

international VIEWPOINT

• march 1995 • issue 264 •

West European Communist Parties in crisis

Mexico: 100,000 Zapatistas!



Women and fundamentalism

Belgium BF 150 • Canada \$6 • Denmark DKr 30 • France FFr 35 • Germany DM 7.50 • Iceland IKr 200 • Netherlands Hfl 8.5
• Norway Nkr 28 • South Africa R12 • Sweden SEK 30 • UK £2 • USA \$4.50 • Other Europe 35 FFr • Rest of World \$ 4.50 U.S. •

In Memoriam. A.R. Desai

16 April 1916 -12 November 1994

by Kunal Chattopadhyay

The heart attack which carried away Akshaykumar Ramanlal Desai at the age of 79 meant an incomparable loss for the revolutionary Marxist movement in India.

A.R. Desai came to politics over half a century ago. He was one of the minority of Indian intellectuals who rejected the myth of Soviet "socialism." He joined the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), the biggest component of the divided anti-Stalinist left. As a leading theoretician of the RSP, and member of the central committee for many years, he argued for a Trotskyist perspective. Many of his most important articles, like "A positive Programme for the Indian Revolution" were published in the RSP theoretical journal, *The Call*.

The RSP developed in a centrist direction, ending up as a "critical" junior partner in the CPI (M) led Left Front government in West Bengal. A.R. Desai resisted this drift to the right, and finally resigned from the Party in 1979. Over 60 years old, A.R. had no intention of letting up in his activities. He became a loyal activist of the Indian Section of the Fourth International (though he never became a member).

A.R. Desai was one of the towering intellectuals of the left. Like D.D. Kosambi, Desai's pioneering Marxist studies of the Indian reality, published as *The Social Background to Indian Nationalism*, and its sequel, *Recent Trends in Indian Nationalism*, broke away from the procrustean bed of Stalinist orthodoxy. They explained how the Indian bourgeoisie and bourgeois nationalism were on the one hand, relatively strong and able to hegemonise the working people and yet, on the other hand, why capitalist development in India would not lead to an abolition of backwardness. The whole thrust of both books was that the only way forward for the working class and all the oppressed and exploited was permanent revolution. Yet they were so lucid and free of jargon that they have been translated into practically every major Indian languages, and serve as standard university text books. I remember a reputed sociologist becoming furious when I made this observation at a memorial meeting in Calcutta. He rejected my 'slur' of Trotskyism on A.R. Desai, and sought to defend the man by showing how his writings were relevant for analysing Indian reality. This was a measure of A.R. Desai's success. He was not a proponent of that sterile "Marxist" style which presents quotes from Marx, Engels and one's canonical choice of subsequent leaders as substitutes for empirical data and solid logic.

A.R. Desai's prolific writings have left a number of works which are of lasting value to activists and academics alike. For over a decade he brought out *Patkar*, a Gujarati journal which published Marxist ideas and analysis in a form accessible to workers and the petty bourgeois. He was also the prime mover in the establishment of the C.G. Shah Memorial Trust, which has published Mandel, Mihir Desai, A.R. Desai, Wilfred d'Costa, Colin Gonzales, Nilinjan Dutta, Soma Marik and other activist-thinkers in a size and price affordable to the Indian militant. The Trust will continue its efforts to become a research centre to help our activist groups.

Under Desai's leadership, the Trust also published a number of resolutions of the World Congress of the Fourth International, and of course the documents of its Indian section the Inquilabi Communist Sngathan including *Communalism in India* and *The Rajiv Era*.

A.R. Desai was committed to anti-communal and democratic rights work. He was willing to go anywhere and campaign anytime for the causes he believed in. His confidence in Trotskyist politics made him open to all currents. It was not his nature to assume that leftists holding different views were to be treated as the next-of-kin of class enemies. All found in him an alert person willing to work together if required and to listen to their views in all seriousness.

He leaves behind him his wife, feminist author Neera Desai, and his son Mihir. He also leaves behind him a lifetime of work for the revolutionary communist movement, for which the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan pays homage. ★



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Class struggle and Technological Innovation in Japan since 1945

by Muto Ichiyo
\$ 4 US, £ 2.50, 25 FF

Send payment to giro account
CER/NSR 1757114, Amsterdam,
Netherlands, or send a regular
cheque (not an Eurocheque) in US\$
or sterling to P. Rousset, IIRE,
Postbus 53290, 1007 Rg Amsterdam,
The Netherlands

Solidarity Subscriptions

This magazine is too expensive for readers in many countries. For many political prisoners, International Viewpoint is the only link to the socialist movement outside the prison walls. Until recently, we have been able to distribute one third of our print run to these activists and prisoners.

But our current financial difficulties have forced us to reduce the number of magazines we distribute free to the bare minimum.

You can help! As soon as we receive contributions marked "solidarity subscription" equal to a six month or one year subscription, we add another solidarity reader to our mailing list. And if you wish, we will inform him or her of your solidarity.

International Viewpoint is published by Presse-
Editions-Communications Internationale (PECI), BP
85, 75522 Paris CEDEX 11, France.
fax (+33) 1/43 79 29 61, e-mail inprecor@igc.apc.org
Directeur de publication: Jean Malewski. Commission
paritaire no. 64324 ISSN: 1294 2925.

Printed by Helma v.o.s., Opletalova 40, Prague, Czech
Republic. A monthly analytical review published under
the auspices of the fourth international. Signed articles
do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

A
B
H
D
S
O

A
C
U
R

S
S
w

CONTENTS

Africa

6 African women's economic policy network

10 Algeria: Caught between two devils

Interview with Nejib Abdou of the PST

12 Senegal: All together now !

Interview with Badara Ndiaye of And Jef-PADS

Women and fundamentalism

4 Algeria: Women in the firing line!

Samira Fellah

5 Socialist feminist assassinated: Obituary for Nabila Djajnine

PST

6 What can Algerian feminists do ? interview with an activist

7 U.S. fundamentalists target lesbians and gays

Julie Enszer

8 France: The National Front and women's rights

Arnaldo Castelleras

9 France: Islamic fundamantalists and immigrant communities



Asia

2 In Memoriam: A.R. Desai

Kunal Chattopadhyay

16 Sri Lanka: New growth in worker resistance

Vickrambahu Karunaratne

Europe

18 Eastern Europe and the former U.S.S.R.

Five years on: economic reform in the East

Catherine Samary

23 Bosnia: Islamic fundamentalist or democratic?

Catherine Samary

24 The Russian army and Chechnya

Boris Kagarlitsky

25 Yeltsin: a new Napoleon

Poul Funder Larsen

What's Left ? West European Communist Parties in Crisis

Portugal: The last mass C.P. in Europe ?

Italy: Back to basics for "Refoundation"

Spain: The challenge of success for United Left

Germany: the P.D.S. in East and West

Jaime Pastor, Francisco Louca,

Livio Maitan, Angela Klein

Francois Verammen

(pp. 26-33)

The Americas

13 Cuba: International Solidarity Meeting

14 Mexico: The struggle continues

Ulyses Martinez

15 Mexico: Chiapas amnesty - who should judge?

Rosario Ibarra, President of the National Democratic Convention (CND)

You can subscribe to International Viewpoint in...

AUSTRALIA: See "Other countries" address below
BELGIUM: Bank transfers to "IVP" account 001-1050035-86
BRITAIN: Cheques to "Outlook International", PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.
HOLLAND: Postal giros to act. 444 7645- ISP, St. Jacobsstraat 10-20, Amsterdam
DENMARK: Box 547, Nørre Alle 11A, København N. Postal account: 510-0852
SWEDEN: Post giros to: 4125 94-4 Roda Rummet, PB 3077, Göteborg.
Other Europe: IV, BP 85, 75522 Paris, CEDEX 11, France.
 Postal giros to: CCP no. 3.900 41 N Paris.

AUSTRALIA: See "Rest of world" address below
CANADA: Cheques to "SC", PO Box 4955, Main PO, Vancouver, V6B 4A6.
U.S.A.: Cheques to: "IV", PO Box 1824, New York, NY 10009.
Rest of world: IV, BP 85, 75522 Paris, CEDEX 11, France.
 Postal giros to: CCP no. 3.900 41 N Paris.

Solidarity (see below)	Full year (11 issues)	Half year (5 issues)
A\$ 100 <input type="checkbox"/>	A\$ 70 <input type="checkbox"/>	A\$ 38 <input type="checkbox"/>
BEF 3000 <input type="checkbox"/>	BEF 2000 <input type="checkbox"/>	BEF 700 <input type="checkbox"/>
£35 <input type="checkbox"/>	£22 <input type="checkbox"/>	£11 <input type="checkbox"/>
f110 <input type="checkbox"/>	f85 <input type="checkbox"/>	f43 <input type="checkbox"/>
DKK 500 <input type="checkbox"/>	DKK 330 <input type="checkbox"/>	DKK 165 <input type="checkbox"/>
SEK 500 <input type="checkbox"/>	SEK 330 <input type="checkbox"/>	SEK 165 <input type="checkbox"/>
FFR 500 <input type="checkbox"/>	FFR 330 <input type="checkbox"/>	FFR 165 <input type="checkbox"/>

A\$ 100 <input type="checkbox"/>	A\$ 70 <input type="checkbox"/>	A\$ 38 <input type="checkbox"/>
C\$ 100 <input type="checkbox"/>	C\$ 70 <input type="checkbox"/>	C\$ 38 <input type="checkbox"/>
US\$ 90 <input type="checkbox"/>	US\$ 60 <input type="checkbox"/>	US\$ 32 <input type="checkbox"/>
US\$ 90 <input type="checkbox"/>	US\$ 60 <input type="checkbox"/>	US\$ 32 <input type="checkbox"/>

Send your money to the address to the left.

Solidarity subscription: One year airmail subscription for you, and one year subscription for a political prisoner in the third world who has recently contacted International Viewpoint.

Algeria: Women in the firing line

by Samira Fellah

THE STATUS OF WOMEN has been a battlefield ever since the independence of Algeria from France in 1962. Modernists and traditionalists wrestled in a patriarchal society, shaken by the social transformations which followed independence and the need to rebuild the country. Women won considerable public space, at least in the larger towns. For a time, each attack on women's rights by the regime was opposed by a generation of women, nourished by western feminist ideas, shaped by their participation in the democratic struggles of the 1970s and 1980s, enthusiastic about independence, about nationalisation, about the massive enrollment of girls into schools, and young women's access to university. These women activists placed great emphasis on the legitimacy won by the moudhahidates (women participants in the liberation struggle).

These core networks of women were regularly activated to oppose discriminations in the legal status of women, restrictions on women's access to housing, to sports, or to the need for parental or husband's authorisation to leave the country. In effect, the regime was under constant pressure from traditionalist factions, and was always trying to give to women with one hand and take back with the other. So the women's movement was constantly active, up until the family code was adopted in summer 1984.

All this time, a small core of Islamic fundamentalists were developing a set of theories and strategies which went beyond simple traditionalism. Fundamentalist leader Soltani was already arguing in the 1970s that the Algerian regime was illegitimate because it negated the fundamentally Moslem identity of the Algerian people, because of its "socialist" path, and because it was leading the nation into depravity by authorising all that Islam forbade, and in particular by estranging women from their natural mission as procreators and educators. What the country needed, Soltani and the Fundamentalists argued, was a sharpening up of the moral fibre, which would have to take the form of a radical reeducation of those women who had been seduced by the West. These arguments started to circulate in pamphlet form, the most famous authors

of the time being Masmoudi and Abou Jerra.

Even in the 1970s, then, women were central to the Islamic (and any other kind of) fundamentalist project. Indeed, many of the splits within the Islamic fundamentalist movement can be traced to differences of opinion on the women question. Until recently, the Women's sections of El Irshad wel Islah (close to the Hamas movement) recognised women's right to divorce, to work, to participation in sports. At the same time, tendencies like the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) were ready to use iron clubs to prevent women students from leaving their halls of residence in the evening.

But back in the 1970s, these reactionary ideas couldn't really spread far in a country sure of itself, admired in the third world, flush with oil revenue, and able to offer job, home and health care for all. In any case, the dictatorship was ready to stamp on the smallest sign of opposition activity.

Things changed in the 1980s, when Algeria suffered an unprecedented economic crisis. The unemployment, marginalisation and impoverishment which hit whole swathes of society provoked bitterness, envy and mute anger. Society seemed ready to explode, waiting only for the right detonator. The simple explications of the Islamic fundamentalists, distributed through the mosques, 'helped' a large part of society to understand the causes of its misery. - The women are the reason nothing works in this country any more! They take the jobs of the young! They leave the weakest to drug themselves! The orphanages are filling up with unwanted children! At the same time, poverty pushed people back into traditional self-help structures, an easy field for the fundamentalists to organise in.

The sudden democratic opening which resulted from the social explosion in 1988 seemed to give all the political forces in the country new chances, the left and the fundamentalists alike. Except that the



Religious fundamentalism has very little to do with religion. Traditional Moslem discrimination against women in Algeria used to be on the decline, and feminists organised openly to improve girls' access to schools and to sport, and women's equality with men in terms of family and labour law. The present regression in that country is the result of massive rejection of the corrupt and anti-democratic 'socialist' National Liberation Front (FLN) which has governed the country since independence from France. By repressing protests against the I.M.F.-backed austerity programme, the F.L.N enabled the fundamentalists to pose as the protectors of the poor. Our correspondents' reports on the French (Catholic) and North American (Protestant) extreme right shows the mobilising power

Women and fundamentalism

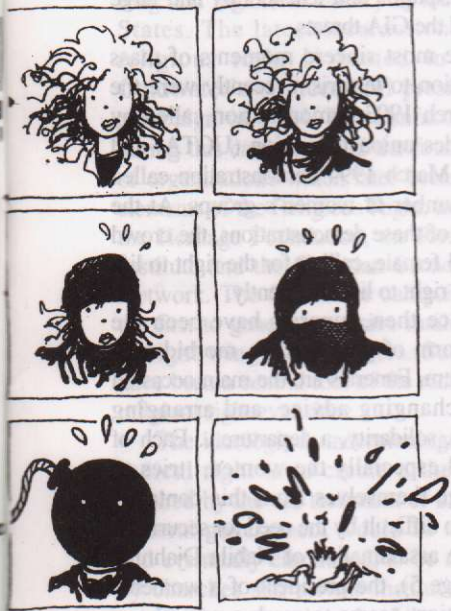
of Christian fundamentalism too. The U.S. religious right is shifting the focus of its attacks from abortion to homosexuality in a conscious search for voters and funds, while French National Front is considering down-playing their opposition to abortion rather than alienate a section of women voters.

All this should warn us that fundamentalism is anything but archaic. It is much more a political movement of the extreme right kind, which uses religious sentiments and arguments to establish a particular kind of political regime in this world, not the next.

The antidote to fundamentalism is not simply education and the preaching of tolerance. The West has nothing to teach the South in this respect. The way to stop fundamentalists enslaving people in Algeria, or controlling media and education in North America, is to build an alternative project for the transformation of society.

★

Shadli regime wanted an intifah, an opening of the economy to the world market, and a dose of economic liberalisation at home. No way he was going to let the left wing develop at a time like this. The Islamic fundamentalists



PLANTIA

found their economic policies in line with the times, and their confidence in the restraint of the armed forces encouraged them to go a long way in promoting their social policies. So while women's organisations also benefited from the new openings, and succeeded in organising some truly massive assemblies of women, they found themselves confronted with a powerful new opponent - the fundamentalists, which seemed to enjoy the tacit support of the traditional enemy - the regime.

In the mosques, sermons became increasingly violent and anti-women. Physical attacks on women multiplied. The regime refused to intervene, apparently confident that they could 'deal with' the fundamentalists at a later date, once it suited them to do so.

Women's organisations and campaigns during this period were no longer led only by the generation of forty-somethings. A new wave of activists from the student and Berber movements (the only sectors of society where left ideas had developed and spread) came in and renovated the women's movement. But everywhere else, radicalisation in society took the forms designed by the fundamentalists.

The victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the municipal elections of

1990 convinced the fundamentalists that they were the new winners in society. The FIS electoral campaign had promised to relieve women of many of their daily burdens - "Give them running water, decent housing and a living wage" went one slogan - at the condition that women return to the home, and leave the menfolk - or rather, the men of the FIS hierarchy, deal with the serious business of public affairs and the state. A huge majority of working women, exhausted by their double working day, long hours in public transport, the water shortage, the food shortage, the inconvenient hours of the education system, accepted this fundamentalist offer to look after them.

Other women, young for the most part, found a new liberty in fundamentalist agitation. It gave them a chance to move about the town, which traditional society would never have permitted. And their fathers, brothers and neighbours gave them a social recognition which they could never otherwise have dreamed of. For all this, the veil was an insignificant price to pay. It was transformed from sign of oppression to sign of self-affirmation.

These women came to argue with us, opposing feminist arguments in the name of a philosophy that could not be farther from women's rights. Thousands of these women were marshalled into demonstrations for an Islamic state. They marched through the streets of Algiers, Constantine and Blida, demanding a society in which they would be confined to the role of reproduction of the species.

Not surprisingly, the confrontation between fundamentalists and those women struggling for their rights became more and more direct, and more and more violent. In this increasingly unequal struggle, women's organisations are more and more frequently obliged to condemn the kidnap, rape or assassination of women.

This extreme violence is something new. Until the beginning of the repressed civil war, a fundamentalist fatwa (order) held that women could only be killed if they were carrying arms. The first woman to be murdered by the fundamentalists was a police secretary. And it was only ten months later that an unarmed 17 year old high school student was assassinated at a bus stop, because she refused to wear a head-scarf. This sinister threat to all women who refused to obey the fundamentalist injunction to cover themselves failed. With the exception of those villages where the fundamentalists, in a traditionalist guise, hold total power, women continued to work and shop bareheaded, and, during the day, to occupy



PLANTIA

Socialist Feminist assassinated

It is with deep sadness that we learned of the assassination of our friend Nabila Djahnine at Tizi-Ouzou on 15 February 1995.

Nabila was part of all the just struggles. Her political life started in the student struggle for democratic freedoms and against social discrimination in the education system. She was active in the women's associations of the late 1980s.

She found herself at the podium during the general assemblies which prepared the second conference of the Berber Cultural Movement (MCB) in 1989. She was a member of the presidium of the meetings which founded the National Union of Algerian Students - Autonomous and Democratic (SNEA-AD). She was a founder-member and president of the Berber women's association Thighri n'Tmettuth (A Woman's Cry) in Tizi Ouzou.

During all these years, Nabila was a member of the Socialist Workers Party (PST). She left the party in 1991, but we always met up with her wherever there was a social or democratic struggle. She was one of the rare militants who continued their activity, their struggle in Algeria, despite the dangers. She was always lively, and to her last day she refused to give in.

The P.S.T. vigorously denounces this cowardly assassination, coming after so many unjust deaths, after so many painful wounds inflicted on the citizens, women and men, of our country. We share the pain of her family and her many friends, and we assure them of our solidarity.

Algiers, 15 February 1995

Statement of the Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs (PST - Socialist Workers' Party), the sympathising section of the Fourth International in Algeria

the streets. Women smiled at other women they did not know, in this complicit resistance, so different from the joyous and noisy demonstrations of previous years. But as the number of women struck down alongside a farther, husband or brother singled out for execution as a civil servant or supporter of the regime increased, fear began to spread. The television brought pictures of bloody corpses, of slashed throats and opened stomachs. In November 1989 two young women in Birtoutat, near Algiers were

kidnaped and raped. Their aggressors repented on television, describing the savage and primitive practices of the fundamentalist guerilla groups.

As the war against the "kuffars" (infidels) intensified, the various Islamic groups began to authorise rape and pillage as legitimate tactics to strike fear into the target groups: policemen, minor state officials, activists in the ruling parties, and intellectuals considered to support the regime. And their families.

The list of targets has widened and

widened to include all of society. In August 1994 the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) threatened to punish all those who participated in the new school year - by attending school, by sending their children to school, or by continuing to teach. Despite the massive courage involved, parents, pupils and teachers by and large resisted the GIA threats.

The most sincere moments of mass opposition to terrorism recently were the 22 March 1993 demonstration called by the trades union federation (UGTA) and the 22 March 1994 demonstration called by a number of women's groups. At the second of these demonstrations, the crowd was 2/3 female, calling for the right to life and the right to live differently.

Since then, funerals have been the main form of get-together, morbid as it may seem. Funerals are the main occasion for exchanging advice, and arranging support, solidarity, a departure... Each of us, and especially the women, tries to recharge themselves from this contact - made so difficult by the need for security.

The assassination of Nabila Djahnine (see page 5), the president of a women's association, seems to mark a new phase. By targeting her, all women militants have been threatened. The fundamentalist groups no longer seek to isolate the regime internationally, and isolate it from the population. They increasingly seek to kill in the womb all elements of opposition to their will, to their conquest of power. ★

Algiers, 25 February 1995

What can Algerian feminists do ?

"As women are more and more the target of the fundamentalists, we have to take precautions. We have grouped ourselves into a network of personal contacts, and meet regularly, but rarely in the same place twice. We try above all to maintain solidarity through the exchange of information. This helps each of us overcome the isolation which generates fear and hopelessness. Some of our members live and work in the 'home' districts of the fundamentalists. These women suffer the terror of armed fundamentalist groups every day. They have to cover themselves up even to walk to the corner of the road. They have to keep their opinions secret. For these women, our meetings are all that keeps them going.

"We have started a discussion of the new violence against women, and we are collecting testimonies to make an inventory of the traditional and new forms of violence, from institutional violence against women to the rape and murder of the armed gangs.

"Unfortunately, the traditional concern with unity inside the Algerian women's movement has very often prevented us from denouncing the self-styled leaders who are often presented abroad as our representatives. And this refusal to appear divided has meant that a whole section of the movement has struggled and acted in silence since January 1992, rather than polemicise with the great ladies of Algerian feminism, paraded before us on the French television. In Algeria today, militants continue to work, to teach in burned-out schools, even in the most risky districts and villages. Women and men sacked by the Post Office (PTT) participated in a hunger strike in October 1994. Women helped organise the oil workers strike in November, to negotiate the new union-company collective agreements for 1995 in December, and all the time to train up new feminist militants, to keep contacts and networks alive, to meet regularly, and to

denounce the assassins as accurately as possible.

"The last united initiative of women's groups was 22 March 1994. Many women wanted to organise a demonstration to protest against the upsurge in assassinations. We agreed on a common declaration denouncing the violence of armed fundamentalist groups, and the blind repression of the regime. But the next day both the other organisations involved decided to withdraw their signatures from anything that denounced the behaviour of the regime. Had someone been to talk to them ? In any case, the final declaration was a one sided condemnation of fundamentalist terrorism, and a demand for an even more savage repression of the Islamic fundamentalist milieu by the regime. For our group, this was a mistake. You can't build a democratic movement, like the

women's movement, unless you denounce all the violations of human rights and summary executions which are raging in the country. Even if we denounce above all the savagery of the fundamentalists, we can't whitewash a regime which still treats women as legal minors through its repressive Code of the Family, and which is responsible for the growing misery and marginalisation in Algerian society.

"We had planned to invite women to design a fresco on one of the squares of Algiers to commemorate International Women's Day this year. But the assassination of Nabila Djahnine has made us even more conscious of the danger women face. Whatever we do on 8 March, we will be thinking of Nabila, and the struggle she carried on up to her death..."

Assia F. is an active member of the Association for Women's Liberation (AEF) in Algiers. ★



African Women's Economic Policy Network

(BankCheck No. 10) - Representatives of 20 African women's organizations and programs have formed the African Women's Economic Policy Network (AWEPON) in order to provide a forum for discussion, analyses and dissemination of information about existing economic policies - especially structural adjustment policies and how they affect women in Africa. The network will also articulate alternatives from a women's perspective. There are regional coordinators in Morocco, Guinea Bissau, Senegal and Zimbabwe. For more information contact Julia Muhala, Women's Program, National Council of Churches, P.O. Box 45009, Nairobi, Kenya. Fax (+254) 2/224 463 ★

U.S. fundamentalists target lesbians and gays

RIGHT WING ORGANIZING has a long and inglorious history in the United States. The latest incarnation of the religious right is rooted in Barry Goldwater's unsuccessful presidential campaign of 1964. The contacts made during this campaign laid the foundations of organisations which later became key elements of the Religious Right, including the Heritage Foundation, the Rutherford Institute and the Christian Broadcasting Network. The Goldwater campaign was the first to generate massive mailing lists of right-wing sympathizers. Such lists have been a central tool of the radical and religious right ever since.

The ideological underpinnings of the radical right is to create a theocracy inspired by the old testament of the bible. Federal government would be reduced and eventually eliminated, to be replaced by churches and private institutions. Of course, the outward work of the religious right is not based on a discussion of theocracy and capitalism in the 1990s. Instead, the right has identified a number of sensitive social issues around which they can mobilize a broad constituency, and assert sole moral authority to speak out. Gender and sexuality have proved particularly effective flash points.

To take one example, abortion has been a vigorously opposed issue in the United States ever since our right to choose was established by the Roe v. Wade court decision in 1973. Visual, noisy and aggressive blockades of health clinics have been a central tactic in the right's attack on reproductive rights. Five clinic workers have been murdered since these confrontations heated up in the 1980s.

These high-profile attacks have been coupled with new laws restricting state funding of abortion. Michigan eliminated state funding of abortions after a ballot initiative of the right in 1988. And self-styled 'feminist' groups like Women Exploited by Abortion (WEBA) exploit concern about the impact of abortion on women to increase the psychological pressure.

All this shows how the radical right has adopted multiple attacks on the issues it has identified for itself. Legislation, publicity campaigns, 'divide and rule', even adapting the strategies and rhetoric of the civil rights and women's movement to their own racist and sexist goals.

The radical right has begun to see the

exhaustion of the fund raising potential of abortion rights among the faithful. This is one of the reasons for their increasing targeting of lesbians and gay men. Homosexuality and bisexuality have been identified as a 'wedge' social issue with which they can continue to fund-raise, mobilize and win elections.

Two strategic advances have already been made by the religious right on these new questions. First of all, they have developed the use of ballot initiatives to suggest that they have popular support for their hateful ideas. And secondly, they



Plague on the bigots!

The Christian right organisation Exodus International claims to have "cured" 100,000 gays and lesbians of their homosexuality since 1976. They run 75 "ex-gay ministries" across North America.

This made them an appropriate target for the San Francisco-based direct action group Lesbian Avengers. On 8 February this year five Lesbian Avengers stormed Exodus' headquarters and released 1,000 live locusts to shut down the organisation. According to Lesbian Avenger Liz Harris, "If anyone deserves a plague of biblical proportions right now, its the Radical Right."

Lesbian Offenders can be contacted via International Viewpoint ★

have succeeded in dividing traditional moderate and radical voting blocks.

Starting in Oregon and Colorado states, the religious right has attempted to organize and win local referenda on propositions to restrict the civic rights of lesbians and gays, or even to pass legislation specifically excluding non-hetrosexuals from anti-discrimination and civil rights legislation. Few of the ballots have been successful, and Colorado's Supreme Court overturned one 'victory' for the right as unconstitutional. Nevertheless, the campaigns multiply and return.

Just as the abortion issue was used to cultivate Catholics as a voting block, the sexuality issue is being used to chip away at other groups of voters. The right does not just attack lesbians and gays as perverse, or disease-ridden. They also feed the new argument that lesbians and gays are seeking 'special rights' and 'minority rights' which will somehow disadvantage the moral majority. This twisted rhetoric is dangerous in two ways. Not only does it diminish support for civil rights of all kinds, but it also allows the radical right to make allies among people of color to oppose lesbian and gay rights.

Women and fundamentalism

Plenty of other issues are under attack by the religious right. Public education, multiculturalism, single parents, immigration, books, libraries, the arts, the environment and crime are all grist for the religious right's mill. Gender and sexuality may still be a fulcrum of these attacks on all of us, but nationalism and xenophobia are increasingly returning to the surface.

If the religious right has had successes in defining a disturbing new social policy, their economic perspective is also increasingly accepted by the newly-elected Congress. The left needs to propose its own answers to the difficult economic and social realities of our times. We need humor and analysis, resilience and resistance, as we organize to counter the religious right. ★

Julie Enszer
c/o Solidarity,
7012 Michigan Ave., MI 48210
Detroit,
fax (+1-313) 841 8884

France: the National Front and Women's Rights

by Arnaldo Castelleras

Mother, housewife, building-block of the nation. The female citizen of the 21st century seems to be threatened by an eruption of the values of the 1940s. Nostalgia for the 'national revolution' of the collaborationist Petain government during the Nazi occupation would be bad enough. But the resurgence of right-wing propaganda about the role of women in society is part of a thoroughly modern project, coherent in ideological, economic, social and political terms.

LEADING NATIONAL FRONT (FN) member Jacques Bompard recently signed his name (with that of his wife) to a 190 page thesis on the women question.

"The struggle for equality with men is, as far as the law is concerned, redundant. In many areas, women are in fact in an advantageous position compared to men... Legislation on the working week, and labour in general, benefits women, even if it is not always rigorously applied... In contrast, laws on the freedom to procreate and on the right to "enjoy" one's body not only verge on the ridiculous, but place the male partner in a severely disadvantaged position." This publication is an attempt to assemble a complete set of arguments for a counter-offensive on women's rights. Joan of Arc is invoked as an example and an

hopes will popularise their family programme are the "maternal income" - a state benefit for housewives - and "universal family suffrage" - one extra vote for each child- cast by the father for

Enough of the bad old days ! Lets talk about something else. Abortion, gays, the death penalty...



sons and the mother for daughters.

"In a rapidly evolving world, the debate on family policy demonstrates the archaic social system in France. The proponents of an liberty-killing moral order are trying to claim for themselves the right to manage the most private parts of the life of the individual... The family is the main vector of the re-conquest of French society by Catholics, traditionalists, Opus Dei members, and all those the other elements of the french far-right which trace their roots to the Counter-Revolution (Phillipe Brunnquel, *Les associations familiales, combien de divisions?*, Editions Dagorno, 1994)

It is interesting to note that, while the right to abortion and the subsidy of the

termination of pregnancy through the social security system remain key elements of the National Front programme, the far right is violently divided in its response to this question. Bruno Mégret (author of the "Universal Family Suffrage" bill rejected by parliament in 1992) and the GRECE fraction want to water down the National Front's position so that abortion "would not be a crime, but rather a regrettable private decision, which it would be better to avoid. Mégret and his team think that a brutal anti-abortion campaign could frighten the Front's traditional electorate, which is largely de-Christianised nowadays, and which is indifferent to most of the Pope's pronouncements. But if this watering down of policy goes ahead, the Catholic tendency around Bernard Antony and the *Présent* magazine will leave the Front and set up their own organisation." René Monzat, *Ras l'front* no.26, Jan.-Feb. 1995.

This struggle is not just an indication of a general struggle within the far right over its future identity. It is also a sign that the question of abortion, and of the role of women in society, will be a central element in the changing shape of the French right as a whole. After all, women are an electoral force, and the National Front is out to seduce them. (The traditionally male vote of the National Front is becoming more balanced between the sexes. In recent polls 15% of men and 13% of women sampled indicate their support for the Front)

While truly anti-women legislation is still far short of a parliamentary majority, the attacks on abortion rights, the debate on 'restoring the place of the family' on the maternal wage, are signs that social struggles of the coming years will be fought more and more on the field of women's rights. ★

Women and fundamentalism

inspiration for the call to arms of "all the women of the world". Well, not quite all, presumably, since the authors speak approvingly of "pioneer" eugenics theorist and champion of the gas chamber Alexis Carrel, for whom racial separation and the elimination of 'weaker elements' were essential to the progress of white humanity.

The National Front's propositions for the rebirth of France centre on the reconstruction of the family, and a massive return of women to the kitchen and the cradle. This would not only end the decline in the birth-rate of the Gallic component of the population, but it would "give back" half a million jobs to the boys. Of course, these are the 1990s, and even the women of the national front have won a certain 'citizenship' which makes it impossible for their leaders to propose anything too retrograde for the moment. Two magic wands which the far right

For more information

Les cahiers du féminisme (Feminist Notebooks) 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, socialist feminist bimonthly influenced by the same ideas as International Viewpoint. Of particular interest: Autumn 1990 (no.54) *L'extreme droite et les femmes*, Spring 1994 (no.67/68) *Famille, natalité, chômage*, and Autumn 1994 (no. 70) *Le pape contre les femmes*.

Ras l'front (Enough of the Front!) campaigning anti-fascist magazine, B.P. 87, 75561 Paris CEDEX 12. Of particular interest: *IVG: 20 ans apres, un anniversaire sous haute surveillance* (no.26, Jan.-Feb, 1995) and *Femmes, famille, fascisme* (no. 11, March 1993)

CADAC (Coordination centre of Associations for the Right to Abortion and Contraception), 12, rue Voltaire, 75011 Paris ★

Islamic fundamentalists and immigrant communities in France

WITH 800,000 ALGERIAN citizens living in France, and a much larger number of people more or less connected to Northern Africa by birth or descent, the serious situation in Algeria could hardly fail to have an impact on the Arab minority in France. Especially since Islamic fundamentalists have targeted the diaspora: source of finance, but also the conduit for "dissolute" morality, and European music, fashion and television.

by Suad B.

While the revolutionary left, and the workers' movement in general has only weak links to the North African immigrant communities in the suburbs of France, we have picked up enough signals to be sure that an Islamic fundamentalist campaign is under way. Islamic fundamentalist leaders hope to use those in Europe of moslem origin (Turks and Albanians in Germany and Switzerland, North African Berbers and Arabs in France and Spain, both groups in Belgium and Holland, Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis in Britain) as one of the bases of their activities. In a way their model is the key financial and logistic role played by the French Federation within the National Liberation Front (F.L.N.) during the Algerian war of independence. With the enormous difference that the F.L.N. was leading an anti-colonial revolution against French oppression, while the fundamentalists are leading a civil war against their own people, especially women, to replace Algeria's current military regime by a religious dictatorship.

As in Algeria, women are the main target of Islamic fundamentalists in France too. Traditional societies create favourable conditions for a whole range of prejudices and discriminations against women. To be sure, polygamy, forced marriage, marital rape, 'instant divorce' for men, or marital and parental violence against women, all existed in the immigrant milieu independently of Islamic fundamentalism. But urbanisation, contact with Western culture, television, the mass media, and the agitation and vociferousness of women have caused a decline in these practices in our communities. Or so it seemed.

Islamic fundamentalism wants to stop this evolution, and put women back where we were 1,400 years ago. This isn't a religious question: Islamic fundamentalism isn't some

ultra-strict branch of Islam, but the use of religion for ultra-reactionary political goals.

The evidence of an Islamic fundamentalist offensive is clear. Four schoolgirls were suspended in September 1989 for wearing headscarfs: the number of girls coming to school with their heads covered is now over 4,000. (Source: Ministry of Education). It isn't the holy spirit which has caused thousands of girls and women in this country to start covering themselves up. Nor are they really so enamoured with this symbol of their oppression, a symbol which generations of women and men struggled for their right to tear off. The return to the veil is the result of an organised Islamic fundamentalist campaign to win male recruits. The fundamentalists offer the most backward of our men the possibility to compensate for their humiliation as exploited workers and as immigrants by taking it out on women.

Some girls have proclaimed on television that they have freely chosen their veil. And for sure, by no means all these girls and women support the full fundamentalist programme for women. Some want to proclaim their identity, and their refusal of racism, in displaying themselves veiled. This doesn't stop the hijab (full veil) from being a fundamentalist uniform and a sign of intolerance. And it doesn't stop those who refuse the veil being attacked as whores.

Dozens, perhaps hundreds of associations more or less inspired by the fundamentalists are now active in most areas of community and civic organisation. To a certain extent, they fill the gap abandoned or neglected by the public sector, and left open by the trades unions and the left wing. In Lille, Northern France, veiled women distribute plates of the North African dish couscous (meat and vegetable stew with steamed semolina) to the homeless. In La Rochelle, posters call for regular, fair distribution of food for the poor (and for the criminalisation of alcohol and

tobacco). Youth clubs, summer holiday camps, literacy courses, school support, cleaning the streets of drug dealers, maintenance of places of worship, so many vacuums left open for the fundamentalists to fill.

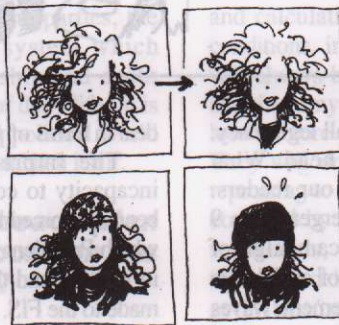
The hijack of an Air France plane during the Christmas holidays was not just a signal to the French state (with whom, presumably, regular contacts have long been in existence), but more a message to French society and to Arab immigrants here. By humiliating the French authorities, the GIA presumably hoped to generate a feeling of vengeance among immigrants, and to further provoke the excesses of anti-Arab racism among the wider population.

What do do?

Young people in the 'worst' parts of town regularly explode in anger against the economic situation which condemns them to marginalisation, and to the racism which festers in society. Hardly a week goes by without a young man dying a violent death in suspicious circumstances. His (white) killers - police, shopkeepers, whoever, claim self-defence. Once in a while they may be right. But what is certain is that there are no longer any groups of lawyers and 'personalities' which can help the families and mates of those who die violent deaths establish the truth.

For sure, the explosions of anger in the suburbs rarely take the best path for meeting the needs of those involved. But what is important to ask ourselves is what can we do to develop this anger in another direction than the burning of cars by teenage joy-riders? In 1994 the L.C.R. was very active in protests after the suspicious death of a young man in police custody. But only because this all took place in the 18th district of Paris, rather than in a small town. Obviously, the far left does not have the forces to be present everywhere. But the decline of the trades unions in the traditional sectors of the economy where so many immigrants worked have made our implantation in these milieu even weaker than 20 years ago.

And yet we see before us that a small number of young men, and a larger number of young women in these Arab districts are increasingly aware of the need to do something to protest against the grim future pressing down on them. These young people are those most at risk from the double-headed enemy of Islamic fundamentalism and French racism. We have to help them mobilise themselves in the high schools and in the districts they live in. Are we ready to make this a priority? ★



Caught between two devils

by Arnaldo Castelleras

Between the repressive regime of the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the growing Islamic fundamentalist movement, ordinary Algerians are frightened and powerless.

Small groups of democrats, socialists, feminists and defenders of the Berber ethnic minority wage a heroic struggle, which needs our full solidarity.

Sonia Leith spoke to Nejib Abdou, Member of the Leadership of the Socialist Workers' Party (PST)

International Viewpoint: What went wrong in Algeria?

Nejib Abdou: The one-party regime of the National Liberation Front (FLN) is totally discredited. For the country's leaders, all methods are justified in the struggle to preserve the enormous privileges they acquired during the 'socialist' period following decolonisation.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the FLN regime tried to manage the political and social crisis by bringing the democratic opposition and the Islamic parties onto 'the non-violent' territory of a multi-party system. They desperately wanted to by-pass the social radicalisation brewing in the working-class districts and the factories, which had sparked off a wave of unrest in 1988.

The craving for a new alternative to the regime, which would reestablish the dignity of the working classes, resolve the enormous frustrations experienced by most young people, and give some answers to the growing economic difficulties and to the real moral crisis very quickly created a base for the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

Passive management of the crisis was no longer enough for the regime. The FIS was no longer 'just' possible, no longer 'just' visible everywhere. It had become an immediate and concrete alternative to a

Literacy campaign in Algeria



regime in crisis and lacking all legitimacy. The crisis had come to a head. What followed is better known to our readers: declaration of a state of emergency on 9 February 1992, a massive campaign of repression, the development of an Islamic fundamentalist guerrilla movement, waves of assassinations, and the terror and hopelessness you can imagine.

And today?

After the widescale arrests of Muslims, the regime has started operations against the guerrillas in the most uncontrolled regions. A reinforced offensive by a military team sent by the French government and supported by an army with improved anti-guerrilla techniques has started to inflict damage on the underground movements. For a long time the guerrillas increased the number of assassinations, the sabotage of the infrastructure and ambushes on the Police and army patrols which gave the impression of a strong guerrilla force that was everywhere and of maintaining the initiative in the political and military arena, leading the population and democratic movements to ask themselves how such ease of action is possible. Beyond all speculation the FIS and the Army of the Islamic Group (GIA) guerrillas have created fear, making insecurity widespread and gaining a great

deal in terms of psychological headway.

The impression of the regime's incapacity to confront the integristas has been reinforced by the political dialogue in which President Liamine Zeroual took part in 1994 and the various concessions he made to the FIS.

After the November 1994 discussions, Zeroual and the army seemed to participate in a policy of eradicating resistance movements accompanied by massive repression in the Islamic areas. The damage has been enormous, the Algerian press talks of more than 20 000 dead and 2 billion dinars worth of damage.

Having given an impression of divisions, hidden conflicts within the army and continuing vacillation, the regime with Zeroual seem to be rallying its forces and giving a more homogenous image.

And the Fundamentalists?

With no chance of winning on military grounds, the armed Fundamentalists are going in for spectacular actions, particularly in the towns. Certain FIS leaders have already realised the need for a single-minded army for any seizure of power and is therefore speaking respectfully of the army.

This means that the army envisages more a political treatment of Islamism and the FIS in the future but on the condition of a liquidation of the whole underground



of the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) and GIA who are affiliated to the FIS. The army must also win against the Islamist underground in order to make the presidential elections fixed for July 1995 credible.

Such evolution clearly brings with it, through pressure from armed Islamism and beyond FIS' encounter with power, a long-lasting tough line from the state. The dictatorship, sundered by the events of October 1988, has reorganised and embedded itself in all aspects of social life. It is not only about repression and exclusive and authoritative legislation, it is also about the fear to speak, to act and it is clearly about political mistrust of the policies put forward by the parties, the obsessive fear of the system which legitimises the dictatorship and death which has become a part of daily life - it is in this psychological and political world that the dictatorship will establish itself.

Does the Rome peace plan mean that the opposition has taken the initiative?

For a peace plan based on the end of confrontations between the fundamentalists and the army to be credible the FIS must control the underground and the urban terrorist groups making it possible for them to call a truce and justify dialogue with the regime. The main argument of the GIA and armed groups comes down to a refusal to enter into any kind of dialogue or make any compromise with the regime. If discussions between the opposition and the FIS are to take place, it is also necessary for the army to finally put an end to ferocious repression, accepting the relegalisation of the FIS and acknowledging to its troops, officers and the parents of victims, the need for a peace with the FIS.

The dictatorship's omnipresence must also give way to force of law and democratic liberties must seriously come to the forefront again.

In fact, I believe that this scenario is difficult to envisage at the moment and that the credibility of those involved has been tainted with blood. The violence is widespread and those responsible must be

brought to book. The army can not work with the SIA guerrillas and their eradication is a question of survival. Their radical speeches, especially those of Benhadj, do not produce confidence in the FIS and represent a threat to its interests.

The FIS also poses problems. Whether the end of the electoral process and its militants' uncivilised repression can justify its frustrations and radicalism - its profile is also made up of assassinations, collective crime, intolerable violence committed in its name and organised by its militants. And if you continue to look at the FIS politically you must not forget that its political radicalism rests on the profound social crisis, but poorly conceals an authoritarian and retrograde socio-political plan, in which religion is not only an ideology.

To sum up, the Rome Initiative³ could defuse the situation if the regime, under international pressure, accepts negotiation with the opposition on a less precarious basis than before. At the moment it is unthinkable. But the actions and calculations, the blackmail and the conditions, in a violent or political form, will always be the way in which Zeroual and the army will ensure that they do not lose the core of what they are trying to do. They will drag things out, but carry on repressing to the full. The fundamentalists, cornered by the army's offensive in the scrublands, will withdraw towards the towns and increase their spectacular activities which induce terror and psychological shock.

The transition will be maintained within an intolerable circle of violence but to a tired population of exhausted guerrillas and a fragile army it is necessary to add important economic stakes which will doubtlessly impose a political truce and a false social peace.

What is the situation of the democratic movement today?

The mobilisation and spectacular battles fought by women and women's groups in 1990-1991 were courageous and anticipated what would become of the FIS and its political plans. Fighting the battle alone, they were not taken seriously especially in the representative democratic parties like the FFS or the mediatory parties like the RCD where the weighing-up of political risks are dominant. The Marxist left was more active and visible but its influence was limited.

The democratic movement today is the Cultural Berber Movement (MCB). The mobilisation around the Berbers' claims in Kabylie reactivated the militant energy

which has lain dormant for two years, dismantling the wall of pessimism which affected all sectors of society. The MCB knew how to prove that they could still fight, reorganise themselves on a massive scale, react to the omnipresence of the regime in an efficient fashion and go beyond the terror that had been instilled in them. The MCB have also had great moments of mobilisation which have really influenced political course of events. It not only symbolised the determination in claiming identity, but especially as the democratic guardian against 'rampant Islamist fascism'.

The democratic movement, which is above all a dynamic movement in which democratic parties, left-wing parties, trade unionists, MCB militants, intellectuals etc are together involved in the battle for the right for survival, for wider freedoms, against repression and torture, for the Algerian peoples' right to an identity, against the payment of debt and imperialist pressure, for constituency pressure and for proportional pressure etc. These are the many themes and claims which underlie the basis of the democratic outlook. But the weaknesses of democratic force are enormous and the journey will be very long.

What can the Marxist left do?

The political alliances dreamt up around the Rome initiative are 'high risk'. I mean that they could shift the currently blocked balance of forces, or force a change in the behaviour of the power or the army, but they are absolutely inadequate in terms of the democratic struggle. What is essential for us is encouraging the autonomous expression of the masses in its organised forms. This means building round the Berber movement, women's associations and the trade unions, to create an active pole in the democratic struggles. The goal of this pole is not to develop a 'democracy' which allows the current regime to restructure and re-legitimise itself, but to develop a real democracy, which would be the framework for the dissolution of the current regime. The democratic pole we would create should put pressure on those existing democratic parties which support the army, or have a loose alliance with the fundamentalists, to detach themselves!

This democratic pole should also recognise the social disarray and mass uncertainty in society, in the face of an unpopular International Monetary Fund (IMF) plan for Algeria. ★

Alliance with democratic right against the Diouf regime

The democratic opposition to the corrupt "Socialist Party" regime of president Abdou Diouf will contest the November 1995 municipal elections as a common front - "Together to Change Senegal."

Badara Ndiaye explains why the African Party for Democracy and Socialism (PADS) is participating in the alliance. He also outlines the challenges facing the radical anti-capitalist left in the struggle for democracy and against the implementation of the IMF-backed structural readjustment plan for Senegal.

International Viewpoint: President Diouf liberated opposition leaders Landing Savané (PADS) and Abdoulaye Wade of the liberal right Democratic Party (PDS) in February 1994, following international protests. What has happened since?

Badara Ndiaye: The 'majority' presidential block in parliament has been widened to include the Democratic League (LD, a splinter of the PDS) and the Labour and Independence Party (PIT, former Communist Party). None of the other promised reforms have been implemented. The political situation is so clearly blocked that a majority of the population supports the PADS initiative of calling for the creation of a kind of constituent assembly. This "National Conference" would create a duality of power at the institutional level, and which could be the basis of new, legitimised politics.

The French government is pressing president Diouf to integrate the PDS liberal right opposition into the parliamentary game by appointing commissions which would prepare a government of national unity¹. This way, Diouf could avoid recognising a national conference of the type PADS is proposing. The pressure on the opposition, including the PADS, to accept some vague national consultation will grow enormously in the coming months. International capital is desperate to find a way to continue making profits without visibly supporting dictators, and France would see an anti-imperialist break in Senegal as a clear defeat.

The opposition is divided in its attitude to the national conference. PDS

leader Abdoulaye Wade and the rest of the liberal right would like to institute a more honest management of the state. The PADS and the Movement for Socialism and Unity (MSU) want to use the conference to generate a radical break with the present system and challenge the structural adjustment plan imposed by the World Bank.

You have formed an electoral alliance with the PDS and MSU. Why?

We have no common strategic point with the liberal right, beyond the struggle for democracy. This is the sense of our common slogan, "together to change Senegal." But this alliance allows us to reach out to thousands of people who want to see Diouf go.

Obviously, the differences in this alliance will become more important one day. In the meantime, we try to reinforce the left inside the alliance. We have even begun unification negotiations with the Movement for Socialism and Unity (MSU). This self-management oriented current strongly promotes African unity, and stresses the need to organise a continental conference for change. Some PADS militants think that a unification congress, held soon, could have enormous political consequences.

Participation in elections is a new challenge for the left, in a country where seven out of ten adults are illiterate. In the trade unions, the left has been pushing for the rejection of the World Bank and IMF-imposed policies. But in the political sphere, the population is fairly reticent about the possibilities of change. There were urban riots in 1988, when Wade and the other opposition leaders were arrested, but this unrest was channelled and controlled by the regime. The PDS entered the 'Socialist Party'

government in 1990. Its not surprising that people are sceptic about the possibilities of change.

And the PADS itself?

The PADS was born only one year before Senegal's last presidential elections in 1993. The founding

Illiteracy in Senegal

Age	Women	Men
15-19	70	49
20-29	77	57
30-39	82	61
40-49	93	72
50-59	96	78
60+	97	83
Total	82	63

Source: Ministry of Literacy, 1993

manifesto of the party clearly presents socialism as an alternative to the existing order. But it also stresses the importance of the struggle for reforms, such as the abolition of foreign debt. Our disappointing score in the 1993 elections (2.95%) did not reflect our implantation in several important sectors of the working class, including the health service, the post office, and telecommunications. We now have between 15,000 and 20,000 members, and a significant capacity for mass mobilisations on specific issues.

Our aim is to maintain the alliance with the PDS and MSU until the November 1995 municipal elections, and to present a strong opposition to the Socialist Party. Although our party was only recently created, we already have a

certain credibility, and most of the important political initiatives in the country are generated by us. PADS leaders have never collaborated with the Diouf regime, which gives them a certain credibility.

The PADS is the result of the fusion of four organisations in 1991. The largest was the Maoist group And Jéf. The Senegalese section of the Fourth International, the Organisation socialiste des travailleurs (Socialist Organisation of Workers - OST) was another of the constituent elements of the new party.

Our central demand is that Abdou Diouf must go - by the ballot box or by the will of the streets, and that we must present an alternative programme for the country's development. Beyond this, there is a considerable diversity of views in side the party. Some members think we will always have to work with the IMF and World Bank, others say we must get rid of them. A minority of our members think we should repay the existing foreign debt. The majority, including the entire trade union leadership, think Senegal should refuse to pay, and that we should leave the French-controlled CFA currency zone. If we came to power, the exact policy would obviously depend on the balance of forces at that time. For the moment, the stress we put on the rejection of the IMF and WB plans reflects our base in those sectors of society which are most implicated in the opposition to the structural adjustment programme - the unions, youth organisations, and community groups.

Most PADS militants come from the Maoist current. This affects their view on the kind of party we should build. But there is general agreement on the needs to fight in the trades unions against the structural adjustment plan of the regime and its consequences, to organise students at the secondary and university level to fight for autonomy from the regime and to create independent, recognised student unions.

In practice, the various currents in the party, including the OST (Fourth International) develop and defend their own positions both inside and outside the party. The different currents are represented on the Internal pluralism is an important part of the PADS statute. The question of external activities is still under debate. ★

1) If the 1993 elections had not been manipulated by Diouf, the PDS would have won a majority nationwide, not just in Dakar.

Campaign to Abolish Third World Debt

Badara Ndiaye is the author of a comprehensive French-language brochure on Senegal and the International Monetary Fund, published in French last month by the Belgian organisations GRESA and CADTM (Committee to Abolish Third World Debt).

To order send 50 FFfr or equivalent to

CADTM, 29 rue Plantin, 1070 Brussels, Belgium, or La Breche, 9 rue de Tunis, 75011 Paris, France, tel. (33) 1/43 67 63 57, fax: (33) 1/43 79 29 61

Cuba International Solidarity Meeting

More than 2,700 delegates from 108 different countries met in Havana from 21 to 25 November 1994. Delegates from parties in power included the ANC of South Africa, the Mozambican Frelimo, the Angolan MPLA, the Vietnamese, North Korean and Chinese Communist Parties).

Most of the left wing forces of Latin America were present, including C. Cardenas and Rosario Ibarra from Mexico, the controlling body of El Salvador's FMLN (without Villabos), Daniel Ortega from the FSLN and a representative of the Workers' Party (PT) from Brazil).

European delegates included representatives of the French Communist Party, the Italian Party of Communist Reformation, United Left (Spanish state), the Portuguese Communist Party, the PDS (Germany) and the Fourth International. The European Social Democratic or Labor parties and the Greens were absent.

The sizeable delegation of North American solidarity was led by the black preacher, Lucius Walker, who organised the drive with several peace caravans to the island, braving the blockade decreed by his country.

This meeting took place at a time when although the living conditions for the Cuban population had improved a little, the situation was still critical. The reintroduction of a peasant free market after the crisis of 'balseros' in August has brought back onto the market certain basic necessities which previously, like dollars, could not be found. Since then the frantic search for greenbacks has diminished, and the dollar has lost its value. On the black market, the American dollar's exchange rate was 85 pesos in December 1993 as opposed to 120 pesos in August 1994 (at the worst moment of the crisis), its rate having been established at 40 pesos in early 1994. With the 'liberta' (the ration card), families can provide the basics for about a week. For the rest of the time they have to manage by buying on the market with pesos or dollars. Pensioners receive between 90 and 130 pesos a month, the majority of wage earners receive between 180 and 350 a month. On the free market the prices are very high: 40 pesos for a kilo of rice, 45 pesos for a kilo of pork. In January 1995 there was a vigorous introduction of new taxes which shocked Cubans who had not paid them since the revolution.

Monetary reform is predicted which ought to allow a new parity to be established with the dollar. On the international scale the situation has cooled a little. At the end of October 1994, the General Assembly of the UN once again condemned the blockade implemented by the USA against Cuba. 101 countries voted in condemnation of the blockade, whilst only two countries, the USA and Israel, voted against the resolution. The USA invited all the American states and Miami to a meeting in December 1994. They excluded Cuba, but did not manage to obtain a condemnation of the Castro regime from the conference.

In these contrasting circumstances, activities of solidarity in favour of lifting the blockade against Cuba are of great importance. ★

Mexico

Stop the war! Zedillo Resign !

by **Ulises Martínez**

by On 9 February the Mexican government broke its fragile truce with the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). Half the soldiers in the Mexican army were deployed in a military and police attempt to wipe out the Zapatista leaders. By 11 February, the government of Ernesto Zedillo had authorised an indiscriminate bombing of the civilian population in the Lacandona forest region where the EZLN is based.

A handwritten press release by the EZLN military command, smuggled out of the combat zone on 12 February, reports that, since midday on 10 February, "four helicopters bombard the Morelia and La Carrucha regions, and direct machine gun fire at the entire zone under Zapatista control... So far, we have done all we can to withdraw without fighting [to save the civilian population]"

The government's justification for breaking a truce respected by the other side, and their fakes astonishment at the discovery of supposed EZLN arms caches across Mexico verge on the ridiculous. As National Democratic Convention president Rosario Ibarra told the magazine *Proceso*, "for one year, they have negotiated with armed rebels, and now they are suddenly surprised to discover arms." And the existence of the Zapatistas in other zones of the country was public knowledge from the start, even though open conflict had been confined to Chiapas state.

It was clear to some of us that the government was preparing this new hard line even while negotiations were continuing. It should have been clear to everyone on 8 December, when President Zedillo participated in the inauguration of Eduardo Robelo, PRI candidate in the falsified state elections in Chiapas state. The EZLN had already called this step a tacit declaration of war.

And although the economic crisis of December-January obliged the government to calm the political situation for a while, it now returns reinforced by its foreign loans, to reestablish itself politically, including over the Chiapas conflict. But as a result of that economic crisis, the government is weaker and more vulnerable to all kinds of pressures than even two months ago. It seems clear that one of the pressures towards a military 'solution' of the Chiapas conflict comes from international financial circles. Already on 13 January a representative of Chase Manhattan Bank told journalists that the Mexican regime would have to "eliminate" the Zapatista rebellion as a proof that it was in charge of

the entire territory. The United States government is another of the pro-war factors in the government camp: as the New York Times points out, the discovery of the EZLN arms caches across Mexico and the alleged identification of Marcos as one Rafael Guillen could only have come about through U.S. secret service cooperation with their



Mexican counterparts. And according to the Washington correspondent of Mexico's *El Financero* newspaper, "sources close to the U.S. security forces claim that the order to arrest the Zapatista leaders are the result of an 'ultimatum' to president Zedillo from the U.S. armed forces command.

The Mexican leader relies much more on the military than on the other institutions of the state. But a military coup is unlikely in the current international context, where the imperialist powers prefer to see countries ruled by the regular institutions of bourgeois democracy. What seems more likely is a repetition of developments in Peru. Zedillo has effectively charged the army with 'solving' what is the country's most pressing social and political problem, and given the generals complete freedom of action. The parliament is relegated to a back seat, and the traditional supporters of the regime: the apparatus of the ruling P.R.I. party, the peasants' associations and trades unions are out in the cold.

All this suggests that the new hard line will not just be applied to the Zapatistas in Chiapas, but to the democratic opposition as a whole. Leaders of a range of civic associations have already been arrested as supposed Zapatistas: their organisations' offices have been raided, police surveillance of militants in a range of social movements has been intensified and so on. There have even been attempts to tar the bishop of St.

Cristobal, Samuel Ruiz, as a militant of the EZLN, rather than the honest negotiator and friend of the Maya Indians which he is.

Meanwhile, the Zapatistas evaporated before the advancing soldiers without the slightest difficulty. The regime desperately claims that it is winning a total victory, whereas, once again, the Zapatistas have demonstrated their superior tactics and impressive preparations for the expected government invasion.

In Mexico City, over 100,000 persons demonstrated against the government invasion on 11 February. Chanting "we are all Marcos," they demanded an end to the war, the immediate liberation of all detainees, and a government commitment to a peaceful negotiated solution which would respect democracy, justice and the dignity of ordinary Mexicans.

The wide range of speakers at the demonstration suggests that the inept government intervention has in fact galvanized civic society and the opposition currents, rather than split it into "militants" and "moderates".

The road to this kind of united action has been a long one. A fragile kind of unity was achieved at the third assembly of the EZLN-sponsored National Democratic Convention (CND) on 5 February 1995. But while a clear majority supported the call for a National Liberation Movement (MLN), the conference revealed the existence of two tendencies: a majority of delegates, including those closest to the EZLN, supported a motion limiting the common platform to the democratic struggle against the Party-state, for liberty and justice. The purpose of such a platform is to allow the widest possible pluralist movement, including political and social forces of the centre-ground. A minority inside the CND argued for a working-class based alliance, uniting proletarian social sectors, the other oppressed groups, and those political forces which clearly identify themselves with the struggle of the oppressed.

The military intervention on February 9th pushed this divergence into the background for the time-being, as all of us are now trying to establish the maximum unity around the demand to end the war. From one of a list of secondary demands, the call for the resignation of president Zedillo has become the number one slogan of the movement. This is the best strategy to assure a radical change in the way the country is run.

For those outside Mexico, the 11 February demonstrations outside Mexican Embassies and Consulates in Buenos Aires, San Francisco, Madrid and Paris should be the inspiration to further activities! ★

Chiapas amnesty? Who should judge whom?

Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, President of the National Democratic Convention (CND) gave the following speech at a demonstration in Zocalo on 15 February 1995

THE PRI GOVERNMENT HAS brought the nation to the edge of civil war. If war has not broken out, with all that war would mean in terms of suffering, it is, once again, thanks to the prudence and wisdom of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). By withdrawing into the depths of the Lacandona forest, away from the civilian population, the EZLN saved the nation from the bloodbath which the system wanted to impose, on Clinton's orders.

Even this did not save the population from bombardments and massacres organised by the government, and hidden behind a disinformation campaign. But imagine how bad things would have been if the Zapatistas had not acted as they did.

And yet, the EZLN was not short of justifications for a military response to President Zedillo's offensive.

Faced with the failure of their maneuvers, and the general condemnation of their actions by the majority of Mexicans and by many people abroad, Zedillo and his strategists are forced to adapt their position. The resignation of the puppet governor of Chiapas state, Robelo Rincon, or the suspension of military aggression show that the regime is conscious of its need for a better image.

But their essential goal remains the same: to get rid of the EZLN, especially Marcos, and to strike heavily at all those sections of civil society which are no longer prepared to submit to this political system.

So, rather than calming the situation of confrontation, the appeal recently launched by Rincon is nothing less than an exhortation for the lynching of Amado Avendaño (the popular candidate for Chiapas governor), bishop Samuel Ruiz (see page XXX) and all the Council of the rebellion. Rincon's appeal was well understood by the landowners and their thugs - with their considerable arsenal of weaponry. Threats are multiplying, as the landowners prepare to take back what they have always claimed for themselves - the land which is the heritage of the Indians.

And as for the amnesty offered by the government, it is a policy of extermination disguised in a lamb's skin! From the beginning of the conflict the Zapatistas have said that they did not take arms so that they could be amnestied one day. Amnesty is nothing less than a capitulation. The regime knows that the Zapatistas cannot accept the amnesty: which is precisely why they have proposed it. What Zedillo really expects from the amnesty proposal is twofold: firstly, that the military encirclement of the Lacandona forest will starve the Zapatistas into accepting the capitulation/amnesty; or secondly that the amnesty offer will weaken support for the Zapatistas in civil society, weaken civil society itself, and allow the regime to make another frontal attack when they judge the moment to be ripe.

But yet again, Zedillo's strategists are wrong! First of all, they have still not realised what stuff the Zapatistas are made of. Despite months of evidence to the contrary, Zedillo still thinks he is faced with people shaped by the Mexican regime's system of domination, and ready to bend at the slightest threat. And secondly, Zedillo has underestimated the maturity of society, which has learned from the blows, deceptions and surprises of the regime, and which today occupies a public space which it will not abandon just because the regime offers another new illusion.

The farce will soon be crowned by asking our parliamentarians to approve the 'amnesty'. What on earth are we asking to be pardoned

for? And who is supposed to pardon us? The PRI, with its crimes and assassinations? the PAN (National Action Party - right wing opposition) which has thrown away its proud tradition to prop up its 'rival'? No!. We call on the PRD and PT deputies (Revolutionary Democratic Party and Workers' Party - left wing opposition in parliament) to vote against this amnesty designed as a new tactic in the war, and to do the impossible to prevent the vote from taking place!

It is civil society which should impose a solution to the current crisis, based on the following points:

★ The army should leave Chiapas, and stop acting as the armed servants of the landlords against the Indians. This is the only way to stop the massacres already under way and prevent the still greater massacres being prepared.

★ Recognise that the majority of the people of Chiapas have chosen Amado Avendaño as governor. Without this, how can we talk about peace?

★ Reaffirm the mediation role played by Bishop Samuel Ruiz and the National Mediation Commission (CONAI). Stop the lynching campaign against the mediators!

★ Stop state terrorism (the only real terrorism in Mexico today). Stop condemning books, records and posters as 'subversive propaganda' as if they were grenades and rifles. We demand the immediate and unconditional liberation of existing and new political prisoners, and the cancellation of the arrest warrants issued recently. We demand the punishment of the torturers, and in particular the suppression of the super secretariat of repression created under president Salinas de Gortari and directed by Arsinio Farell Cubillas.

★ There is one more logical demand to crown all of this: the government should recognise the EZLN. They are not faced with terrorists or delinquents, but with the best elements of the Mexican people. The EZLN is a political organisation which took up arms to create a new political system, in a climate of intolerance created by the state. The Zapatistas took arms in order to make arms redundant. Not just their own arms, but all arms.

Maybe the Zedillo government will have the sense to abandon its current policy in this conflict. We hope so! In any case, the National Democratic Convention (CND) calls on the Mexican people to build a wide social movement to force Zedillo to resign. We can no longer be content to live at the mercy of an oligarchy which defines public policy in terms of its own narrow partial interests. We must put an end to the system of domination in this country, based on fraud, corporatism, corruption and illegitimate power. Enough of the neo-liberal policies which have plunged the majority of Mexicans into misery! Enough of the neo-liberalism which has concentrated in the hands of 24 families the essential wealth of the entire nation! Enough of a system which has put the earth on sale instead of the fruits of the earth, and which is preparing to fritter away our oil riches!

★ Zedillo, resign!

★ Viva the EZLN! you are not alone!

★ Zedillo means war, we want peace!

★ Troops out of Chiapas!

★ Viva Mexico! ★

New growth in worker

For the third time in thirty years, sections of the left have joined a 'national alliance' government as junior partners. But as our Colombo correspondent Vickramabahu ('Bahu') Karunaratne argues, the possibilities of these junior partners to introduce reforms are even more limited than in 1964 and 1970.

An explosion of popular unrest can therefore be expected sooner or later. One factor stopping the government using its cross-class credentials to calm the situation is the Trotskyist New Sama Samaja Party. The NSSP is trying to combine mass action outside parliament with regrouping of those left deputies who recognise the dead-end of the current government's programme. But as the NSSP argued in the August 1994 elections, any left regrouping must be based on a rejection of privatisation, and opposition to the conditions imposed on the island by the World Bank and IMF.

"Bahu" Karunaratne is a leading member of the New Sama Samaja Party (NSSP)

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga heads a 'People's Alliance' government, which swept to power in 1994 after 17 years of right wing rule by the United National Party (UNP).

Of course, the UNP only won the 1977 election because of popular rejection of a coalition government dominated by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). That government was led by Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, Prime Minister in the new government and mother of the current President. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Sri Lankan Communist Party (CP) held several portfolios in the cabinet, and claimed to be politically directing the coalition. In reality, they were junior partners, invited in to protect the regime from attacks from the workers. They took a leading role in the repression of the 1971 insurrection of the educated element of rural Sinhala youth, led by the People's Liberation Front (JVP).

As soon as they resisted government attempts to compromise with multinationals and institutional lenders, Sirima threw them out of the government. In new elections in 1977, the LSSP and CP could not present a credible and viable alternative to the right wing United National Party campaign. Having been capitalist strike breakers for over five years, LSSP and CP leaders had lost the trust of the working class.

The UNP campaigned on the need to "go beyond Marxism" and build "democratic socialism." Once elected, they reversed most of the radical reforms initiated by the previous

government. They gave foreign "robber barons" a free hand to set up in Sri Lanka and make massive profits.

The first national resistance to this reactionary path came with the general strike of 1980. Unfortunately, the NSSP was the only left party to appreciate the political implications of this strike. The JVP openly disassociated themselves from the strike, which they labelled "opportunist-led".

The UNP government used this situation to smash the worker's movement. Trade Union leaders were arrested under emergency powers, and union offices closed. Over 100,000 workers were sacked, across the public and private sectors. The government retook the initiative. In 1989, J.R. Jayawardhane profited from the rise of petty bourgeois chauvinism to proscribe the NSSP, JVP and CP. Merciless repression was launched in the North and South of the country.

The moderate left opposition was not inactive during this period. Ms. Chandrika, with her left wing history, was able to refurbish the image of the SLFP, and rebuild its image in the eyes of the left-leaning masses. She hoped to put her party at the centre of a broad left coalition, as her mother had done years earlier.

But things were different than in 1970. The New Sama Samaja Party (Sri Lankan Section of the Fourth International) now stood in the way. We were always prepared to participate in common struggles and campaigns with the SLFP against the reactionary UNP regime, but we refused to formalise a political alliance, and we contested all elections separately, putting forward our

own political positions. We called for the creation of a block of workers' parties, with a left programme, as an alternative to the capitalist parties.

Of course, this is not incompatible with the creation of strong bonds between rank and file militants of the NSSP and SLFP. Everybody could see that those comrades who were arrested for leading mass struggles came from both parties.

So the only way to form a coalition was to vilify the leadership of the NSSP. The pro SLFP weekend papers *Yukthiya* and *Ravaya* were a regular outlet for this systematic campaign. While Chandrika failed to drag the NSSP into a coalition, she did win over a part of the party, under the leadership of Vasudeva Nanayakkara ('Vasu'), who agreed to form a "People's Alliance" coalition with the SLFP, LSSP and CP.

District level elections in Sri Lanka are contested on the basis of proportional representation, with extra seats in parliament for the party winning most district seats. The Peoples Alliance claimed that this made it necessary to stand a single opposition candidate in each district, to ensure that the left majority on the district level translated into a national majority even if the UNP was the largest single party. In fact, this argument was only employed against leftist candidates outside the Peoples Alliance. A number of right wing or national minority groups also stood independently, but National Alliance leaders claimed this was a positive means to break votes from the UNP and the main nationalist parties.

In fact, the People's Alliance was more than a coalition. From the moment of its inception it had a separate political identity and its own programme and leadership. Sirima Bandaranaike was appointed Alliance leader, with a notorious Sinhala chauvinist MP from the SLFP to act as coordinating secretary. The programme presented by the Peoples Alliance was so right wing that the UNP seriously accused the Bandaranaiques of having stolen a draft of the UNP programme and printed it more quickly!

It seems that the masses were itching for a chance to unite in a campaign against the UNP. The new generation was relatively unaware of the debacle of the 'left' coalition of 1970. And older workers were swayed by the pro-Chandrika positions of the LSSP, CP and the Vasa group. "Chandrika can be trusted to be uncompromising with the UNP," many left-wing activists argued. "Her victory would mean a real change."

The wave of popular support for Chandrika started in the urban working class, and quickly spread to the Sinhala-speaking rural areas, but not so much to the estate areas or among members of ethnic and religious minorities.

While Chandrika Bandaranaike did not make as many promises as her mother Sirimao in 1970, her campaign has left a lot of promises that she will not be inclined to keep. Ordinary people still expect that she will

- ★ stop the war, by giving substantial autonomy to Tamils in the North and East

- ★ restore civil and human rights

- ★ call a constituent assembly and replace the presidential system with a democratic parliamentary constitution

- ★ clean the state apparatus of the stench of torture, murder, 'disappearances' and bribery

- ★ control the process of privatisation

- ★ regulate the activities of the transnational corporations, and imperialist agents like the Voice of America radio station.

The minority of workers who did not expect Chandrika to go this far put their efforts into building mass organisations that could continue agitation even after the elections. As a result, the expressions of unrest after the elections were so strong that even curfews and intimidations could not stop them.

In the run-up to the elections, the NSSP proposed to regroup independent

left tendencies across Sri Lanka in an electoral front. We argued for a common basic programme rejecting privatisation, opposing the conditions put on the country by the IMF and World Bank, and opposing the authoritarian presidential constitution. Any left bloc, we argued, must propose autonomy for a Tamil homeland in the North East of the island. Unfortunately, even the JVP was not interested in our proposal. In fact they hoped to gain more power by campaigning alone, and intended to make a bid for legality. As a result, separate lists of candidates were presented by the NSSP, JVP, and a number of independent left groups, including the Up Country People's Front.

The NSSP presented candidates in Colombo and Vavuriya constituencies. In several more places, we supported SVP comrades who had a chance to be elected. Where the independent left did not put forward a viable alternative, we campaigned for the election of left candidates from the PA list.

The election showed the potential for independent left representation: the SVP and the Up Country People's Front both gained one seat in parliament.

The assassination of UNP candidate Gamini Dissanayake¹ by Tamil separatists transformed the presidential election. The 'Tamil Tigers' presumably hoped to provoke Sinhala chauvinist attacks, which would push Tamils in the Sinhala areas to support the separatist cause. If so, they were let down. The assassination destroyed the Sinhala chauvinist project, and increased pressure for a viable solution to the Tamil question.

The capitalist class knew that they had no alternative to a Chandrika victory. Hence, all their efforts were directed towards consolidating the right wing within the PA. This right wing sought to place themselves in all important ministries. The two left parties in the coalition, the LSSP and CP, hold much less important positions than they did in the 1964 and 1970 coalition governments. On both those occasions, they pushed through radical reforms, and strengthened the illusion among the people that there is a reformist, parliamentary strategy powerful enough to eliminate the power of capitalism. But as was shown in 1975, to be the surgeon of capitalism is not the same as being its grave-digger. In any case, the LSSP and CP are clearly tail-ending the pro-capitalist parties in the current coalition.

The working class is ready to push for reforms. The NSSP slogan "Defeat the World Bank Dictates: Implement the pledges given to the people" became popular almost instantly. The UNP has retaliated with their own slogan; "Defend the open economy and implement the pledges given". The pledges they are so concerned about are those given to leading capitalists by Chandrika before the elections.

The UNP is not yet supporting any open campaigns against the PA government. But they are very busy consolidating the right-wing programme inside the government. UNP leaders hope to prune the PA programme of its support for Tamil autonomy and constitutional reform. In the meantime he is assuring tactical support for the PA, and trying to neutralise the commissions established to investigate corruption, disappearances and torture under the previous UNP government, of which he was prime minister. The UNP leaders understand that, if they provoke the masses, they will unify the forces to their left, and so they are very cautious for the moment. UNP members have been warned against associating themselves with workers' struggles, or campaigning against rising prices.

Political uncertainty and the tug of war within the political elite has created a space for the freedom of expression and public agitation. Trade Union membership is growing. Public discussions and campaigns attract a growing public.

The 'left' in the government is obliged to criticise the rightward policies of the Chandrika leadership. The government as a whole may even start to zig-zag left and right to absorb all these tensions, before gaining enough strength to break to the right. As for the left, it will have to leave the government under such circumstances.

The NSSP hopes to bring together the left forces within and outside the government into a block representing the workers and peasants, and proposing a non-capitalist alternative. The above analysis suggests that the coming period may allow such an alliance to form. ★

(1) Gamini was one of those responsible for inviting the Indian Army to intervene in Sri Lanka. Close to American leaders over the years, Gamini advocated the sale of plantations to 'dollar' companies.

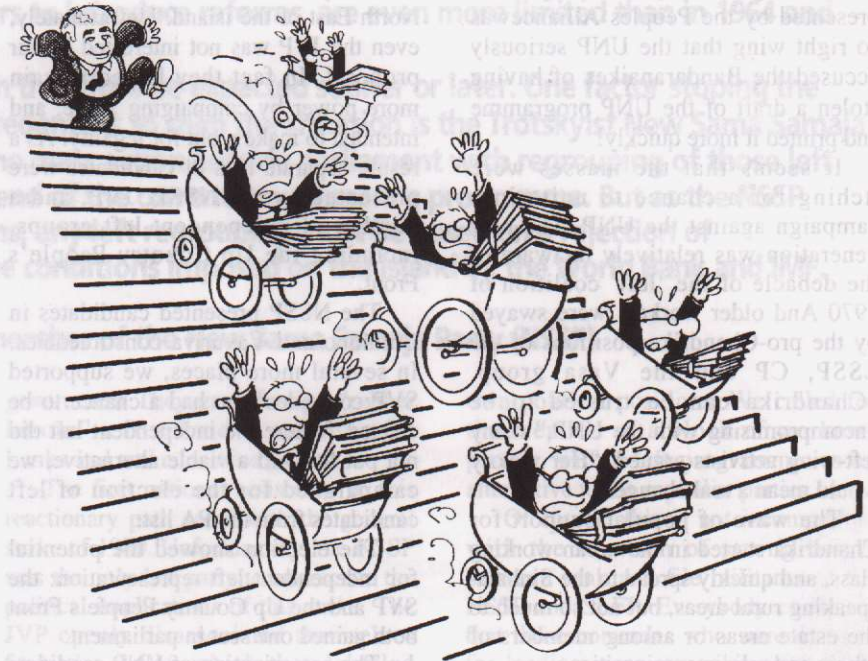
Five years on: Economic reform in the East

Reforms since the 1950s have prioritised the broadening of market mechanisms and the sphere of private production. But the current reforms are not just the same thing on a bigger scale. Today's Kremlin leaders want not just a greater use of "market mechanisms," but the capitalist market, covering all the means of production. Timid reformers in Poland and Hungary once experimented with the "privatisation" of small commodity production, artisanry, or commerce - the new governments in Warsaw and Budapest have placed massive parts of industry on open sale, and in the meantime are trying to establish capitalist relations of production within all the country's enterprises. From the Czech Republic to the Albania or pre-war Chechnya, "post-socialist" societies are in transition. In this comprehensive and ambitious survey of the region, Catherine Samary of Paris University analyses these transformation at three levels: the goals of the new governments, the reform of the state apparatus, and the transformation of the economy.

by Catherine Samary

The first objective of the new elite, and their bourgeois governments, is to modify the legislative and repressive framework of society - the state apparatus. This structure can then be put to the service of the newly-forming bourgeois ruling class, and the world bourgeoisie, in order to assure a fundamental socio-economic transformation. This last stage has so far proved more difficult than the new rulers and their foreign creditors expected.

There is no simple definition of capitalist restoration at the socio-economic level, just as there is no universal "model" of capitalism which can be adopted. It is already clear that the new capitalism in the East will be very different from one country to another. In the same way, no percentage of privatisation marks a "qualitative threshold" or an "irreversible transition". The question to ask ourselves is whether a capitalist logic (property rights, relations of production orientated towards profit) dominate. It seems clear



that in this sense the building blocks of the capitalist projects are clearly in place in the countries of the East.

The goal of the elite

The goal of the new elites is a new, market discipline and class relations which can impose the closure of those enterprises which are unviable (from the point of view of the criteria of profit) - and impose a constant search for the reduction of costs in all other enterprises. New capital markets will allow the rich to buy and sell these companies according to their own, private interest.

The economic transformation

Between 1989 and 1992, all the 'post-Communist' economies of Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR did not just stagnate: they shrank in size! The collapse in production over this period was 20% in Hungary, 30% in the Czech Republic, 40%

in Russia and 50% in Poland. The economic decline in most of the newly independent countries created from the decomposition of the USSR is even worse.

Germany is the sole case of absorption into a capitalist framework. Hardly a model the other countries can follow, since the astronomical cost of restructuring was met by western taxpayers*. Only a few countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovenia) are emerging from this crisis. The other countries of eastern Europe and the Community of Independent States are sinking into "under-development," fragmentation (ex-USSR) or even war for the division of resources and territories (ex-Yugoslavia).

All these countries suffer persistent inflation. The lowest rate in 1994 was 12%, in the Czech Republic. In Russia, inflation devalued the rouble from 200 per 1 USD in June 1992 to 2,000 the following summer, and over 4,000 in July 1994.

Unemployment is generally higher than 15%, while the restructuring of the big



Five years on: Economic reform in the East

enterprises has not started anywhere. The "destructive" aspect of the upheavals underway has affected the price system and the former circuits of production and exchange. The interruption of traditional circuits of supply, and the obligation to make payments in hard currency have led to the collapse of entire branches, regions and newly independent countries, and generated pressures for the re-establishment of east-east links. The reorientation of exchanges towards the countries of the OECD has increased the foreign deficits of each of the countries in the region.

Discrepancies have grown between regions of each state, and between countries. The degrees of advancement of the transition towards capitalism are extremely unequal.

Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania and Slovakia are still emerging from changes in the price system and the destruction of the COMECON trading block. Hungary, Poland and Slovenia have gone further, and embarked on a profound restructuring of their productive and financial system. This is reflected in their privatisation programmes, by the real increase in the productivity of labour and a lowering of real wages. And since increased productivity has allowed a contraction of the workforce, unemployment has risen in all the "successful" countries.

Behind all the ambitious claims of the new governments, the reality in all these countries is that the major form of privatisation so far has been a small-scale privatisation in commerce and tourism. In Hungary for example, only 20% of large enterprises have been privatised. But foreign capital, which provided 80% of the income from privatisations in 1991, has been scared away by new legal measures

Five years on: Economic reform in the East

to favour Hungarian "national" capitalists over foreigners. Moreover, the best enterprises have already been privatised. In Poland, 80% of commerce is private, but only 1/10 of productive enterprises in the former public sector.*2

In other words, even in those countries where



the transition is the most advanced, insufficiency of capital and fear of the social (and political) cost of the restructuring of the big enterprises, is slowing up the rhythm.

The other country sometimes presented as a success story is the Czech Republic. According to official statistics, over 80% of industrial and agricultural enterprises have undergone a "transfer of ownership". However, "privatisation by coupons and the appearance of investment funds... have in fact prolonged the agony of the enterprises and delayed their restructuring. These funds only partially fulfil their role as proprietor, whereas they will have to proceed to restructurings whose social effects are predictable" (Courier des Pays de l'Est, 1994). The relatively macro-economic stability of the Czech Republic is also due to favourable circumstances; a low level of debt, a relatively good economic situation even before the changes of 1989, strong growth of tourism,

people in eastern Europe believed that they had nothing to lose. Their hope was that the market and privatisation would signify a general elevation of the standard of living

frontier work in Austria, favourable real rate of exchange; but there is added to this an extremely prudent social policy, in spite of the liberal discourse.

But inter enterprise credit remains very developed. The law on bankruptcies, introduced in April 1993, has still not really been applied. Real wages are rising two times faster than wholesale prices. All this illustrates the weak discipline of the market. After 2 billion USD of foreign investments in 1990-1993, there was a squeeze in 1994. The Czech government is criticised for "favouring the arrival of capital whose goal is the liquidation of a competitor or to reserve to local industry the subordinate role of sub-contractor or better assembler".

In Russia, in spite of Yeltsin's coups d'etat to accelerate the liberal shock therapy, the "privatisations" underway reflect above all the total loss of power of the central state to the benefit of a multiplicity of feudal power groups.

"the wage-earners and the former directors of the vast majority of enterprises

have kept control by becoming "proprietors." Thus in most cases, the change of ownership has not modified fundamentally the behaviour of the actors of the enterprise. Many enterprises have maintained a monopoly situation, subject neither to the discipline of the market, nor that of strong financial constraint". (Courier des Pays de l'Est, 1994). Foreign private investments in the Russian Federation since 1989 are only around \$2 billion: the same as the Czech Republic, and four times less than Hungary).

The situation differs according to the market position of the branches and regions of the federation. Light industry and enterprises making equipment goods and transport material are confronted with a collapse of demand (and what remains relies on imported goods, above all in food production). These enterprises survive by barter agreements and inter enterprise loans.

The military-industrial complex is experiencing the beginning of a difficult reconversion. This powerful lobby draws its strength from its links with the state apparatus.

The energy monopolies or the enterprises making basic industrial products capable of being exported are the only sectors of Russian industry in a good market position and the most attractive prospects for privatisation. The share of the OECD in oil exports went from 47.8% on 1988 to 72.5% on 1992. But the ownership of these sectors is disputed by different forces and state powers; the local regimes, ready for example to proclaim a "sovereign republic" of the Russian Far East, confront the "muscular" interventionism of the Russian central powers.

Will the workers stand for it ?

Given the deterioration of the 1980s, people in eastern Europe believed that they had nothing to lose. Their hope was that the market and privatisation would signify a general elevation of the standard of living.

Popular disillusion across the region is expressed through massive "nostalgia" which provides dangerously fertile ground for the neo-Stalinist currents. After all, there is no credible socialist alternative.

Having said this, the "gains of the past" (social security, the right to work, "egalitarianism" of cultural needs, and women's rights - even if all these rights were perverted by the bureaucracy) have kept their weight in the minds of the losers in the transition. This is reflected by the systematic return of the "ex-communists" to government, or by their improved

electoral scores, including in Poland and Hungary, the trailblazers of the "transition".

Back in power, these ex-communists seek to combine the largely contradictory: partial responses to the concerns of their electorate, and the pursuit of the policies demanded by their creditors. As a result, the majority of these parties are dividing into two principal wings:

★ The first is more aware of the social degradations caused by the transition. Its social base is found among the trades unionists, the peasants and the workers hit hardest by the transition. On the political level this could be reflected by alliances between the "neo-stalinist" currents and the nationalists (including the far right), passing through, as in Slovakia, "worker-communist" currents explicitly hostile to privatisation. Their starting point can be protection against "those who wish to sell the country to the foreigners" and to the IMF; the logic of this can lead to a fascist variant of "state capitalism" or a "strong hybrid state" inspired by the "Chinese model". All this necessarily implies conflict with the IMF and a search for alliances with similar currents in other countries of the region.

★ The second current seeks on the contrary to ally itself with the explicitly "liberal democratic" currents and render itself "acceptable" to foreign capital and the European Union. It warns the workers of the "limits" of its "responsible" social policy. These ex-communists constitute the "liberal" wing of the new "social democracy"; they seek recognition as democrats ready to leave power if they lose the next election, and keen to assure integration with the European Union.

The relative strength of these two currents varies from country to country. In Poland it is the populist wing (originating from the Peasant party) which seems to dominate (in an increasingly conflictual relationship with the social democratic ex-communists); their objective is to slowdown if not block the "mass" privatisation. The "liberal" wing of the ex-communists is seeking, it seems, to ally itself with the liberal currents originating from Solidarity. In Hungary the second variant (alliance of the ex-communists and the liberals) dominates the new government, which has announced a project of acceleration of industrial privatisations, open to foreign capital in the hope of reducing the foreign debt.

No real political stabilisation has been achieved in any of these countries - because the economic processes of submission to a capitalist logic still demand great social costs.

At the same time, the main forms of social resistance remain fragmented and limited to the enterprise itself. The relations of conflictual connivance between workers and directors in the big enterprises not already snapped up by foreign capital limit the development of independent class resistance. "Collective property" is the bearer of a double dynamic; where market mechanisms and a tougher credit policy are imposed, the workers will be trapped, and a class polarisation will occur between managers and workers; elsewhere the conflicts will be deferred.

The organised left is polarised between parties of the nationalist-Stalinist type and diverse parties characterising

The alternative left will only emerge from its marginality when a new trade union left and the anti-capitalist resistance in western Europe start proposing an alternative to the plans of the European Union and the IMF. In other words, the struggle in the east is no longer in the same framework which defined the dynamic of the Polish and Hungarian workers' councils in 1956, the socialist oppositional currents in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in 1968, or the Polish self-management

themselves as social democratic. Alternative anti-Stalinist and anti-capitalist currents remain marginalised. Some militants put their energy into marginal groupuscules, while others try to participate as a democratic socialist tendency in the dominant neo-Stalinist or social democratic currents. Generational cleavages are powerful - many youth in their 20s turn with enthusiasm to the new values of individual enrichment (although those younger can link up with the anarcho-communist traditions); the older generations reflect all the currents of the

past but in a context of profound disarray.

The alternative left will only emerge from its marginality when a new trade union left and the anti-capitalist resistance in western Europe start proposing an alternative to the plans of the European Union and the IMF. In other words, the struggle in the east is no longer in the same framework which defined the dynamic of the Polish and Hungarian workers' councils in 1956, the socialist oppositional currents in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in 1968, or the Polish self-management movement of 1980. Defence of what remains of the old system, or worse, support for "red-brown" alliances which could eventually emerge from the current rottenness, is not a progressive alternative.

There had been market reforms before. What was new in 1989-90? And why wasn't the failure of these regimes marked by an upsurge in radical socialist activity, as many Trotskyists expected?

Here are some of the key factors which shaped the relation of forces in the east, which created a different context than that of the 1950s, and which made the conditions of the working class in 1989 different from that in 1968 or 1980.

★ The system of bureaucratic planning was in a long term structural crisis. Incapable of passing to a dynamic of intensive rather than extensive growth, having exhausted and wasted its resources and its capacities of reform, the economic situation generated, notably among the new generations, a moral and political crisis, aggravated by corruption, bureaucratic conservatism, and the absence of liberties.

★ the debt crisis in several countries of eastern and central Europe after a wave of imports and loans during the 1970s. It signalled the death of "socialist" reforms and introduced the pressures of the IMF. In short these regimes could no longer assure the semblance of that limited well being and security which had legitimated them. The USSR benefited from the increase in the price of oil during the 1970s, but the oil shock of 1986 came after a decade of stagnation. The weight of the arms race, in the new phase of Cold War marked by the arrival of Reagan in power meant that for several years equipment investment fell drastically.

★ whereas for several decades the gap



Five years on: Economic reform in the East





Five years on: Economic reform in the East

between the developed capitalist countries and the countries of eastern Europe had narrowed, it began drastically widen. Unlike the bureaucracy, capitalism was able to innovate and adapt during its periods of crisis.

The bureaucracy could only solve its problems by a thoroughgoing anti-worker offensive. But this was not possible on the basis of the existing (non-capitalist) rules of the game. Faced with this historic blockage, a substantial part of the leadership turned towards the world bourgeoisie and made itself an agent of capitalist restoration. No longer able to protect its privileges and its power through economic growth and the security of the workers, it attempted to re-consolidate itself through privatisation.

No illusions! there was nothing "ideological" about the opposition of some bureaucrats to capitalist restoration. Yesterday or today, the bureaucrat defends his interests pragmatically. What stands in the way of the bureaucrat of yesterday selling himself to foreign capital or transforming himself into a bourgeois is very concrete; either foreign capital holds back (generally because the investment is not necessarily profitable or secure), or the bureaucrat lacks the "market" position, political-economic support, relations of force in the enterprise) to assure the juridical-economic transformation of the property.

The failure of the reforms in the east (notably self-management in Yugoslavia), and the crisis of the welfare state in the west endowed liberal market ideologies with a considerable provisional strength among the intelligentsia. The various "radical" responses to the impasse of the bureaucratic reforms proposed by groups of intellectuals were usually, based on the identification of an appropriate efficient and democratic "model" in the west, which it would suffice to reproduce.

If the scenario for the counter-revolution had been, as in earlier times, the invasion of foreign troops, patriotic reflexes would have come into play. Indeed, this scenario occurs Cuba, one could expect an "anti-imperialist" resistance. But "economic" scenario of capitalist restoration - the overwhelming hope of the population that they will live better and under greater freedom



under the market - is much more pernicious.

The dominant attitude of the workers in the east is marked by pragmatism and high expectations; one is for privatisation "in general", but against the privatisation of one's own enterprise, if one realises that this is likely to result in the loss of one's job. Foreign capital is not rejected a priori - if it brings material investments, and promises to maintain employment and/or increase wages. Altogether different is the sensation of being tricked when trade union rights are suppressed, the enterprise sold off indeed bought to be sold - or when the entire country seems once again dominated.

The hope at last of exerting more control over one's workplace through decentralisation of ownership and the market can make the workers more open to this process. The market also divides those

The worker in the east is pragmatic: for privatisation in general, but against the privatisation of his own enterprise...

who find themselves in a good market position (export enterprises, rich regions) from the others.

The quasi-general growth of foreign deficits with countries with strong currencies (after the break up of the USSR and COMECON) reinforced the external pressures for "structural adjustments" turned towards an insertion in world capitalism and privatisation. The essential vector of the capitalist restoration is the power of interference of the institutions of the world bourgeoisie (IMF, World Bank, European Union). This imperialist intervention is relayed by local regimes which could more or less assume the function of comprador bourgeoisies. A new form of colonisation is being imposed.³

After all, for the bureaucracy to sell itself, a buyer must exist, someone who judges the "market value" of the country (or the strong branches of its economy) and the political stability of the state. Currently, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia are the most attractive prospects.

On the other hand, federal states which are in the process of breaking up, often in the context of war, are obviously less attractive from this point of view. The potential investor does not know who is the owner of the country's natural resources?

The question is both internal (what "national" bourgeoisie will appropriate them - protected by what state?) and external (with what interlocutor can the foreign capitalist negotiate solid contracts?)

The chances of integration in the European Union weigh obviously on the dynamic underway in the countries of central and eastern Europe and the three Baltic Republics of the ex-USSR. All these countries have signed an Association ("Europe") Agreement with the EU, and received numerous promises from Brussels. Not that this has stopped protectionist barriers being reintroduced against east European agricultural, iron and steel products.

Their chances of integration of the various countries concerned are very unequal. But the perspective of future membership is in any case for the moment sufficiently credible to be a central axis of foreign policy in all these states.

But the colossal cost of the "adjustment policies" demanded, the unequal credibility of the transformations in the various countries - and thus the capital received under the form of credit or investments - will accentuate a divergence of dynamics between those who remain fundamentally oriented towards the European Union and the others, who begin to recognise the need to deal with their crisis through forms of barter and regional economic reintegration. This process is moreover encouraged by European institutions and experts concerned by the economic disaggregation of these countries, and convinced that few of them will be capable of being "integrated" into the European Union, even by the year 2000.

Meanwhile, insertion into the "new world order" is also taking place on the political and military planes; the existing regimes in eastern Europe, concerned by mounting disorder and the revival of Russian influence, seek integration into NATO. They have been disappointed by (but nonetheless obliged to accept) the propositions for "partnership" and United States overtures to Yeltsin. The Russian leader has sought to reconcile proposals for "partnership" with NATO with the demand for recognition of Russia as a great power and guarantor of "regional order".

As compensation for internal social and economic upheavals, the chances of a new "Great Russian" regime (or more simply the evolution of the existing regime in a "great Russian" direction as shown by the intervention in Chechnya) are multiplied, as is the reinforcement of currents hostile to what is denounced as a political and economic subordination to the U.S.



Globally, apart from the Yugoslav crisis, the "partnership" demanded by the countries of eastern Europe and Russia has enlarged Nato's functions in Europe - not without conflicts of view between the European powers and the United States. Faced with the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact, the progressive option would have been a powerful anti-militarist mobilisation against NATO. The contrary has happened; the growing penetration of an interventionist ideology, even in supposedly left circles.

The weight of the world institutions of the bourgeoisie is not accompanied by the capital means which would allow the absorption of the countries of eastern Europe and the USSR analogous to what happened with East Germany. The world bourgeoisie, confronted with its own crisis, has not the means for a "Marshall plan" for eastern Europe and the ex-USSR. The breadth and the nature of the problems to be resolved are without precedent.

Internally the first source of instability is that the restorationist process lacks a social base of legitimation, because it is destructive. It can only gain a social base by ameliorating the material situation of a significant part of the population - which has allowed some room for manoeuvre in the Czech Republic.

The colossal loss of social protection is accompanied by a previously unknown phenomenon; the shops are full but access to the merchandise (and, increasingly, to medical services and cultural goods) is forbidden to a growing part of the population. There is also exclusion, massive marginalisation, and the degradation of the social status of the majority.

There is at this level an essential dyssymmetry between a rupture of the Stalinist type with capitalism and the current restorationist programmes; the forced collectivisation and the suppression of market mechanisms (whatever their economic, ecological, human and political costs) were accompanied by a social and cultural elevation and massive social protection.

The "system" resistances are then stronger where the market has penetrated least as a regulator; in the ex-USSR, more than in China; in Bulgaria and Rumania more than in Hungary; in the big enterprises and the regions structured by them rather than the sectors open to petty commodity production. Agriculture itself shows very different configurations - and an attachment to the social protection of

the collective farms where the chances of improvement via the market and privatisation are not obvious (in Poland, Hungary and Rumania the peasants have tended to vote for the ex-Communists).

Globally, the restorationist process lacks capital for it lacks a bourgeoisie. It is not enough to proclaim oneself a bourgeois, or to wish to become one to have the traits of one - that is to say the class strength, backed up by the funds. The introduction of market reforms has always enlarged the possibilities (legal or not) of self-enrichment. The black market existed before. But nowhere has there been a "primitive accumulation of capital" to the extent required. This could only really happen after 1989. The money (savings) available at the beginning of the 1990s represented only 10 and 20% of the value

It is easier to organise to combat fascism and capitalism in a reunited Germany than in a chaotic Russia

of the goods earmarked for privatisation. And not everyone was ready to swap their savings books for shares!

There are two principal internal sources for the emergence of a new bourgeoisie; the nomenklatura and the intermediate social layers (the "middle classes") born principally from the small-scale privatisation of services and commerce. The mafia straddles both categories.

The nomenklatura aspires to transform its privileges of function into the privileges of property and money. It is hampered by the purges of the old apparatus, on the one hand; but also its own limitations faced with the needs of the capitalist restoration. Some members of the old nomenklatura have competencies and knowledge of society and can play the role of a "comprador" bourgeoisie in the service of foreign capital; those who, after the purges, still occupied posts of responsibility in the economy are in very different situations, according to the "market" position and the size of the units that they control, and according to their relation with the state. Confronted with the criteria of the world market, most big manufacturing enterprises in eastern Europe and the ex-USSR will eventually disappear. Many are already virtually bankrupt. Even if they aspire to become a national bourgeoisie, the directors of the big enterprises or the military-industrial complex in Russia have

neither the capital means nor the technology to restructure industry in a framework of competition with foreign capital and the relations of social forces in the big enterprises. As a result, we can still expect conflictual alliances of managers and collectives of workers to block the process of industrial dismantling in some companies and regions.

The dynamic will then be that of a "state capitalism" endowed with a strong public sector. Protection from the world market would offer some protection to the workers, and maintain the old relations of force inside the enterprises. It is precisely the major ambiguity of such a configuration which impels "experts" like Jeffrey Sachs to advocate the most rapid possible transformation of property relations, so as to break the old manager-worker relations at the level of the enterprises and destroy any ambiguity of "collective property," either by a privatisation in favour of a real investor, or by temporary state ownership, provided the administrators are capable of imposing capitalist-style management discipline.

Globally, changes in the system of credit and the development of a market logic (with the closure of enterprises in a situation of bankruptcy) can only lead to a modification of the internal relations in the enterprise. The breadth of the social upheavals underway panics those political leaders who do not have the financial means to assure reconversions. This is the principle source of the blockages we see in many countries of the region. Having said this, in those - mainly large industrial - enterprises where the "old-style" mechanisms and social relations persist, they exist in a "degenerated" form - in crisis - without coherence, and without the emergence of a credible socialist alternative.

This resistance then in no way implies a "better" situation for the workers, nor for the conditions of independent struggles. It will without doubt be easier to organise to combat fascism and capitalism in a reunited Germany than in a chaotic Russia.

★

1. See Le Monde, 13/1/1995. The Treuhand, the agency for privatisation created in 1990, closed down in December 1994 having fulfilled its programme, at the cost of some hundred billion DM and several million unemployed.

2. Central Office of Statistics and Institute of Political Studies. Reproduced in "Employee-owned companies in Poland", Maria Jerosz (ed.), Warsaw 1994.

3. The case of Vietnam seems to be the most dramatic example of this tendency.

Islamic and democratic forces in the Bosnian camp

The left's inability to mobilise a solidarity movement with democratic forces in former Yugoslavia is partly the result of a thorough confusion over who is who, and who we should support. This is especially true in Bosnia, where the relationship between anti-chauvinist and democratic currents and the Islamic leadership of the state is complex and impenetrable.

This extract from a longer report is an attempt to clarify the situation.

by Catherine Samary

The differences which run through the Muslim SDA between the Islamic and civil factions are becoming more and more apparant. The Prime Minister Alija Izetbegovic) is aiming at making Bosian society fully Muslim. But this project can only be defended either by being a minority movement in a lay and multinational state or by going towards a division of the 'Muslim' state which would be more easily controlled by religious movements. Since the beginning of the war, Izetbegovic's oscillations have been hesitations between these two alternatives, the first having the advantage of offering a larger state for Islamist propaganda and the second which is more homogenous. The difficulties of co-existence, seen in the open fight with the other nationalist parties, clearly favours a division into three states. Certain Muslims will find themselves in this situation through fundamentalist conviction, others through despair.

But the large majority of Bosnian Muslims (as an ethnic/national community) are secular. Their attachment to Bosnia is more 'national' - it is the country where they lived and were dominant for centuries when Bosnia was part of the Ottoman Empire. In contrast to the Bosnian Serbs and Croats, part of whom lie at the extremes of the country near the neighbouring Serbian and Croatian republics, the Muslims have no other state than Bosnia. The SDA therefore contains another faction, the civil 'Bosnian Muslim Nationalist movement'. Currently its main representative is the Prime Minister, Haris Silajdzic. The defense of the Bosnian State's frontiers is the biggest priority of this faction - by whatever means: international military intervention and a 'national liberation' war. The lack of a majority in the country

makes it necessary to forge alliances and engage in multi-ethnic debate; but its programme remains hazy and in the process of evolution - trapped between its alliance with the current Muslim Islamists and the Nationalist Croat Party and for the moment with the anti-nationalist opposition. But this last party is very marginalised: the Sarajevo Circle of 99 which organised a petition, with more than 200,000 Sarajevo signatures on it, against the division of the town was quickly attacked for being 'tohetnik'. If the discussion is multi-ethnic the policy that dominates the Federation would not give equal status to the Serbs. And the nationalist parties demonstrate the placid juxtaposition of community interests (villages) more than the logic (more urban or industrial) of ethnic blending and of 'Bosnian' citizenship. . . Only the war and the logic of reinforcing Muslim representation in a single party keeps the SDA together.

In effect, the Islamist offensive (notably in the 7th brigade of the Bosnian Army which is recruiting many Muslim refugees from the countryside) has been publicly denounced recently by five members, Serbians, Croats, Muslims and the Bosnian Presidency (where the SDA is in the minority). The following points made on this subject are important for the future: the Bosnian army is as heterogeneous as the SDA and the Bosnian Parliament - which includes the opposition parties and non-nationalists. The criticisms formulated by the five non-members of the SDA about the Presidency aim to explicitly preserve its lay character in the army. Its Islamisation signifies the explosion of the Federation. But the power games and territories between the nationalist parties are another cause of fragility. The United States are on the point of admitting that they actually envisage a type of 'protectorate' or a team

of unbiased experts on conflicts putting the parties on opposing sides in the Federation...

And the Left?

The Left is dramatically absent from the scene. The non-nationalist democrats, in Bosnia as in Croatia or Serbia, are often cut off from their people, profoundly turned towards this 'International Community' and the European Union, expecting the earth from them - in other words they regard them as one of their own, the partisans of democracy and market economy, the true Europeans. Now the forces which count, the negotiators, the regimes supported by these 'defenders of human rights' governments are the nationalist parties. Bitterness runs deep.

[...] At the moment the drama is only being played out amongst the peasant population (who are the base of radical nationalism in each camp), security is about being inside 'good frontiers' - those of the ethnic/national state which will protect your property. The workers in Yugoslavia are often peasant/workers. Moreover they have been split, divided by a very categorised self-governing system and decentralised. What is destroying Yugoslavia (and what has ravaged the rest of world since the 80s) is also preventing the emergence of a credible alternative: market liberalism - each man for himself, each republican power to be for privatisation and incorporation into the world market.

The opposition parties have taken the much sought after label of 'social democrats' and sometimes, although more rarely, socialists. But here, as in Eastern Europe and the former USSR, there are two principle types: either a liberal market economy or a tendency towards Milosovic style nationalist populism... ★

The Russian Army and Chechnya

Boris Kagarlitsky

On 11 December 1994 columns of tanks and forty thousand Russian troops burst onto the territory of the Chechen Republic, shooting up peaceful villages along the way and killing the health minister of neighboring Ingushetia. Aircraft and artillery dumped tons of bombs and shells on the Chechen capital, Grozny.

The weakest spot in the authorities' scenario was the lack of combat readiness of their own army — demoralized, poorly trained and without the slightest idea of why it was supposed to fight against citizens of its own country. The soldiers were sleeping in open fields during winter, and going into battle beneath the automatic rifle muzzles of special forces troops. They refused to carry out orders, deserted, and committed acts of banditry. Tanks became stuck in bogs. During the first days of combat several colonels surrendered. After the first skirmishes with Chechens, the group of forces that was advancing on Grozny from the east halted its advance and dug itself in. Soldiers and officers began fraternizing with the population. Warriors of the Russian army often began appearing in market-places in the suburbs of Grozny, where the besieged population fed them and gave them cigarettes. Supposedly super-accurate laser gun sights constantly failed to work. Bombs and rockets missed their targets sometimes by several kilometers, or even fell on the territory of neighboring Russian republics.

Failing to take Grozny with a quick assault, the commanders of the Russian forces took out their wrath on the peaceful population, mounting an incessant bombardment of the city. The number of victims grew by the day. One of the first air raids on Grozny saw the devastation of Moskovskaya Street, where there was not a single military installation. The casualties included journalists who were in the battle zone. Although the whole world, including inhabitants of Russia, saw on television how Russian aircraft were dropping bombs on Grozny, the official Russian propagandists claimed to know nothing of any bombing, accusing the Chechens of engineering it themselves.

Just before new year Yeltsin promised to halt the bombardment of the Chechen capital. Immediately after the end of his speech, when residents of Grozny whose hopes had been raised by the Russian president's promises emerged from their bomb shelters, the most ferocious air raid

of the entire war was unleashed. This was followed by a massed assault using tanks and infantry.

The new year attack on Grozny turned into one of the most shameful defeats in the history of the Russian army. The tanks that forced their way into the city were quickly cut off from the infantry and destroyed. The paratroopers who had taken up positions near the railway station were surrounded. The army lost half the equipment it had thrown into the battle, along with hundreds of dead and wounded. The Russian forces retreated in disorder, even as the official propaganda was telling the world that the city had been taken and the presidential palace seized.

Following this debacle, the federal forces began systematically destroying Grozny. Unable to capture the centre of

reported that at night, troops used bayonets to slash the tyres of their own armored personnel carriers. According to Chechen sources, more than twenty Russian soldiers were shot by firing squad for trying to desert from the line of battle. The fact that government news sources constantly stressed that there were no "defeatist moods" in the army, and that the soldiers were "ready to carry out any order", indirectly confirmed that discontent was ripening in the federal forces. It was not only enlisted troops and junior officers who were grumbling. After arriving in the Caucasus and familiarizing himself with the situation, Deputy Commander of the Russian Land Forces Colonel-General Eduard Vorobyov resigned his commission. Deputy Defence Minister General Boris Gromov came out



"The Chechen volunteers fought professionally and with selfless courage, which is more than can be said of the Russian army..."

the city, the attackers deliberately used artillery fire to demolish block after block, trying to make their way gradually toward the presidential palace. Meanwhile, almost the entire territory of the republic was engulfed in fighting. Skirmishes also began occurring in neighboring Dagestan. The drawn-out siege of Grozny allowed the Chechen fighters to develop a guerrilla war in the rear of the Russian forces.

The Chechen volunteers fought professionally and with selfless courage, which is more than can be said of the Russian army. Federal soldiers refused to go into battle, deserted, and in some cases crossed over to the Chechens. Journalists

with a public criticism of the war in Chechnya. Then national television showed the commander in chief of the Russian paratroop forces, General Yevgeny Podkolzin, delivering an anti-war speech at the funeral of a colonel killed in Grozny.

Such actions by military officers in a country at war are virtually unknown in world practice, but perfectly natural in Yeltsin's Russia. After the country's ruling circles had spent five years destroying and humiliating their own army for the benefit of the West, they discovered to their surprise that this army was no longer willing or able to fight. ★

Yeltsin: a new Napoleon ?

The anti-war rhetoric of some of Russia's generals is more motivated by their shame for this imperial army in tatters than by any new concern for human rights in the region.

By Poul Funder Larsen

Boris Yeltsin has the support of less than 10% of the Russian electorate, according to recent polls. The Chechnya crisis has weakened the ruling group to the point where it is virtually impossible to hold onto power by constitutional means. Like Bonaparte, Yeltsin's power increasingly rests on his contract with the "power ministries" (Defence, Interior) and the various Secret Services, and on the constant generation of external 'crises.'

The army has been loosing influence within the Soviet/Russian elite for at least ten years, ever since the defeat of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Ever since, the army has played no independent role in Russian politics, not during the confrontation in Moscow in 1991 and 1993, and not during the Chechnya crisis.

Corruption and crime are rampant in the army. The ideological, economic and structural integration of the armed forces disappeared with the Soviet Union. The resulting armies, at least the Russian army, is divided and disorganized. This crisis became visible during the Chechnya crisis when the most prominent leaders of the Afghan generation - General Boris Gromov and General Alexander Lebed, spoke out against the war. Neither man is a democrat. Gromov is a very vocal hard-liner and Lebed has often advocated a Pinochet-style dictatorship.

What is under way is a power struggle about the future role of the repressive forces. Grachov wants to see the army become a subordinate to the political elite, under a weak leadership. Boris Gromov wants the army to play an independent role in a semi-authoritarian regime. Neither faction has any time for the democratic movement. "How can you consider yourselves Russians if you are trying to break up Russia?" Grachov recently asked peace activists. "Why are they doing this? Why, for that stinking green dollar!" he explained to his supporters (Moskovskie Novosti, 22 January 1995)

But with thousands of soldiers dead in the Chechnya campaign, and the prestige and morale of the army in tatters, Yeltsin is shifting his alliances towards other parts of the repressive apparatus, which could represent more loyal long-term partners. The elite units of the Ministry of the Interior and the Federal CounterIntelligence troops (FSK- the former KGB) are particularly valued. After all, these units can be deployed rapidly to quell internal uprisings, as in October 1993.

One new factor coming into play is the elite's reliance on para-military armies linked to large commercial companies. Tens of thousands of well-equipped mercenaries are employed in Moscow alone. These men made up a significant proportion of the 'governmental' troops which battered the White House into submission in October 1993.

Yeltsin, however, is worried that neither the "power ministries" nor the private armies of the top capitalists are a secure enough support for his regime. He has already started building up a Presidential Guard, which will eventually number several tens of thousands of crack troops, with armored support. This force could

One new factor coming into play is the elite's reliance on para-military armies linked to large commercial companies. Tens of thousands of well-equipped mercenaries are employed in Moscow alone. These men made up a significant proportion of the 'governmental' troops which battered the White House into submission in October 1993

prevent the situation in Moscow and St. Petersburg getting "out of control," if, for example, Yeltsin cancelled the 1996 presidential elections. ★

Developments in the Russian Peace Movement

This war in has finalized the divorce between the nostalgic "Communist" and "nationalist" elements of the old opposition to Yeltsin (the "red-brown" alliance). Virtually all the chauvinist, non-Communist forces, including Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's party, the fascist "Russian National Unity," have backed the war. And all the Communist groups have come out against it. Having said this, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF - Russia's largest political party) seems to be opposing the war more to improve its position in the coming elections than out of a sincere desire to stop the war. It has consistently subordinated peace initiatives to tactical considerations. The public remains opposed to the intervention. Opinion polls have shown a constant 65-70% of citizens as opposed to the war. And less than 10% say they approve of President Yeltsin as a leader. But this turn in public opinion has not ended the apathy and withdrawal into private life and "making do" which characterize society. But reflex obedience to, or at least fear of the state has gone, probably for good. After decades of Stalinist dictatorship, official propaganda is no longer able to set the agenda for the media, nor persuade people to support 'their' leaders. This is an exciting change.

So why is the peace movement, and the movement for democratic rights, is only able to mobilize tiny crowds? For one thing, there is no unified peace or democracy movement. Each party or group works through its own channels, and no-one has the authority to rally all war-resisters on an unified platform. The liberals and the Communist Party have a strong parliamentary basis, and wide access to the

media, while the left has tried to organize through grass-root structures, like the human rights group "Memorial" and the "Movement for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia".

Also, a significant part of the Perestroika left has effectively 'sold out' and joined forces with the lukewarm war opponents in the KPRF or the new Russian Social Democratic Union.

One striking aspect of the war resistance is the role played by women in what is usually the all-male world of Russian politics. Opinion polls show women as consistently more anti-war than men. The "Soldiers' Mothers" movement has been intensively active and shows great courage in fighting the military bureaucracy, while the Women of Russia faction in parliament has a consistent opponent of the war.

The government's plans to abolish students' exception from military service, will drag students into the potential anti-war camp. While working youth will also be affected by plans to extend military service from two years to three.

The workers movement has played no significant role in the anti-war movement so far and it remains weak, divided and mired in local struggles inside the plants, such as the threat of bankruptcies and mounting unemployment. The one-day warning strike of 500,000 miners on February 8 could indicate a change in the situation. Miners are still the vanguard of working class resistance in Russia, and their unions are now threatening to call a general strike to demand the resignation of the government and new presidential elections. ★

Portugal: the last mass Communist Party in Western Europe?

For a long time the dominant force on the left, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) seemed immune to the crises sweeping the other West European CPs. But over the last few years the Party has begun to pay a heavy price for its alliance with the Stalinist regimes in the East, and from its own ambiguous relationship to bourgeois democracy and the 'rule of law.' But as Francisco Louca explains, the PCP is still the major component of the working class socialist movement. And any new radical left force must be built with elements of the PCP.

The author is a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (PSR), Portuguese section of the Fourth International.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY had only existed for five years when a fascist regime was installed in Portugal in 1926. During the 48 years of dictatorship, the PCP was the best organised, and in some periods the only force on the left (following the

disappearance of the Socialists, and the liquidation of the anarcho-syndicalists). This long winter of repression meant that when the anti-fascist ("Carnation") revolution broke out on 25 April 1974, the PCP had just 3,000 members.

At the same time, its role in the anti-fascist resistance gave the PCP a great deal of credit. As a result, the Soviet invasions in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) had very little effect on the Portuguese left: a few important intellectuals left the Party

What's Left? The West European Communist Parties in crisis Introduced by Francois Vercammen

The fall of the Berlin wall and the disintegration of the USSR meant the historic defeat of the Stalinism which was at the root of the long-term crises of Communist Parties across Europe. This was partly because a positive reference to the USSR was a key element in the identity of these parties, and partly because this positive identification with the first country of Stalinism was the basic element in the cohesion between tendencies inside each party, and between the parties at the international level.

No party nowadays can avoid drawing a balance sheet of the various stages of development of the Stalinist cycle, or rewriting a programmatic text which fills the vacuum in politics which has opened since 1989-90. And all the parties surveyed in this issue of International Viewpoint are also required nowadays to make policy as they go, in rapidly changing conditions.

What are the overall tendencies in this mutation of the West European Communist Parties? First of all, no party has gone back to the revolutionary Marxist roots of the Third International in 1917-1922 to search for new inspiration. Instead, the leaders of all the parties, and a majority of tendencies in each organisation, tend to share a neo-reformist vision of social transformation, which brings them closer in spirit to the social democratic or the Green parties. Having said this, ex-Communist leaders in western Europe face two major obstacles:

★ Despite its Stalinist deformations, the traditional ideology of these parties contained real anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist elements, which can be suppressed only with great pain to the organisation and its militants.

★ secondly, the real problem in any transition from post-Stalinism to social democracy is that collaboration with the ruling class in order to win limited reforms - which is what social democracy boils down to - is more difficult in the 1990s than 30, 20 or even 10 years ago. In the old days, social democrats argued with conservatives about how to run the welfare state and where to invest to create most jobs. Nowadays, support for the system means sharing the responsibility for the brutal dismantling of the welfare state and a neo-liberal reform of the economy as a whole. The price a left wing party pays for this collaboration is already

known: look at the crisis in the social democratic parties.

Of course, all the Communist Parties try to protect their apparatus of full-time party workers. But whereas the French or Portuguese traditionalists do this by a sectarian and defensive proclamation of pride in the "communist identity" of a shrinking section of their supporters. They refuse to take part in the management of the capitalist crisis, but they also refuse to link up with other social and political forces which are available and ready to do something to confront capitalist policies.

The situation in Spain, Italy and Germany seems rather different. Large sections of the former Communist Parties have broken with their Stalinist past, without drifting into social democracy. While their desire to protect the party apparatus results in the strengthening of a new centre of gravity of the parties in their parliamentary caucuses (the part of their party apparatus they can have financed by the bourgeois state itself), their real success among a part of the working class exposes them to other, contradictory pressures. They are still mindful that their electoral success is the result of their support for extra-parliamentary activities and their fundamental support for the interests of the lowest sections of capitalist society. And they have also understood that an effective fight-back in the 1990s obliges as never before the united action of different sections of the left, and a real respect for the autonomy of mass organisations like trades unions from the political parties they may be closest to.

The United Left in Spain, "Communist Refoundation" in Italy and the Party of Democratic Socialism in Germany are the major political force opposed to the bourgeoisie and to social democracy in their respective countries. Their future is far from pre-ordained. Their programmatic and political make-up is very heterogeneous. Their past experiences and their historical references can lead them to support "economic realism" or to make their peace with the institutions of the state instead of defending always and everywhere the interests of the oppressed. But as we hope to show in this dossier, there is another possibility... ★

on both occasions, but there was no development of a political and intellectual current which would question the development and the international politics of the Stalinist movement.

From revolution to normalisation

The PCP responded to the revolution of 25 April 1974 by entering the provisional government and the state structures, including a policy of infiltration and political activity among the armed forces. At the same time, the Party retained mass sympathy in the trades unions and social movements. This is because the PCP participated in the state apparatus in the context of a pre-revolutionary crisis. Participation in the government and civil service seemed to be a way of transposing the social conflict into the very organs of state power. This is quite different from the latter participation of moderate Euro-Communist Parties in stable bourgeois administrations.

One of the first things the PCP did when it entered the provisional government was to organise a trades union movement against the wave of wild strikes factory occupations and land occupations that had, quite naturally, started. When this PCP initiative failed, the Party started trying to control, channel and institutionalise the spontaneous workers' and peasants' movements. Land reform must not challenge the basic order, reforms in industry must be agreed with the bourgeois political forces.

It was only latter that the PCP rationalised and justified its participation in state power. They claimed that there had been a situation of dual power, particularly in the economic sphere, at the time when the large industrial groups were nationalised. Supporters of the party accepted this reformist strategic vision to the extent that it was based on concrete measures which seemed to be a step forward for ordinary people

Having said this, the PCP was obliged, at the same time, to take the leadership of mass struggles and areas of social resistance. So the party became clearly linked to nationalisations and land occupations, and to the opposition to the various attempted coup d'Etat against the provisional government. And this was at a time of violent social confrontations, with a very active extreme-right. There were numerous arson attacks against PCP offices, our own offices, and trades union offices.

The PCP was expelled from the government as part of the process of 'normalisation' after the November 1975

coup. The naked reality of the balance of class forces demonstrated the weakness of the previous reformist line and radical rhetoric. In response, the PCP replaced its policy of participation in state structures with the catastrophic and demagogic position that the revolution was still under way. This not only justified their class collaboration in 1974-5, which contributed to the final blockage of the revolutionary process in 1975, but it enabled them to consolidate a certain militant base. They rejected all social democratic tendencies, and proclaimed the need to effect a transition to socialism and the classless society. The first time PCP Secretary General Alvaro Cunhal met with the leaders of our party, in the early 1980s, he claimed that even then, the revolution was still under way.

Ideologically, this demagogy enabled the PCP to ignore the eurocommunist developments across most of Western Europe. Openly hostile to the evolution of the Italian Communist Party under Enrico Berlinguer, the PCR maintained relations more or less exclusively with the traditionalist French Communist Party, and became Moscow's most faithful ally in Europe.

This radical position has ensured a fairly constant 15-18% of the vote in municipal elections, and until recently at least 10-12% during national elections. The Party remains the majority current in the trades union world. All this gives it a real political importance.

No change possible under Cunhal

International affairs had little effect on Portuguese political life during a long period, and information on foreign affairs did not circulate in society. At the same time, the PCP formed a semi-autonomous social and cultural segment of society, with its own means of communication. Journalists visiting the Party's rural strongholds in the Alentejo region have shown that many workers and peasants simply did not believe that the Berlin Wall had fallen. They had absolutely no doubt that the entire business was media intoxication and bourgeois propaganda.

Internally, the PCP is extremely bureaucratic. The historic leaders of the party, some of them in place for over 50 years, others, like Cunhal, having passed long years in fascist prisons, have an immense moral and political authority controls everything in the party. It is difficult to build an opposition to them.

Slowly but surely, of course, the news filtered through. And the loss of credibility

of the Party in recent years has been brutal. Both the electorate and the militant base are disappearing. The party has never managed to establish a newspaper close to its views, and has great difficulty communicating to its potential supporters. Their remaining social base is ageing.

What next? The democratic reform of parties like the PDS in Germany, the Refoundation in Italy, and the United Left (IU) in Spain, without collapsing into social democracy, came from sections of those parties' apparatus. Nothing similar can develop in the PCP as long as Cunhal is in charge. Afterwards, the minor differences already visible among leading members of the party will doubtless develop into alternative positions and conflicting strategies. Whatever happens, the PCP remains the largest component of the organised workers' movement. Unlike in the revolutionary days of 1974 and 1975, the only realistic perspectives for regrouping the left today are those which base themselves on the transformation of at least part of the Communist Party. ★

Splits to left and right...

The PCP was founded in 1921. Like several other southern European workers' parties of the time, it was born after a split in the anarcho-syndicalist movement. This was a very militant milieu, compared to the socialist origins of some of the North European Communist Parties.

The first major split in the PCP came in 1963. A pro-Chinese faction left the party to form a series of organisations which, taken together, formed an important current in the workers' and the student movements, as an alternative pole to the PCP.

In later years, many dissident tendencies developed in the Party youth and in various trades union fractions. But these resulted in individual resignations from the Party rather than organised splits. Only in 1989 was there a conscious and organised split on 'post-68' political lines. One of the Party's MEPs (deputies to the European Parliament) and a section of the official leadership left, several more leaders were expelled. Those who left were opposed to the PCP's positions on capitalist integration of Europe, and in particular the Common Market (a free trade zone, in which workers may migrate to any member state).

Although this new current advanced left-wing ideas on international questions, and in their support for a democratisation of the trades union sphere, most of these militants have become more and more moderate or right-wing. Its two leading figures have both won elections on Socialist Party (PS) lists: one to the national parliament, the other to a town council in the Lisbon region. A minority has resisted this rightward drift, and some of these militants issue a left-wing magazine. ★

Italy: Back to Basics

Party of Communist Refoundation

By Livio Maitan

The 'official' ex-Communist Party of Democratic Socialism has continued to move to the centre in response to the growing political crisis in Italy, and the threat of a new authoritarianism. In contrast, the Party of Communist Refoundation, formed by a number of left currents including a minority from the Italian Communist Party, has kept its anti-capitalist orientation, and renewed its determination to defend the rights of Italian workers. But as Livio Maitan explains, "Refoundation" now has to wrestle with 'classic' questions like the relationship of a workers' party and its parliamentary representatives, and the right of a minority to criticise the party in public.



The failure of the Progressive Pole in the 1994 general election persuaded its leading component, the former Communist Democratic Left Party (PDS) to reorient towards the centre-ground of Italian politics. In the subsequent municipal elections, the PDS formed an alliance with the Popular Party (PPI - the former Christian Democratic Party) wherever possible.

The Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) also adapted its orientation after last year's general election; redefining its programme which more clearly responded to the needs of the workers and exploited, and more clearly opposed the austerity measures of recent governments.

The growing division between the two former wings of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) is illustrated by the municipal election in Brescia. The PDS mayor did not stand for re-election, and the PDS refused repeated offers of a coalition with the PRC and instead supported Mino Martinazzoli, the last national secretary of the Christian Democratic party, and now a leading PPI member.

This divergence is all the sadder since the militants of both left parties had come together in the wave of mobilisations during the autumn of 1994. But it seems clear that the PDS leadership tolerated their members participation mainly to punish the Berlusconi government for its intransigence

than to build a movement from below. Statements from PDS Secretary Massimo D'Alema in early December 1994 confirmed that his party want to participate in a coalition of the centre parties, and demarkate itself clearly from "Refoundation."

The difficulties in forming a government to replace Silvio Berlusconi obliged all the left parties, including the Party of Communist Refoundation, to state their possible coalition partners. "Refoundation" president Armando Cossuta and a majority of the secretariat indicated that they would have supported only a "guarantee government" limiting itself to the preparation of new elections, and committed to respecting all existing agreements with the trades unions, including those on old age pensions, which have come under attack by the right. Other "Refoundation" leaders would have gone as far as supporting a government of the PDS, PPI and the Northern League under Romano Prodi, former Christian Democratic manager of nationalised industries.

These endless public debates and speculations seemed to be a matter of party tactics. But in fact, they reveal problems and divisions for the workers' movement in the relationship a workers' party should take towards a government dominated by bourgeois forces. What alliances should we propose, or accept, if we are faced with the installation of an authoritarian, if not fascist regime? Do our elected representatives have the right to ignore party discipline or invoke their conscience? Can a minority publically oppose decisions taken by a majority of the elected party leadership?

All tendencies in the PRC argued that the situation was not only bad, but deteriorating, and that it was essential to block the advance of the right by vigorously defending the right of the citizens to decide on the future government, condemning the centre parties' preference of party negotiations over snap elections, and preparing to oppose the attacks on the masses sure to follow the establishment of any imaginable variety of centre or centre left government, given the past behaviour of the main candidates.

For the minority currents in the PRC, opposing an authoritarian development obliged the party to participate in, and support a possible centre-left coalition government. Minority leader Serio Garavini, former Party secretary, exhorted

the majority not to repeat the sectarian errors of the Komintern at the time of Hitler's rise to power. For Garavini, unity with the PDS was a top priority, and he proclaimed himself willing to vote for the Dini 'technocrat' government. He also argued that the parliamentary fraction should not be bound by decisions of the Party leadership.

It is striking that the lines of this division within the Party cannot be traced to any single division between the various currents and components that make up the new organisation. It seems instead that the PRC is reliving some of the classic moments of the workers' movement.

The perennial debate about whether elected representatives should make their own decision, or follow party discipline was regularly discussed at the socialist congresses of the late 19th century. Its reemergence today is a symptom of a deeper process. The parliamentary fraction is bound to feel most strongly the perverse effects of a systematic integration into the institutions of bourgeois society, without deep roots in the social base of society. They are the most exposed to it. Some are bound to slide towards more moderate behaviour. The pronounced gap between our parliamentary representation and our social implantation, and our lack of a clear anti-capitalist programme, makes it hardly surprising that in the case of the PRC, a large part of our parliamentary caucus should slide towards the centre.

These same structural and programatic weaknesses of the left, coupled with the deteriorating situation in the country, the attacks of the right, the risks of an authoritarian initiative, lead some sections of the party to advocate left unity at any price, democratic unity at any price, and even unity with the 'constitutional' right. This analysis is defensive and, in the final analysis, an illusion. These comrades propose an orientation which would mute, if not obliterate, the autonomy of our party, and reduce it to a kind of pressure group within a centre-left coalition.

Unfortunately, reflection on the political and strategic background to our everyday activities has ground to a halt in "Refoundation" since the period of preparation of the last congress. But there is no other way out of our current troubles, and no other way to make the PRC an effective lever in the reconstruction of the Italian workers' movement. ★

Spain: the challenge of success

The United Left's fragile consensus

Since the Spanish Communist Party joined forces with a number of smaller groups on its left to form the United Left, the organisation has grown to become a serious challenge to the corrupt ruling socialist party (PSOE). But rapid growth is a mixed blessing, as Jaime Pastor reports from the organisation's Fourth Federal Assembly.

JULIO ANGUITA, GENERAL Coordinator of the United Left (IU), opened the assembly with a clearly auto-critical balance sheet of activities over the last few years. Leaders at the federal level recognised our problems as a political formation which is increasing its share of the vote, without a parallel deepening of our implantation in local initiatives and associations, and in the most dynamic social sectors of society. The risks of this unbalanced development were visible both as sectarianism (at the level of some local federations) and the 'drunkenness of enthusiasm for 'new politics' among some comrades. Most delegates, however, seemed aware that it is unlikely that the impressive successes of recent years will be repeated.

Only the Estramadura and Castille-La Mancha federations made a sincere attempt to discuss the problems raised in the leadership's report. Other delegates tended to approve without discussion, and keep their reservations for private conversations. This lack of sincerity in the debate reflects a certain "old style" political culture in many of the regional groups, which is only slowly being overcome.

The manifesto adopted by the congress deals with the global crisis of civilisation, old and new forms of social inequality, the centre-periphery conflict and the crisis of the capitalist economy and the welfare state. The clear 'red and green' outlines of the manifesto are the proof of a step forward for the major political culture in IU. The programme recognises the need to defend social advantages within the fragile welfare state, but does not propose a rehash of outdated social democratic ideas. In mapping out a new hierarchy of values, the manifesto makes it possible for IU to work for the convergence of traditional and modern social movements in an alternative social block, in Spain and in Europe.

Within this global context, the section on the Spanish state is sharply critical of the ruling Socialist party (PSOE) of Felipe Gonzalez. Large sections of the population have been demoralized through this

party's neo-liberal economic and social policies, corruption, and state terrorism (in the confrontation with the Basque separatist movements). Spain is characterised by a crisis of politics and political parties in their present form. The report emphasises the need to find alternative forms of action, and to transform IU into a "socio-political movement" integrating all the traditions of the anti-capitalist left. Unfortunately, criticism of the hesitant line of the trades union leaders was deflected by the conference leadership as supposedly contradictory with our short term political opportunities.

(United Left's attitude to alliances is characterised by the following amendment proposed by Izquierda Alternativa (Alternative Left - IA) and accepted by the Federal Political Council in September 1994. "The hegemony we aspire to has nothing to do with that of a charismatic leadership or that of a powerful bureaucratic apparatus. Hegemony can only come from the flowing together of different streams, with mutual respect."

IU and the two major parties

"The respectable opposition currents [in the PSOE] are the weakest, and the strongest currents are the least respectable" In such a situation, "general formulas [like] institutional stability [or] opposition to the right cannot justify the formalisation of any agreements" until the PSOE breaks with the bad habits of 'Felipisme' Local alliances are still possible, provided these are "coherent with the objective of affirming our autonomy, and refusing any subordinate position"

While the IU recognises "no common objective, value of importance" with the main right wing Peoples Party (PP) the congress did not rule out the possibility of a limited, transparent accord "to win democratic reforms in the face of the concentration of powers under 'filipisme'"

The New Left (IN) proposed an amendment defining the struggle against the right as the main priority, and leaving

the possibility of a government coalition with the PSOE open. But this proposition did not win the 25% support in the working group which would allow it to be discussed at the plenary session.

It was agreed that, where IU manages to overtake the PSOE and form the government in a town or region, we need to create a 'culture of transformation' rather than engage in the management of the crisis within a framework fixed by the competitive economic model and an international climate of 'social

Communist Parties in crisis

darwinism.' Wherever the PP is in government, we should strengthen the spine of the opposition, and resist the demoralisation of the left's social base. If the PSOE will join our efforts, they are welcome. And where the PSOE is in control, the Federal Political Council will evaluate the possibilities of an agreement with them.

State and Nation in Spain

The commission proposed a clear federal state, with constitutional reform to ensure, for instance, that the senate reflects the Spanish state's multinational character. Those of us in the Alternative Left current (IA) feel that the notion of self-determination implicit in the discussion is still too vague. We proposed a critical amendment, stating that the right to self-determination and independence must be a pre-condition to any constitutional reform. This and similar proposals received over 25% of the plenum vote, but were not adopted. The majority was clearly reluctant to reopen a question 'dealt with' in Spain's post-Franco constitution of 1978. But the debate continues. The rank and file rests very sensitive to the national demands of the majorities in Euskadi (the Basque Country) Calalunya and Galicia. Having said this, we should not close our

eyes to the resurgence of a certain type of reactionary Spanish nationalism. If the right wing Popular Party (PP) wins the next elections, there will certainly be attempts to challenge even the precarious and limited autonomy of the various non-Castilian nationalities.

Internal democracy was advanced by a series of measures. Currents have the right to exist, and a limitation has been put on the time any one individual may represent IU on an elected body. Primaries have been instituted to select candidates in future elections. The main unresolved



'internal' question is the definition of the federal existence of IU. Some federations proposed a looser, confederal (but not particularly democratic) structure, others an exaggerated 'neo-centralist' model.

Unfortunately, the status of the youth organisation(s) is also unresolved. Those of us in the Alternative Left (IA) argued that the youth anti-militarist, ecological and peace movements are among the most radical and active sectors of society at the moment. Without overestimating the importance of youth, it seems to us that turning IU into a social and political movement can only be done by turning more towards youth. And the left organisations as a whole are in need of a new generation of members and leaders.

The desire for consensus among delegates tended to favour the Party of Socialist Action and the Republican Left, two small parties which joined with the Communist Party (PCE) to form IU. Most non-aligned and under-represented comrades opposed this list. Still, two 'eco-socialists', one Green, two members of Alternative Left (IA) and several 'red-green' independents were elected to the 103-member Federal Political Council.

While rather short, the resolution on women recognised "shortcomings, and contradictions between pronouncements and practice." A debate has been launched inside IU to deepen the feminist consciousness of the organisation.

IU is developing an anti-capitalist project for the transformation of society. Militants are striving not to re-edit social democracy, but present a distinct alternative. These policies imply significant "structural reforms" in the

economical and political sphere and across the state institutions. The common thread in the movement's deliberations is the search for a new model of society. We will see how this project takes shape in the coming municipal elections and in the elections to the autonomous parliaments in the various national regions. Of course, as IU starts looking for coalition partners, the pressure to water down the content could become quite acute.

In coming months, IU could quite possibly overtake the PSOE in several important regions and cities. But at the national level, the gap in electoral support is still important. As the leadership's report stressed, an increase in electoral scores is not the same as digging deeper roots into the social base of the left. We still have a lot to do to establish a relative hegemony within the social sectors that are the sociological base for left politics.

We have to build an alliance with the parts of society which are moving forward. The Civic Platform for Social Rights in Madrid could play an important role here, even though the leadership of most trades unions is still hesitant about getting involved. And there are a whole range of initiatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which IU should strive to support and participate in. We need to make sure that electoral agitation does not absorb all the efforts of the organisation.

The need for simultaneous struggles against the PP and the PSOE is clear. The federal leadership sometimes seems embarrassed by accusations that IU has joined with the right to squeeze the PSOE in a pincer attack. The accusation is sometimes sincere, but often hides an attempt to relegate us to the position of cheer-leader for the PSOE. We are surely capable of criticising the PSOE (which has never hesitated about forming a "pincer" coalition with the right wing Catalan nationalist block against the working class) without negating our criticism of a right wing which is incapable of proposing a meaningful alternative. As one delegate from Valencia argues, IU is neither a pincer for the right, nor a crutch for the PSOE.

In conclusion, IU represents a chance for political reorganisation and recomposition which should not be underestimated. It is essential to remain involved if we want to encourage a social re-mobilisation, defeat the PSOE in elections to the benefit of a left alternative, and, in the more or less long term, regenerate confidence in Spain for an alternative, anti-capitalist and internationalist programme. ★

Germany's P.D.S. A new socialist p...

AFTER ITS GREAT ELECTORAL successes of 1994, the PDS finds itself in a strategic dead end. It does not know what to do with its success - because the contradictions which run rife in society and politics are huge and because the failure of Stalinism weighs heavily on any notion of 'another way.'

A Party in Transformation.

The change in identity of a state party in a so-called socialist system, into an opposition party in a capitalist system has been marked by more than just one contradiction:

★ It starts with the uprising of a section of the population against rule by a one-party state and finishes with subjugation to the law of private property.

★ It was originally created to safeguard the GDR as an alternative to the FRG and to reformulate it on a social basis characterised by common property and direct democracy. It ended in a negation of the whole experience of the GDR.

The development of the PDS is at the same time marked by its former 'state party' character, by the emancipating and democratic power of the 1989 uprising, by the bourgeois domination of the process of integration with West Germany - ideologically, politically and economically - and by the marginalisation of all those who talk positively of the GDR as an example of an alternative way to capitalism.

In this sense the PDS has a unique experience in Europe because it is the only party in the West which comes from a communist tradition and was a state party. This loss of power only goes back 5 years. In its makeup and identity the PDS can not be a communist revolutionary or workers party. But the commitment to a democratic regime both internally and as a political objective is a condition for its survival at a time when the democratic rhetoric of the bourgeoisie is confused with the democratic hopes of the masses.

The PDS formally came into existence on 8 December 1989, the date on which the SED extra-ordinary congress decided not to dissolve the SED but to change its name and give it a new identity.

Up until December 1991 the major preoccupation of the PDS was to find a way out of the shadow of the SED and to give itself a face-lift. During this period its existence was more than fragile and the

party for East and West?

necessity of self-dissolution remained at the core of debate. Finally, at different sessions of the congresses in 1991 and 1992, the party succeeded in affirming itself as the Opposition Party - in the best position to defend the interests of East Germans and from there to establish itself as the Opposition Party of the Left all over Germany.

The fall in electoral support for the elections to the GDR parliament in March 1990 came to an end in Winter 1993 with its success in the municipal elections in the Brandenburg region, where the PDS almost installed their candidate as mayor of the regional capital Potsdam. Ever since, the PDS has had a new influx of electors, mostly young and from the East. This was followed (in the general elections in October 1994) by an influx from the West. In the East these successes led to it assuming decisive roles in regional governments, inducing it to abandon its position as the Opposition. In the West, the existence of a party (with 2,000 members at the moment) is no more important than one of the other tiny groups of the extreme Left - if you take its presence in the Bundestag out of context.

Under the weight of the multitude of contradictions which exist in the new Germany, the PDS would do better to define itself as a party whose role and definitive identity is still in the making. The major contradiction between different policies in the East and the West occasionally risks destroying the party. On the one hand the leadership is well aware that the survival of the party is to be decided in the West. In an interview with Neues Deutschland, the director of the PDS electoral bureau, Andre Brie, explained on 27 August: 'As a socialist party, an Left alternative, we can not in the long term remain a regional party. The East German identity will disappear in the following five to eight years...' On the other hand the PDS structure in the East can not see itself as a simple extension of the party in West Germany. Given the collapse in the West, spanning from the Left to left of the Social Democrats and the Greens after 1989, it is now a question of a new foundation, the original construction of a new socialist party which comes about due to the conditions and cultural policies which exist in the West. In as far as the PDS succeeds in imposing itself on the West, its identity will change completely. The PDS is still in the middle of a process of transformation

with an open-ended result.

Changes in social composition and internal structure.

Between May 1989 and May 1990 the party lost 2 million of its 2.3 million members. A first wave of resignations took place in 1988 due to the expulsion of those in opposition, namely Barbel Bohley, Wolfgang Templin and Freya Klier. At the time of the municipal elections and the mass exodus at the end of the holidays there was another succession of waves. The workers were amongst the first to leave the party. The 'discovered' privileges of the bigwigs, their corruption and the state budget deficit repulsed many members who felt deceived.

The SED-PDS did not succeed in stabilising itself as a leading force in a new political base. This and the more concrete day to day perspective of integration in the FRG provoked in the majority of the nomenclatura (in the economy, administration and the army) the feeling that: 'The SED-PDS is powerless. It is becoming a party like the others,' (Wolfgang Berghofer). A sufficient reason to abandon the sinking ship and look for a new direction under the wing of new leaders. After the siege of the Stasi headquarters in the middle of January 1990, Berghofer left the party and took with him the majority of the party leaders. Since then the SED-PDS has been called the PDS. It is no longer the party of the nomenclature.

Having said this, 90% of its members were members of the SED, the majority having had lower positions and little power. A sociological study published in 1991 by an institute close to the party, concluded that: 'Structurally the PDS is a different party from that of the SED. It no longer has a state party structure but maintains within its structure the heritage of having been a state party.' The study underlines the following traits as particularly indicative of the social composition of the PDS: 60% of members are more than 50 years old; 10% are less than 30; 41% are retired; 45% are employees (among them a number of ex-state employees); 17% have a university degree; 40% are women. The majority of members are out of work (60%), seeing the party as a place of refuge and a community of solidarity - working for the party is the essence of their political life.

For quite a time the party has been assisting the process of rejuvenation and

change in leadership at all levels. The party statutes enable self-organisation for the young, women, school students, homosexuals, workers, giving them the right of representation and aiding them in the ever continuing slow movement towards a change of leadership.

With the majority of members passive, it is not surprising that pragmatism is the party's dominant trait. The 'silent majority' are standing firmly behind Gysi, who since 1993 has been the President of the Bundestag (parliament) faction, and Bisky, who succeeded Gysi as party president. Modrow (honorary president) continues to be the key person for the integration of the oldest members. Bisky represents middle-

Communist Parties in crisis



"We are the People" (1989) East German artist Matthias Gübiger predicts a difficult life together for G.D.R. citizens in a

aged members, often active in municipal work and in regional parliaments. His strong hold is in the Brandenburg region and constitutes the factions most inclined towards a coalition with the Social Democrats. This type of member is active, but not less pragmatic; he allows himself to be guided principally by 'electoral success'.

Only three current and structured policies exist; by far the most important is the 'Communist platform' which accounts for a few hundred members; next is the 'Social-Democrat platform' and an 'Anarchist platform' which does not play any part. The 'Communist platform' is

primarily ideological in its activity. It represents those members who view the dissolution of the GDR with nostalgia, accusing Gorbachov of having sold socialism with his speeches on democracy, whilst embracing the Maoist position that everything was fine in the socialist camp up until the 20th PCUS congress. The 'Communist platform's' political weight in day to day party politics is minimal.

Pragmatism is an obstacle to the development of a strategic debate, around which firm trends could be formed. It encourages Bonapartist behavior on the part of key representatives of the



The VSP and the PDS...

Winfried Wolf of the far-left United Socialist Party (VSP) was elected to the German Parliament (Bundestag) last year on the PDS list, but as an active member of the VSP). His election campaign marked the reorientation of the more active VSP members towards work around the PDS. At its last conference of town wards in December, the VSP decided to present a resolution describing its relationship with the PDS and perspectives on constructing a revolutionary organisation at its next conference in June 1995.

The outcome of the debate was to undertake three tasks to resolve the problems implied by such co-operation with a party like the PDS:

H A VSP assessment (including an assessment of the construction of a certain type of organisation)

★ An analysis of the PDS

★ The preparation of a debate on the reconstruction of the Socialist Party on the basis of class independence (a programme, union reorganisation, political reorganisation, the type of party). The role of a revolutionary organisation in such a project.

If there are differences in the VSP with regard to the PDS there is on the other hand agreement on the necessity for the VSP to define a construction project based on the new subjective and objective situation and on the tasks which emerge from it and may define its relationships with the PDS within the project and not vice versa. A convincing contribution in achieving this might exert an attractive influence on a left-wing faction in the PDS. ★

AK.

leadership. Tending also to displace the political centre of gravity towards parliamentary factions, neglecting the party structures, the predominance of pragmatism shows considerable political and strategic weakness in the party's leadership.

A non-Stalinist Left does not exist in a structured form. It exists in virtue of the AG (work groups) of the young, women, the Berlin Federation and the weak federations of the West. This Left influences the party's central decisions principally by means of pressure from Gysi. It can count on a group of representatives in the national leadership. Often these 'representatives' express a certain socialisation and political culture rather than a strategic and common point of view. They are perfectly capable of using all their means to dismantle a reformist project, for example the 'social contract' or different coalition projects (hidden or not), working with the Social-Democrats in Lander in the East. But when it comes to it, the left in the PDS are incapable of formulating an alternative project of construction - a weakness shared by the majority of the leadership.

The PDS is probably the most democratic reformist party in Western Europe. In its statute, the right to form movements outside the party is expressly recognised. These movements, once recognised, have privileged rights: they can claim particular representation in the party congress and have the right to special group budget status. Non-members have the right to attend meetings and except in certain cases, they can even be delegates and participate in elections.

This internal democratic regime, unusual for a reformist party, is partly explained by the weakness of the party structure. The former SED structure has been completely destroyed. Today the party has 130,000 members and only 150 permanent officials. The 3,000 basic organisations, work groups and interest groups has to rely on 30-40,000 unpaid activists. In the final analysis these are the people who are developing party policy and determining its image in the outside world.

The regional federations are also very strong. The central leadership can no longer count on a strong central structure to impose its point of view. It can only use the personal authority of its members and its capacity for integration as a basis. It has to discuss and convince.

The PDS no longer has a newspaper but publishes a monthly magazine, *Disput*. Its editorial, along with the majority of its contributions, reflects a left-wing point of view. Apart from this, the party sends out a great many brochures, frequently organises conference debates on all sorts of subjects and maintains an institute for political

training.

These activities are proof of a true culture of debate. At the same time, the PDS is the only party which continually preserves its revolutionary and communist German traditions. Proof of this fact is in the annual parade to commemorate the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht on 15 January, in which there are more participants every year (this year more than 100,000 marched past the tombs).

The party's statute and conception have not been created by the party alone. They have come about due to a sharp conflict between the conservative majority and the current anti-Stalinist movement of the Left (from here on referred to as the 'movement') which in 1991-92, the formative years of the PDS, played a key role in the 'renovation' of the party. This movement aimed to transform the PDS into a left-wing socialist, movementist party - in practical terms, the sum of the lessons learnt from the fall of Stalinism. During the years which were marked by the dismantling of the GDR, the party resisted all temptation to withdraw into itself and merely defend its organisation and its ideological, material heritage. The PDS was emphatically asked to formulate a socialist critique of the GDR regime and not abandon the Stalinist critique to the forces of the bourgeoisie.

In the end, at the hour of its dissolution in 1992, the 'movement' demonstrated the failure of its project admitting that transforming a former state party into a socialist party of the Left was an illusion. All the same, it was able to impose the two important results of its work:

★ the statute

★ a motion touching the heart of the party, which took the risk of adopting it: the motion on members who collaborated with the Stasi. It states: 'Comrades who are preparing to work for the party in high positions can no longer consider the material contained in their personal biographies as private... PDS members who were active collaborators, official or unofficial, with the ministry for state security and who are putting themselves forward as candidates for the party mandate in the election of a people's representative have the duty to make public their activities for the state security so that an analysis of particular cases can be made. These activities will have an effect on the decision on candidates. Representatives who turn out to be dishonest and unworthy on this question are asked to abandon their candidature.' A similar decision was taken for comrades preparing to take up an important position in the party.

Between Socialism and Capitalist Reform.

Surrounded by a democratic bourgeoisie, the PDS must keep on proving that it has 'truly abandoned' Stalinist heritage.

At the same time this democratic bourgeoisie is extremely hostile to the party, to the point that the ban on it is openly debated. What is more, the integration of the former GDR has been accompanied by the violent destruction, not only of any positive political reference to the SED but also of all the social and cultural value that ultimately emphasizes the point that society can be better organised and in a different way from the existing capitalist one. In being pushed to integrate into bourgeois society, the PDS finds itself, at the same time repulsed, marginalised and treated like a pariah.

The PDS has found itself a place in this evident contradiction which reflects a contradiction between two lines pursued by the dominant political forces towards it: simple attendance or integration.

The elected programme of 1992 left this question open. It states: 'In the PDS there is a place for those who want to form a resistance to capitalist society and fundamentally oppose the current conditions and for those who combine this resistance with the goal of changing the conditions in a positive sense, overcoming them gradually'. This contradiction runs through the whole programme. It leaves - like the PC reformers in the West - huge challenges to humanity which are steeped in the class character of a capitalist society and layers of society exploited as a subject for social upheaval. At the same time it denounces 'the capitalist system of production, distribution and consumption in the world centres of economy and domination of the patriarchy' as 'the principal causes of global problems'. 'A bureaucratised, competitive and consumer society is the major social problem of our planet'.

The programme states: 'the crisis of existence felt in civilisation makes the upheaval in the method of production and capitalist life a question of human survival'. At the same time it believes that 'the type of productive force newly emerging (flexible automatised, work groups) is replacing the assembly chain more and more. It offers new possibilities to participate in the organisation of the work process and saving resources'. It primarily criticises 'the antisocial imposition of a new type of productive force,' which destroys jobs on a massive scale.

The programme defines socialism as a 'movement' and 'system of values', at the same time stating that: 'a socialist and democratic society, which is not dominated by principles of profit, can only establish itself on the communal effort of social forces and diverse policies . . . Strategic

decisions on development . . . make conscious and democratic planning on the part of producers, municipalities and social movements necessary'.

The programme contains immediate and advanced claims (based on the most radical positions of social movements), but replaces the demand for the expropriation of large capital by demands for 'control of the banking system', 'a constitution of economic and social advice at all levels' and 'the increase of communal property'. It gives off a fundamentally positive attitude vis a vis the market economy and side-steps the question of property and power quite well - this has also been inherited from the fall of the Stalinist regime. However it persists in defending the legitimacy of the GDR as an attempt to put forward an alternative to capitalism and admits that many things were regulated there in a more progressive and social way. Finally the programme portrays a fundamentally positive attitude vis a vis the state ('a civilising body') and of the nation.

Between Coalition and Opposition.

There is also confusion in deciding what attitude to take to social democracy and the unions. The PDS has always avoided all public criticism on the subject of the unions. With regards to social democracy it would like to take its place as a reformist party - given that the Social Democrats are right of centre.

So the possibilities of realising such a strategic option differ massively between the East and the West. In the East the Social Democratic Party has a weak membership, although it is stronger in electoral support. The Christian Democratic Party is the minor party in a few of the Lander; although it is also the case that the Liberals and the Greens are no longer represented in any of the Lander (with the exception of Berlin). The Social Democrats are burdened by the contradiction that on the one hand they want to present themselves as the true way for change. On the other hand the majority of their members and voters are of the old school of the regime (like the Christian Democrats); they have often seen themselves surpassed by a PDS who succeeded in expressing the preoccupations and feelings of East Germans much better, often sharing their own preoccupations. Many have ignored their party's ban on cooperation with the PDS.

Putting aside the fact that such events would not take place for 4 years (at the time of the next elections), the Social Democrats' capacity to take control and manoeuvre events so that it would not be the PDS who gains a part of the SPD but the SPD who gain a part of the PDS has also been underestimated. What is more, it

should be taken into consideration that there will be more posts and positions for disposal which would unite the dissidents.

In the West however, the weight of social democracy is such that a party to the left of it can only win with a profile that is clearly in opposition to it (as the Greens once were, with in addition, the beginnings of a vision for how to lead an alternative life, which was much clearer than that of the PDS. They were also very strong on ecological matters).

At the moment these politically and socially diverse pressures have produced a strong debate in which the option 'for a social contract' presents itself as the most logical course of action, but by and large only for the minority. As a left-wing

Communist Parties in crisis



opposition party, it outlines a 'prolonged opposition' option which has the drawback of wanting to favour to social movements and base itself on extra-parliamentary forces which are weak anyway. In principle this Left ought to produce a rebuttal/opposition document but it is difficult to engage in debate when it is in itself heterogeneous. There is the National Directive (Gysi, Bisky) in the middle, who fall between both camps, answering the pressures of all sides and hiding their weakness through violent attacks against the communist platform and 'programme' type documents which try to satisfy everyone and in fact satisfy no one.

Angela Klein, 18.1.1994.

Martinique: General Strike during Carnaval

Striking bank workers in the French colony of Martinique lifted picket lines outside banks so as not to damage strong public support for their strike, which had entered its sixth week when the island's three day carnaval drew closer at the end of February. But by blocking the processing of cheques and credit card payments, they reminded the island's richest inhabitants and businessmen that carnaval or not, the strike for a modest wage rise and for management respect of trades union rights would continue.

According to local militant Philippe Charles, municipal counsellor in Fort-de-France, "over a two week period, three general strikes were called. While none of them mobilised a large majority of workers, the first and the third did make their mark on the life of the country. Three thousands demonstrators at the first mass rally, and 2,000 at the second, resisted intense anti-strike propaganda, which could not help but have some effect on the marginalised groups of society. The position of the banks in our economy is obvious..."

"The trades union movement in Martinique is mostly animated by the radical left. And in this campaign, militants of all seven groups worked together, accepting responsibility for the success of the united action. The general level of consciousness among the workers is one step higher as a result".

to contact the several hundred workers still on strike, or for more information on the situation in Martinique, contact Group Revolution Socialiste (GRS), B.P. 1031-97200 Fort-de-France Cedex, Martinique. GRS published a fortnightly French-language magazine "Revolution Socialiste," available at the same address.

★

Nicaragua Sandinistas finally split

A number of leaders of the Sandinista Front (FSLN) left the organisation in December and January, led by Sergio Ramirez, leader of the social democratic opposition to the 'traditionalist' faction around Daniel Ortega.

Ramirez has since set up the Movement for Sandinista Renewal (MRS), which promotes cooperation with the centre-right in order to win the middle classes to a more reformist programme than that of the present Lacayo government.

While Ortega still insists that the FSLN must "defend the interests of the masses" he has been reluctant or unable to propose alternatives to the I.M.F.-backed structural adjustment programme which is destroying the country's health and social security systems. He has also been implicated in the pinata scandle, concerning the privatisation



of many nationalised companies into the hands of leading Sandinistas in the days after their electoral defeat in February 1990, but before they handed over power.

The bitterness of the public accusations of both sides in the fight for the soul of the FSLN have damaged the image of the organisation, and disoriented or disillusioned a number of militants.

Presidential elections will be held some time in 1996. Given the state of the Sandinistas, the demagogic right wing mayor of Managua, Aleman, is the pollsters favourite. ★

Paquita Marqués.

12 January-12 October 1995

European March for nuclear disarmament

Nuclear power and weapons plants in five European states are being 'visited' on a ten month march for a nuclear-free world. After visiting France and Great Britain, marchers are now in Belgium, and will cross into Germany on 19 March.

Route plan

Germany 19 March - 28 April

Czech Rep. 29 April - 18 May

Austria 19 May - 25 May

Slovakia 26 May - 18 June

Ukraine 19 June - 8 August

Belorussia 9 August - 12 August

Russia 13 August - 12 October

The "12 countries in 10 months" event is coordinated by Mother Earth. In 1992 the group organised a nine month march which terminated, on Indigenous People's rights day, on a traditional territory of the Shoshone people in Arizona, U.S.A., now used as a nuclear test site.

For more information contact Peline Gsien, 2 place Croix-Paquet, 69100 Lyon, France. fax (+33) 78 28 10 70

MSI (Italian Social Movement) leader Gianfranco Fini has proclaimed the dissolving of Italy's neo-fascist party into a "National Alliance" which he describes as "a common home for the Italian right." Traditionalists accused Fini of being an agent of masonic forces for seeking to abandon the MSI's flame symbol, and its historical references to the fascist "Republic of Salo," a short lived independent fascist territory in the North of Italy towards the end of the Second World War.

Despite Fini's superficial proclamations of anti-racism, the National Alliance is composed of 99% neo-fascists and one percent only of recycled failures from other parties and last minute opportunists. The 2,000 local branches ("circles" in Fini-speak) do not seem to exist independently of the MSI structures.

As for the programme of the new party, it formally rejects two of the cornerstones of Italian post war neo-fascism - continuity with Salo

and Mussolini, and corporatism as a model for society. While the economic programme has been completely rewritten to please supporters of the democratic right-wing parties, Fini has enough authoritarian policies - a total ban on absolutely all non-medical drugs (except alcohol), or the expulsion of unemployed or paperless immigrants - to maintain most of his "hard right" militants.

The potential power of the new-style party is shown by Fini's 47.5% score in municipal elections in Rome in December 1994. Alessandra Mussolini, daughter of the wartime dictator Benito, won 46.8% of votes in Naples for the MSI in the same elections.

René Fougerolles

(Reprinted from the French weekly Rouge)

Polite notice to subscribers and librarians

Don't Panic !

Regular readers of *International Viewpoint* will have noticed a greater than normal delay in delivery of the previous issue of the magazine (N^o 263, dated February 1995). The short excuse is that producing a magazine like ours is a constant challenge and please bear with us. The longer excuse is that we have transferred production of the magazine from France to the Czech Republic to reduce costs and make the magazine more affordable for our readers in the second and third world. It took some time to find a suitable printer and arrange postal distribution. We hope you are happy with the result.

Collectors should note that the series numbers have been maintained: 262 in December, no magazine in January, 263 in late February and this issue, 264, produced in mid-March.

Future issues should now arrive on time. Please let us know if late deliveries persist.

As all subscriptions are based on the number of issues delivered, rather than a fixed period of time, you will get the same value for money for your subscription as before.

On the subject of subscriptions, don't forget that we need 300 new subscribers in 1995 if *International Viewpoint's* future is to be secured. The table to the right tracks the progress of the appeal. The coupon on page two explains how to subscribe and how much money to send as a minimum contribution. We hope that what you read on all the other pages will convince you to subscribe, re-subscribe, and make gift subscriptions for those of your friends and comrades who would value our unique coverage of the world. If you don't have that much money, please give them your copy to read, and ask them to make up their own mind.

In solidarity

In the April issue of *International Viewpoint*

Algerian feminists
Mexican rebels
Russian peaceniks
Quebec separatists
and special feature on

France in crisis

- ★ Presidential elections
- ★ Socialist Party
- ★ Women's movement
- ★ Trades unions
- ★ The revolutionary left
- ★ Economy



We need 300 new subscribers in 1995

Region	goal
Belgium	2
Denmark	9
France	4
Germany	14
Greece	6
Great Britain	50
Ireland	2
Netherlands	17
Norway	6
Sweden	19
Total Europe	139
Canada	20
United States	90
Total Americas	110
Hong Kong	21
Japan	14
Total Asia	53
Australia	8
New Zealand	5
Total	13
South Africa	3
Total Africa	3
Rest of the world	10
Grand Total	300

The high point of this month's campaign was a \$1,000 contribution to the solidarity fund from a reader in the United States of America. Thanks also to the German and British contributions.



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

◆ 48 bed conference centre with six channel interpretation system, library and television room, ten minutes from the centre of Amsterdam and 2 minutes from a park

◆ Contact Robert Went or Peter Drucker to discuss holding your event at the IIRE tel. (+31) 20/671 7263 fax 673 2106 e-mail iire@antenna.nl Postbus 53290, 1007 RG Amsterdam,

Inprecor para América Latina

Revista bimestral de información y análisis.

Like International Viewpoint, but in Spanish...
Published in Mexico six times a year, covering Latin America and the world

Subscription rates for one year (six issues)

Mexico: 50 pesos Latin America \$15
USA: \$18 Spanish State 2,000 ESP
Rest of world \$20 Other Europe 120 FF/£15

Make out cheques and postal orders to the order of
Ulises Martínez Flores, Apartado postal 18-996, Colonia
Escandón, México, Distrito Federal, CP 11800, Mexico

Feminist and socialist summer camp Southern France, 22-29 July 1995

Registration is now open for the 12th summer camp organised by the European youth organisations in sympathy with the Fourth International. In 1994 1,000 participants from over 20 countries spent a week of debate and culture in Tuscany, Italy. This year should be bigger and (even) better.

Buses will be organised from most European capitals. Cost (including food, and entry to all events, but excluding transport) from 500 to 1,000 French Francs, depending on your country and circumstances. For more information contact your International Viewpoint seller, or write to the Youth Camp Committee, c/o International Viewpoint, P.O. Box 85, 75522 Paris, France
fax (33) 1/43 79 29 61 e-mail inprecor@igc.apc.org

For a different World Summit: Other voices of the Planet

One week after the U.N. summit in Copenhagen, the Committee to Abolish Third World Det (CADTM) and other Non Governmental Organisations invite you to an alternative world summit in Brussels, Belgium. Guests from India, Russia, Senegal, Canada and 10 other countries will expose the impact of World Bank and United Nations interference in their counties, and discuss how Non Governmental Organisations can link up to oppose the New World Order.

Other Voices of the Planet: Brussels, 18 March 1995

**CADTIM, 29 rue Plantin, 1070 Brussels, Belgium,
tel (+32) 2/ 523 4023, fax (+32) 2/522 6127**

Price: 350 BEF (includes musical programme until midnight)

Solidarity Subscriptions

This magazine is too expensive for readers in many countries.

For many political prisoners, International Viewpoint is the only link to the socialist movement outside the prison walls. Until recently, we have been able to distribute one third of our print run to these activists and prisoners. But our current financial difficulties have forced us to reduce the number of magazines we distribute free to the bare minimum.

You can help! As soon as we receive contributions marked "solidarity subscription" equal to a six month or one year subscription, we add another solidarity reader to our mailing list. And if you wish, we will inform him or her of you solidarity.



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

'Women's Lives in the New Global Economy'

Eds. Penny Duggan & Heather Dashner

◆ A new anthology by women writing from their personal and activist experience. Published as part of the *NSR's* "dossier" series, it explores how capitalist re-organisation of the global economy is profoundly affecting women's lives in every corner of the world.

◆ Includes articles on **Belgium, Sweden, Turkey, South Africa, India, Malaysia, Mexico, and the US** — with an introduction on **women and economic integration.**

◆ *Women's Lives in the New Global Economy* demonstrates that feminist and labour struggles can re-assert women's right to decide their future.

Send payment to giro account
CER/NSR 1757114, Amsterdam,
Netherlands, or send a regular cheque
(not an Eurocheque) in US\$ or sterling to
P. Rousset, IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007
Amsterdam, The Netherlands