso: it ordered the Philippine Central Bank (BSP) to allow the "flotation" of the peso. It removed the previous system of "defending" the peso through state intervention on financial markets.

This official devaluation capped a series of shock waves which had sent Asian financial markets spinning ever since the devaluation of the Thai baht in April. The depreciation of the baht had a knock-on effect on other south east Asian currencies, including the Indonesian rupiah, the Philippine peso, and even the Singapore dollar.

The first shock wave

In May, as an aftermath of the Thai devaluation, selling of Philippine pesos to buy US dollars became more intense, and threatened to deplete the dollar reserves of the Philippine Central Bank. To protect the peso, the banks increased their overnight lending rates, from 10.5%/year in April to 20%/year on May 19. By increasing the interest paid to currency traders holding pesos, the Central Bank hoped to encourage them to hold pesos, rather than sell them (in bankers' jargon this is called "mopping out the peso's excess liquidity in the market").

For a while, this policy seemed to work. From May 22 to June 19, the exchange rate stabilised, and the overnight lending rate was gradually reduced to 12.75%. The collapse of the peso was avoided because the Central Bank had enough dollar reserves to absorb the "peso glut". In a meeting with businessmen, Philippine President Fidel Ramos boasted of a "robust" Philippine currency and, in a gloating mood, promised that he would never allow a currency devaluation, as the Thai government had done. He would recant on this promise a few weeks later.

The second shock wave

Between June 27 and July 2, the financial market was again besieged by "peso dumping". The overnight lending rates shot up to 24%/year, or a few percent higher than the peak rate during the first shock.

Peso-dollar trading became more

feverish. The volume of currency exchange leapt from 100-150 million/day to \$400-600 million/day. Overnight lending rates to 30-32% in the days preceding the July 11 devaluation.

A number of local capitalists, including many whose companies figure in the country's Top 100, demanded that interest rate be pulled down to manageable levels. They said that industry expansion was being jeopardised as interest rate soared to levels where it was unprofitable to borrow money.

The demand

Philippine capitalists demanded a devaluation of the peso. The banking sector said it would bring stability. Exporters said a devaluation would cheapen their products, and would make them competitive in the international market. Investors in the domestic market argued that their products would become more competitive, because devaluation would push up the prices of imported products.

This was a nightmare for President Fidel Ramos. However one looks at it, devaluation was like an axe falling towards the heads of the consumers. Ramos' posturing about the country's "economic growth" would fizzle out and might jeopardise his party's chances in the 1998 elections.

The government finally buckled to pressures from capitalist circles. Whatever the economic effect for consumers, Ramos knew that he had to secure first the support of his main financial backers.

In early July, the government liberalised the terms on which six major financial institutions could bid for U.S. bonds and other financial instruments. This was called "widening the spread of bond trading in order to freely adjust the value of the peso against the dollar."

On July 11, the financial speculators outbid themselves in frenzied trading. Billions of pesos were dumped into the market in order to acquire these new dollars. Windfall profits were made. Speculators who had acquired dollars at P26.40, were able to sell them on July 12 for P30-P32. Ten percent profit, overnight!

Who are the culprits?

Senator Ernesto Macea told the media that the culprits were those who had "plenty of money in the first place to play the money game." He threatened to sue the six "universal banks" authorised to bid for dollars in Philippine markets for their "economic sabotage" that had led to the collapse of the peso. Surprisingly, not a single bank was named, and any reference to the issue disappeared from the news within two days.

The six "universal banks" in the foreign-dominated Philippine financial world are

known around the globe. They are Citibank, JP Morgan, Solomon Brothers, Merrill Lynch, ING Barrings, and Morgan Stanley. All are awash with paper money, and trade in trillions of dollars and other currencies all over the world. They are just six of the giant financial corporations preying on the South-east Asian market.

Financial speculator George Soros, who the Malaysian government holds responsible for their currency's forced devaluation, is insignificant in comparison to any of these six banks. In any case, a large part of Soros's financial dealings are brokered by these money trading firms.

Together with 14 other international banks and financial institutions, the six "universal banks" do a huge amount of short-term lending to banks and industrial companies in the Philippines. Rather than being used for industrial expansion, these "portfolio investment" funds circulate mostly in the financial market. They are used predominantly for speculation: short-term trading of treasury bonds, stocks and various financial instruments.

It is above all *this* kind of capital that has boosted so-called economic growth in the Philippines. Without this inflow of speculative cash — and the millions of dollars that are sent home every year by more than five million overseas Filipino workers — Asia's "sick man" could never have appeared to recover in recent years.

The economic strategy of the Philippine government under "Steady Eddie" (as the Australian press endearingly calls the Philippine president) strongly revolves around procurement of the precious US dollar. Even if it means attracting the financial vultures to prey on the Philippine economy.

Financial vultures

Portfolio investments represent trillions of dollars of surplus capital that cannot find a use in the advanced capitalist countries. As a result, the owners are on a constant look-out for profitable investments that bring in fast profits.

What entices them to "invest" in the Philippines (and Southeast Asia in general) are the higher interest rates in the region. In normal times, Philippine Inter-bank (base) interest rates average 12-15% compared to 5-7% in advanced capitalist countries.

This means that US dollars earn more if they are invested in local currencies and financial instruments (through the purchase of Philippine treasury bills and shares in Philippine companies) rather than in low-interest US bonds, the main alternative. Foreign financial investors are assured a higher return than they can get in the money market of their home country.

However, in order to attract financial investment, a Third World economy has to

assure investors that their investment is "risk-free," through a stable exchange rate. This is a guarantee to investors that any capital they bring into the economy, and whatever profits they make, can easily be converted into dollars, which they can transfer out of the country whenever they want.

So, if it is in the interest of financial managers that the exchange rate in the Philippines remains stable, why did they resort to conspiracy to bring down the value of the peso?

To understand, we must look at the operation of the financial markets. This "industry" is inherently speculative. Competition is rife because of the presence of surplus money-capital in a number of big institutions where everyone tries to corner the surplus capital in the shortest possible deals.

One of the major operations on these financial markets is speculation on exchange rates. Just like any commercial capitalist, financial speculators try to make profits by buying a currency cheap in order to sell it dear. In the case of the Philippines, they started to buy dollars when the rate was P26 to the dollar. They then dumped more pesos in the trading market to raise the dollar value.

The finance managers do this in a conspiratorial way through agreements among themselves to fix a "trading spread" (usually a manageable 1-1.5% movement of the exchange rate). But on occasions the trading gets out of hand because of stiff competition, or when bigger financial institutions start to attack the trading market by heating up the competition in the trading floor, and the system fully gets out of hand.

Crisis after crisis

To solve the crisis brought about by money speculation, the Philippine government's response was to whip up another crisis. It officially devalued the peso, purportedly to stop the speculation and to recoup the dwindling foreign currency reserves in the Central Bank. By doing so, the government expects to stabilise the exchange rate, and allow interest rates to settle at a manageable level, which will no longer discourage industrialists from borrowing money to finance their investments. They also hope that devaluation will strengthen the country's exports, and that this will encourage further capital investments.

Unfortunately, this "textbook solution" is only applicable to fully industrialised countries and strong exporters. This is not the case of the Philippines, which is dependent on imports, and lacks competitive export products.

And in any case, even in the "textbook" solution, currency stabilisation after depreciation usually lasts for only six months. And the post-devaluation "economic boom" led by the export industry usually occurs a year after depreciation.

If the Philippine exchange rate does not stabilise in the next few months,



Manila Cha Cha

President Fidel Ramos is trying to change the 1987 constitution so that he can stand for re-election.

Charter Change, known in the capital as "Cha Cha," is massively unpopular. The Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Jaime Sin, has said that if Ramos stands for a second term he will "lead us back into the dark ages of pre-martial law political dynasties, warlordism, corruption, sham democracy and debilitating poverty."

The September 21st mass rally against constitutional change could turn into the biggest public demonstration since 1986. [JD] ★

and if foreign currency reserves continue to be depleted, some economists will consider this as evidence that the financial vultures are preparing to ship out their money back to their base country, or to some other more profitable ventures outside the Philippines.

The poor pay

The most conservative estimates predict that inflation will rise from 4.6% to 6.1% by the end of the year. Prices of basic commodities like as food, electricity and transport have already increased.

Although the price of crude oil has fallen 30% in the international market, where trade is in US dollars, vultures in the Philippine petrol industry are demanding a further increase in fuel prices. And now that the government has deregulated the trade in oil products, there seems no way of stopping them from doing so.

It is not only the poor who are the losers in the peso devaluation. Capitalist importers, and most Philippine businesses, stand to lose. While the devaluation will be profitable for some exporters, this will not be the case for corporations which have incurred dollar debts in their operations and exporters who use imported components will have to raise their prices anyway.

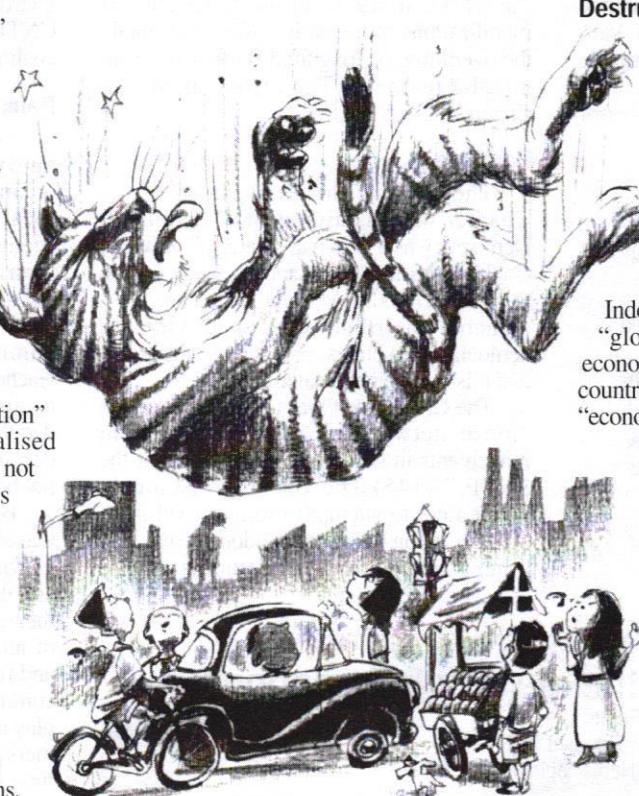
The main winners from devaluation, apart from the international financial firms, are the transnational corporations (TNCs) which trade mainly between their own subsidiaries in different countries.

The government will see its revenue increase, as price increases generate more sales tax. But this will be counterbalanced by the higher cost of repaying foreign loans. President Ramos is again begging the International Monetary Fund to extend its "exit programme" in the Philippines.

Destructive role of finance-capital

The Philippine economy is held hostage by a number of international financial institutions. International finance capital is roaming around the globe in search of the quick buck. It attacks weaker currencies of smaller countries to reap huge profits. It first shook the economy of Mexico, followed by Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, and Indonesia. It seems that this is one facet of "globalisation" that quite clearly stifles economic growth. And the Southeast Asian countries have been hit particularly hard. The "economic miracle" in a number of Southeast Asian countries is starting to burst. It was always a bubble. The economic collapse experienced by Thailand in particular has proved once more the destructive role of finance-capital.

As Marx said, "pure money-capital" is the "slaughterer" of industrial capital. ★



This article was first circulated among members of the progressive union organisation Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP). *The author can be contacted via [Links magazine](http://linksmagazine.org), PO Box 515, Broadway NSW 2007, Australia. Tel. +61 2 9690 1230, Fax: +61 2 9690 1381, Email: links@peg.apc.org

of currency, were to be used to buy the
abolition of the state's monopoly of
communications. In 1992, the government
closed down one of the last remaining
state media companies.

Organizing Dissent: Unions, the State, and the Democratic Teachers' Movement in Mexico.

Maria Lorena Cook.

reviewed by Dan La Botz

The teachers' movement has been the single most important labor movement in Mexico in the last twenty years. The movement in the teachers union (SNTE), Mexico's largest labor union, began in the mid-1970s and came to involve tens of thousands of teachers in marches, demonstrations, sit-ins (*plantones*), strikes, and myriad other forms of confrontation with their employer, the Secretary of Public Education (SEP). These were usually struggles for higher wages and better benefits, but above all for union democracy.

Over a period of fifteen years rank and file teachers in the state of Chiapas and Oaxaca, and to a lesser degree in other states, as well in Mexico City, succeeded not only in creating a mass movement, but more remarkably in an authoritarian regime such as Mexico's, in creating an on-going national rank-and-file organization, the National Coordinating Committee (CNTE) of the teachers union. The CNTE succeeded in winning control of the Chiapas and Oaxaca state organizations, and later played a key role in bringing down the dictatorial regime of Carlos Jonguitud Barrios, head of Vanguardia Revolucionaria, the political machine that controlled the union.

Maria Lorena Cook, assistant professor

book notes

at the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University, asked, "How was this possible?" And in response to that question has written an excellent account of this important rank and file labor movement.

Most studies of social movements or of labor reform movements ignore or neglect the importance of the movement's own organizational structures, procedures and values, but Cook puts those issues at the very center of her study. What makes this book important is its emphasis on the democratic self-organization of the teachers movement as essential not only to its survival, but also to the achievement of its goals of democratizing the union, and—at least for some of its members—the larger goal of democratizing Mexican society.

After the excellent introduction come two chapters which some lay readers may find tedious. The first two chapters show the origins of this book in her dissertation, and review half a dozen theories of social movements, particularly in authoritarian societies. The point of those chapters seems to be the truism that workers take advantage of differences between the government, the employer, and the union bureaucracy to advance their cause.

However, Cook goes on to tell in a quite readable and interesting style the important history of this movement, beginning with the struggle of indigenous bi-lingual teachers in the early 1970s, through the organization of the CNTE in 1979, to the great teacher mobilizations of the early 1980s, and finally the overthrow of Jonguitud Barrios and Vanguardia in 1989. (The history is told in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 7.)

Democracy

The heart of this book, however, is Chapter 6, "Sustaining the Movement: Democracy as a Survival Strategy," in which Cook argues that democracy became central to the teachers movement. Cook makes a valuable contribution by specifying the democratic structures, procedures and values that this movement created.

The CNTE itself was a "coordinadora" a "loose network of regional dissident movements in state and federal locals of the SNTE." (145) The CNTE consciously decided not to attempt to form a rival independent union—a strategy adopted by some other union reform movements in this

period—rather the CNTE defined itself as an opposition current within the official union, fighting for the right to elect its own local leaders. The CNTE's strategy was usually moderate and legalistic, but based on constant mobilization of the membership to pressure the employer and the state. The movement's central demand became the members' right to control their own local unions.

How did it happen that the CNTE adopted profoundly democratic procedures and values? First, the teachers knew what they were against: the dictatorship of Jonguitud Barrios and his political machine Vanguardia. They were opposed to the dictator and that made them democrats at least in theory.

Second, since Jonguitud Barrios and Vanguardia represented the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) inside the union, the teachers decided they wanted the CNTE to be independent of political parties. Political organizations, mostly Maoists, Trotskyist, and Communists (usually acting under the cover of a caucus name) were permitted to operate within the CNTE, but with only one vote, compared with five for each of the "struggle committees" made up of rank and file members. (147) Thus the CNTE took advantage of the political groups' analyses and strategies, without necessarily being controlled by them. "Most of the time the existence of political factions within the movement had a positive impact," says Cook. (250) Perhaps because the PRI and Vanguardia were centralized organizations, the CNTE adopted the form of a decentralized coalition.

Rank and file control

Since this was a movement which constantly mobilized the teachers, the basic organizational form of the CNTE was the local "struggle committee" or regional "central councils of struggle," extra-legal forms of organization not recognized by the union statutes. There might also be "municipal struggle committees" and strike committees, and "brigades," teams of teachers who carried information and support to other areas. The CNTE's members demanded that they be consulted and have a vote on decisions, and they felt that leaders should not be fully trusted.

By the mid-1980s both the Chiapas and Oaxaca rank and file movements succeeded in winning control of the state conventions and the executive committees. How did they then attempt to democratize the union? First of all, the CNTE did not disband as a rank and file organization, feeling that the struggle committees and councils would continue to play an important role, even though the reformers now had control of the official structure. They decided to have two structures,

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Women's lives in the new global economy

Penny Duggan & Heather Dashner (editors)

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one legal and official, the other legal and unofficial. In the event they lost control of the state-wide local, they would still have their parallel organization.

Second, they made changes in the official structure as well. Most important, the state-wide assembly became the ruling body, rather than the smaller state executive committee. The state-wide assembly schedule was changed so that it met once a month or more often if necessary, and the assembly was expanded to include not only the official representatives, but also rank and filers from the coordinadora. Individual offices were replaced with collective commissions, to spread the knowledge and the responsibility. Also rank and filers were incorporated into these collective commissions along side elected officials, to keep everybody honest.

The membership demanded the right to make decisions. In the state assembly itself, delegates were required to take the debate back to their local areas before voting and adopting a decision. This process of "consulta" or consulting with the rank and file was essential to the CNTE's vision of democracy. Delegates to state assemblies often had to produce an "aval," a document proving that they had actually consulted with their members and were representing their position. "It was this daily practice of discussion and decision making that was at the root of the new political consciousness movement leaders wanted to instill in union members." (228)

Indigenous women teachers

In addition to looking at union organization and procedure, Cook also looked at the role of women and ethnic minorities in this process of building a democratic movement. Though indigenous bilingual teachers had been among the earliest activists in the contemporary teachers union movement, the Indians seldom became the leaders of the CNTE. "Teachers from the Mixe, Mixteco, and Triqui regions of the Sierra Juarez became the foot soldiers, but never the officers of the emerging movement," writes Cook. (233) In part this came from the condescension of other Indians: "In spite of the indigenous ethnic background of most teachers in the state, urbanized and more highly educated Zapotecos, Mixtecos and mestizos in the teachers' movement tended to treat members of the indigenous teachers' coalition with a high degree of paternalism." (234) Nevertheless, Cook argues that some of the democratic qualities of the Chiapas and Oaxaca movements may have come from indigenous traditions of democratic self-government.

Similarly, while women make up a majority of teachers, or a very large minority in some states and more rural areas, few

women were found among the rank and file leaders, at least initially, this despite the fact that women played a key role in mobilizations. "In spite of this large presence of women in the union, the representation of women in leadership positions at both local and national levels has been highly disproportional in favor of men," Cook found. (235). However, Cook also found that women's participation in leadership grew, apparently as a result of the movement's generally democratic practices.

Cook argues that despite such weaknesses, the movement created a democratic collective identity which united men and women, primary and secondary school teachers, bilingual indigenous and urban teachers. Moreover, the teachers developed a sense of identity with the parents, students, the community, and other workers. Cook argues that not only was their a movement identity, but also a "greater class consciousness." (243)

While this was an impressive movement, it was not without its faults and weaknesses. One weakness, Cook explains, was its neglect of educational issues such as pedagogy and curriculum. Mostly concerned with wages, benefits, and union democracy, the teachers spent little time on their professional concerns. Also, while teachers and parents might appear to be natural allies, sometimes the teachers' job actions, strikes, demonstrations and meetings meant that in certain periods they spent little time teaching, leading to friction with parents.

In 1989 the CNTE played a key role in organizing huge teacher demonstrations in Mexico City which brought down Jonguitud Barrios. But, Cook points out, the CNTE failed to provide leadership at that crucial moment. Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari succeeded in installing as the new union leader Elba Esther Gordillo, a member of Jonguitud's Vanguardia, and a person whom some believed to be responsible for the assassination of a CNTE activist. Gordillo then successfully divided the CNTE's leadership, winning some of them to join her new executive committee, while isolating others. The CNTE split into several rival currents, while the rank and file demobilized.

Ironically by 1990 the union had become more democratic and more independent of the PRI, but the union also became closer to president Salinas, and became part of the model union federation he was sponsoring which advocated higher productivity and flexibility. Salinas, it could be argued, had successfully used the CNTE to help unseat Jonguitud—an old dinosaur who would have resisted Salinas's "modernization" of labor union contracts and attitudes—and replaced him with Gordillo who was a more pliant union official. (She is now a leader of the Foro group of unions and at this moment, as head of FNOP, playing a key role for the PRI in the up-coming elections.)

Cook's book leaves us with a number of questions. First, if these groups succeeded in building such strong democratic organizations, why in the end did the teachers fail to

control their leaders, many of whom made deals with Gordillo and the PRI? Second, why did leaders formed by such a movement make such deals? What was the role of the Maoists, Trotskyists, Communists, and of the National Democratic Front (FND) which became the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in the deals with Gordillo? What was the relationship between the democratic social movement and the political reform movement and various self-conceived revolutionary movements?

Perhaps the greatest merit of Cook's book is that it leads us to want to know more and understand better. ★

University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996. Photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. 359 pages.

Inside economics

Wall Street, by Doug Henwood (Verso, 1997)

Spot rates, zero coupons, blue chips, futures, options on futures, indexes, options on indexes... The vocabulary of financial markets can seem arcane, even impenetrable. And yet, financial news and comment is ubiquitous. Major national newspapers devote pages of newsprint to the financial sector. Television news invariably concludes with a visit to the market for the latest prices.

Can non-specialists ever hope to understand what the markets are up to? In *Wall Street*, Doug Henwood gives the answer, and it is an emphatic "Yes!"

Henwood is a notorious scourge of the stock exchange in the pages of his acerbic publication *Left Business Observer*. "You are scum..." Norman Pearlstine, executive editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, once told him. "It's tragic that you exist."

In *Wall Street*, Henwood dissects the world's greatest financial centre, laying open the intricacies of how, and for whom, the market works. The Wall Street which emerges is not a pretty sight. Hidden from public view, the markets are poorly regulated, badly managed, chronically myopic and often corrupt. Their activity contributes almost nothing to the real economy where goods are made and jobs created. But they wield enormous power. With over a trillion dollars a day crossing the wires between the world's banks, Wall Street and its sister financial centres don't just influence the government, effectively they are the government. ★

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Forever young

Pietro Tresso: Revolutionary, internationalist

The Fourth International's 1997 European youth camp took place near the forest where, in 1943, four Trotskyists were assassinated by French resistance fighters, on orders from the Communist party. **Livio Maitan** presented one of the four, Pietro Tresso.

"Why dedicate a meeting to someone most of you have never heard of, born 105 years ago? Because he and other comrades were killed not far from here, and because our memories of revolutionary internationalists like Pietro Tresso illuminate the most dramatic moments of this century.

Pietro Tresso was born in 1893, near Venice. When he was nine, he had to leave school and become an apprentice tailor. This early entry into the labour market stimulated a precocious social and political consciousness. At 14 he joined the Young Socialists. Just before the outbreak of World War I, he was arrested for anti-militarist activities, and assigned to a disciplinary battalion. Later, as an officer, he experienced 33 months of inhuman trench warfare.

Classified as an invalid after contracting tuberculosis, Tresso returned to civilian life. He rejoined the labour movement in that critical period between the October 1917 Russian revolution, and the split in the Italian Socialist Party in 1921, and the founding of the Communist Party. Tresso was one of the most active figures on the Socialist Party left, in the fraction led by Amadeo Bordiga. After the split, he had several key responsibilities. In 1922, two weeks before the fascists took power, he participated in the Italian delegation to the 4th Congress of the Communist International. Assigned to work in Moscow with the Red International of Labour Unions, he collaborated with Antonio Gramsci. In 1926 he was elected as an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Italian CP Party, when a Gramsci-inspired majority defeated a "Bordigist" minority.

With party leaders gradually arrested in the fascist repression, he was soon promoted to full member of the Central Committee, and then to the Political Bureau. He had responsibilities both in the (underground) Interior Organising Centre and in the Exterior Centre, based in exile.

The years 1929 and 1930 had deep, consequences for the Communist International. Its leadership bodies, now openly subordinate to the interests of the Stalinist group leading the USSR, imposed an analysis of the Social Democratic parties. Despite their failures, these parties nevertheless represented a majority of the labour movement, with which it was essential that the Communists

find unity in the face of the fascist threat.

A debate on this analysis, and its orientations developed in very sharp terms within the leadership of the Italian party. Four members of the Political Bureau, including the leader of the youth organisation, supported the positions adopted by the Communist International in July 1929. Tresso and two others disagreed. They argued that one could not predict any revolutionary crisis in Italy in the short term. It was therefore wrong to hedge everything on a impending conflict between the dominant classes and the proletariat.

Subsequent developments confirmed Tresso's analysis. But at the time, the three dissidents were the victims of vicious attacks, culminating in their expulsion in 1930.

Tresso quickly discovered the arguments of Leon Trotsky and the left opposition, with which there was substantial convergence with his own ideas. For Tresso, the arguments of the left opposition explained the regressive trajectory of the Soviet regime, and the contradictions of the Italian CP.

Now living in France, Tresso remained extremely active. In 1938, Tresso participated in the founding congress of the Fourth International, joining its Executive Committee.

Despite the extreme difficulty of political activity in the émigré milieu, he continued to be active in the General Council of Italy's Socialist Maximalist Party. In January 1935 he participated in a fascinating, three-evening debate in which the different tendencies of the Italian workers movement discussed whether organisational unity was possible. The participants included the best-known Socialist leader, Pietro Nenni, and Giuseppe Di Vittorio, future leader of the CGIL trade union confederation.

The war, the German occupation of France, and the Petain regime marked the third, final phase of Tresso's life and struggle. With the Gestapo at his heels, Tresso began underground work in France. Arrested in Marseilles on June 1, 1942, he was tortured, in the presence of his companion Barbara. On October 2, a Vichy tribunal condemned him to 10 years hard labour.

One year later, he was freed, along with other prisoners, from Puy-en-Velay prison, after a courageous attack by a Resistance group. But his liberators, members or sympathisers of the French CP, know who he was. Twenty days later, Tresso and three other revolutionary Marxist escapees disappeared, apparently without a trace.

Decades later, the first information has been released about the technical details of their execution by the partisans, although of course there was never any doubt about those responsible. The order came from individuals and leaders acting within the exterminist logic of Stalinism.

Fifty years later, we see that the most dramatic moments of Tresso's life coincide

with the key moments of the first half of the century. In his youth, he saw the miserable conditions which were the lot not only of Italians, but of most of Europe's peasants. He suffered personally in the nameless catastrophe of World War I. He contracted a sickness that was the plague of his age, and from which very few people recovered. He lived underground under the fascist regime that imposed 20 years of repression and obscurantism on Italy. And he was swept away by the tempest of World War II, an even more murderous conflagration than the first world war. Pursued by the Gestapo, he was condemned by the puppet Vichy regime, and spent his last year in its prisons.

The final, tragic paradox, is his murder by those who had liberated him, or by their comrades. People from "the same side of the barricades," who, cynically or naively continued to consider themselves Communists and democrats.

But Tresso's life was also marked by other, very different events. He lived life to the fullest. As a young man he built the Socialist Party. He threw himself into international solidarity with the Russian revolution. He was in the front line of the battle to create the Italian CP. He experienced the glorious moments of the 1936 strike wave in France, and the Spanish revolution. Throughout his life, he was comforted by the knowledge that he had been consistent and faithful in the struggle that had become his *raison d'être*.

"It is precisely because we have remained young that we find ourselves virtually outside the various 'churches,'" he wrote from prison in 1942. "The same moral aspiration that pushed us, in our youth, to join a party, pushed us out of it as soon as these aspirations were contradicted by what they call 'practical necessities.'

"If we had grown older, we would have listened to the voice of experience. We would have become 'wise.' We would have adapted, like so many others, to the street, the lie, the obsequious smiles of the various 'sons of the people.'

"For us, this was impossible. Why? Because we stayed young. Young, and therefore dissatisfied with what is, and always aspiring to something better. In reality, those who have not remained young have become cynical. For them, people, humanity, are just instruments to serve their own particular needs. For us, people, are the only real, existent truths."

Tresso's words carry existential suggestions to all those who refuse to accept the world as it is, struggle to change it, and are not ready to sell their internationalist revolutionary commitment for a plate of beans.

I hope you understand why we wanted to pay homage to the memory of Pietro Tresso, and that you will do your best to never grow old, and to stay forever young!" ★

Talkin' Loud and Sayin' Something

In August, world music lost two masters

The demise of **Olufela Anikulapo-Kuti** (58) and **Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan** (48) is a staggering loss to music and beyond, writes **Siddharta**. Both were schooled in the classical and finer arts but also innovators in contemporary styles, as much influenced as influential in the crossover between western and non-western melodies.

Fela Kuti had been described as the second funkiest man alive - James Brown denying him the top honour. Hailing from Abeokuta, (north of Lagos) in south western Nigeria, his parents were important influences. His mother was a prominent anti-colonial activist and recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize and his father a churchman, founded Nigeria's first teachers union. Fela won a scholarship to study medicine in England but when in London enrolled instead at the Trinity College of Music. He could already play piano but took to the trumpet inspired by Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and others in the United States.

Back in Nigeria he was looking for "a sound that fit." He stumbled onto the same sort of funky jazzy recipe as the gospel and soul-influenced James Brown. **Fela** dubbed it Afro-Beat.

His ability to bridge the gap between the pidgin English speaking masses and the more intellectual and politically conscious was cemented by a visit to the U.S. in 1969. Here, Latin-Cuban-African and Jazz elements and melodies fused with an empowering message that added to the potency of the music. This reflected his exposure to radical groups like the Black Panther Party and works like Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

From his '69 Los Angeles sessions album, an out-take "Viva Nigeria" has the following lyric: "War is not the answer/War has never been the answer/and it will never be the answer/one nation indivisible/long live Africa/Viva Nigeria."

Confrontation with Nigeria's rulers

His increased politicisation and growing popularity brought him into conflict with Nigeria's military regimes. Branding the dictators as liars, and denouncing them as unpatriotic led to beatings, raids and imprisonment. One of his periods of imprisonment was in the Alagbon Close jail nicknamed the 'Kala-kuta' (after the dark hole of Calcutta). On his release he named the compound enclosing his home and club "The Kala-kuta Republic" - declaring it independent of state authority and interference.

He also became a campaigner for the healing and meditative powers of marijuana, which he had been introduced to in the U.S. He and the other members of his "republic" consumed liberally and openly. This provided the justification for numerous police raids, which were thinly disguised opportunities for harassment and intimidation.

In one of those raids his mother was thrown from a window and subsequently died. Fela's spell in jail between 1984 and 1986 led to him being adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. His brothers, Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, a human rights activist, is serving a fifteen year prison sentence on trumped up charges imposed by the Sani Abacha dictatorship.

In musical terms, his fusion of the Latin and Jazz idioms with African music encompassing both traditional and modern influences was unique and hugely successful. Afro-beat provided an alternative to the highlife sound that was over-running north west Africa and the juju and later fuji styles dominating Nigeria. The spontaneity of compositions - often coming together live on stage - added to the spectacle of a large band with semi-clad singers and dancers making his stage shows un-missable.

When he was diagnosed as having AIDS he continued touring but recording became more sporadic. This August he died of heart failure brought on by AIDS related complications.



Fela Kuti's demise was followed barely two weeks later by the unexpected and untimely death of **Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan**. Here was an artist at the peak of his creativity, accomplishing through a highly emotionally charged voice something Indians and Pakistanis had failed to achieve any semblance of. Unity!

Born into a family of excellent singers, **Nusrat** ascended to the highest heights, and early on was awarded the honorific *Ustad* (Master). He brought *Qawwali* music, based on Sufi Muslim spirituality and classical Punjabi verse, to the world, like Ravi Shankar did for Indian classical music. The intensity and the poetry of his performances extended to *bhajans* - Hindu songs of religious praise.

Qawwali literally means "devotional songs aimed at bringing the individual closer to God". This corresponds to the Sufi notion of the exile of the soul from its maker, and its longing to return. These songs of praise appealed to Muslims, while his interpretations of bhajans captured Hindu hearts too. In *Allah Hoo*, he sang "The Hindus call you Ram, the Muslims call you Allah, they are speaking of one and the same."

Ecstasy, abandon and Allah

The motif of love entwined with that of faith, and the Sufi disdain for rules and rituals, and their mean-minded veneration, infuriated fundamentalist Islamic traditions. The ecstasy and abandon Nusrat evoked in his audience had them dancing joyously. Even at staid venues like London's Albert Hall, where Muslim, Hindu and Sikh flocked to hear him.

His music also fared well at the hands of remixers who added Latin, *bhangra* and hip-hop effects to his tracks in efforts to modernise the sound.

He proved the versatility of his sound through collaborations with renowned western musicians like Peter Gabriel and on film scores for "Natural Born Killers" and "Bandit Queen". He translated his talents for Bollywood (Indian commercial cinema) film soundtracks, without compromising his integrity.

Nusrat ballooned in weight by his late 30's and fought a losing battle from then on. The resultant pressure on his body, and his prolific and intense emotional performances both live and in the studio almost certainly contributed to his death of renal failure.

He was of an age with the post-colonial Indian sub-continent, a product of its previously combined culture and heritage; striving to reconnect links torn asunder. ★

100 years of Zionism

Gilbert Achcar

In August 1897, delegates to the founding conference of the World Zionist Movement gathered in the Swiss city of Basel.

The 100th anniversary of Theodor Herzl's conference been a low-key affair. After all, the Zionists are divided by political disputes over the practical implementation of their historical project in Palestine/Israel. And the present Zionist government has succeeded in provoking the unanimous disapproval of Western governments. The official centenary conference organised in Basel was also marred by the controversy around the sordid behaviour of Swiss banks concerning the funds belonging to victims of the Nazi genocide.

To highlighting the oppression to which the Zionist state submits the Palestinian people, an alternative conference was organised on August 15-17, in Basel, by

Association Suisse-Palestine, Association pour l'Union entre les Peuples Juif et Palestiniens, and Sozialistische Alternative, Basel.

The conference was also supported by Mouvement suisse de la Paix, Neue Partei der Arbeit, Parti du Travail de Suisse, SolidaritéS, Israeli and Palestinian organisations, including the Alternative Information Center and the General Union of Palestinian Women also gave their support.

Three hundred people, mostly from Switzerland, but also from the Middle East and other countries, discussed, often passionately, a range of issues pertaining to the history and present-day realities of Zionism and the Palestinian people. Among the speakers were Saleh Abdel-Jawad (Palestine), Albert Aghazarian (Palestine), Abdel-Bari Atwan (Palestine/Britain), Khaled Ayed (Palestine/ Lebanon), Erica Deuber-Pauli (Switzerland), Meir Gal (Israel/USA), Tikva Honig-Parnass (Israel), Islah Jad (Egypt/Palestine), Elias Khoury

(Lebanon), Jakob Moneta (Germany), Akiva Orr (Israel), Maurice Rajsufus (France), Abraham Serfaty (Morocco/ France), and Ella Habiba Shohat (Israel/ USA).

Former Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella and former Tunisian political detainee Khemais Chammari were also present. The cultural programme included a screening of films by Palestinian director Michel Khleifi, an exhibition of works by Israeli artist Meir Gal, and a musical evening with Palestinian singer Marwan Abado.

In terms of the modest goals set by the organisers with their limited financial resources, the conference was an undeniable success. It was reported in the Swiss media, including television, by the BBC World Service, and by various organs of the Arab press.

Beyond the obvious interest of listening to so many specialists on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for many participants the key importance of the event was the fact that it brought together political and intellectual opponents of Zionism from the many communities involved in one way or another in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Palestinians from the West Bank, from Israel and from exile, Israelis of European descent, Mizrahim (Oriental Jews), people from other Arab countries, including Arab Jews, and Europeans of Jewish descent. The 'ethnic' composition of the participants was so varied as to allow for coverage of the many aspects of this most complex of political and historical problems.

One can only regret that such gatherings of thinkers and activists from so diverse origins, yet sharing common progressive values are not organised more often. They would be a welcome alternative to the numerous conventional international meetings dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian issue. More meetings like this one would undoubtedly contribute a great deal to the necessary convergence between Arab and Israeli left-wing anti-Zionist thinking. It would also provide the European supporters of the progressive anti-Zionist struggle with a better understanding of the topic, in order to treat it in the best way.

Unfortunately, not enough emphasis was put on the question of racism and anti-Semitism today, and how to fight it. As I stressed in the workshop I co-led on anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, since the event was held in Europe with a mainly European audience; since Zionism was originally a reaction, however misguided, to the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe; and since moreover there is currently a resurgence of racism on the continent — not only anti-Jewish this time but also and mainly anti-Muslim, this issue should have been one of the key topics of the conference.

This was all the more necessary since the boundaries between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in Europe are not always very clear. Anti-Zionism still serves sometimes as a disguise for anti-Semitic views. These cases are rare, but often become highly visible. In the Arab world too, the boundaries between anti-Zionism and anti-Jewish racism

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or fanaticism are very often crossed.

Of course, one cannot treat the racism of the oppressed and the racism of oppressors as if they were the same. And Zionism, which is inherently racist and oppressive, is in no position to blame the Arabs for "anti-Semitism." The false claim that "anti-Zionism means anti-Semitism" is a key ideological argument used world-wide by Zionism to win sympathy from many short-sighted and well-intentioned persons.

But this does not change the fact that European anti-Semitism, like anti-Muslim

racism, is oppressive through and through. This is why it should be kept clearly in mind that the priority in Europe is not anti-Zionism, but the fight against racism in all its all forms and shades. This is a fight where Muslims and Jews are objectively on the same side of the barricade today. And it is only on the basis of this uncompromising fight that solidarity with the Palestinian people can and should develop in Europe and the rest of the world.

For this reason, it would have been more effective to ask not only "what has Zionism

led to?", but also, "is Israel the answer to present-day anti-Semitism?" and "how best to fight anti-Semitism, which Herzl called the 'propelling force' of Zionism, while recognising that Zionism now incorporates anti-Muslim racism."

No doubt the organisers of the Basel counter-conference took it for granted that these questions are linked. But the point is precisely that these progressive concerns cannot be considered as self-evident. They must on the contrary be stated on each occasion, and repeated very loudly. ★

comming soon

Seminars on Che Guevara

A seminar on Che Guevara will be organised by the Organisation of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAL) in Havana on 25-27 September.

On 2-5 October, *America Libre* magazine is holding a seminar in Argentina on the same theme, followed by a festival in Buenos Aires on October 8th called "With Che: for a free America"

Contact: Frei Betto, America Libre, tel/fax +54 1/953 2934

"Surviving in a Globalised World"

27 September-11 October 1997, Aachen, Germany

The International Autumn University on North-South Issues and the Environment is a seminar on environmental suicide, poverty and injustice.

Speakers include Susan George (associate Director of the Transnational Institute, former board member of Greenpeace International), Prof. Nanjundaswamy (KRRS, India), Christine von Weizsaecker (ECOROPA), Myriam Vander Stichele (Transnational Institute), and Alistair Smith (Farmers' Link).

Working languages are English and Spanish

www.astar.rwth-aachen.de/orga/ir/AU97.html

Ernest Mandel Study Centre:

Symposium on the Russian revolution

Co-organised with Espaces Marx, a pluralistic Marxist research foundation linked to the French Communist Party, the research centres of Paris VIII and Dijon universities and journals including *La Pensée* and *Critique communiste*. The symposium will take place at Université Paris VIII on November 14-16.

This event is likely to be one of the major international gatherings of Marxists scholars and thinkers held in recent years. Scheduled participants include Samir Amin, Daniel Bensaïd, Robin Blackburn, Samuel Farber, Marc Ferro, Janette Habel, Boris Kagarlitsky, Paul Leblanc, V.P. Volobuyev, and Claudie Weil.

Simultaneous translation into English, French and Russian. Registration fee:

FF100 for individuals, FF200 if sponsored by an institution, FF50 for students and unemployed. Accommodation in 2 or 3-bed rooms costs FF50 (\$9) per night

To register, write to *Espaces Marx* (64 Bd Blanqui, 75013 Paris, France), attaching a check for the registration fee, plus accommodation if needed (specify which nights). The check will be kept as a deposit and returned to you against payment in French cash on arrival. Meals will be paid on the spot

International LaborMedia '97

(Seoul, Korea, 10-12 November 1997)

In spite of a total lack of financial resources and experiences Korean activists are trying to organise a conference on "Labour Movement and Media: Workers, Information Technology and Solidarity" and an international labour video and film festival in Seoul, Korea.

Registration Fee: evening of November 8 - morning of November 13 -- Including accommodation for five nights with all meals and participating in Worker's mass rally
Private room: 130 \$ • Pension: 250 \$ (30% discount for Underdeveloped Country, 10% discount for registration before 15 October).

Contact: Seoul International LaborMedia '97 Committee, tel: +82-2-855-1913, fax: 858-1913, e-mail: labormedia@mail.sing-kr.org [To join conference mailing list write to LM@mail.sing-kr.org] Internet: <http://kpd.sing-kr.org/labormedia>

Many of these speakers are well known activists in South Asia, but speaking for the first time in Britain.

* Sponsored by SOAS, De Montfort University and Luton University

Registration: £3/day for students, low and unwaged, £10/day for waged individuals, and £25/day for institutions. Cheques payable to SASG, c/o Londec, Instrument House, 205-217 Kings Cross Rd, WC1X 9DB. For further details tel./fax +44 171 354 8744 or 713 7907

Raise your banners '97

31 Oct.-2 Nov. 1997, Sheffield, England

Following the enormous success of the '95 festival, plans are under way for a bigger, better, even more exciting celebration of political music.

Invitations have gone out to some of the best known British and international names in political music. An extensive programme of films, drama, performance poetry, workshops, children's events, exhibitions and discussions will complement the more than 20 concerts which are planned for city centre venues, large and small.

To receive a programme send a SAE to the Festival Office, RYB, PO Box 44, Sheffield, S4 7RN

Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference

Sydney, Australia, April 1998

Organised by the Asia Pacific Institute for Democratisation and Development. See advertisement in last month's magazine.

The Institute also welcomes applications to present papers at the conference, and suggest specific themes for discussion under the general framework of supporting democratisation, self-determination and social justice and opposing the neo-liberal austerity offensive.

Individual affiliation to the Institute costs A\$150 per year. Affiliates are entitled to copies of major articles by Institute Fellows, a bi-annual newsletter and access to Email news services on developments in the Asian region.

Contact: Dr Helen Jarvis, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies, (SILAS) University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052 Australia. Or Email to: apiaustralia@peg.apc.org. Or fax to: 02-96901381

Networking



Censorship of "terrorist" and guerilla websites

The recent kidnapping and assassination of Spanish politician Miguel Angel Blanco by the Basque separatist group ETA has ignited a backlash of cyberspace censorship in the United States.

In early July, the Spanish government requested last week that the Cable News Network (CNN) remove its link to the group's web site. CNN refused, saying that it was standard practice to provide links that relate to the subject matter of current affairs stories.

Several days later, the Institute for Global Communications (IGC), a non-profit Internet service provider for activist groups, had its system crippled by a deluge of mail bomb attacks against a site maintained by the New York-based Euskal Herria Journal (EHJ). A flood of mail with bogus or no return addresses from anonymous automated mail relay systems swamped the IGC's servers. On 20 July IGC reluctantly suspended the EHJ site. "This destructive campaign has overwhelmed our ability to keep our system running and we have made the difficult decision to suspend the Euskal Herria Journal Web site -- under protest -- so that we can continue to serve the many other individuals and organisations who depend on our services," IGC said in a press release.

"If a non-profit Internet provider like us can't keep up a controversial site, I don't know who can," said Maureen Mason, programme co-ordinator for IGC.

In fact, IGC is not the only group under fire for its links to guerrilla group web sites. Along with the ETA, rebel groups such as the MRTA, FARC-EP and Zapatistas have joined the burgeoning ranks of political groups that are bringing their message to the Internet. Some are finding cyberspace allies on American university servers, raising a heated debate on First Amendment rights of free speech.

In early May, officials at the State University of New York at Binghamton shut down a student-operated site for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), Latin America's largest guerrilla group.

"For us, it was not an issue of academic freedom," said Anita Doll, director of communications at Binghamton. "It was an issue of the appropriate use of university resources."

Not all universities agree. Officials at the University of California at San Diego, took no action when, shortly after the

Peruvian rebel hostage crisis began at the Japanese embassy in December, Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement sympathisers posted an MRTA web site, the Solidarity Page, on the school's computer.

"We're proud that our students are part of that communications network. We don't see any reason to get rid of it because it's controversial," said Dan Hallin, chairman of the Communications Department at UCSD.

This outraged right wing groups like the Heritage Foundation. "It is outrageous that groups who have attacked Americans repeatedly in the past were allowed to worm their way into a situation where American taxpayers subsidised their propaganda on the Internet," insists Jim Phillips, terrorism specialist at Heritage. "I think that UCSD has a hard time explaining why they are subsidising terrorists."

In fact, by closing down its FARC-EP site, SUNY-Binghamton may have violated America's First Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech. "The question turns on whether the university is censoring students' sites based on content or whether the university has a neutral, non-content-based rule," said James Dempsey, senior staff counsel for the Center for Democracy and Technology, a non-profit Internet civil liberties group. "If it looks like the government singled out this one site because of its content, then it's impermissible under the First Amendment."

On a similar note, Carl Kadie, president of Computers in Academic Freedom, said that SUNY-Binghamton was reinventing an old censorship trick that universities used to restrict unpopular speakers from off-campus. In 1958, for example, the University of Illinois decreed that "no employee of the university shall allow any subversive, seditious and un-American organisation the use of university facilities for publicising the activities of that organisation." Kadie said that in the 1950s, the University of Illinois was more the norm than the exception. Many state universities maintained similar policies. ★ [JD]

Source: *The Real Revolution: Net Guerrillas*, Elizabeth Frantz, Time-Warner's Pathfinder web site, July 21, 1997

Mexican labour newsletter

After a six-week break, *Mexican Labor News and Analysis* has resumed publication. Editor Dan La Botz has returned to the US, supported by a number of volunteer correspondents in Mexico.

The electronic newsletter is produced

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

MLNA can be viewed at
<http://www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/>

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The People's Summit on APEC '97

Information about the forthcoming counter-summit is available at
www.vcn.bc.ca/summit

A window on Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Voice of Democracy site "chronicles the activities of the grass-roots democracy movement of Hong Kong and the political climate in which it operates through the period of transition and beyond. Indications are that freedom of the press, whether by self-censorship or by direct government intervention, is under imminent threat. This endeavour seems the only way to continue the free discussion of the performance of Hong Kong's government in safeguarding the fundamental rights of society."

www.democracy.org.hk/

April Fifth Action
members.hknet.com/~tllau/default.html

Australian Militant

Australia's other left newspaper
www.ausom.net.au/~mil

Berlin Squatters

Following the 29 July eviction of three squats in East Berlin, there are now almost no squats in Berlin anymore. Whatever happens next can be read about on the "HaeuserMob" website. Most information is in German.

www.hou.net/hmob

International Viewpoint

Our own website was "down" for a few days in the middle of September, but is again working. It now includes 60+ pages: articles from our special issue on Europe • Report from The Fourth International Youthcamp • More than 40 other articles from previous issues.

www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.htm

Our English listserv provides the full contents of this magazine, and articles from our associated publications. We also have lists for French, Spanish/Portuguese and German materials from our sister publications.

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