

international
VIEWPOINT
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Labour prepares for government



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The Sao Paulo Forum is the largest annual gathering of the Latin American left. Janette Habel and Tatau Godinho report from this year's meeting in San Salvador.



News deadline: October 25th

Three years after Oslo

The confrontation

Salah Jaber

In May, 55% of Israelis voted against Shimon Peres, the Zionist Labour leader identified with the "peace process." Four months later, Palestinian anger boiled over in the *muwajaha* (confrontation) of 25-27 September.

You don't have to look far for the causes of this revolt. Insults, deception, repression, blockade and pauperisation were piling up on the Palestinians long before Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu became Prime Minister. Yasser Arafat's capitulation, disguised as a "soldiers' peace" had built up false hopes. His "Palestinian Authority" added new forms of repression. The situation for ordinary Palestinians was increasingly insupportable.

Michel Warshawsky and Walid Salem wrote the following articles just before the *muwajaha*. They explain, with surprising clarity, the dynamic which led to this explosion of Palestinian anger.

Israel's conservative government did not "kill" or "reverse" the peace process. As Michel Warshawsky argues, "Netanyahu did not cause the death of the peace process: he is the expression of its death." Palestinian patience was already strained under the previous Labour administration. By pushing patience beyond its limit, Netanyahu is directly responsible for the particularly violent character of the confrontation. He may even have provoked the Palestinian reaction. He knew that the "tunnel" crisis was sure to light the fuse.

The Zionist right is not motivated by short term fanaticism. This is a machiavellian manoeuvre. Netanyahu's minimalist interpretation of the Washington accords obliged him to cut short the illusions and bluff which the previous government had built up. Likud exposed what, for the Zionists,

were Palestinian shortcomings in the application of the accords. Yasser Arafat, Netanyahu argued, was unable to control his own troops, never mind the Palestinian masses. The Zionist right had always doubted the reliability of Arafat's control, despite the waves of repression the Palestinian leader organised at the request of Israeli leaders Rabin and Peres. The Israeli right began to ask itself what was the point of entrusting police control of the Palestinians to a puppet Authority, which, regardless of its real and symbolic prerogatives, was unable of filling the mission which Israel entrusted it with.

Netanyahu can now claim to have foreseen the danger, rather than have provoked it. And Arafat has his back to the wall, even more than he did under the previous Israeli government. Either the Palestinian leader accepts new restrictions, and accepts

to be no more than a prison warder for his people, or he seizes the Palestinian people's formidable capacity for revolt, and widespread indignation around the world, in order to fight for a solution which goes beyond the fool's bargain he accepted in Oslo and Washington.

Palestine is a land of miracles. But such a transformation of Arafat is highly unlikely. His immediate response to the September confrontations was true to form. He turned to the reactionary forces of the Arab world, including even King Hussein of Jordan, in the hope that they would rescue him.

Given the crisis of the Palestinian left (see p.7-8), the danger is that, once again, it will be the Islamic fundamentalists who capitalise on the new, more combative spirit of the Palestinian masses. ★

Three years of the "peace" process

Israeli Premier Netanyahu has not hurried the peace process. He is the symbol of the whole, stillborn process.

Michel Warshawsky

READING THE OSLO DECLARATION OF Principles three years ago, one could not help seeing the document's serious limitations and the booby-traps it contained. Above all, the relationship of forces (completely in Israel's favour) made it possible to preserve a situation of flagrant injustice, despite the formulas about reconciliation and opening a new chapter in Israeli-Palestinian relations. But in spite of these limitations many of us, while remaining fully aware of how unfavourable the relationship of forces was to the Palestinian cause as well as the cause of justice, hoped that the accords could serve as a point of departure for the creation of a more favourable relationship of forces, and thus for a possible substantial improvement in the agreement's terms.

Doing this would have required a mass Palestinian mobilisation, supported by an Israeli peace movement worthy of the name. Together they would have been capable, if not of pushing beyond the accords' content, at least of imposing a scrupulous respect for all the Declaration of Principles' provisions. In particular, they could have made sure that Israel kept to the very tight calendar that was the basis of the document's whole internal logic—like some Swiss cheeses, the agreement had more holes than substance.

Looking back, it is clear that these hopes did not reflect the reality: Palestinian defeat, the depth of popular demobilisation, and the disarray of left forces that would have been needed to create a progressive dynamic. In other words, when we analysed the relationship of forces, we should also have taken account of how difficult it was to create a dynamic that could improve this relationship of forces.

"Peace" at any price

As for the Israeli peace movement, except for a minority led by ex-MP Uri Avneri (whose moral integrity should be honoured), it showed once more that it is very rarely motivated by a desire for justice, or even for respecting commitments made by its own government. All it wants is to get rid of the Palestinians as easily as possible: and how nice, thanks to Oslo, there are no more Palestinians messing up our lives. Who cares about children reduced to begging in Gaza, when "peace" takes the form of a blockade that gets rid of Israel's Palestinian workers? And who cares about human rights when it's



not our army doing the dirty work (even if it is still our army which is giving the orders)?

If the negotiations had taken place under the pressure of mass mobilisation, if the Israeli peace movement had been up to its tasks, if international public opinion had remained vigilant, if Rabin had been De Gaulle and Arafat had been General Giap—with all these ifs, perhaps Oslo might have been, in Churchill's words, if not the beginning of the end, at least the end of the beginning.

Blockade blackmail

In reality, Yitzhak Rabin unilaterally decided to disregard the calendar, which he thought was too tight ("there are no sacred dates"), and the Palestinian leadership was unable to force him to abide by the Declaration of Principles. This was the beginning of an uninterrupted sequence of violations of the agreement. Little by little, the violations emptied the accords of any content that would have still merited the name of peace, or even of negotiations.

Using blockades as a permanent means of blackmail, the Israeli government quickly stopped negotiating. From the Washington talks that led to the Cairo accords, to the Taba accords, to the re-negotiation—for the third time—of the agreement on Israeli withdrawal from Hebron, what was going on was no longer negotiation but Israel laying down

the law. This held true even for purely internal Palestinian issues (the elections in particular). By its very nature, Israel's laying down the law could never lead to Palestinian sovereignty, even on a limited territory.

True, the Israeli negotiators in Oslo did think themselves—and said so many times—that the negotiations process would ultimately lead to a partition of historic Palestine into two sovereign, albeit unequal, states. They even drafted a Declaration of Principles which spoke of the territorial continuity of the Palestinian entity and of a re-deployment in three stages by the Israeli army that would remove it from the West Bank and Gaza, except for the settlements and a few military bases. Did Dr. Yossi Beilin, Professor Yair Hirshfeld or Ron Pundak deliberately lie to public opinion and the international community? Were they counting (rightly, as recent history has just shown again) on the international community's short memory? Did they sign the document knowing perfectly well that their government would never carry it out?

Competing Zionist visions

That explanation would be a little too simple. The truth is that the Oslo accords were an object of dispute among the different conceptions that divide the Israeli ruling class. For the bourgeoisie's modernist fractions, the New American Order in the region demands a substantial change in Israeli-Arab relations and a relative demilitarisation of Israeli society and politics. In their eyes the future belongs to a Middle Eastern Common Market (the New Middle East of Shimon Peres' dreams), whose emergence is blocked by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israeli military withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and the dismantling of the bulk of the settlements do not count for much compared with the billions of dollars that the New Middle East promises them. Beilin and company are the spokespeople for this fraction of the Israeli bourgeoisie; the Oslo Declaration of Principles is their credo.

The military establishment, grown fat over the course of the last twenty years, and the military-industrial complex still hesitate to accept this challenge to the framework that best reflects their interests, at least in the short term, and their worldview. Yitzhak Rabin, due to his personal history and close ties to this fraction of the Israeli ruling class, did not share Peres' pupils' modernist pacifism. From October 1993 on, Rabin left it to the generals to negotiate the implementation of the Declaration of Principles, effectively showing the Oslo negotiators the door. The Oslo negotiators waited their turn,

convinced that they had gotten the maximum possible concessions from the PLO.

Total surrender

Apparently even the Oslo negotiators had under-estimated the gravity of the PLO's crisis. It quickly became clear that the Oslo concessions led to still more concessions in Cairo; then the process of negotiation gave way to a more and more humiliating process of swallowing Israel's dictates.

Israel fails to abide even by the agreements it imposes itself. This was true well before Binyamin Netanyahu came to power. To take only the most flagrant examples, without even mentioning the calendar:

- Free passage between Gaza and the West Bank was supposed to be possible from 1994 on, giving the Palestinians' freedom of movement in the territories administered by the Palestinian authority. Two and a half years after the agreed-on date, there is no free passage. Even Yasser Arafat has to ask Israeli permission to visit the territories he supposedly runs.

- The second phase of redeployment out of the West Bank is supposed to have been finished by now. In fact not even the first phase has been finished (Hebron), despite the fact that Hebron has been negotiated three times. This means that the Palestinians have paid cash down three times for a purchase who value has been diminished each time.

- According to the Oslo accords, the refugees from the 1967 war (including their families, 600,000 people) have the right to return. This subject has not even made it onto the agenda.

- The great majority of Palestinian political prisoners are supposed to have been freed. There are still 5000 of them in jail.

- Security in Zone B is supposed to be managed in common. Since March 1996 the Israelis have unilaterally decided to ignore the Palestinians and to act the same way in Zone B as in Zone C, i.e. as if the Declaration of Principles had never been signed (destroying houses, arresting political activists, making sudden raids, etc.).

From the frying pan...

Far from managing a territory where Palestinian sovereignty is steadily widening, the Palestinian Authority has less autonomous maneuvering room today than the PLO and the Intifada's Unified Leadership had in 1989.

As for the Palestinian population, its living conditions have gotten worse in many respects during the last four years. True, for the urban population, the withdrawal of the occupying army has meant a definite improvement in personal safety. Except for nationalist and Islamist opposition activists, who are still being arrested by the Palestinian police (by order of the Israeli authorities), the men and women in Jenin, Gaza, Ramallah and Rafah are free. Their children come home from school safe and in one piece—from wretched schools, admittedly, but at least from schools that aren't closed down

every three weeks.

But personal safety is accompanied by an unprecedented deterioration of the majority's living conditions. While a minority is getting rich quick and displaying its new wealth with irresponsible arrogance, the majority is experiencing an unemployment rate above 40 percent and falling living standards that are difficult to imagine. Even worse are the countless barricades which fragment Palestinians' lives and restrict their freedom of movement as never before. During 28 years of occupation, except in periods of curfew, Palestinians were able to move freely through the territories and even through Israeli territory. Today East Jerusalem is forbidden to Palestinians. They need special permits to go from Gaza to Ramallah. And when the Israelis choose—and they have chosen already—they can close off each of the 150 enclaves that constitute autonomous Palestinian territory and prevent any movement from one enclave to another.

The tragic economic consequences of the politics of blockade are well-known. But there are also social and human consequences: lack of access to hospitals, universities, cultural centres, social and administrative institutions. Even Palestinian passports (printed and approved by the Israelis) often confer fewer rights than the old occupation passes. Certain basic rights, like the right to leave the country or to family reunification, are even more hollowed out. Before one could sometimes appeal to the Israeli courts, whereas now the Israelis are accountable to no one, including their own courts: after all, everything is done by agreement with the Palestinians. As Yitzhak Rabin said a few weeks after Oslo, it will be just like before, minus Betselem (a well-known Israeli human rights organization) and the High Court.

No one believes in peace any more

One can understand that the Labour government, once able to impose such a situation, slid backwards even on issues that once distinguished it from Likud, like for example the settlements. Most Labour supporters thought, without necessarily saying so out loud, that the settlements policy was a major obstacle to peace with the Palestinians. They were clearly prepared in the course of final-status negotiations to give up many of the settlements—in exchange for major Palestinian concessions, for instance on Jerusalem or refugees' right of return. Today, though, even the Yossi Beilins and Yossef Sarids, who never hid their objections to the settlements and their opinion that the great majority of them would have to be dismantled, say that a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should allow 90 percent of the settlers to be annexed into sovereign Israeli territory. This means both

major annexations of Palestinian territory (under the optimistic assumption that there will be a sovereign Palestine) and recognition of the settlements' legitimacy. It means admitting that the strategy of settling Israelis all



Oslo hypocrites: Peres, Clinton, Mubarak (Egypt), Yeltsin, Arafat, Hassan (Morocco), Chirac (France). Back: Fahd (Saudi), Butrus Ghali (UN)

over the place, which the right defended for a quarter of a century, was justified all along.

Asked about this political turnabout, Beilin answered recently: I used not to believe that the Palestinians could accept a proposal like that. Now I know they will. Negotiating with Yasser Arafat allowed the Israelis to discover his extreme weakness, as well as (at least in the middle term) the weakness of any Palestinian resistance to the policy of total surrender. Today we know that if the Palestinian Authority had held firm on the issue, the Israeli government would have expelled the settlers from the Hebron city centre after the massacre in the mosque. The Palestinian leaders' capitulation not only con-

Networking

The Interuniversity Consortium for Arab Studies (Montreal) provides two internet-based information resources on the Palestinian issue:

- **Palestine Refugee ResearchNet** (PRRN) is a website on the Palestinian refugee issue, featuring documents, research papers, and details of ongoing research/dialogue projects. Its associated email discussion list, FOFONET, facilitates communication and networking among activists, experts and policy-makers. PRRN can be found at <http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/prfront.html>
- **Palestine Development InfoNet** (PDIN) offers resources on Palestinian economic development, while its associated email list facilitates networking and information sharing. PRRN can be found at <http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PDIN/pdfont.html>
- For more information, contact Rex Brynen, Department of Political Science, McGill University. E-mail <cyr6@musica.mcgill.ca>

firmed the Israelis in their policy of laying down the law; it made possible implementation of a whole series of supplementary repressive measures directed not at those responsible for the massacre, but at its victims (closing down the Hebron market and university, tightening the blockade of the whole West Bank). One can hardly believe it happened.

Given this background, it is not hard to understand the wave of attacks that not only shook the peace process but closed off any possibility of reconciliation. Peace is dead in Palestinians' hearts. Even if disappointment and humiliation led for many of them to resignation rather than revolt, that does not change the fact that the hope with which many greeted the PLO leadership's return home has been transformed into cynicism. Support for Yasser Arafat and his policies has given way to cynicism or even contempt.

This is the reason for Labour's defeat in the last election, particularly if one compares it to the massive support the government had two years earlier.

In order to overcome many ordinary Israelis' rejection of Labour—which has very little to do with Labour's policies towards the Palestinians, and much more to do with problems inside Israeli society—the Rabin and Peres governments would have had to identify with the hopes that Oslo gave rise to among those same ordinary Israelis. That meant promoting peace as a choice for which it was worth taking risks and making substantial concessions. It meant reaffirming the PLO as the partner that itself had chosen peace and the Palestinians as neighbours with whom Israeli could develop good neighbourly relations. In fact, as we have just shown, from early 1994 on Israeli government policy did exactly the opposite. It was a policy in the image of Generals Biran and Mofaz, who treated their Palestinian counterparts with the rudeness typical of those who have occupied a people for a quarter of a century. Yitzhak Rabin's statements, the arrogant behaviour of high officers, the systematic lack of educational work in the army (and among the public in general) made peace meaningless, until the moment when the last wave of attacks finally did away with peace in everyone's minds after having done away with it in reality.

From that moment on there was no reason any more to vote Labour: all the more so because what shone through the Labour speeches was the contradiction between an abstract reference to the peace process and a reality that had left hope behind long before.

Peace is dead—Oslo lives on

Binyamin Netanyahu did not cause the death of the peace process: he is the expression of that death. The new Israeli government will carry on with the Rabin-Peres policies, albeit with still more arrogance, still more lies, and still more attacks against Palestinian rights, both their inalienable human rights and the rights

granted them by earlier agreements. Netanyahu can always cite the previous government's actions. There is no crime against peace that the Peres-Rabin team did not commit, from failure to carry out their commitments, to massive settlement construction, to military intervention in territories supposed to be under Palestinian authority, to murderous war in Lebanon.

But it would be mistaken to think that Oslo is dead and buried. Peace and the "peace process" are two completely different things. Even if Israeli-Palestinian peace is not on the agenda, the Oslo process will go on. It is the expression of globalisation in the Middle East, and reflects the new strategic and political facts in the region: realignment of the Arab states in the imperialist orbit, end of the Cold War, restructuring of markets and frontiers. This is a long-term process, not an event whose duration can be written on a calendar; a business of decades, not years.

Sooner or later Israel will have to adapt to this reality. It will have to transform itself from a frontier post in the Cold War to a frontier post for multinationals in the Arab world.

This will require political changes, doubtless including the creation of a

sovereign Palestinian state. In this sense the Beilins are not mistaken. But there will be a long battle inside the Israeli ruling class, between currents that are still tied objectively and ideologically to the Zionist past and those that represent the long-term interests of Israeli and international capital. The battle between the old imperialist order and the New Middle East has just begun. Among other things, it will redraw the Israeli political map.

But unfortunately all this has very little to do with the interests and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, or with peace and reconciliation. Justice for the Palestinians and Peace for Palestine's Two Peoples will be goals of another battle, this time among the Palestinians themselves. On the one hand is a leadership that seems to have sold out once and for all; on the other, a new generation of political cadres in the occupied territories and the refugee camps. This new generation will have to develop its own strategy for the 21st century, a strategy of struggle adapted to the context of the New World Order. Until then the Palestinians will remain largely the victims of a process whose contents and rules are decided by others. ★

Delineating the cantons

Successive Israeli governments have encouraged Zionist settlement in the occupied territories. Tikva Honig-Parnass explains

THE previous Labour government guaranteed settlers that it would "thicken" settlements in such a way as to ensure Israeli control over contiguous blocs in the West Bank. A secret agreement with Yasser Arafat projects the cantonisation of the West Bank, and annexation to Israel of the territory where 70% of the settlers live. Jerusalem will remain under Israeli sovereignty, and a Palestinian "capital", Al Quds, will be located in Abu Dis, just outside the boundaries of municipal Jerusalem. The limited re-deployment of the Israeli army is part of the implementation of this plan.

Meron Benvenisti writes in *Ha'aretz* that "even if the territories annexed to Israel are not [geographically] extensive, what is significant... is the value of these territories in terms of control of water resources, in terms of contiguity between settlement blocs and in terms of control of security blocs and Greater Jerusalem. (2 August 1995).

The current government has its own plan. It follows the same basic principles as that of Labour, but is worded more explicitly. Like Labour, Likud will continue building settlements, and entrenching Israel's direct and indirect control over the entire West Bank. This will be accomplished by "delineating the borders of the Jewish and Palestinian population blocs and dividing the empty territory between the two sides." Netanyahu is also willing to connect the various Palestinian autonomy enclaves and create direct connections between Palestinian population centres. Water resources and other "trans-

border" matters will remain under Israeli control. Israel will also keep full possession of "zones important for security".

The only difference between the plans concerns the definition of the Palestinian entity. Labour agreed with the Palestinians that it should be called an "independent Palestinian state." Netanyahu insists that it must be seen to be "less than a state, and not entitled to sovereignty". As Meron Benvenisti notes, "the difference is [merely] symbolic... What kind of state, except for a Bantustan, would be considered a sovereign entity on the basis of its rule over discontinuous sovereign blocks, lacking control over basic natural resources, and surrounded by areas belonging to another state which is capable of strangling it whenever it suits its interest?"

Netanyahu has ended the previous government's "freeze" on settlement construction. This hardly reflects a basic policy change. Labour "only" strove "to thicken settlements in accordance with their natural growth". The settler population grew by 40%. The new Likud administration now admits that the purpose of "thickening" is 'to delineate the borders between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the final settlement'. Labour and Likud "thickening" plans have received stamps of approval from US President Clinton, Egyptian President Mubarak, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. ★

Source: *News from Within*, 8/1996, pp. 3-4

Occupied territory

Three years after the Oslo accords, two years after the creation of the Palestinian Authority, and nine months after the first Palestinian elections, the situation in the occupied territories is more desperate than it has been for a long time. Walid Salem reports

The Netanyahu government has transformed the concept of re-deployment in Jericho from a Zone A solution (transfer of control to the Palestinian Authority) to a Zone B solution (total Israeli control, with some civil matters delegated to the Palestinian Authority). Even this limited concession has a price: the Palestinian Authority must itself close down three Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem: the Geography Centre, the Topographical Centre, and the Youth and Sports Centre.

Re-deployment has been frozen in Zone C, which covers 72% of the West Bank, representing territory effectively annexed by Israel.

The Palestinian Authority controls about 9% of the West Bank, essentially the territory covered by six towns. These towns are effectively prisons. Although even the Palestinian guards cannot circulate from one site to another in uniform. Israel can and does erect barriers at the exits from each of the towns, and control entry and exit.

The colonisation of Jerusalem has accelerated. The previous, Labour government managed to create a Jewish majority in the city of Jerusalem, including East Jerusalem (160,000 Jews and 155,000 Palestinians). The current administration plans to boost the Jewish population to 48% of the population of Greater Jerusalem (as far south as Gush Atsayun, as far north as Al Bira, as far west as Beit Shimish and as far east as Ma'ali Adumin) by 2010.

By extending the colonisation of Ma'ali Adumin towards the West, Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon hopes to create a band of continuous Jewish settlement from Jerusalem to the Jordanian border.

Interior Minister Ely Suissa plans to annexe adjacent West Bank urbanisations to Jerusalem proper.

This new band of settlement will receive financial and infrastructure support to develop industrial zones servicing Tel Aviv and the Jordanian capital Amman.

The elections of January 20th have not changed the nature of the Palestinian Authority. All power remains in the hands of the top leadership, which publicly ignores the decisions of the supposedly sovereign Palestinian Council.

Over 90 Council decisions have been ignored or contradicted by the Authority. Arafat's power is guaranteed by the "peace"

accords, in which Israel gives the President the right to veto Council decisions. As consolation, Council members, most of whom come from Arafat's Fatah branch of the PLO, receive a monthly salary of \$2,500, a car (with driver) and a portable telephone.

Palestinians might have a representative body, but this hasn't stopped Arafat's campaigns of repression. Armed police have invaded the campuses of Birzeit and El-Najah universities to disrupt student organising. Physical mistreatment and even torture are common in Palestinian police stations and prisons.

Arafat is not only President of the Palestinian Authority, of course. He is still the President of the PLO, which in April of this year deleted those parts of its charter to which Israel objected.

The Palestinian Authority has little room for manoeuvre. Either it reinforces its control over Gaza and the West Bank towns, and strives to develop political and economic institutions, and to generate relations with potential investors and foreign diplomats, or it must opt for confrontation with Israel. This option can only be followed if Israel gives the go-ahead. Netanyahu continues to hinder the development of Gaza airport.

The other option would mean breaking with the current strategy of the Palestinian leadership. It implies breaking police cooperation, stopping the Israeli-orchestrated hunt for Hamas militants, and taking steps to advance the interests of the masses.

The goal of such a strategy would be to create a new balance of forces on the ground, so as to be able, in a second phase, to suspend the negotiations with Israel.

Instead of leading the struggle, Fatah has transformed itself into a party-state. Fatah full-timers have become faithful civil servants. Those who remained faithful to their militant convictions were isolated and persecuted.

The Islamic resistance movement Hamas faces the combined repression of Israel and

the Palestinian Authority. There is a growing divergence between the movement's Gaza wing, which would like to become a legal political party, and West Bank militants who reject such a transformation. There is tension between the military and political wings, and between the emigre leadership and the leadership in the occupied territories.

In reality, Hamas has frozen its military operations. Part of the leadership wants to announce this publicly, part wants to overturn this unilateral ceasefire.

The Palestinian left (both the "Popular" and the "Democratic" Front for the Liberation of Palestine) is in deep crisis. Neither has democratised itself. The leadership is the same as before, and so is the mechanism of decision-making.

The Palestinian Peoples Party (ex-Communist) has rallied to the Palestinian Authority, and been rewarded with the post of Minister of Economy.

Fortunately, there are signs of popular mobilisation. A first conference of refugees in the Bethlehem region was held on 12 September, at the initiative of the West Bank Youth Union. The self-organisation of refugees is spreading, and will soon culminate in a conference to be attended by representatives of refugees from across the West Bank.

Within Israel itself, the Palestinian Committee for the Defence of Refugees now has over 600,000 members. And land defence committees have sprung up in many parts of the occupied territories, improving Palestinians' capacity to defend themselves in the regular confrontations with Zionist colonists.

As Likud increases the pressure, and Arafat follows his own interests, this independent popular mobilisation is likely to grow. Refugees in particular are likely to develop independent representative organisations. Unless, of course, Arafat can co-opt their leaders, as he has tried to do in Gaza. ★



Bibi's bloody road back to Oslo

To many people, the opening of the "Hasmonaean tunnel" expressed Netanyahu's irresponsible goal of setting fire to the Territories and thus bringing to a halt the progress of the Oslo agreements. Tikva Honig-Parnass of Jerusalem's Independent Information Center suspects that the opposite is true; that is, that Netanyahu needed this step to deliberately get the Oslo process out of the deep-freeze and then to enforce it according to his style.

This is the traditional style of the Israeli right, which is coarser, more arrogant and more exhibitionist than the Labour establishment. Prime Minister "Bibi" Netanyahu's rightist clique are lovers of nationalist symbols, believers in military power - and thus not ready for a bit of generosity toward the granting of even symbolic independence to the Palestinians.



SINCE NETANYAHU'S RISE TO POWER, pressures from the extreme right, both secular (in his own party) and religious (the National Religious Party and the extremists among the settlers) have been pushing him to discontinue the Oslo process. At the same time, the Americans and the heads of the Israeli military forces are pressing "Bibi" to implement the agreements, warning him against the danger of a loss of legitimacy for Arafat's regime even within the Fatah movement and the possibility of an outburst of Intifada (rebellion).

The opening of the tunnel, which allegedly dates from the Hasmonaean monarchy (163-60 B.C.), was supposed to raise widespread enthusiastic support in Israel. The Hasmonaean monarchy, thanks to their revolt against the Hellenistic Seleucids, has been granted a place of honor in the complex of myths created by Zionism during its search for historical and religious legitimacy. "We touch here the very bedrock of our existence," Netanyahu declared.

In this way he turned back and re-legitimized the basis which has always been necessary for every colonial project of Zionism.

The current agenda includes the speeded up Judaization of Jerusalem, especially by close co-operation with fanatic Jewish fundamentalist organizations obsessed with buying up property in the Old City and East Jerusalem. One of these groups (which also funded Netanyahu's election campaign) financed the excavating of the tunnel, which had been started under the Labor government.

What was not planned by Netanyahu was the force of the Palestinian response. This went way beyond "disturbances which will last a day or two" as he expected.

The mistaken assumption that the political process would destroy Palestinian resistance, both military action and mass uprising, by means of a mercenary Palestinian army completely alienated from its own people was one of the pillars of Oslo. It has been inflated by the Israeli establishment (Labor as well as Likud),

These mistaken assumptions, which are deeply rooted in the Israeli perspective of the Oslo agreements, were reflected in the public discourse following the bloody events.

First, most of the time, the recent events are perceived as obeying Arafat's orders, and secondly, at the centre of this discourse, we

find astonishment and anger that Palestinian police defend their own people, instead of siding with the Israeli army.

Netanyahu's assumption that Israel could do on the ground whatever she wanted without any serious resistance, was also supported by the belief within the Israeli establishment that it could count on Palestinian security forces which, during recent months, had successfully co-operated with Israeli intelligence against Islamic and Left-wing opposition organizations.

But there is no doubt that the natural racism common to the position of any colonizer blinded him from seeing the strength of the dedication and determination which the Palestinians have revealed, expressing the terrible rage which has built up towards the Israeli occupation and also towards the Palestinian Authority because of deep disappointment with Oslo: the tunnel served just as a trigger.

The sacrifices and the blood which followed the opening of the tunnel may pave the road back to Oslo.

This is a joint victory for Netanyahu and Arafat. Netanyahu enjoys increased trust from the extreme religious right and the fundamentalists who pressed for the opening of the tunnel. Fortified with this good will, Bibi can now claim that he has no choice but to continue to implement the Oslo accords.

On the other hand, the "proofs" that have supposedly accumulated following this new Palestinian uprising will enable him to attempt to enact the agreements according to his own rhythm and "style".

Most of all, he has been given a pretext to demand amendments to the agreements: "adjustments" in the redeployment plan in Hebron, and strengthening direct military rule by Israel, which is currently surrounding the main cities in the West Bank with assault tanks.

Meanwhile, Yasser Arafat has won a temporary renewal of support from broad sections of the Palestinian people. But don't be mistaken: this support is conditional. Arafat needs to prove that the Oslo agreements answer the national Palestinian interests.

And this is impossible. The heroism of September will be etched in the collective memory of the Palestinians, and will strengthen their stand against the Oslo plan for an apartheid state, which is being erected before their very eyes. ★

Repression without hope is harder to bear

Israeli human rights lawyer Lea Tsemel tells International Viewpoint's Sonia Leith about human rights in Palestine and the State of Israel.

• How have things changed since the "peace accords?"

Before the "peace agreements," we faced all kinds of breaches of human rights, but we could continue, because we thought change could come. Democratic changes, and change for the Palestinian cause. Since the peace accords were signed, we face the same human rights problems, but that perspective of struggling for change has been taken away from us. We now experience repression as part of an unchanging bad situation. Militants feel they are in a dead end.

• There must have been some changes

There are fewer arrests by the Israeli authorities, because the main population centres have been transferred to the Palestinian Authority. But Israel still controls huge areas of the territories, and continues to arrest everyone suspected of opposition of any kind; be it organising independent associations, learning about religion, or throwing stones. The courts have been moved from the towns to the suburbs, but they keep functioning!

The Israeli military authorities cannot convict many of these militants, since the elementary rules of evidence are not met. So Palestinians are held in "Administrative Detention" for months at a time. As a measure of resistance against this pseudo-judicial system, many Palestinian prisoners now refuse to appear before these tribunals, even when offered a review of their sentence and possible release. "We reject this facade of justice," they say. "And we refuse your jurisdiction over us."

This struggle has generated significant public concern in Israel itself. People are asking themselves how it is possible that Israel is holding hundreds of Palestinians in "Administrative Detention" when a peace process is supposedly under way.

These detainees don't just come from Israeli-occupied areas, but also from Zone A — the larger towns which are now totally under the control of the Palestinian Authority. There is clearly cooperation between Arafat's police and the Israelis — the Israelis want to minimise opposition currents in Palestine, and this suits Arafat very well.

The big new phenomenon in human rights work since the Oslo agreements, of course, are the arrests by any one of a dozen Palestinian security forces which Arafat has charged with the combat against subversion. Those arrested are being held for months without trial; sometimes even without inter-



rogation. The effect, presumably deliberate, is to terrorise activists. And it works. Palestinian magazines have been closed, and so on. The message is that we shouldn't expect an independent democratic space.

• How are Palestinians reacting?

Most people still say that we should give the Palestinian Authority some time to prove itself. But I fear it is already showing its character. It is an arbitrary system, without the rule of law. Democracy is a long way off.

The Palestinians are now struggling against two repressive forces. The well-known Israeli occupation, and the not-yet-fully-known Palestinian Authority. People suspect that the world outside doesn't really care. They say "part of the media, and the human rights networks abroad, encouraged us in our struggle against Israel, by talking about our suffering and our struggle. But they don't yet seem ready to do the same when we face repression by Palestinian authorities.

• Is torture still a problem?

The Israeli occupier has used torture for years. Now the Palestinian Authority does the same. Except that the "rules of the game" and the few means of protection painfully established over 30 years of occupation do not yet have a parallel in Palestinian police stations. All policemen and functionaries know that their jobs depend on the approval of their superiors — on Yasser Arafat. And they act accordingly.

• How do you choose your clients?

I represent anyone who acts against the Israeli occupation. As an Israeli, I can't elevate my moral judgement into a reason for

not opposing our occupation of the territories. I have defended people for things I wouldn't have done myself, and wouldn't defend in moral or political terms. But I know where I stand. When the Islamic groups, like Hamas, came to the forefront in the later years of the struggle, they came to me to help defend their militants who had been detained. They still come, without hesitation, because they know what I do.

I only intervene with the Israeli authorities. Only Palestinian lawyers appear in the Palestinian Authority's courts.

• What about Jerusalem?

Refugees who once lived in Jerusalem are blocked from returning. West Bank residents traveling from North to South must take a huge detour, rather than travel through Jerusalem (the logical centre of transport systems). And Israel is trying very hard to force out the remaining Palestinians [who didn't flee in 1967]. They cannot get permits to build, and there are not enough jobs for everyone. Israel is denying them an identity as Jerusalemites, and trying to expel them. If an Arab from Jerusalem works or studies abroad, and takes up a foreign citizenship, the Israelis refuse to let him return.

Palestinians are still being denied access to Jerusalem to pray at the holy sites. The Oslo peace accords were supposed to guarantee this right. Maybe this will push Arafat to call for civil disobedience. I do hope Palestinians find enough energy and force to fight back, at least for Jerusalem.

• So how do you view the future?

I'm so pessimistic I don't want to tell you what I think. ★

Learning from the food riots

In August, the people of southern Jordan poured into the streets in spontaneous riots over the increased price of bread and animal feed. The demonstrations quickly spread to other villages and cities, including Salt and parts of the capital, Amman.

by No'man Amjed

IT IS TWO YEARS SINCE THE SIGNING of the "Peace Accords" with Israel. Jordan's rulers predicted an economic revival — "a new Singapore," as Prince Hassan described it. The Prime Minister promised that "one year after the signing of these accords there will be no more poor people in Jordan." Eighteen months and three cabinet re-shuffles later, the people are rioting for food. How can this be?

There are a number of factors: internationally, the Jordanian regime has been obliged to alter a number of alliances, beginning with its cruel involvement in the sanctions against the people of Iraq. Jordan also participated in the US-led assault against Iran and Iraq, in total harmony with the USA's dual containment policy in the Gulf.

King Hussein says he "jumped into his seat" on the "peace train." On the eve of the Gulf war, more than 50% of Jordan's foreign trade was with Iraq. Sanctions against Iraq meant that Jordan's income was severely decreased and its recession grew deeper. And, while the Iraqi market was taken away, the markets of other Gulf states did not open to Jordan in exchange. Despite their relative strength these countries are also suffering from economic problems due to the reduction in oil prices and excessive weapons purchases. In addition there are the expenses of the Gulf War itself, which left the Saudi government with debt of about \$100 billion.

King Hussein's critical stance *vis-à-vis* the allied forces during the Gulf War has not been forgotten by the Gulf countries, and there is no great eagerness to improve relations with him. Thus he had little room to manoeuvre. Following the Oslo "Peace" accords between Israel and the PLO, Jordan's ruler was sucked into normalizing relations with the Zionist state. The Egyptian media described him derisively as "jogging toward the Israelis". In effect, he gone further in one year than Egypt had dared do in 15 years of "realistic engagement" with the Zionist state.

King Hussein even opened military bases in Jordan for American aircraft so they could monitor southern Iraq. This political stance gives the Jordanian monarchy some increased security.



It also enables Hussein to participate in putting pressure on the Syrian regime to reach its own "peace settlement" with Israel. This has included threats and accusations from Jordan that the Syrians are supporting terrorism because of their support for Hizbullah, an Islamic militia in Lebanon.

Hostility towards Syria is part of the Jordanian regime's support for the Turkish-Israeli alliance [see IV#277, May 1996]. Jordan also wants to regain a better relationship with the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. But the main factor governing Jordan's attitude toward the Syrian regime continues to be determined by how urgent it seems to promote a new development in the "peace process".

Due to the decline of foreign aid to Jordan (less than \$10 million this year, according to the *Financial Times*), the government has been forced to implement a rapid Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). This requires removal of all price subsidies—including those on bread and animal feed.

The SAP also requires attacks on democratic liberties and hard-won labor rights. For example, a new labor law has abolished the right to strike. This was designed "to make the Jordanian labor market more appealing to foreign investors", according to one of Jordan's leading pro-SAP economists.

Far-reaching attacks against labor and trade unions continue under the new government. The goal is to diminish their role in all areas. The president of the Engineers' Union, Laith Shubelat, was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison in retaliation for his speech opposing the "peace accords" and criticizing King Hussein's behavior. There has also been harassment and jail terms for political activists who oppose normalization of relations with Israel.

Meanwhile, the rate of unemployment has surged to a new high (14-20%, according to the economist Fahd al-Fanik. Individual income has declined by over 50% over the past ten years.

The next step of the SAP calls for the government to sell its shares in public enterprises at current Amman stock exchange rates—without regard for the nationality of the purchaser! Over 30 million shares are on offer, but total sales income is not expected to exceed \$152 million.

The King has proposed negotiations to "evaluate the situation" in the wake of the riots. This was partially to try and place the burden of economic problems and corruption on the shoulders of the people. It was also designed to ensure the widest possible support for and popular participation in the next SAP measures, which will include devaluing the Jordanian dinar. The government hopes to spread responsibility for the catastrophic consequences of this policy as widely as possible. They know that devaluation could lead to a currency melt-down, at a time when foreign investors are definitely not inclined to support the Jordanian economy.

The economic relationship with Israel is of crucial importance. There are more than one billion Jordanian Dinars in circulation on the Israeli-occupied West Bank. And the government of Israeli prime minister Netanyahu is not proposing a quick and easy, or even a "respectable" solution for the Arab regimes involved in the settlement track (of peace, and regional economic "co-operation.")

The August uprising in Jordan should be seen in the context of these current and historical developments. It was hardly a product of "external machinations" as the regime has claimed (see below). It is an indication of motion which might be able to begin counteracting the current mood of defeat—provided it develops into a political movement with the courage and daring to rebuild the labor and popular struggles and if it can capture a broad, revolutionary vision beyond the restricted ideological vision of the Arab regimes.

Jordan's Islamic "opposition"

Jordan's largest political force, the Islamic Action Front Party (IAFP) is supposedly part of the parliamentary opposition to the "accords." But, in a leadership meeting prior to the increase in the price of bread, the party agreed "not to participate in or support any kind of disturbances against the government's bread price increase."

The IAFP's influence on the Jordanian political scene can be compared to a fatty deposit which blocks the flow of blood when the body tries to move and change. It has shown no interest in mobilizing people. Instead its rhetoric has served to deceive the masses and diffuse the anger of its rank and file membership and social base.

That social base is substantial among those who have nothing to hope for—due to their severe poverty combined with their social and national oppression. The IAFP represents the (illusory) hope that the dispossessed can find an alternative, decisive path toward change.

The Left and Nationalist Movements

Jordan needs a new left, which recognises the true nature of the IAFP, and stops trying to ally with it. The role of a truly progressive left party would involve addressing the base of the IAFP, and criticizing the opportunism of the party's leadership's—a leadership which will soon return to its seats in his majesty's government.

To regain control after the riots, King Hussein claimed that the protest was due to Iraqi intervention, via Jordan's pro-Iraqi Ba'ath nationalist party. Security forces arrested over 300 militants from the nationalist and left parties (Communist Party, Democratic People's Party, Popular Unity Party, Jordan Ansar Party, and Jordanian Community Party—Revolutionary Tendency).

The nationalist and leftist movements in the area have been dealt a defeat. They were defeated separately, but at the same time. This took place because, during the formation and early stages of the Arab liberation movement, they did not understand the revolutionary integration between their two causes, the national struggle and the class struggle. For some, this was due to sectarian nationalism. For others it was the result of Stalinism and dogmatism.

Hard as they are, these latest blows provide another chance to create a new vision for Jordan and for the general struggle of the Arab peoples against Zionism and imperialism.

As the proverb goes: "That which does not kill us makes us stronger." It is important for the evolution of any new movement that it learn in a radical and critical way. The most valuable lesson is still the process of the uprising itself, the unlimited reserves of the people to retaliate, and to succeed, and to try again.

These latest riots won't change the course of the history of the Middle East. But analysis of this struggle should indicate the major changes which are needed in the whole region. ★

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Third World gays fight back

The lesbian/gay movements that took off in Latin America in the 1970s stalled in the early 1980s. Blame AIDS, hard times, repression and the rise of the right.

A resurgence began in the late 1980s. And not just in Latin America. The movement has spread to new regions and new constituencies.

Thousands of people in the Third World are joining lesbian/gay movements. They sometimes borrow from movements in imperialist countries. But they are also highlighting distinctive identities of their own.

Peter Drucker

IN THE THIRD WORLD AS ELSEWHERE, sexual nonconformity is often seen as a threat, and lesbians and gay men can be scapegoats. Periods of crisis often intensify anti-gay repression. Since crises hit dependent countries harder, witchhunts in the Third World can be virulent.

Ironically, some in the Third World associate same-sex eroticism with the resented West. In fact, laws used to attack gay people are often leftovers from colonialism. Laws against sex between males on the books in much of Africa and Asia today are copies of an old British law repealed in Britain in 1967. Liberia's and Puerto Rico's anti-gay laws also remained in force after their US models began to be repealed.

Suppression of indigenous sexualities by imperialism has helped conceal authentic Third World same-sex traditions. "Sex tourism" from richer countries is by contrast all too visible, mostly male-female but sometimes male-male; it has become a potent symbol of exploitation. In reality the sex trade's customers are usually mostly Third World people themselves, and crackdowns usually victimize sex trade workers more than customers or pimps. But even the

domestic sex trade is sometimes a veritable slave trade. This has helped root anti-gay prejudice in popular consciousness. Third World regimes can exploit these prejudices, and attack lesbians and gay men as carriers of alien influences.

In reality Third World lesbians and gay men are rediscovering their countries' own traditions. This became clear, for example, when Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe banned the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) from the August 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair, condemning gays as un-African. Same-sex relationships are a longstanding tradition among shamans of Zimbabwe's majority Shona people. The public's reaction to Mugabe's ban "must have been a thorn in (his) flesh: the stand was literally paved with flowers". GALZ's membership reportedly doubled over the next several months. The book fair's organizers, who had yielded to Mugabe's ban in 1995, defied it in 1996, and the ban was overturned in court. Only an attack by thugs linked to Zimbabwe's ruling single party succeeding in driving GALZ from the 1996 fair.

Souls have no gender

Same-sex relationships in India have also found points of support in indigenous sexual traditions. When for example two Indian policewomen married each other in 1987 in a Hindu temple, they were purged from the police. But they were later reinstated: the police commissioner cited the Hindu definition of marriage as a "union of two souls" and said that souls have no gender!

The most vicious attacks on gays in the Third World have come from the most unpopular dictatorships. Between them, the Chilean, Argentinian and Brazilian juntas murdered thousands of gay people from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. The memory of these killings lives on among lesbian/gay

and human rights activists. During the March 1996 March for Memory, Truth and Justice organized by Argentinian NGOs, lesbian/gay groups bore witness to the destruction of the Argentinian gay movement of the early 1970s and carried a banner that read "Police brutality = today's dictatorship". Continuing arbitrary arrests of gays and raids of gay gathering places in Chile since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship have generated international protests.

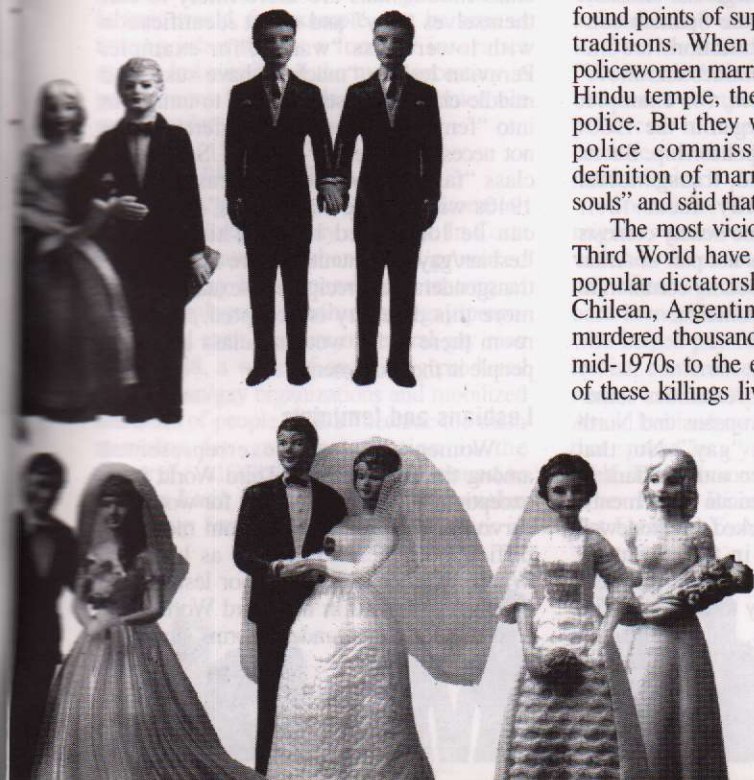
Same-sex eroticism has also been targeted by fundamentalist and communalist movements. Despite Iran's centuries-old same-sex traditions, its fundamentalist regime has justified a barbaric anti-gay campaign as anti-Western. Christian and even Buddhist fundamentalists have a similar approach, as shown for example by anti-gay raids by Bangkok's fundamentalist governor in 1987.

Repression breeds resistance

Anti-gay repression has increasingly been met with lesbian/gay resistance. The lesbian/gay movement exists today in dozens of countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. At an accelerated pace since the 1980s, lesbians and gay men are organizing in the Third World. They often redefine the concepts of "gay" and "lesbian" by rooting them in their own cultures and adopting or inventing words in their own languages.

Resistance to repression has been a particularly important factor in the rise of lesbian/gay movements in the Third World. Lesbians and gay men there have sometimes mobilized in defense of communities that are still barely emerging; self-contained, safe and accessible gay neighbourhoods in the Third World are rare. These communities' fragility helps explain why the first wave of Third World lesbian/gay liberation—beginning in Argentina in 1969, Mexico in 1971 and Puerto Rico in 1974—proved so vulnerable. The young movements found it hard to contend with economic adversity, like the Argentinian hyperinflation of the early 1970s and the Mexican debt crisis. While the dictatorship killed off the Argentinian movement after 1976, groups elsewhere in Latin America were weakened by police crackdowns, AIDS and the struggle for economic survival.

But after a few years lesbian/gay movements began to move forward again. The Argentinian movement, refounded after the dictatorship's fall, is now stronger than ever: a national gathering in April 1996 brought together 170 participants representing 20 different groups. The Brazilian movement too is large, diverse and once more on the rise. New movements have taken advantage of openings in Uruguay, Chile, El Salvador: in fact in every Latin American country except (apparently) Paraguay.





Lesbian/gay movements of the second wave that began in the late 1980s are different in some ways from earlier movements. Asia is catching up with Latin America in lesbian/gay politics; so is South Africa. Lesbian groups have become more important almost everywhere than they were in the first wave, thanks perhaps to women's increasing role in the wage economy and the resilience of feminist movements. AIDS, which helped decimate the first wave, is very often a key issue for the second wave.

Southeast and East Asia's economic growth since the 1980s may help explain why new groups have formed particularly there. Since 1992 an Indonesian Gay and Lesbian Network has grown up as an umbrella for dozens of groups. Lesbian/Gay Pride events have grown large in the Philippines lately, and the movement is gaining strength in Thailand. Just in the past year a gay group was founded in Sri Lanka. So far the political and ideological climate has imposed limits on the new Asian groups, however. The left is weaker in their countries than in Latin America and the space for political organizing narrow. Activities have so far consisted less of marches and demonstrations than of lower-key kinds of organizing.

Transgender

Third World lesbian/gay movements sometimes differ from North American or European movements because sexualities they are defending are different. While same-sex erotic behaviour exists almost everywhere, across boundaries of time and culture, its forms vary considerably. Different forms of same-sex sexuality existing in the Third World today are unique products of unique histories, beginning from the different indigenous sexualities that existed there before the age of European world conquest. The Islamic world (like ancient Greece, Rome, China and Japan), for example, has been characterized by forms of same-sex sexuality in which dominant men have sex with younger or lower-status males. Many pre-colonial African and American cultures, by contrast, had forms of "transgenderal" same-sex eroticism, in which some people adopted social and sexual roles of a different gender: transgender men could be other men's wives, for example.

European rulers often persecuted indigenous Third World same-sex eroticism. But both traditional forms of sexuality and forms that developed more recently are important in Third World subcultures and movements today. For example, transgenderal sexuality rooted in traditional

Dahomeyan and Yoruba religions of West Africa came on slave ships to the Caribbean and Brazil, where it has persisted underground in Christian-dominated cultures. Many gay people in Haiti find identities and a degree of acceptance in the "voudun" religion, as gay Brazilians do in "candomblé" and gay Cubans in "Santería".

Cape Malay people who came from Indonesia to South Africa's Cape are popularly believed to be the founders of the transgender "moffie" subculture in the Cape's "Coloured" community. Around Johannesburg there are transgender "skesanas", mostly among men of Zulu background—though it was the skesanas' butch "injonga" boyfriends who led the 1992 Johannesburg Lesbian/Gay Pride March.²

The gay conquistador

Forms of same-sex sexuality that first appeared in Europe have also taken root in the Third World. Europe has its own transgenderal traditions, which arose with the decline of feudalism and the rise of towns. Beginning as early as the fourteenth century, transgender men formed sexual undergrounds in many European cities. Their kind of transgenderal sexuality, which came to Latin America with the Spanish and Portuguese, was different from indigenous Third World transgenderalisms: it was mostly urban; cut off from rather than linked to traditional family structures; associated with prostitution more than with marriage; and condemned by instead of part of the dominant religion. This European-originated, commodified transgenderalism persists today in much of Latin America. Transgender people include not only transvestites and transsexuals, but women who are called "butches", "machas" or "colonels" and men who are called "fairies", "locas", "bichas" or many other names.

Transgender people lived in South and Southeast Asia for millennia before Europeans arrived: "hijras" in India, "kathoey" in Thailand, "waria" in many regions of pre-Islamic Indonesia, and transgender shamans in the Philippines before the Spanish conquest. These indigenous traditions are important for lesbian/gay identities and movements today: in Indonesia, for example, organization of "waria" began in the 1960s with official government sponsorship. But as capitalism has taken hold, transgenderal forms have grown away from their traditional roots. Transvestite beauty contests and brothels were probably not part of Asian traditions, but they have become common in Asia now as well as Latin America.

Sexuality and class

Third World same-sex sexualities sometimes differ from what Europeans and North Americans recognize as "gay". Not that transgenderalism has been unimportant in European and North American movements: it was transvestites who sparked the Stonewall Rebellion! But history in the advanced capitalist countries has pushed a different form of same-sex sexuality to the fore. With the bourgeois revolutions, industrialization

and urbanization, sexual undergrounds grew quickly, notions about romantic love and desire spread, and the number of people able to live independently on their wages increased. These changes gave rise late in the nineteenth century to the concept of "homosexuality", which for the first time included not just transgender people but *all* people who took part in same-sex activity. The transgenderal pattern, polarized between "masculine" and "feminine" partners, gradually gave way to a more "reciprocal" pattern. At the same time, the new pattern marked off lesbians and gay men in a new way from the majority, now explicitly defined as "heterosexual". Reciprocal lesbian/gay sexuality spread at first mainly among middle-class people and only later in the twentieth century among working-class people. But by now it is hegemonic in the lesbian/gay communities of Europe, North America and Australasia, where transvestites and transsexuals are often marginalized or excluded.

Gay in the ghetto

Reciprocal lesbian/gay sexuality has come later and more unevenly to the Third World, probably because of later growth of cities; more traditional roles for women; fewer social programmes, leading to greater dependence on families; and low incomes, which make it difficult to live or spend time in commercialized gay neighbourhoods. Economic dependency seems to have delayed the emergence of lesbian/gay communities, and helped shape communities that look somewhat different from those in advanced capitalist countries: somewhat less commercialized, somewhat less ghettoized, and sexually distinctive.

These differences between dependent and imperialist countries are especially marked among the Third World's working-class and poor populations. Middle-class people are more likely to be aware of and imitate European and North American trends; the working class and poor are more likely to stick to older, transgenderal forms. Middle-class Indonesians are more likely to call themselves "gay" and reject identification with lower-class "waria", for example. Peruvian lesbian "machas" have suspected middle-class feminists of trying to turn them into "femmes". These class differences are not necessarily eternal—in the US working-class "fairies" co-existed at least into the 1940s with middle-class "gays"—but they can be long-lived in the Third World. Lesbian/gay communities there include both transgenderal and reciprocal sexualities. The more this diversity is accepted, the more room there is for working-class and poor people in the movement.

Lesbians and feminists

Women are always overrepresented among the poor, and the Third World is no exception. Where it is difficult for women to survive economically apart from men, it is difficult for them to survive as lesbians. Where working-class and poor lesbians do manage to survive in the Third World, they tend to adopt transgenderal forms similar to

those adopted by working-class and poor gay men. "Butch/femme" relationships seem more common in the Third World today than in Europe or North America. In countries where women are married off young, lesbian couples are likely to have children from earlier heterosexual marriages, with all the financial and legal problems that can bring. These women sustain themselves by building rich lesbian subcultures: for example, sports brings together butch lesbians from Peru to Soweto to India.

Asian lesbians

In East and Southeast Asia, women's growing economic role seems to have created new possibilities for lesbians. Lesbian groups with feminist roots are an important aspect of the new Asian organizing, for example in Thailand, Indonesia and Taiwan. In India the rise of public lesbianism after the 1987 marriage of two policewomen provoked debates in feminist groups. Feminists faced with the issue of lesbianism are likely at first to fear the stigma (as if feminists did not face enough prejudice already). But they usually come to understand that lesbians' struggles are an important part of their own. Argentinian lesbians' role in the women's movement was shown in March 1996, for example, when dozens of lesbians from several groups marched as a lively contingent on International Women's Day. The International Lesbian Information Service helped make sure that lesbian issues were prominent at the 1985 UN women's conference in Nairobi, and again ten years later in Beijing.

In the Third World as elsewhere, love between women is often seen as sexuality escaping male control, and repressed accordingly. Many forms of women's oppression can in fact be seen as in part ways of repressing lesbianism; enforcement of heterosexuality for women can be seen "as a means of assuring male rights of physical, economical, and emotional access."³ Female genital mutilation in some parts of the Islamic world, for example, can be seen as among other things a form of insurance against lesbianism, all the more necessary in polygamous households where women are segregated together.

AIDS and organizing

Among gay men, AIDS has become an organizing issue in many countries. In Costa Rica, for example, when AIDS provoked raids on gay bars, mandatory testing of public employees, a rash of anti-gay propaganda and even murders of several gay men in 1987-88, a wave of organizing produced four lesbian/gay organizations and mobilized hundreds of people. AIDS "became the main stimulus for gay organization in the country."⁴ AIDS activism has continued to grow in Latin America, with a Guatemalan gay group forming around AIDS issues in

1989, Act Up groups arising in cities like Buenos Aires, and the Chilean AIDS Prevention Council challenging discrimination against HIV-positive workers. In Asia, Pink Triangle in Malaysia began in 1987 in response to AIDS, while Action for AIDS in Singapore and the Fraternity for AIDS Cessation in Thailand (FACT) emerged in 1989 as their countries' first largely-gay public groups. In Africa, an openly gay AIDS foundation has recently been founded in Kenya. The eleventh International AIDS Conference in Vancouver in 1996 confirmed that with anti-AIDS drugs becoming more effective, funding for treatment in the Third World is the most important and most shamefully neglected requirement for avoiding millions of needless deaths.

Solidarity and its discontents

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and International Lesbian Information Secretariat (ILIS) have supported Third World groups both morally and financially. This solidarity has proved most fruitful when it has led to Third World lesbians and gay men organizing their own regional networks, as in Latin America and Asia. Lesbian networking at the 1983 Latin American Feminist Gathering, the 1985 Nairobi conference, and the 1986 ILIS conference helped lead to Latin American and Caribbean Lesbian Gatherings in 1987, 1990 and 1992, as well as the first Asian Lesbian Network conference in 1990. There have also been Asian gay conferences in 1986, 1988 and 1990 and a Caribbean lesbian/gay conference for the first time in 1996, with 14 countries represented. Lesbian/gay people inspired by regional conferences have founded new national groups, which in turn strengthen the regional networks.

Sometimes the disproportionate wealth and influence of lesbian/gay groups in imperialist countries can lead to tensions. Latin America and the Philippines are particularly open to European and North American influence, and also justifiably sensitive about it. One Mexican lesbian has commented, "We want lesbians from the U.S. and Canada because we import your theories. When a political movement happens in your countries ... we know eventually it's going to reach Mexico."⁵

Sometimes Third World lesbian/gay immigrants return to their countries of origin with new ideas and experiences. Those who stay often organize in solidarity with people back home, like the US lesbian/gay Latino/as who helped pay for the first Latin American lesbian conference, or the lesbian/gay South Asians in North America who founded South Asian lesbian/gay organizations in 1985-86 that spread in a year or two to South Asia itself. This too sometimes leads to problems. When Puerto Ricans and other Latinos from Act Up New York came to Puerto Rico to

organize around AIDS in 1990, tensions arose with Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico. At the Asian Lesbian Network conference in 1990, tensions over the participation of Asian women from Europe and North America led to the creation of a separate group, Asian Lesbians Outside Asia.

Lesbians, gays and the left

The left's role was important from the first decades of the lesbian/gay movement. The Bolsheviks, adopting the position staked out by German Social Democrats, decriminalized same-sex eroticism in the Soviet criminal code in 1922, and took part in the pro-gay rights World League for Sexual Reform throughout the 1920s. But given that Soviet Russia had no lesbian/gay movement, the new regime's policies were in some respects contradictory; and the left worldwide regressed on sexual politics from the 1930s on. The Soviet regime was anti-gay from Stalin on; the Chinese regime from the beginning. Stalinist and Maoist parties in the Third World not only justified Soviet and Chinese repression, they argued for similar repression in their own countries. While the rise of lesbian/gay movements and the falling prestige of the Soviet and Chinese regimes made progress possible, the tradition of bigotry is still not dead. Sendero Luminoso in Peru has reportedly executed lesbian/gay people, for example.

Cuba

Even the Cuban revolution, which inspired a generation of non-Stalinist leftists, helped associate the left with anti-gay persecution. Cuba's Stalinist Popular Socialist Party actively promoted anti-gay policies, and US imperialism backed a counter-revolutionary underground that ensured that "private space was invaded as never before."⁶ With many gay people confined to camps in Cuba in 1965-67 and still barred from the party and the professions in the 1970s, leftists elsewhere who identified with Cuba often kept their distance from lesbian/gay liberation. In Argentina in 1973, for example, when right-wing posters linked the Fourth International-affiliated ERP to homosexuality and drugs, the left responded by chanting, "We're not faggots, we're not junkies." Cuba has grown more tolerant since the 1980s: drawing on more enlightened East German sex education materials, ending forced quarantine for people with HIV, permitting gay-positive images in plays and movies, making possible a more visible lesbian/gay community and even (since 1994) attempts at organizing an open gay group. And the left elsewhere in Latin America now thinks more for itself.

In the 1970s, popular upsurges against dictatorships converged with waves of lesbian/gay organizing and fostered more pro-gay thinking among radicals. Uprisings in Argentina in 1969 and 1971 coincided



★ Lesbian and gay liberation

with the rise of lesbian/gay organizing. The Brazilian Workers Party (PT) adopted pro-gay programmes from its origins in the late 1970s: PT support has helped pass gay rights ordinances in several of Brazil's major cities and push a same-sex marriage law forward in parliament. The Mexican lesbian/gay movement, which brought thousands into the streets in the late 1970s, linked up with the PRT (Mexican section of the FI), which ran lesbian/gay leaders on its slate in the 1982 elections.

Nicaragua

The Nicaraguan revolution also ended up having a positive impact. At first the FSLN was hostile towards the country's same-sex subcultures. In 1987 harassment by the interior ministry helped break up a lesbian/gay group that included FSLN members. But lesbian/gay Sandinistas—encouraged by FSLN clashes with the church hierarchy, the rise of a women's movement, and solidarity from the US lesbian/gay Victoria Mercado Brigade—managed to change the climate. In 1988 the ministry of health backed a gay-organized AIDS collective. In 1989 there was an open lesbian/gay contingent in the revolution's tenth anniversary celebration. Though the FSLN's 1990 defeat was a setback, in other ways it led to new openings: as one lesbian FSLN activist said, "When we lost the election ... that's when I began to HAVE a personal life." ⁷ The first public lesbian/gay pride celebration took place in 1991, and the FSLN was the backbone of the fight against the Chamorro government's 1992 proposal for a new anti-gay law. Nicaraguan lesbian/gay organizing was echoed in El Salvador, where lesbians with roots in the FMLN formed a group.

The lesbian/gay movement also converged with the national liberation movement in South Africa, where lesbian/gay organizing began in black townships after the 1976 Soweto uprising. The treason trial of gay ANC member Simon Nkoli led to a split in the lesbian/gay movement: the radical Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) and Organization for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA) were born. Nkoli's open gayness and European and North American lesbian/gay solidarity helped lead to OLGA membership in the United Democratic Front in 1990. The ANC came out in support of lesbian/gay rights in 1991, and made South Africa the first country in the world to write lesbian/gay rights into its constitution.

Towards liberation

So far, despite the experiences of early revolutionary Russia and Sandinista Nicaragua, no revolution has fully embraced lesbian/gay liberation. But as lesbian/gay movements advance in the Third World, the left is learning. Lesbian/gay movements for

their part have to challenge capitalism in order to achieve full liberation, since only a massive transfer of wealth from North to South and rich to poor can create the material prerequisites for sexual freedom: jobs to free youth from dependence on traditional families or the sex trade, housing to give relationships the space they need, health care in order to stop AIDS, and much more. Together the left and lesbian/gay movements can enable Third World struggles to grow over into a global struggle and struggles against sexual repression to grow over into sexual liberation. Bypassing the ghettoization characteristic of European and North American lesbian/gay communities, Third World movements could shape new visions of sexual liberation.

Time to act

For now those who favour sexual liberation must seek out, learn about, learn from and actively support struggles that arise in their countries. The possibilities and tasks of lesbian/gay liberation in Third World countries will vary; they cannot be deduced from any overarching strategy or dictated from the outside by any political organization. But in general, sexual radicalism has to go together with coalition-building, and unitary revolutionary organizations have to be built alongside independent lesbian/gay movements. Elements of a programme for lesbian/gay liberation that are likely to be appropriate (at least in part) in many Third World countries can be tentatively suggested:

- Encouragement of self-organization and self-determination of oppressed people as key to the solution of ANY problem;
- As steps toward the liberation of women in general and lesbians in particular: women's right to work, equal pay, and economic independence; women's right to marry according to their free choice, or not to marry at all, and to divorce freely; women's freedom to have or not have children, with or apart from men, and to keep their children if they choose to leave men; women's right to be in public, dressed as they choose, without harassment; an end to female genital mutilation;
- An end to fundamentalist and communalist persecution, through movements uniting gays with others who suffer from it; separation of the state from religion;
- In keeping with AIDS activists' 1989 Montreal manifesto, creation of an international fund for AIDS prevention, education and treatment in the Third World, funded from the North and controlled in the South, particularly by people with HIV;

- An end to repression or harassment of sex workers; alleviation of pressures pushing people towards the sex trade by giving them the means to live as they choose;
- An end to police harassment, violence and extortion; an end to discrimination based on people's sexuality or gender role;
- Building of links among lesbian/gay movements in the Third World; freedom of international movement and communication, including asylum rights for people persecuted for their sexuality and equal immigration rights for same-sex partners; and
- Transformation of families through recognition of diversity, including equal recognition of same-sex relationships.

Meanwhile, we have to fight within the left. In the words of Mexican Fourth Internationalists, we need to "live in everyday alertness" so as to resist "the influence of the oppressive ideas, attitudes and practices of the surrounding society".⁸ ★

Notes

New Left Review recently published another article by Peter Drucker, "In the Tropics There Is No Sin": Sexuality and Gay-Lesbian Movements in the Third World", *NLR* #218, July/August 1996, pp. 75-101. He is currently editing *Same-sex sexualities and popular struggles in the Third World*, an anthology forthcoming from Gay Men's Press, London, in 1998.

1. This article uses the words "lesbian" and "gay" to refer to people organizing around same-sex sexualities in the Third World, as people in the Third World often do themselves. But it will make clear that same-sex sexualities in the Third World are not necessarily the same as in Europe or North America.
2. Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron eds., *Defiant Desire*, Johannesburg, 1994, 28, 164-65.
3. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence" (1980), in Ann Snitow et al. eds., *Powers of Desire*, New York, 1983, 183, 191.
4. Jacobo Schifter Sikora, *La Formación de una Contracultura*, San José, 1989, 119. In many parts of the Third World AIDS is spread mostly by heterosexual sex.
5. Kim Irving, "1st Latin American and Caribbean lesbian conference", *Rites* (Sept. 1987), 12.
6. Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich, "Homosexuality, homophobia and revolution", in Martin Duberman et al. eds., *Hidden from History*, 447-48. Ian Lumdsen's *Machos, Maricones and Gays*, Philadelphia, 1996, is an excellent history of lesbians & gays under the Cuban revolution.
7. Margaret Randall, "To change our own reality and the world", *Signs* v 18 n 4 (summer 1993), 921.
8. Max Mejía, "Introducción", in PRT, *Liberación Homosexual*, Mexico, 1983, p.4.



Gay pride in France

Over the last three or four years, the lesbian/gay movement in France has become a steadily more active force.

Jean-Louis Touton

LAST YEAR 80,000 PEOPLE—LESBIANS, GAYS, or people committed to equal rights and fighting against the “moral order”—demonstrated in Paris. Many demonstrations took place in the provinces as well. Again this year, the struggle is becoming steadily broader, the movement’s fabric is getting stronger, and lesbian, gay and bisexual people are acquiring the means to have an impact on issues that concern them.

Lesbian and Gay Pride (at the end of June) has become a social and political phenomenon, bringing together discussions, festivals, and shows of force. The minimal victories that have been won—reductions for gay couples on the railways; the brand-new possibility of registering domestic partnerships at (some) left-wing city halls and even a few (secular, republican, liberal-inspired) right-wing city halls—would have been impossible without the relationship of forces that the lesbian/gay movement has created.

The Gay and Lesbian Centre in Paris is always full. Each month new groups are formed to represent one interest or another. It may be useful to mention those among them that seem most political and militant.

The movement landscape

SOS Homophobia was born two years ago from the desire to create a hotline against homophobic violence in France. An article in the daily *Libération* bears witness to the importance of this kind of watchdog institution, faced with a resurgence of anti-gay violence from the police. In the Marais, a consumerist Paris neighbourhood where gays are well-established, the rainbow flags that have spread from the US movement to the rest of the world have had to be removed from street windows. Right-wing, openly puritanical “neighbours” associations are calling for “law and order”, with all the discriminatory practices that that implies: police checks in the bars, insults, humiliation of gay people and people with AIDS.

It’s already been several months since, without much reaction from the parliamentary ranks of the official left, right-wing minister Toubon publicly ridiculed the proposal for a cohabitation agreement (whose name keeps being changed) that would be open to people without regard to sex or sexual orientation. In the good old bourgeois, Catholic (or Stalinist) tradition, Toubon explained that all this could only “disturb public order”. Who protested? Who got upset? Not even as many people as joined with ACT UP to try to save an undocumented



“Gay Pride,” Paris 1993

Zairean, Marie-Louise, from deportation. (Sick herself, Marie-Louise has an HIV-positive French child who’s being treated in France.) This is why the Gay and Lesbian Centre has to continue centralising information from all the gay groups and, together with Lesbian and Gay Pride, create the tools to amplify the collective force that it represents.

Then there are the Research and Study Group on Homosociability and Homosexualities (GREH) and ZOO, a brand-new group working on the social construction of gender: the sexed identity disconnected from biological sex through which identity can be redefined beyond the reductive polarities of masculine and feminine, gay and straight. They are working to bring to France the US-originated problematics of gay/lesbian/women/gender studies and the gay and feminist academic left across the Atlantic. They are sponsoring a seminar together on “imaginative and symbolic strategies in the age of AIDS”.

Gay Europe heads for Paris

Of course, the lesbian/gay movement operates on a European scale. After this year’s Europride demonstration in Copenhagen, next year it will be Paris’ turn to welcome an expected 200,000 lesbian/gay pride participants. But while Copenhagen, like New York two years ago during the lesbian/gay march on the UN, participated by providing space and financing exhibitions, Paris City Hall contents itself with asking for discretion so that homophobes will not be confirmed in their intolerance. In short, the right in power in Paris and in France, taking their cue from the lamentable inaction of the

various SP governments, are worsening a bit a situation that was already completely untenable.

For this reason, the theme of lesbian and gay pride this year is recognition for lesbian/gay couples. The major battle is thus for democratic rights and citizens’ rights, which we support without hesitation, along with extension to lesbians and gays of all the “universal” rights traditionally reserved for straights (insemination, adoption, etc.). It is urgent to mobilise the radical left and social movements in order to support this struggle, which is beginning with its own specific, unknown and often misunderstood mode of expression: asking real questions about this society of exclusion, “moral order” and discrimination. Links between oppressed groups can and must be strengthened. This is something that ZOO is trying to do: blaze a trail for new political practices on the part of the social movements, in a world where the form and content of struggles is changing profoundly.

Tension on the left

The Marxists of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) were the first to protect gay contingents in an organized way, deploying its marshals in 1970s May Day marches to protect gay demonstrators against the cops and (Communist-led) CGT trade unionists. The LCR has tried and often succeeded in avoiding every kind of macho workerism. We have always acknowledged the political priority of carrying on the feminist fight. But it’s true that in the last fifteen years, since the dissolution of the LCR’s national lesbian/gay commission, the end of lesbian/gay commissions in the trade unions, and the physical death from AIDS of many gay leaders in the 1980s and ‘90s (including some of the most radical figures, like Foucault, Hocquenghem and many others), we have like the rest of the left neglected this fight. Even if it has taken an integrationist form today, the lesbian/gay movement lays the basis for a different kind of society, and particularly for new social relationships, often focussing on the critique of the very idea of power.

Queer culture

In fact, in order to counter the subversive effect of the lesbian/gay couple, the dominant morality often need only depict the world in terms of redesigned binary oppositions. Instead of men and women, we now hear about actives and passives, “diesel dykes” and “queens”. We have to reject these categories, or rather re-integrate them into a politicised culture, form of expression, and esthetic project that plays with gendered identity. ZOO has imported from the US one of the most subversive forms of political combat of the last thirty years: queer culture.

For ZOO, “visibility is nothing without

readability, without re-examining the construction of the self by others, without a critique of the epistemological and historical facts that are at the root of the social and cultural categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality". This is a good critique of the artificial polarization of sexualities. Yes, we need a strong lesbian/gay movement, as well as a powerful women's movement, just as the undocumented workers' movement is launching a new challenge to the world order. But all these movements ultimately succeed only if they try to transcend themselves, if for example the categories of gay and



straight can ultimately disappear in order to make way for simply human beings. The social and sexual divisions of space, the representation of reality, domestic roles and labour must disappear. The very categories of "illegals", "immigrants", and "homosexuals" are only transitional forms in the emergence of a world in which, as the state withers away, the classification of "ZOO animals" will no longer apply. Instead of society's being divided into social groups separated from one another, all communities will be able to live out their specific experiences in a non-exclusive way, without hatred of others.

In short, ZOO is also a way of advancing towards the union of the different "species" that constitute it. "Queers are caught between the desire to affirm a new identity—I am queer—and the desire to reject any notion of identity that would fence us in—I don't give a shit about established categories, I don't need your approval, get out of my way'."

Doesn't this desire converge with our conception of the revolution? Of course! Everyone should get in touch with the movement, go to the demos, take part in the debates, because now more than ever, the division is not between gays and straights but between those of us who want to fight, and the rest. ★

Remember when...

A few bound collection of International Viewpoint are still available at the special price of £5/\$ US 10 per year (only 1975, 76, 90, 91, 92, 94, and 95 are still available), plus 20% postage charge for orders of less than 5 volumes.

Euro-March for jobs

PARTICIPANTS at the September preparation meeting for next year's *European Marches against Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Social Exclusion* expressed a number of complementary points to the Florence Appeal. These elements have been integrated in this text and will be integrated, alongside the Florence appeal, into a Manifesto which will be presented at the Brussels meeting on 1-2 February 1997.

- The final document will need sense, power and clarity, so that it can mobilise the unemployed, people hit by job insecurity and exclusion, and all those who struggle at their side. The document should clearly criticise competition, the search for higher and higher profits, and neo-liberal logic, which, in Europe and the world, is causing a real social, human and ecological disaster.
- We would like the Brussels document to develop certain elements of the Florence Appeal, such as the right to housing, citizenship for those of immigrant origin, the "regularisation" of the situation of the "paper-less" (sans-papiers), the universal right to health-care, and a decent income, including for young people. It should also pose the question of the environment, and the organisation of work today. It should call for solidarity with the people of the South and the East. This implies refusing any "fortress Europe," closed to the world, and closed in upon itself.
- The European March against Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Exclusion will be a social mobilisation, an international struggle which seeks to realise a package of demands. At the European level, this movement is open to associations, trade union organisations and individuals who see a place for themselves within this project. It will be autonomous of political organisations and institutions. While respecting this autonomy, it will be open to dialogue, and can receive the support of all those movements which struggle against social injustice, unemployment, and exclusion."

The Calendar:

Preliminary European meetings on unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion are scheduled for 1-2 February 1997 in Brussels. Five hundred persons are expected (50-100 for each country).

From March to June 1997 a monthly newspaper will be produced. It will report on the general situation and specific initiatives in each country, and the particular points of view of the participating organisations. The European Secretariat continually updates its files on signatory organisations. We will regularly issue a list, and a one-page

description of each group's history and activities. This list will be available in several languages. A list might also be drawn up of individual speakers, specifying the theme of their talks and the languages they speak.

From April to June 1997 organisation committees in each country will organise initiatives: press conferences, seminars, demonstrations, "human chains", concerts,



and, of course, the marches. Symbolic actions such as occupying vacant housing, occupying unemployment and "temp" agencies, "sit-ins" in front of ministries, can be programmed for the same day in different countries.

The marches get under way on the 15th of April. There will be simultaneous events in each country. Our objective is to gather more than 30 thousand people from different European countries at a demonstration in Amsterdam, probably on Saturday the 14th of June. A series of events is planned to mark the European Union Intergovernmental Conference, which will meet in Amsterdam on 16-17 June.

In October 1997, an evaluation meeting will be held. We will prepare further Europe-wide initiatives and consolidate the network.

Organisation

Until the preliminary meetings in Brussels, the secretariat will be assured by the French Delegation. Mailings will go out directly from the European Secretariat to all Appeal signatories. In return, we ask for a financial contribution to cover mailing expenses until January 1997: small associations: 200 French francs - small trade unions: 500 FF; big trade unions: 1,000 FF. Make your cheque payable to "Marches Europeennes 97" ★

Source: Synthesis of organisational discussions at the Paris co-ordination meeting of 21/22 September.

Union leaders sabotage Liverpool dockers' strike

THE LIVERPOOL DOCKS DISPUTE IS reaching its first anniversary. The dockers were sacked when they refused to cross picket lines put in place by contract workers. This was a clear provocation set up by their management in order to attack the only remaining British port with a strongly organised workforce.

Since then the dockers have mounted an effective campaign of defiance, both in Liverpool and further abroad. They have done so despite the full weight of British anti-trade union legislation and in the face of attempts to buy them off.

The dockers' action remains unofficial. British anti-union law would make the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) open to legal action if they were to recognise the strike. But, according to *Socialist Outlook* newspaper, the TGWU is threatening to withdraw even the minimal support allowed by Britain's reactionary legislation. And while the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) has given token public support, behind the scenes they have done everything possible to frustrate any real action in solidarity with the Liverpool dockers.

Despite this betrayal, the strikers have built a campaign garnering support from across the country, though this remains weak and has been ultimately unable to close down the Liverpool docks except for short periods. Recognising this weakness, the strikers have gone abroad to gather support from dockers world-wide. With their own fine tradition of support for other dockers in struggle, they have relied on rank and file contacts.

The dockers have inspired solidarity action across Europe, North America and Australasia. Even when this involves no more than delaying the loading/unloading of Liverpool-bound ships for a few hours, it has caused significant problems for some of the shipping lines using Liverpool and caused them to go elsewhere.

It has proved possible for the Liverpool dockers to mount effective, "legal", pickets in New York which would be "illegal" and ineffective in Liverpool. The irony has not been lost on the British labour movement.

This is the key to the importance of what is, in itself, a relatively small dispute. But it continues to have a major political impact within the British labour movement, both because it shows that it is possible to defy the anti-trade union legislation and because it highlights why such defiance is necessary.

Many dockers in other countries face similar problems. The bold, direct networking of the Liverpool strikers has helped build an unprecedented and inspirational level of rank and file organising.

The far left has not made best use of its international contacts. We should redouble efforts to build solidarity with the striking Liverpool dockers! ★

Pete Robinson



The dockers, and their partners' organisation Women on the Waterfront, have put up a magnificent struggle, resisting several attempts by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to buy them out and building impressive international solidarity. Liverpool-based ships have been blacked and delayed and MHDC's profits have been hit.

What a contrast with the minimal public support, and behind-the-scenes sabotage of the leaders of the British and international trade unions which are supposed to represent the strikers.

Pete Firmin and Mark Harrison

LEADERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT workers Federation (ITF) are deeply hostile to the independent international rank and file contacts pursued by the Liverpool dockers. In September, several European dockers unions pulled out of the (striker-sponsored) international dockers' conference in Liverpool after receiving last-minute faxes from ITF General Secretary David Cockcroft. Cockcroft was upset that direct links, international picketing, and actions like the occupations of gantry cranes in Montreal were taking place without his advance knowledge. The ITF has assured union leaders abroad that officials in the strikers union, the powerful Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) will soon end the strike.

The TGWU, despite the "left" majority on its executive, will not give official support because the dockers' action is illegal, under the Tories' anti-union laws. Ironically, much of the publicity drive by dockers abroad would have been illegal here.

In clear opposition to the strategy developed and still supported by a large majority of the strikers, the TGWU is seeking a settlement short of full reinstatement. In August, the TGWU's powerful Finance and General Purposes committee refused to meet with the stewards. And in early September, the union undermined the strikers' position by calling for negotiations "without preconditions."

There are threats that the TGWU National Executive will give the dockers an ultimatum: accept the deal they have already rejected, or lose all TGWU backing. Loss of TGWU support would mean exclusion from the TGWU's Liverpool office, and possibly the TGWU informing other unions and dockers unions internationally that they have withdrawn support, making it harder to win solidarity action.

This scandalous threat by the TGWU leadership is made easier because the dockers have never really challenged the TGWU's lack of support. Instead, the dockers' leaders have argued that they are stronger without official backing. This is rather strange. In early September, TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris threatened the union's delegates at the annual conference of Britain's Trade Union Congress with disciplinary action if they moved that the dockers be allowed to address congress. This would have been more difficult for him to do if the dispute were official. When they have been allowed access to trade union conferences, dockers have won generous political and financial support.

Throughout the strike, the TGWU has given only token support. Union chairman Bill Morris occasionally speaks at rallies, and supposedly collects money for the dockers. Very little of this money has been seen by the strikers. Morris's main activity has been trying to sell the dockers out. He has brokered deals with the MDHC behind the dockers' backs and then tried to get them to

accept. Fortunately, the dockers have stood firm and repeatedly rejected union-sponsored deals in which many of them would lose their jobs.

For the dockers the forthcoming talks with the port authorities (MDHC) must seek the reinstatement of all men sacked in the dispute, with the reinstated men taking up their jobs as dockers rather than re-deployment into ancillary areas. Those who wish to leave the industry must then be offered voluntary severance. TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris says publicly that negotiations cannot go beyond the 329 men directly employed by MDHC last September, and that, in any case, re-employment does not mean a return to work as a docker, but to any ancillary job proposed by the employer. This is exactly the same framework for talks as the MDHC itself proposes!

The employers are furious that the international blockade has done enough damage to convince shipping lines around the world that Liverpool is a 'strike-bound port'. For years, they have been able to limit militant activity by dealing with the national union, than with the Liverpool stewards who directly represent waterfront workers.

Union leaders are concerned that a rank-and-file initiative could generate so much support. They know that it will be very difficult to regain control over the union membership, and impose a moderate "solution." Anti-union legislation brought in over a decade of Thatcherism limits the union's room for manoeuvre. As a result, the TGWU leadership has played a cautious hand, hardly publicising the lockout. "Which side are they on?" the strikers are asking. ★

Source: *Socialist Outlook* #108, 21 September 1996, and LabourNet (Chris Bailly)

International dockers conference



THE LIVERPOOL LOCKOUT WAS ONE YEAR old on 28th September. Several weeks earlier, dockers from 12 ports in eight countries' attended a rank and file conference in Liverpool, called to debate tactics and

refine the strategy of what has become an international struggle.

The ITF and its affiliates were asked to work towards an international day of action on September 28th.

Delegates agreed to seek a co-ordinated campaign to hit all ACL/CAST traffic and containers, along with other shipping consortiums using Liverpool and Medway ports.

Swedish and Danish dockers pledged to join Liverpool strikers in visits to Germany, while French dockers promised to renew approaches to their colleagues in Belgium and Holland.

A rolling programme of action in Northern Europe, Southern Europe, America, and Canada will seek support for boycotts, go-slow, and all other methods familiar to dockers which affect productivity and efficiency on Liverpool port's main remaining clients.

Following a Swedish initiative [IV#279, June 1996], delegates resolved to introduce weekly collections for the Liverpool strikers "in all ports where such activities are consistent with labour movement tradition."

Conference delegates signed a joint appeal with the sacked Liverpool dockers, calling on the ITF and its affiliated unions to contribute to the strike fund. They also recognised the need to formalise the conferences which have been held this weekend and last February, aimed at achieving a "democratic alliance of dock workers internationally." While both resolutions await ratification in the various organisations represented last weekend, delegates expressed their personal commitment to pursue these objectives. ★

Note

1. The conference was attended by delegates from trade unions and/or port workers organisations in Australia, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Spain, Sweden and the USA. Delegates represented port workers from Sydney, Montreal, Arhus, Copenhagen, Le Havre, Tarragona, Bilbao, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Portland (Oregon), St. Johns (New Brunswick), and, of course, Liverpool.

• Vive la solidarité!

Trish Barratt describes her visit to France for Women on the Waterfront

"CHRISTIAN MET US AT THE AIRPORT in Paris... from then on our feet never touched the ground. We spent most of that day with railway workers from the CGT discussing the docks dispute and exchanging experiences. The big Villeneuve St. George railway centre was one of the most important during the strike last November and December. We were given a medal commemorating the 50th anniversary of railway workers' solidarity and shown around the railway repair works. Freddie also went to speak to postal workers who were striking the following day. I couldn't help thinking of the postal workers back home who were about to go on strike. There was also a meeting with Allfortville unemployment committee.

We met staff at the SUD education union offices and were welcomed at a union mass meeting. In the afternoon we were interviewed by Radio Paris Pluriel. Next day we took our banner on the 50,000 strong *manifestation* against privatisation organised by railway unions...

At a CGT trade union conference in Rouen we spoke about the dockers dispute and there was a great deal of interest. We also met Le Havre dock workers and arranged to meet them the following week. A meeting organised by the CGT, "CFDT in struggle" [see IV#281, October 1996] and SUD-Rail unions was supported by factory unions (Rhône-Poulenc, Renault) and the students' union.

Back in Paris [...] we went to a one-day festival organised by the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR -- Fourth International), where we sold our T-shirts, books etc. The *fête* ended with a concert by Renaud, a popular French singer. He told the audience that sacked Liverpool dockers were present, and asked them to give generously. At the end of the concert we collected £700 (\$1,090). ★

For more information...

Messages of support should be sent to : MPSSC, c/o TGWU, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool L3 8EQ.
© +44 151 207 3388. Fax 298 1044.
www.gn.apc.org/labournet/docks/index.html.

For latest news on the strike and solidarity activity contact *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2AA.
© +44 181 800 7460; fax 880 1846.
E-mail <outlook@gm.apc.org>

The message to workers everywhere

"LIVERPOOL DOCKERS HAVE BEEN LOCKED OUT by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. Most of the 500 dockers have given their working lives to the docks; many have between 30 to 40 years' service. The fault lies squarely on the shoulders of the employers who stand for Tory government policy - "a low wage/high profit" Britain.

In 1989, the government abolished the National Dock Labour Scheme, taking away every right won in trade union struggle for over 100 years. Backed by the anti-trade union laws and huge government financial handouts, the port employers succeeded in defeating the strike, smashing union recognition, cutting wages and introducing part-time casual work in all British ports, except in Liverpool.

This was the only port where a trade union force of dockers continued to exist which was not casualised. But whereas before the 1989 strike there were over 1,000 dockers in the Mersey ports, at the end of that year only 400 remained.

Since 1989 dockers have had mass disciplining, falling safety standards and constant threats of dismissal. Shop stewards were de-recognised and union rights undermined.

Four years ago 80 dockers' sons were taken on by Torside Limited on different terms from the other dockers. This was agreed only because the dockers were concerned about the future of the port and the future of trade unionism in the industry. It was through an attack on this group that the present lockout was engineered. Torside Limited 'offered' redundancies, saying they wanted to cut the workforce by 20 and employ agency, part-time labour. There was a unanimous strike ballot. The employers backed down. But only until the legal 28-day time limit for the ballot was used up. Then they organised a provocation, sacking all 80 dockers who put up a picket line which the other dockers would not cross. All the dockers were then locked out.

The dockers' crime is that they fought to protect jobs and help young workers to get a future. The dockers' fight is for regular employment, for the conditions that their forefathers won and for the right to collective organisation. Their fight is therefore the fight of millions of men and women throughout Britain, facing uncertainty of employment both day-to-day and long term.

We cannot allow this tragedy to unfold. Our port is the historic lifeblood of our community and it symbolises the regeneration of our great city. We cannot allow the scars of casual labour, inhumane working environments, the absence of democratic rights of representation, to destroy the dignity of our waterfront. We ask the Merseyside community to support our just cause, to right a wrong. We ask workers everywhere to support us." ★

Source: Dockers web site: <http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/docks/index.html>



The 500 sacked Liverpool dockers, most of them with 25-30 years' service, are fighting for their jobs. They demand:

- The right to permanent work for a living wage, social hours, proper conditions and a retirement pension.
- The right to a trade union, with democratically elected on-the-job representation.

Their main employer, the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company wants:

- A greatly reduced workforce with no trade union rights, hired on individual contracts with long, unsocial hours, plus flexible shifts and work-sites.
- A back-up pool of casual agency labour, with no rights, to be hired and fired as required.

On the Company's side are the international shipping, banking, insurance and agency-labour companies, backed up by the state's anti-trade-union laws. The port employer has received millions in government cash hand-outs and so-called development grants. For six years, since the defeat of our 1989 strike, the company has been trying to put Liverpool on the same footing as every other port in Britain. That is why the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company is prepared to gamble millions in this battle for cheap casual labour and a union-free port.

- They have hired Drake International to hire and fire scabs who are brought into the port by sea.
- They have installed portakabins inside the dock fitted with TVs and washing machines so that the scabs do not have to pass the picket line.
- They have brought container ships into the port free of charge in an effort to prove that they have an up-and-running port.

Liverpool dockers knew about the company's weaknesses before the strike started. They also knew that, because of the 1989 defeat, they could not rely on solidarity actions from dockers in other British ports. So they acted on three main fronts:

- They established a firm financial and organisational basis for the strike, taking the fight out into the whole community in Merseyside.

Who wants what ?

They explained in leaflets that casual labour and trade union rights are not merely issues for us, but for every worker, employed and unemployed. They organised six community rallies, published a strike newspaper, The Dockers Charter, and won a huge response throughout the country.

- They won the support of Merseyside church leaders, Euro MPs and Labour MPs who are waging the fight in the Labour Party and in parliament.
- They sent delegations and letters to dockers internationally, calling on them to take solidarity action in support of the fight in Liverpool. Crucially, dockers in Australia, Canada and the US have refused to touch container vessels loaded by scab labour.

The striking dockers continue to believe that support from millions of people in this country and the international solidarity action of their brothers and sisters throughout the world can change the situation.

- We call on dockers in every other port in Britain to take heart. Realise your strength, reinstate the union in the ports. Build support for our strike and for international solidarity.
- We demand that the Tory government carries out its 1989 promise that casual labour would not be introduced into the ports.
- We demand a public inquiry into the affairs of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company.
- We will campaign for one port authority, for a shorter working week, proper wages, holidays and sick benefit and we will advance our fight over pension contributions and benefits.
- We call for the election of a Labour government, and demand that it repeals the anti-union laws as a first priority.

Source: *Dockers Charter* and <http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/docks/index.html>



Paving the Way for a Blair Government

This years Labour Party and Trades Union Congress conferences were important in setting out Labour's programme for government and seeing the state of the opposition within the workers' movement.

Neil Murray

CURRENTLY THE OPINION POLLS PUT LABOUR 18 points above the Tories (49% Labour to the Conservatives 31%, with the Liberal Democrats on 16%). With the Tories beset by allegations of corruption and deeply divided over Europe, it is difficult to see them being able to turn this situation around by the time of the general election, which has to take place by May 1997 at the latest.

Since his election as Labour leader Tony Blair has built on the work done by previous leaders Neil Kinnock and John Smith in taking Labour's policy to the right and making it acceptable to the ruling class as a safe alternative to the Conservatives. In the process he and his co-thinkers have been prepared to challenge some of the basic tenets of the Labour Party and to jettison pledges made by himself and his predecessors about the limits of this assault.

Kinnock took on the task of gradually reversing the gains made by the Left in the trade unions and constituency parties in the late 1970s and early 1980s in policy and Party democracy. Blair has gone further in attempting to ensure that similar policy gains could never happen again.

For Blair the failure of the last (1974-79) Labour government was not that it bowed to the demands of British capitalism and the International Monetary Fund in bringing in pay restrictions and cuts in social spending – which resulted in mass strikes against these policies – but that such revolt found expression within the Labour Party. His 'project' is to ensure that a future Labour government could carry out the requirements of capitalism unhindered by the wishes of the rank and file of the workers' movement. He knows that a Labour government carrying out its monetarist policies will meet resistance from the working class, particularly in the public sector, and wants to forestall this by legally shackling the unions and limiting their ability to influence Labour's policies.

Since the demise of the Liberal Party and the growth of Labour in the early 20th century, the British bourgeoisie has recognised the Labour Party as a possible alternative government when the Conservatives are unpopular. They have always preferred the Conservatives, but recognise that Labour is also committed to the maintenance of capitalism and often in a better position to



discipline the working class in the interest of capital. But they have always been wary because of the input of the working class into Labour's policy-making through the involvement of the unions at every level of decision-making. Blair hopes to radically reduce or eliminate this altogether.

Blair's Project

Blair's assault has been on three levels – policy, ideology and party structures. Rather than gradually trimming policy, he has virtually rewritten it, in line with the perceived requirements of capitalism. This has been accompanied by an attack on some of the basic views of the Party, such as Clause IV of its constitution, which supposedly committed it to the socialist transformation of society. Blair has attempted to reduce the level of involvement of the unions in policy making and to turn individual members into a passive supporters by use of mechanisms like the referendum on policy, and the severe reduction of the role of annual conferences.

Labour policy now includes a commitment to European Monetary Union "if the conditions are right" (and there is no indication from Blair that the current Maastricht conditions are unacceptable). Blair refuses to contemplate the restoration of any serious level of progressive taxation, even on the 1% of the population who earn over £100,000 a year. He is committed to keeping the anti-union laws brought in by the Tories which severely restrict the ability of workers to strike within the law. No attempt will be made to tackle unemployment, currently at least four million. Labour will continue the Tory dismantling the benefits and pensions system. There is no commitment to do more than tinker at the edges to repair the damage done by the Tories to the National Health

Service and education. Labour attempts to be more populist than the Tories in tackling crime (not the causes of crime) and Blair promises that not only will Britain keep nuclear weapons, but he would be prepared to press the button.

Ideology has never been Labour's strong point. But there has always been a vague, verbal commitment to socialism and an acceptance that capitalist society is divided into two main classes. Thus Labour's Clause IV supposedly committed it to the transformation of society to bring the means of production, distribution and exchange into common ownership. No Labour leadership has ever had any intention of carrying this out, but nevertheless it was seen as the *raison d'être* of the Party. Previous attempts by Labour leaders to erase it had to be abandoned in the face of opposition. Blair succeeded in getting it replaced by a vapid formula, which, while still claiming Labour to be a socialist party, also committed it to acceptance of the market.

Blair has attempted to prepare the Party for the severing of the link with the unions, championing the view that there is no longer any conflict between workers and bosses, and that the job of a Labour government is to represent all the British people "with fairness not favours".

After Kinnock succeeded in the 1980s in "cleansing" the Party of much of the hard Left through expulsions, leaders have tried to ensure that a tamed membership would never again have the channels for rebelling against the policies of a Labour government. They have replaced many areas of collective, delegate decision-making by "one member one vote" postal ballots, reduced the proportion of votes cast by the unions at annual conference from 90% to 50%, and

introduced an unaccountable "national policy forum" in the hope of displacing conference as a place where policy is discussed and decided. Blair has taken this a stage further in extending one member one vote ballots (which excludes the many trade union members who are not individual members but pay a kind of collective membership, the "political levy" through their trade unions) into the area of policy-making, using it to gain endorsement for his new Clause IV and currently seeking endorsement of a manifesto which conference was not allowed to discuss.

In carrying through these changes Labour leaders have built on the "achievements" of the Tories. In the 1980s the Tory government took on the working class sector by sector. With the assistance of a trade union bureaucracy unwilling and unable to defend jobs and conditions, they scored many significant victories, weakening union organisation in the workplace. The Tories gradually extended their advantage to the privatisation of many industries and the establishment of trade union law which makes it very difficult to call legal industrial action and impossible for workers to take lawful solidarity action with those employed by a different company.

Alongside this weakening of union organisation there was a strengthening of the view that industrial action cannot succeed. Despite a recent wave of important strikes, the level of industrial action has still not recovered from the lowest figures for 100 years. This mood has been exploited by the Labour and Trade Union bureaucrats (who were partly responsible for the defeats in the first place) to encourage the view that the only alternative was to get Labour elected and that a dilution of Labour's policy was essential in order to make this possible.

Blair, however, has gone much further in expressing admiration for Thatcher and her achievements, declaring openly that he has no intention of reversing her legacy. Thus the commitment to keeping the anti-union laws, and even floating the idea of extending them as far as the public sector is concerned.

Union Leaders Assist Blair

The leaderships of most unions, particularly the largest ones, have been more than willing to smooth Blair's path in pushing through his changes. Although some have occasionally balked at some of the things required of them, this has been rare.

Thus at this year's TUC, the leadership (General Council) did its utmost to ensure that no policies were passed which might embarrass the leadership of the Labour Party. Repeal of all the anti-union laws was clearly defeated. Knowing they would be defeated on the adoption of a figure of £4.26 an hour for the national minimum wage (based on a formula of half male median earnings), they got round the issue by also passing support for Labour's proposed "Low Pay commission" and then posing the amount as merely a bargaining ploy.

However, Blair was determined to use the week of TUC conference to demonstrate to the ruling class his "get tough" approach to

the unions. Education spokesperson David Blunkett used the TUC conference to announce plans for the introduction of compulsory arbitration of public sector disputes and compulsory ballots when employers make "significant new offers". Stephen Byers, Labour's employment spokesperson then told journalists that Labour would scrap the link between the unions and the Party.

This made no difference to the decisions of congress, but it had usually-moderate union leaders lining up to make public statements in defence of the link and against further encroachment on the right to strike. John Edmonds, moderate general Secretary of the GMB union, called for Byers to be sacked. John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, made a scathing attack on Blair at a dinner at the TUC.

Some attempt was made by Blair to limit the damage in his relationship with the union leaders. While he may want to eventually eject them from the Party he needs their support in the meantime. So he argued, ambiguously, that the relationship between the unions and party would "evolve and develop" while claiming that Byers had not actually said what journalists reported (a claim no-one believes). Blunkett claimed he had been misunderstood.

At Labour Party conference three weeks later the trade union bureaucrats were on the spot. Given Blair's increasingly explicit attacks on the unions and the Party-union link, they could either show they were

Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), with a supposed 2:1 "left" majority on its executive, only voted against the top table once all week, despite the fact that its general secretary, Bill Morris, is declaring not only that he will fight to defend the Party-union link but that he is prepared to die in the process.

The whole charade culminated in the endorsement by the unions of Labour's draft manifesto "New Labour, New Life for Britain" at the conference, a document which encapsulates all the rotten pro-capitalist policies outlined above. No discussion was allowed, it was voted through by conference 18-1, indicating that, at most, only the smallest unions voted against.

The Opposition

The conference was portrayed in the media as a triumph for Blair's programme. The reality is not so rosy. He only succeeded in securing this smooth ride with an exceptional amount of manipulation of delegates by Party officials with a large amount of help from the union bureaucrats.

Within the Party and unions the opposition to Blair's programme is disparate. European Monetary Union, Maastricht, and especially the social chapter are supported by virtually every union. Opposition is limited to a fairly marginalised section of Labour MPs and activists. Although the recent conference of UNISON voted overwhelmingly to reject moves to a single currency, not one of its



willing to stand up to him and vote for the policies required by their members (and often endorsed by their conferences), or they could turn a blind eye and continue to provide Blair with an easy ride.

In the end most chose the latter path. Unwilling to turn their public statements into conference policy, they refused to debate emergency motions in defence of the union-Party link. On many policy issues they voted with the top table at Labour Party conference, giving Blair and his manifesto the endorsement they needed. There were several issues at the conference, such as economic policy, on which the votes of one or two large unions could have reversed the outcome. Indeed, Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of the big public sector union UNISON, was thanked for his services in ensuring the defeat of a resolution calling on the Party to restore the link between pensions and earnings scrapped by the Tory government. The large

national officers is prepared to publicly argue for this policy. While many unions have conference policy commitments which go beyond Labour's programme around the anti-union laws, benefits, low pay and social spending, very few of their leaderships are prepared to countenance either leading a fight over these issues against the Tories now or challenging Blair's policies in the Labour Party.

The Constituency Labour Parties, made up of individual members and local trade union delegates, have moved significantly to the right over the years, not mounting any serious opposition to the policy changes. Nevertheless, the left still manages to take two of the seven places on Labour's National Executive from this section of the Party, and at the conference a majority of constituency delegates voted against the leadership on nearly all the crucial issues. This is why Blair seeks to go further in removing the rights of

constituency parties to determine policy by means of postal ballots, bypassing collective decision-making and leaving Party members subject only to influence by the Party leadership and the supportive media.

Much is made of the large influx of new members over the last few years. They are often portrayed as unthinking Blair supporters. The reality is more complicated. Many are trade unionists joining on the newly reduced rate, and nearly all join because they wish to see an end to the destruction the Tories have brought to the welfare state. No doubt they are by and large politically naïve and see Blair as leading Labour to victory, but none of this means that they cannot be convinced of the inadequacies of his programme when its realities become apparent.



Battles to Come

Blair's intention to scrap the Party-union link shows his wish to transform the Labour Party into either a social democratic party on the continental European model or into a straightforward bourgeois party on the lines of the U.S. Democratic Party. However, wanting such an outcome is a lot easier than achieving. While socialists will defend the link as an essential requirement for the working class to have an independent voice, the Trade Union leaders will also defend it for their own reasons. The last thing they wish to be deprived of is a say in the policy of a Labour government, not only because it would deny them a place in the corridors of power, but also because it would deprive them of a smokescreen behind which to hide the fact that they are unwilling to defend their members interests.

Speculation is rife that if Blair wins the election he will attempt to get state funding for political parties in order to remove the need for the unions to fund the Labour Party, probably one of the few useful purposes he sees then as currently having. Despite its wooing of big business and a few large donations from the rich, Labour still gets half its funding from the unions.

The debate around the link, and Clause IV has sown confusion among many socialists as to the nature of the Labour Party and the changes it has undergone. Some, including Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) argue that Labour used to be a socialist party, but with the scrapping of Clause IV it ceased to be one. This was his justification for forming the Socialist Labour Party (SLP).

Of course, what defines the Labour Party is not its ideology – this has always been politically “bourgeois”, whatever certain clauses in its constitution say. The Labour Party came about when the trade unions became convinced that the Liberal Party (which they had supported until that time) could not represent the interests of the working class and broke with it to form the LRC/LP. The break was organisational rather



than ideological, but nevertheless was a basic assertion of class independence. Blair has gone so far as to recently state that the split with the Liberals was a “mistake”, a clear indication of his intentions.

The Labour Party has never been a socialist party in any meaningful sense of the word. Unlike much of European social democracy it did not degenerate from a revolutionary party. Unlike the majority of the second international it could not be said to have “gone over” to social imperialism in the First World War – that would imply it had been on the right side on such issues in the first place. The Labour Party represented an organisational break from Liberalism but not a political one, exhibiting the limitations of trade union consciousness, or more correctly, that of the trade union bureaucracy. From its inception Labour has been a social democratic party or, in Lenin's words, a “bourgeois workers party”.

To attempt to draw the line at Clause IV, or the policies which Blair is currently promoting, is to claim that Blair's policies are qualitatively different to those which the Labour Party has had throughout most of its existence. The Labour Party has always, in practice, been a party committed to the maintenance of the bourgeois order, to disciplining the working class while occasionally throwing it some crumbs of reforms. There never was a “golden age”. If the Labour Party were to be defined by its policies alone it would have always been a straightforwardly bourgeois party.

To say that the Labour Party has not fundamentally changed is not to deny that Blair is attempting to do so. Success in breaking the union link would alter the character of the Party qualitatively, and Blair is promoting an ideology which goes far beyond traditional Labourism in its explicit support for the market and the denial of class conflict. Those who argue the Labour Party fundamentally changed with the dropping of Clause IV declare a battle lost which is still going on. Excluding the unions from the Labour Party would create major shock waves throughout British politics and the workers movement.

Despite the reluctance of the trade union bureaucracy to challenge Blair, the battle over the union link will happen. Many union leaders are making statements in defence of the link now in the hope of scaring off those who want to scrap it. Even the Engineering and Electrical Union (AEEU), for long the

bastion of the hard right in the union movement, has come out against any further dilution of the link. But those who want to transform the Labour Party will not be diverted so easily. A major fight is brewing over this issue in the next period, and it cannot be assumed, as the SLP would have us believe, that the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

The other factor which currents like the SLP ignore in the British political situation is the mood among the working class in the run up to the election. Workers will vote in their millions for Labour, some despite being aware of what Blair's programme means, others with illusions as to what he will do in government. Those socialists who see it as the primary task to stand against Labour in the election will not only be marginalised electorally, but also in their ability to relate to that mood of the class. Mass disillusion with Labour will come after the election when workers begin to realise what Blair's politics mean in practice, not before.

Within the unions a central task for the Left is to hold the leaders to account for the support they are giving to Blair and to promote a fightback against the attacks still going on under the Tories and against the austerity programme which will be continued by Blair. One of the most important developments in this respect is the decision of left formations (“Broad Lefts”) in about twelve unions to work together as a federation.

The way in which the bureaucrats can be pressured to fight is shown by developments around the postal workers' strike. Alan Johnson, joint General Secretary of the Communication Workers Union (CWU), has opposed this strike over the introduction of “teamworking” from the start, being defeated by his executive and the pressure of the rank and file. Johnson is Blair's favourite trade union leader, the first union general Secretary to sit on the Labour Party's National Executive in a long time. Yet after Blair argued postal workers should accept arbitration on their dispute, Johnson made a speech criticising him at TUC and even moved an emergency resolution at Labour Party conference critical of “outside interference” in the dispute. ★

Neil Murray is a leading supporter of *Socialist Outlook* <outlook@gn.apc.org>, the newspaper of British supporters of the Fourth International

Feminism PT style

Last month's municipal elections were relatively successful for Brazil's Workers Party (PT). Helena Bonuma discusses the successes, and limits, of her feminist activities in local government and in PT structures.

• **Brazilian machismo is still strong. How do people react to a "feminist" electoral campaign?**

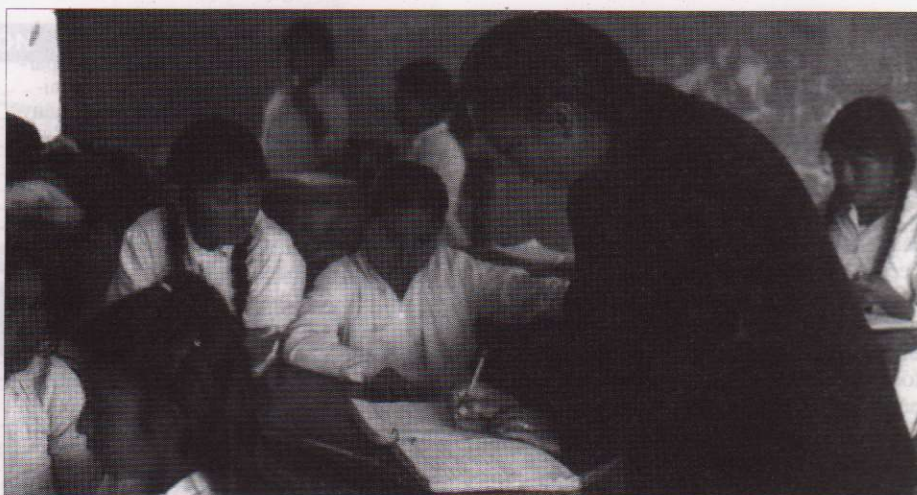
THINGS CHANGE! THE FEMINIST ELEMENT IN my programme was one of the reasons I was elected to the state parliament of Rio Grande do Sul and the Porto Alegre Municipal Council. Though feminist work is difficult in these institutions! Less than 10% of delegates are women, and the tradition here is towards personalised concentration of power. Nevertheless, the needs of women, and oppressed minorities in general, are better taken care of here in Porto Alegre than in most other larger Brazilian towns. This is thanks to the participatory budget process in Puerto Alegre since the PT took over in 1988, and the efforts of PT women to integrate women's demands into this process.

• **You work with the women's movement outside the institutions**

Here in Rio Grande do Sul state, the women's movement has been around, in one form or another, since the late 1970s. In my particular circles, the Fourth International's 1979 resolution on women had a great influence on the way we tried to approach and support the various women's struggles. In 1980 I began working with a non-governmental organisation which tried to apply our conception of feminism to the peasant reality. We were able to develop a whole mobilisation of peasant women, round a few central themes. For example, under the 1961 Land Code, peasant women were not recognised as workers. They worked on family plots, but had no right to social security, no access to credit, no right to form a trade union, and no possibilities to sell their produce. Everything had to pass through the husband or the father.

In the 1980s, this rural women's movement was quite impressive. In 1985 we brought 10,000 women from all over the state to Porto Alegre for a meeting. There were similar movements in other parts of Brazil, although here in Rio Grande do Sul, the church was less involved in the leadership of the movement. This meant, among other things, that we could organise debates about the family, sexuality, and so on.

Here in the city, on the other hand, there was no mass women's movement. There were some small feminist groups in the 1970s, but they didn't last. In 1986 we



created a Women's Commission within the Unitary Workers Centre (CUT), the trade union body. We began to organise urban women workers, particularly in the shoe industry of the Cisne Valley, where most of Rio Grande do Sul's industry is located.

We decided to create women's commissions inside the union, but autonomous, and oriented towards all the women in each specific profession. Our male comrades, the revolutionaries, thought all this was great as long as we were targeting a "yellow-led" (boss-dominated) union. But it all seemed rather useless to them whenever they took control of a union.

At the end of the 1980s I began to devote more of my time to the internal debates inside the PT. Particularly the question of quotas, and "affirmative" measures for women within the party.

• **What have you done as a councillor?**

During the first PT municipal government here in Porto Alegre, a number of improvements were made. We built a refuge for battered women, and supported community initiatives concerned with women's health (gynaecological examinations, contraception, etc.) But things didn't go much further. There was no systematic attempt from the town hall to develop policies which would address the specific aspects of women's oppression.

In the first year of the second PT mandate, the town hall organised a "City Conference." Over 12 months, forums were held to discuss public transport, urban development, social policy, economic development, culture and leisure. All the social forces, from the employers to the trade unions and civic associations, were invited to participate. This process enabled us to examine the woman question here in Porto Alegre in all its aspects, and begin to elaborate a diagnosis of women's situation in each area of life. We then organised two seminars to deepen this analysis, inviting university researchers, civil servants... In each forum of the City Conference we presented specific proposals

concerning women. We rejected the idea of a special "women's forum" within the conference, which we suspected would serve to isolate our issues.

• **How do you link work in institutions with the movement outside?**

Through the participatory budget. There are a lot of women in the general assemblies, although the budget council is never more than 30% women. The participatory budget process has enabled us to sustain popular mobilisation here in Porto Alegre. It has liquidated the hegemony of populism, and enabled the PT to play a more visible role among the poorer sectors of the population.

Unfortunately, the town hall has still not made a clear commitment to the development of feminist policies. For example, neither PT mayor has taken measures to make abortion available in public hospitals in Porto Alegre. The PT is reluctant to raise the issue, and pressure from women members has not been able to overcome this resistance.

We have integrated support for women's economic activities into the general economic development programme. It was very difficult to convince the municipal administration that this innovation was possible and worthwhile. It was hard to change working methods to meet new questions.

We are beginning to meet with banks and trading organisations to help set up a network for financing and distributing the products of women's clothing and food production. One group of black women has developed a line of "afro" clothing. We organised the official launch of their collection with a fashion show on one of the city's main squares, and we helped them find sales space in a number of public markets. Another group, based in a district so marginal that even the police hardly dares enter, has started producing very innovative clothing from recycled and industrial fabrics. Other groups are producing alternative foodstuffs.

This isn't a period of mass mobilisations,

or re-stating the class line within the popular movements, as was the case during the resistance to the dictatorship. Today, social struggles are on the defensive. The challenge now is to use those institutional positions which we can win to re-elaborate and re-establish a space for popular autonomy.

We need to integrate the most marginalised social layers into the political decision-making process. The women of the poorer districts are among those Brazilians who don't yet have the right to speak. Most of these poorer districts have car parks, football pitches, and volleyball courts. But no nurseries! So, the women get together, they organise petitions, I transmit these demands to the mayor, and so on. But I have not yet been able to get a single nursery built!

Despite these difficulties and frustrations, the rural women's struggle and the networks of trade union women are definitely more developed than in other parts of Brazil. So we continue the struggle, inside and outside the PT! ★

The PT in government: direct democracy?

The Workers Party (PT) has just won a third term of municipal government in Porto Alegre. Eight years of PT management in this southern city are unanimously recognised as Brazil's best example of municipal government in the service of the workers and the poor. Thomas Coutrot explains

FISCAL REFORM IS THE FIRST TASK OF ANY municipal government which aspires to social transformation. When the PT took control of Porto Alegre in 1988, sales and property taxes were badly collected, devalued by inflation, and based on outdated records. Just like in the rest of Brazil. Under the PT, rationalisation, re-registration and improved collection have increased Porto Alegre's annual resources by 140%.

The local elite has denounced this "fiscal fury," but without success. No-one really believes that taxation is crushing the entrepreneur. And the citizens of Porto Alegre don't just elect their council, they decide exactly how the funds will be allocated.

"Participatory democracy: right up to the municipal budget" This PT electoral slogan has gradually been put into practice here, thanks to patient, serious work by the successive PT teams in the town hall.

The first thing the incoming PT team did in 1989 was to establish the most appropriate administrative division of the town. Popular consultations helped identify sixteen culturally and socially homogeneous zones, large enough to be viable planning units, but "tight" enough to encourage democratic debate and a communal "life."

Next came the cautious re-definition of the relationship between the Town Hall, its various specialised institutions (road maintenance, cleaning services, the public transport utility, educational establishments,

Notes

Helena Bonuma is a deputy in the state parliament of Rio Grande do Sul and a municipal counsellor in Porto Alegre. Like many other members of the team supporting Raul Pont in his bid to become the next PT mayor of Porto Alegre, Helena is a member of the Socialist Democracy current inside the PT. Socialist Democracy is the Brazilian section of the Fourth International.

1. Since 1940, abortion has been theoretically legal following a rape, or when the mother's life is endangered. Even in these cases, it is virtually impossible to abort in a public hospital. Catholic currents within the PT and the popular movements have led the party to fudge its position on abortion. During the 1994 presidential campaign, PT candidate "Lula" da Silva denounced the disastrous medical consequences of Brazil's two million annual illegal abortions, but he did not specifically support an increased right to abortion. The furthest he went was to say that "in the case of those abortions allowed by law, it is essential to normalise the conditions for receiving the women concerned into the public hospitals."

hospitals and health centres) and community groups (district groups, socio-cultural and sports groups and the trade unions).

The "participatory budget" is not about fixing the number of municipal workers and their salaries. The Town Hall negotiates these matters directly with the Municipal Workers trade union. Instead, the process aims to enable the population to formulate the priorities for municipal investments.

In March, public meetings in each district elect local delegates, who help them establish a list of priorities for municipal investments in their district, and their urban sector as a whole. In May, these delegates elect two councillors to represent each urban district in the Participatory Budget Council (COP). They are joined by two representatives of each "thematic plenary groups:" trade union; ecology; culture; sports; small business development. The Municipal Workers trade union and the Union of Tenants nominate one councillor each. COP councillors are not paid, and cannot be re-elected twice. They report back to the district delegates at weekly meetings.

Every May, the new COP decides on the procedure it will follow to monitor the implementation of the existing budget, and the elaboration of the next year's budget. COP meetings are regular, and open to the public.

The Town Hall integrates each urban sector's priorities into a draft "budget matrix." The municipality's various technical

bodies report on the feasibility and probable cost of each proposed investment, and suggest amendments. After considering this advice, the Town Hall presents a second draft budget to the COP. This "Budget Matrix" includes a breakdown of credits by budget post (housing, sewage, lighting, roads, sports, etc.) for each of the 16 urban sectors. The allocation of credits between the sectors is based on population, relative "backwardness" in the resource concerned, and the relative priority which the sector's inhabitants have allocated to each budget post. From August to October, the COP meets up to twice each week, until the councillors manages to agree among themselves and with the Town Hall on the final version of the budget. This becomes the municipal investment plan for the next year.

In the early years, only a few hundred people participated in the district meetings. The process only "took off" in 1992, when over 3,000 people took part. In 1995, over 15,000 residents of Porto Alegre attended their local meetings, electing about 800 delegates, who selected and monitor the current 44 COP delegates.

The British magazine *The Economist* describes Brazil's traditional mayoral approach as follows. "Most mayors see their municipal job as a trampoline to higher office. So, throughout the land, they have set out to stuff their fiefs with as many monuments as will fit in one four-year mandate, leaving the costs to successors to handle. And no-where more so than in Rio... [where] the current wave of urban reform is... bold, chaotic, autocratic and arbitrary. Not just the frenzy of public works snarl up the city's already congested traffic. Critics complain that it is merely cosmetic, more a facelift than the real surgery that Rio needs, and does little for public transport, education or health."¹

In sharp contrast, PT Mayors in Porto Alegre have concentrated their efforts on improving living standards, public transport, health care and education. Decisions are made in a decentralised way, as close as possible to the people concerned. There is something predictable about popular choice. The top priorities are sewage, asphalt and housing. Not surprisingly, the right-wing ridicules what it calls this "rice and beans" approach (*arroz com feijao*).

The 15,000 people who participated in last year's participatory budget represent less than 1% of the city's population. But they presumably reflected the aspirations of their relatives and neighbours. Opinion polls show that a majority of residents are aware of the participatory budget process, and appreciate it. This is a success for the PT team. Not simply in electoral terms (though only the PT is capable of implementing this project seriously) but in impregnating the popular consciousness with the conviction that each and every citizen can and should have their say on public policy, and how the money is spent. ★

Notes

1. "The city of God, or someone," in *The Economist*, September 28th 1996, p.62

Networking in the Latin American Left

Janette Habel* discusses the 6th Sao Paulo Forum, the major annual meeting of the Latin American left

Janette Habel: Parties influenced by social democratic ideas, including the leadership of Brazil's Workers Party (PT), Mexico's Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) and a sector of the Salvadorian FMLN, proposed "the construction of a democratic, modern state," based on an economy dominated by the market and private property, with the state playing a strong role, and imposing a minimum level of social justice, and ensuring "durable development." Given the economic and social crisis in Latin America, this strategy has obvious difficulties.

The Cuban Communist Party, and Salvadorian Communist leader Shafik Handal, preferred to talk of a new "socialist mode;" represented, according to them, by China, Vietnam, Laos, North Korea and Cuba.

The debate provoked by the contradictions between these two orientations was not resolved during the Forum, which has a federal, consensual nature. The final document of the Forum reflects the Latin American left's lack of strategy. The brutality of the neo-liberal offensive, North American hegemony and the absence of socialist reference-points (since the fall of the USSR) has disarmed the Latino left. A number of delegations, including the Salvadorian current led by Mario Mijango, tried to develop a some kind of third orientation in the workshop discussions, but the open plenary debate was confined to these two major orientations.

We also saw new initiatives on immigration, environment, culture and women. This is making the Forum an important, continental framework for those who want to develop broad campaigns. The Sao Paulo Forum is an instrument of unity and mobilisation which is well worth preserving.

• It must be difficult for the Forum to function in a federalist way

The working group said that the lack of a permanent mechanism made it difficult to act between annual meetings. Delegates resolved to create an experimental (two year) secretariat in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The location is no accident: Brazil remains the centre of gravity of the continent. This move towards structure is a good thing. But the political



differences among Forum participants do not permit any political centralisation.

• Are the Zapatistas a reference-point for the Latin American left?

It is worrying that the Zapatistas weren't mentioned at all during the Forum. Not at the opening and closing meetings, not even in the various interventions by the Mexican PRD. Only after the closing ceremony did Shafik Handal announce that a delegation from the Forum would travel to Chiapas to participate in the Zapatistas' meeting.

The organisations present at this Forum are quite critical of the Zapatistas. Some leaders of armed movements are implicitly critical of the Zapatista strategy. "We don't understand," one Guatemala guerrilla leader told me. "When you have arms, you use them."

• The Forum clashed with the EZLN's Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity

The Zapatistas knew that these were the Forum dates. It is obviously a problem that they decided to hold their own event at the same time. The two meetings were only a few hundred kilometres apart, but security problems made it impossible to attend both.

• What about Cuba?

There was no special resolution on Cuba. But the central document, the final declaration, and all the sectoral statements condemned the Helms-Burton law [which strengthens the US embargo] and stressed support for Cuba, including support for the current economic reforms. As far as I could see, there was no public disagreement on these questions at the Forum. ★

• Invitation only?

IN 1997 THE FORUM WILL HOLD joint meetings with the North American and European left. The 2nd meeting is an initiative from the old continent, reflecting the deepening relationship between the European Union (EU) and Latin America, links between the EU and the Mercosur free trade bloc, EU opposition to the Helms-Burton law, and growing EU interest in Mexico.

Several European parliamentary left parties spent most of the planning meeting arguing the necessity of excluding the non-parliamentary left from this meeting. The "solution" was a compromise: a preparatory commission including the Forum co-ordination group and the European parties will meet in the first half of 1997 in Brussels, and will then issue invitations, on the basis of "a broad spirit." [J.H.] ★

• Who, what, where...

THERE WERE 187 DELEGATES, REPRESENTING 52 of the Forum's member organisations. A further 144 invited organisations sent a total of 289 participants, and 44 organisations from outside the region were present with observer status.

In the preparatory phase, parliamentarians met in Havana, Cuba, a workshop on migration was organised in Mexico City, and a seminar on Caribbean integration was held in Guadeloupe.

There was a cultural meeting dedicated to the Salvadorian poet Roque Dalton (executed for ideological reasons on the orders of FMLN Comandante Villalobos) and a meeting on environmental questions dedicated to Chico Mendes, an Amazonian Indian leader, and member of Brazil's Workers Party (PT) who was assassinated in the early 1990s. [J.H.] ★

Notes

* Janette Habel attended the Forum as an observer, representing the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR, French section of the Fourth International).

1. Mexico's Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) participated as an observer, via its newspaper *El Machete* (IV#281, Oct. 1996)

Women's seminar

by Tatau Godinho*

THIS WAS THE FIRST MEETING OF THE Sao Paulo Forum to include a women's seminar and a discussion on gender relations during the plenary session of the Forum.

The two-and-a-half day seminar, which brought together some fifty women, discussed the effects of the international economic situation on women and some of the problems which have a significant impact on women's daily lives such as health policy and the abortion situation in Latin America, sexist violence and domestic work. The 50 participants represented political parties and feminist groups from across the region, as well as some European and North American organisations which have solidarity work with Latin America.

In the 1980s, the women's movement in Latin America became significant force and organised around a broad platform of demands with the goal of changing the structural conditions of women's lives and fighting against different forms of discrimination. Although certain left parties generally incorporated some of these questions into their platforms, this inclusion was rather unequal and superficial. In the balance sheet of the gains and difficulties of these years we should underline the immense difficulty in changing the relationship of forces between women and men in the spheres of power. It is clear that, in this sphere, to break with the almost total exclusion of women, we must develop a strategy able to change directly the conditions for women's participation.

During the 1990s, the discussions and mobilisations aiming to broaden women's participation in the spheres of power gained strength. Within this dynamic, this seminar within the 6th Sao Paulo Forum constituted the first Latin American meeting of women in left parties. For the first time, we had a broad meeting of women within a framework that sought to involve the whole spectrum of left parties in Latin America and the Caribbean, despite the fact that there are ambiguities and limitations in the constitution of the Forum itself. Other networks of women in Latin America have a more limited character or lack any politico-ideological definition.

The pre-Forum meeting and the broader discussion in the plenary session opened up the perspective of a broadening of feminist discussion on the left, inaugurating a channel of discussion and contacts between militants of left parties across Latin America.

The Seminar showed that, despite all that women have accumulated in terms of organisation and deepening of the feminist discussion, in many parties this has not been deeply assimilated. There is often a hostile atmosphere to the equal participation of women in the leadership. The interchange

between militants with different experiences could be a strong element pushing towards change.

The Seminar also broadened the debate with those groups in the women's movement which identify with left politics. Until now the feminist movement in Latin America has lacked a space for political discussion of strategic and ideological options. This has been seen as somehow foreign to the feminist struggle. This Seminar was only a first step, but a promising one. The second Seminar, which will take place in July 1997, preceding the Seventh Sao Paulo Forum, will continue this discussion. ★

* Sao Paulo State Executive of the PT, and PT National Women's Secretariat member.



Salvador: FMLN at the Crossroads

Janette Habel

THE SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR IS VERY TENSE. An openly authoritarian tendency is developing inside the government. The ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance) government has allowed the re-emergence of the death squads made infamous by their founder and leader d'Aubisson.

Journalists and militants are receiving more and more threats. The general climate at this year's Forum was marked by the contrast between the declarations, mostly variations on the theme of "we have won, because we have won democracy," and the tension and uncertainty which was apparent when you looked outside the conference hall. Democracy is under threat, at least in Salvador. The old state structures and judicial system are still intact.

In the context of a generalised neo-liberal offensive, the social and economic promises which were part of the January 1992 Chapultepec peace accords have not been respected. Among other things, this means that many former FMLN fighters cannot meet the payments on the land they have been allocated. Many others have still not received their allocation of farmland.

This is the context within which the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) hosted the 1996 Sao Paulo Forum. Over 10,000 Salvadoran militants attended the impressive opening ceremony. Unfortunately, the main FMLN speech, which talked of victory and the installation of democracy in El Salvador, was out of phase with the reality facing the population. Many Salvadorians feel that the FMLN benefits from the current situation, through its parliamentary representatives. These resentments reflect the misery which is still the daily reality of the majority of citizens,

despite 12 years of war, trauma and sacrifice.

Mario Mijango leads one FMLN current which tries to articulate a left response to this popular dissatisfaction with the new direction the FMLN is taking. Mijango directed urban operations for the Peoples' Revolutionary Army (ERP). He and a number of ERP comrades remained faithful to their ideals when ERP leader Joaquin Villalobos split the FMLN to form the Democratic Party (PD). The few public texts of the Mijango group are concerned with the FMLN's refusal to discuss and draw conclusions from the changes which have transformed the world over the last five years. In Mijango's opinion, this shortcoming has left FMLN militants ideologically disarmed, and stripped of a global perspective for their political work.

Nor does Mijango agree with FMLN leaders' claims that the Front has "won." In his opinion, the FMLN was forced to negotiate, finding itself with its back to the wall, in extremely difficult conditions. The Front tried to protect a number of social gains, and maintain its own structures and identify for the future struggle. Mijango argues that the Front must now explain to its people that it was obliged to accept the "peace" negotiations because of the unfavourable balance of forces at the international level (US policy combined with the transformation of the USSR).

He argues that, in order to preserve its forces, the FMLN was forced to retreat, without achieving the goals for which it had struggled. Mijango is convinced that social explosions are possible in the foreseeable future. This means that the FMLN continues to play an important role in the popular struggle, including its potential contribution to the self-defence of popular movements. ★

The Clinton deception

The 1996 U.S. elections is proving to be even duller than these things usually are. Public opinion polls put Bill Clinton ahead by twenty percentage points. Strange, considering that the man who is almost certainly to be re-elected president did not carry out his campaign pledges of four years ago. Instead he secured passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement despite majority sentiment opposing it, and slashed government spending—except for the military budget.

Dianne Feeley

THE TWO MOST PROGRESSIVES ACTS CLINTON shepherded through Congress were the Medical and Family Leave Act, which granted workers the right to take “short, unpaid leaves” for childbirth or other family reasons, and a raise in the minimum wage.

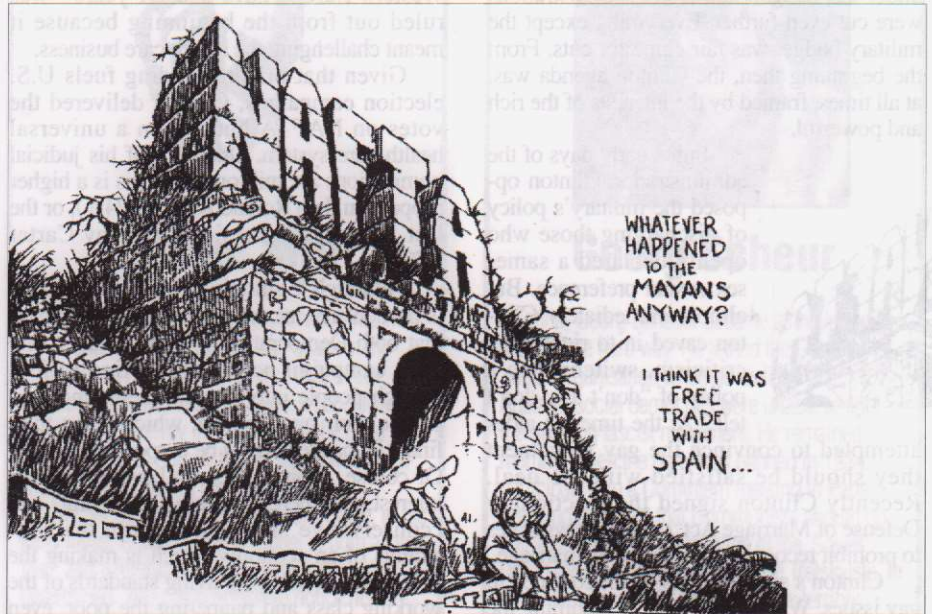
The \$4.25 an hour minimum wage—which had been in effect for five years—has just been raised to \$4.60. Next year it will go to \$5.15. This is hardly a living wage even for a single person.

None of the anti-union legislation from the Reagan-Bush era—including a striker “replacement” bill—was dismantled during Clinton’s first term.

Clinton developed quite an anti-labor record while governor of Arkansas (an anti-union “right-to-work” state). Yet the AFL-CIO endorsed him in the 1992 election. Then he used every resource at his disposal to get the votes necessary to pass NAFTA. At the time, labor leaders proclaimed that at re-election time they would oppose every politician who supported NAFTA. Yet the truth of the matter is that the seventy international presidents who govern the AFL-CIO endorsed Clinton earlier than they had ever endorsed a presidential candidate before—with only one abstention, Teamster president Ron Carey. And while there were more union member delegates at the 1996 Democratic convention than ever, there was not even a token effort to produce a pro-labor platform.

Except over abortion, the Republican challenger, Bob Dole, has trouble distinguishing his positions from Clinton. One of the Republicans’ biggest criticisms of Clinton, in fact, is that he has stolen their campaign themes. Be it crime, welfare benefits or reducing the deficit, Clinton has embraced the Republican’s platform. Agreement between Clinton and Dole includes the following points:

- Federally-mandated cash assistance to poor



women and their children should no longer be a guarantee—ending a 70-year program, which constituted 1% of the federal budget and no more than 3% of the budgets of the individual states. The bill limits women and their children to benefits lasting no more than two years, with a lifetime maximum of five.

- Medicare and Medicaid [health care programs available to the poor, the disabled and the elderly] should be cut.

- The private market is recognized as the only way to reform health care.

- The number of guards at the U.S.-Mexican border should be doubled and fences should be constructed in order to reduce the number of people crossing without documents.

- Legal immigrants, including tens of thousands who have lived in the U.S. for decades, are to be second-class residents, excluded from social service benefits.

- The annual \$167 billion in corporate welfare should go untouched and the military budget—already more than \$250 billion—should be increased.

- The death penalty should be expanded and jails should continue to fill with nonviolent drug offenders and those ensnared in “three strikes, you’re out” laws.

- Civil liberties should be sacrificed to fight “terrorism.” Newly passed legislation includes the deportation of non-citizens suspected of terrorism on the basis of secret evidence not subject to scrutiny.

- Free trade should come before the interests of workers.

- Gays and lesbians should be denied the right of legally recognized marriage, spousal Social Security and pension benefits, immigration rights, visitation rights, etc.

- Replacing the Delaney Clause, a forty-year regulation which banned carcinogens in processed food, to one which allows panels of scientists working for the food industry to set “risk assessment” standards that allow for an “acceptable” annual rate of people dying from cancer.

- The Endangered Species Act is too strong and the timber and mining industries have “rights” to “extract” in national forests at subsidized prices.

- The current system of election laws and private campaign funding works just fine.

- In foreign policy Clinton and Dole are on the same wave length. They support bills such as the Helms-Burton bill, which attempt to penalize any government that does business with Cuba.

Clinton’s inauguration four years ago was conducted with much fanfare. He was the first Democrat after twelve years of rule by the right wing of the Republican Party. Although he was clearly in the right wing of the Democratic Party, Clinton sounded as if he wanted to be a new Roosevelt. Specifically he called for creating jobs through rebuilding the country’s infrastructure, for a universal health care system—and he was the first president who could say “gay rights” without a sneer.

That was Clinton the candidate. Clinton the president replaced any progressive ideas about the federal government jump-starting the economy by an obsession with cutting the

deficit. Borrowing from the Republican Party, Clinton made speech after speech about how the federal government had become bloated and inefficient. Social programs that had been drastically defunded under the Reagan and Bush administrations were cut even further. Everything except the military budget was fair game for cuts. From the beginning then, the Clinton agenda was, at all times, framed by the interests of the rich and powerful.

In the early days of the administration Clinton opposed the military's policy of discharging those who openly declared a same-sex sexual preference. But almost immediately Clinton caved in to right-wing criticism, switching to a policy of "don't ask, don't tell." At the time his aides

attempted to convince the gay movement they should be satisfied with the deal. Recently Clinton signed the reactionary Defense of Marriage Act, which allows states to prohibit recognition of same-sex marriage.

Clinton's spinelessness is not confined to gay issues. Within six weeks of assuming the



Clinton's war on American children

The welfare "reform" bill signed by Clinton will make more than one million additional children poor (mostly from working families). This will increase child poverty nationwide by 12 percent. It will reduce the incomes of one-fifth of all families with children, by an average of \$1300 per year.

- It replaces the federal guarantee of cash assistance for poor children and families with a flat block grant that cannot respond to inevitable economic downturns. It further reduces resources by allowing states to withdraw \$38 billion from their own contributions to cash assistance and work support over six years.
- It will make 14 million low-income children and their families hungrier, by cutting \$27 billion from food stamps over six years.
- It denies cash assistance to more than 300,000 children with disabilities, some of whom will also lose Medicaid coverage.
- It fails to protect children who need child care by forcing a mother with a child of six or older to work, even when child care is unavailable.
- It abandons legal immigrants, denying not just cash assistance and food stamps, but even aid to the disabled and Medicaid coverage.
- There is not enough money in the bill for states to provide work activities or child care. Parents who are not teens will find it virtually impossible to get training for a stable or family-supporting job. ★

Source: *How the New Welfare Law Profoundly Harms Children*, by the Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street NW, Washington DC 20001,
Tel. (202) 628-8787).

presidency, Clinton set up a Health Care Task Force to study how to implement a cost-effective, universal health care plan. However the only plan that could have worked—a single-payer plan that Canada and much of Western Europe have had for years—was ruled out from the beginning because it meant challenging the health care business.

Given that private funding fuels U.S. election campaigns, Clinton delivered the votes on NAFTA but not on a universal health care system. One-third of his judicial nominations are millionaires. This is a higher proportion than Ronald Reagan (24%), or the last Democratic President, Jimmy Carter (4%)

Although Clinton's two-faced approach is particularly interesting to track, the fact is that both Democrats and Republicans spend their campaign period attempting to fool enough people into electing them, and then pursue their own agenda, which given their financial backers, must be corporate interests. Of course, capital does not have one united interest, and therefore there are "liberal" and "conservative" faces. But given the constraints of an economy which is making the rich richer, eroding the living standards of the working class and paupering the poor, even the liberal face supports NAFTA and deregulation.

Additionally, the fundamentalist, Christian right now constitutes a quarter of the Republican Party stalwarts. These people can be helpful foot-soldiers in furthering a conservative agenda, but they are a bit too headstrong for Republican bosses. The Party was willing to have them write the platform—although Bob Dole made it perfectly clear he did not intend to be bound by it.

Since election laws and financing make it extremely difficult for any third-party alternative to meet ballot requirements (unless the candidate, like Ross Perot, is a billionaire), progressives have a tendency in U.S. elections to vote for the lesser of the two evils (almost always the Democratic Party candidates). That is how the social democrats and the Communist Party have justified their support for Democrats over the last fifty years, and how they justify their support for Clinton today. Jesse Jackson, arguing for the entire Black political establishment, makes the point:

"I know the disappointment associated with the Clinton White House. One of four children in this rich country—and one of two African-American children—is born to poverty. The President's capitulation [over] welfare repeal is indefensible, a shameful act that places millions of children at risk. His embrace of the conservative corporate economic consensus—from NAFTA to deficit posturing to tight money—continues the country down the wrong path. Politically I know firsthand the divisive push-off politics perfected by the White House. And yet I urge you to engage, not withdraw."

The "push-off politics" he is talking about include the Clinton administration's abandoning two African-American nominees, Lani Guinier for Assistant Attorney General, and Henry Foster for Sur-

geon-General, after they were attacked by the far right. The right orchestrated vicious campaigns against the two: Guinier, because she wrote about the need for election law reform and Foster, because he held a mildly pro-abortion position. Clinton never launched an effective counter-campaign, but meekly withdrew the nominations. He also sacked Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders, an outspoken African American woman, for suggesting that teenage masturbation was "normal" and "harmless," which horrifying the right wing.

Jackson presents Clinton as the only option opposing the social devastation that would inevitably follow Dole's election. He remains silent about Clinton's capitulation to the right and maintains that this election is "a referendum on the anti-people, pro-corporate, antigovernment, radical-right Gingrich/Dole agenda." Likewise, the Communist Party states "Clinton is the vehicle for defeating the far-right in the presidential race, there is no other option...."²²

The Communist Party is dead wrong. In 1996 there is more interest and activity around third party formations than there has been since World War II. These include Green Party and Socialist Party candidates at the state and local levels, as well as Ralph Nader's campaign for president. Nader is on the ballot in 20 states and an official write-in candidate in another 25.

Probably no other U.S. citizen is as well known for opposing corporate interests as Nader. His book, *Unsafe at Any Speed* led to the Vehicle Safety and Highway Safety Acts in 1966 and he has been working on health and safety issues ever since. He has been involved in campaigns for union democracy in both the Teamsters and mine workers, and notes "the ability to organize an industrial union is almost impossible in this country because of the way the labor laws and the implementation of them are rigged in favor of the employer." Nader has worked to establish more than fifty non-profit organizations, including the Center for the Study of Responsive Law, in order to expose corporate crime and track government hand-outs to the corporations.

Nader's presidential campaign has some interesting points:

- "we want to move in the direction of "Concord Principles".... tools of democracy that extend the power of workers, consumers, shareholders, voter-citizens, and taxpayers and do it virtually without any taxpayer money. Then to facilitate the banding together of people."
- "We want to help galvanize a new generation of activists who want to reform politics and channel their energies into more productive and just pathways."
- "This is a message to the Democrats and Republicans that the days are over when they can tell millions of disaffected Americans that they've got nowhere to go politically."

Nader doesn't have a chance of winning.

But Democratic Party strategists like James Carville are worried that Nader will siphon votes away from Clinton in key states like California. For this reason the Democrats were determined that Nader would participate in none of the televised debates. When boring Bob Dole met blustering Bill Clinton, the first presidential debate got the lowest TV rating ever.

Nader's campaign is primarily focused on how U.S. democracy is being dismantled by the major corporations, who control the government and its assets. Nader spotlights this stranglehold as the fundamental reason for injustice, rather than focusing on the comprehensive, broad-based platform of the Green Party. This might be weakening his campaign since many people want to know where the candidate stands on many of the burning issue of the day, including affirmative action, immigration policies and the right of women to have access to abortion and family planning services.

Clearly Nader sees the campaign for president as a concrete challenge to the "duopoly" of the Democrats and Republicans. In his acceptance speech at the Green Party convention, Nader remarked, "What we're doing is building for the future. The Greens and other progressives are in the early building stages of a people-first democratic political movement for future years."

The low public interest in the presidential elections is the direct result of the U.S. public's awareness that they are dominated by huge corporate money and special lobbying financing. Yet so long as the prevailing consensus is that nothing can, or will, be done about it, the already high level of apathy and 50% abstention rate will continue. ★

Notes

The author is an editor of *Against the Current* and a member of the Political Committee of the revolutionary socialist group Solidarity, which endorsed the Nader campaign for president as "an important opportunity to promote the idea of an anti-corporate, pro-working class alternative to capitalist politics in the 1996 election."

1. ("Voting Right," *Nation*, 9/23/96)
2. (*Defeat the Far-Right's Contract on Michigan Workers*, brochure from the Michigan District, Communist Party)



Michel Mill

[Paris] On Monday October 7, we were informed of the sudden death from a heart attack in the USA (where he was on a family visit), of our comrade from Montreal, Quebec: Michel Mill. It is difficult to convey in a few words the great shock and deep sorrow that all those who knew Michel felt at hearing the sad news.

Michel was still in the full bloom of life, in his early fifties. He was the true model of both a 'high liver' and a fighter, enjoying life and strongly determined. You could not fail to notice his presence wherever he was. Michel always displayed a lot of energy, when arguing politics, and in his special way of telling (funny) stories from his militant career.

And stories he had! Michel started to be active politically at a very early stage in his life. He was linked to the Fourth International for more than thirty years. One of the most prominent FI leaders in North America, he went through all the factional fights around the US SWP. He withdrew for a while from active politics, probably tired of the internal feuding. Several years ago he re-joined our Canadian section, Gauche Socialiste/Socialist Challenge, with renewed energy — immediately recovering his role as one of its key leaders.

Michel, like the rest of us, was deeply afflicted by the untimely death in 1993 of François Moreau, another key leader of our Quebec/Canada organization. Michel felt it a personal duty to increase his commitment to building the section even more, in order to compensate for the major loss which François' death represented.

Michel was very enthusiastic about the prospects opened by the merge of Gauche Socialiste as an organized section into the larger Parti de la Démocratie Socialiste (PDS) of Quebec. He often contributed to our press, usually under the pen name of Michel Lafitte.

Our comrades in Quebec and Canada will undoubtedly need our solidarity to face this second heavy blow they suffer in three years. To them and to comrade Katherine Beeman, Michel's companion, we extend our deepest sympathy. We shall always miss Michel.

Salah Jaber, on behalf of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

We will publish a biography of Michel in the next issue of *International Viewpoint*.



Georg Scheuer

[Vienna] Georg Scheuer became a revolutionary Marxist the hard way. He joined the Communist Youth Organisation when he realised that Austria's social democrats were unable to fight the growing fascist movement. He remained a member when the party was banned in 1934, participating in a Comintern meeting in Paris. Refusing to accept that Communists should do nothing to weaken the prestige of the Soviet Union, he sought out the Viennese Trotskyists, to try to understand what was going so terribly wrong in the movement.

Georg became a founder member of the (underground) Austrian Revolutionary Communists (RKÖ). As he later explained, "for us, Trotsky was the preserver of the world revolution. . . . But this does not mean that we always agreed with him. We called ourselves 'Trotskyists' with reservation, and out of spite." In the 1936 Trotskyist-trial (*Trotskistenprozess*), he was sentenced to five years imprisonment. After his release, Georg escaped to Czechoslovakia only hours before the Nazis seized power in Austria.

At the 1938 conference which founded the Fourth International, Georg argued that the international situation was not as revolutionary as Trotsky claimed, and spoke against the proclamation of the Fourth International. He stayed in France during the war, joining an independent left resistance group. After the liberation, he became the Paris correspondent of various left newspapers. He visited Algeria during the war of independence, and reported on French torture and atrocities. In the 1950s he published an analysis of Bolshevik "short-comings," characterising the Russian revolution as a "putsch".

He contributed regularly to the Austrian Fourth Internationalist newspaper *Die Linke*, debating Trotsky's faults and the failures of the Fourth International. He was a true revolutionary intellectual, working with the far left, Communists, and left Social Democrats. He was regularly seen on demonstrations and at public meetings. In his later years, Georg was increasingly concerned with the growth of far right forces across Europe. He was pleased to hear about the unity discussions between Fourth Internationalists, the Communist Party, and the local "Militant" group.

Walter Kanelutti, on behalf of Sozialistische Alternative(SOAL)

Student Protest at Yonsei University

A dawn raid on August 20 ended the biggest and most violent student demonstration in South Korea since Kim Young-sam became president in early 1993.

In nine days of struggle, 5,848 students were detained. Riot police used helicopters firing stun grenades and tear gas to "regain control" of Seoul's Yonsei campus.

by Terry Lawless, in Seoul

THE DEMONSTRATION WAS ORGANIZED TO coincide with Liberation Day (August 15), the celebration of Korean independence from Japanese imperialism. At its highest point, as many as 15,000 students were involved in and around Yonsei campus. Five separate demonstrations tried to march from various campuses around Seoul, each numbering between 500 and 2,000 students. Another, larger group which had gathered at Yonsei itself. The occupation force numbered over 4,000 by the time the riot police moved in for the final assault on two buildings on the Yonsei campus. Amazingly about 2,000 of the students in the second building managed to slip away while police were engaged with the task of securing the first. This latter group was then involved in running battles with the police in the streets around the campus. There are reports of hundreds more arrests.

More than 700 police and several hundred students were injured during the days of protest.¹ Parts of Yonsei University will require extensive repair, if not partial demolition, as a result of fire damage. The University estimates the total damage at 10 billion Korean Won (\$12 million).

Two days later, President Kim Young-sam told the heads of the universities and four-year colleges that he would "never tolerate radical students adhering to communism and [would] deal sternly with anachronistic pro-North Korean forces. These activities," he suggested, "can be regarded as an anti-establishment revolutionary movement in support of North Korea and as an urban guerrilla movement." The President stressed the importance of teaching students the merits and values of liberal democracy, saying that South Korean colleges failed to offer proper ideological and philosophical guidance to students.

The demonstration started when South Korean authorities banned the Grand Unification Festival² planned for August 13-15 in Seoul, claiming it was a pro-North Korean event. It was the unsuccessful attempt



of the police to prevent students gathering at Yonsei for this Festival which triggered the confrontation. The protest continued because students wanted to march to the truce village of Panmunjom in order to meet up with their North Korean counterparts and two South Korean students who had flown to the North via Berlin. The riot police repeatedly thwarted the attempts of the demonstrators to leave the Yonsei campus for the purposes of this meeting.

Police officials have issued a nationwide hunt for leaders of Hanchongnyon, (Korean Federation of University Student Councils),³ which organized the rally.⁴ Prosecutors have stated their intention to arrest all the militant leaders but to show leniency to all those who were simply participants. 36 students will be prosecuted under the National Security Law for having produced and disseminated material "benefiting the enemy". Another 428 have been charged with violence, interference in police duties and unlawful intrusion. The rest of the 3,400 students detained and interrogated have been released.

Hanchongnyon represents organisations at about 180 South Korean universities and colleges. Police estimate that the number of Hanchongnyon activists across the country total 30,000 out of a total student association membership of one million students.

There are three basic points to Hanchongnyon's unification programme: withdrawal of all US forces; repeal of the National Security Law; and the signing of a peace agreement between the USA and North Korea, excluding the Republic as a signatory. The federation considers that campus unrest and violent rallies are inevitable in pursuit of the NL-led national unification movement. All three of these points run contrary to present South Korean policy, and tend to undermine support for the four-way talks proposed by President Kim and Bill Clinton during their summit on Cheju Island earlier this year. [Proposals to which North Korea, of course, has still not

responded.]

It is too early to assess the implications of this latest confrontation between the regime and students. Unfortunately, the main opposition grouping, Kim Dae-jung's New Congress for New Politics, has made the regime's job easier, by condemning the student demonstrators, for the first time.

Some universities have suggested that they will shut down unauthorized student circles, especially those suspected of leftism. Korea University has already ordered the closure of the head office of Hanchongnyon, and Yonsei has indicated that it will seek damages against both Hanchongnyon and the government for the extensive damage the university sustained during the protest.

Government circles have been grumbling since the April election about "dangerous" levels of student activism. They now have an opportunity to do something about it. Their strategy so far has been to focus the repression, arresting only the radical leadership of the movement. As the new academic year gets under way, developments will show how successful this policy has been. ★

Notes

There were two errors in our previous article on Korea (IV#279). Firstly, Kwang-Ju is in the south-west of the country. Secondly, a reader has suggested that at one point we confused Park Chung-hee with Chun Doo-hwan. Park Chung-hee was President from 1961 until his assassination in 1979. Chun Doo-hwan was the architect of the 1979 coup and chiefly responsible for the Kwang-Ju massacre.

1. A twenty-year old university student conscripted as a riot officer died from injuries sustained during the final assault. A reporter also underwent brain surgery for a head injury sustained from a flying rock. There were also reports of dehydration and physical collapse, broken limbs and, in the case of two students, possible eye damage.
2. The first Grand Unification Festival (in 1992) took place simultaneously in Seoul, the truce village of Panmunjom in North

Korea and Tokyo. It was supported by the previous South Korean Federation of student councils, Chondaehyop. In subsequent years, the Unification Festival has alternated between the North and the South, drawing Korean activists from abroad as well as from the two Koreas.

During the confrontation during this year's festival, North Korean officials and students staged their part of the Festival in the northern half of Panmunjom truce village on August 15th.

3. Hanchongnyon was formed in 1993, one year after the first Grand Unification Festival. The Federation chairperson, 25 year-old Chong Myong-ki, 25, is also student council president at Chonnam National University in Kwangju. The present Policy Consultation Committee of Hanchongnyon, made up of 20-30 militants, took office in April, around the same time that South Korean government circles began muttering about the "dangerous levels" of student activism on campuses. The executive committee, which is the governing body of Hanchongnyon, consists of 1,600 representatives of the participating councils. It determines action plans and policy initiatives.

There are two basic political tendencies within Hanchongnyon: National Liberation (NL) and Populace Democracy (PD). One government report claims that anti-government activists dominate 117 out of a total of 169 four-year universities across the nation. NL activists lead the student councils of 94 universities including Yonsei and Korea National University in Seoul and Chonnam National University in Kwangju. According to this report, Seoul National University and Sogang University are headed by conservative PD followers, while Ehwa Women's University is led by the 21st Century Progressive Student Front. None of these latter universities have managed to garner much enthusiasm for actions either on or off their campuses. The PD tendency decided not to take part in the 3-day Grand Unification Festival which opened last Tuesday at Yonsei, suggesting that participation was a matter of individual student choice.

4. Hanchongnyon is the southern partner in Pomchonghangnyon, the League of Pan-national Youth and Students. The League was established in 1992 to stage joint North and South student rallies for national unification. It facilitates fax communication between students in the North and the South through its liaison office in Berlin.

China: dissent inside the Communist Party

Zhang Kai

The Chinese Communist Party theoretical review *Qiu Shi*, No.13, includes an article by General Secretary Jiang Zemin, 'On Politics'. Jiang criticises "some cadres" for: not reading any books or journals; not studying party documents; not considering issues or problems from political perspectives; lacking political discretion and sensitivity; not implementing party policies they do not like; and ignoring party instructions. Jiang writes that "regionalism and protectionism in some areas and some departments have become very serious." He acknowledges that, for partial or individual interests, criminal acts have been protected.

Considering that this criticism supposedly refers only to "some" party cadres, the list is rather long.

Xing Fensi, Vice President of the Party Cadre School and the Deputy Head of the Party Central Ideological Leadership Team, is more direct than Jiang. On June 6 he wrote a long article in the *People's Daily* entitled "Unwavering in persisting on Marxism — drawing a clear distinction between Marxism and anti-Marxism". The article admits that "there are indeed differences on some significant theoretical and practical problems", and that "there have already been rather significant interferences with the overall situation."

- He refutes two "erroneous" views, one being that there is no more hope for state enterprises and the only way out is privatization; the other being that the shareholding form for state enterprises is also a form of private ownership. Xing argues that shareholding is not privatization.
- Xing criticises the view that the serious polarization in distribution has caused the emergence of a new bourgeois class. Nevertheless, three researchers from the People's University have established that the Gini coefficient in China in 1994 is higher than that of the USA in 1990, indicating serious discrepancies between the rich and the poor in China. (New China Digest, February 1996). According to the State Statistics Bureau, in 1994 the registered capital of privately run and individual enterprises amounted to 441.8 million Yuan (\$1 = 8 Yuan). This is nine times higher than in 1990.
- He argues that "it is not valid to negate the Reform by Socialism, or adversely, to negate socialism by the reform, open-door policy and market economy."
- Xing tries to argue that China's "socialist market economy" is different

from the capitalist market economy, because "public ownership is the pillar" and because of "state macro-economic control."

Xing's defence of Deng Xiaoping's theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics is rather feeble. In reality, China has become a key site for imperialist investments. The *People's Daily* of July 14, made a front page appeal for people not to boycott foreign capital by resorting to uncritical defense of the national industries.



Other media have been more independent-minded. China's *State and Strength*, No.6, argues otherwise, saying that uncontrolled foreign capital will break the domestic economic 'ecology', causing considerable social turmoil. Qiu Xiaohua of the State Statistical Bureau claims that this investment means

- 50-60% of domestic industrial consumer goods will be replaced by foreign capital, and one-third of the industrial goods market being taken up by foreign capital;
- unequal competition increases the difficulties of state-owned enterprises;
- regional competition for foreign capital has caused the drain of state property;
- structural imbalance in investments, with funds concentrating on high-priced property, entertainment facilities and processing industries.

Intra-party struggle is heating up. At least two anonymous papers are circulating. One is entitled 'Factors affecting our state security', and the other is against peaceful transformation. These papers warn that a new bureaucrat bourgeoisie and comprador bourgeoisie is emerging, and critique the flooding of bourgeois liberalization since 1992. However, both call for strict party ideological control. It is seen that the papers represent the manifesto of the Stalinist faction within the party. ★

Reprinted from *October Review*, GPO Box 10144, Hong Kong e-mail: or@vnet.com

A fixed election is worth fighting

Amadou Guiro, a leading member of Senegal's And-Jéf - African Party for Democracy and Socialism (PADS) explains why the country's left opposition will participate in November's local elections, despite predictions of massive fraud by the Diouf regime.

• **The Socialist Party has been in power for 35 years. How stable is the regime?**

Amadou Guiro: President Diouf has announced that he will be a candidate in the next Presidential elections. His aim was to hold back all the centrifugal forces that could place themselves at the centre of his party and cause problems. The moment he announced his candidature all the vague whisperings in the heart of the party were brought under control. Nevertheless, the crisis of the ruling party is extremely serious, as shown by the forces leaving it.

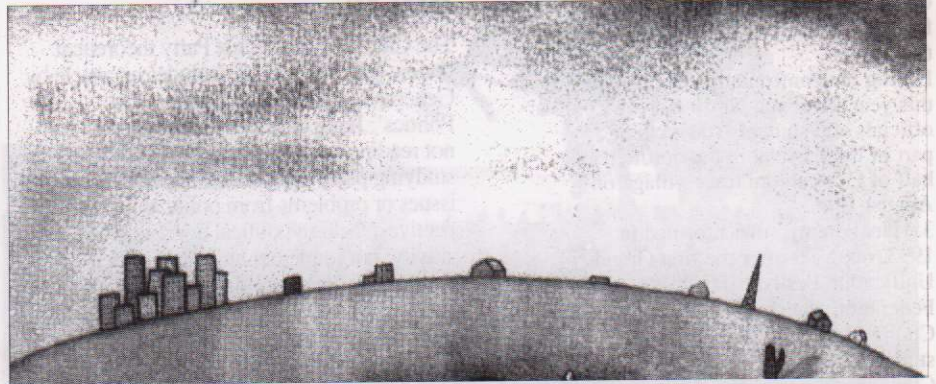
The battle for the succession is in full swing. Diouf is engaged in imposing a new successor, someone who hasn't been tested out in the centre of the party and who will hardly benefit from majority support. A crisis is opening up within the leading ranks of the party.

• **Municipal and rural elections will take place in November.**

These elections were meant to take place in 1995. The Socialist Party didn't feel itself ready, and preferred to postpone them. Municipal and rural elections should take place every five years, and the last were held in 1990. In 1990 the opposition decided on a boycott because of problems posed at that time by the electoral code. That means that today all Senegal's municipal and rural councillors and mayors are members of the ruling Socialist Party.

• **How will the PADS present itself?**

These elections therefore give us a chance to place ourselves as an alternative political force. Our aim is not just to get a good vote but to get the maximum number of people elected. We are counting on transforming these elections into a very important stage for building the party. And Jéf-PADS will present lists in every municipality, every rural community and, therefore, in every region. That means that the number of militants mobilised on this occasion will be considerable. It is obvious that if we just present candidates without doing the necessary mobilising work and building campaign committees at the level of the



federation and the region we will waste this opportunity.

• **What will be the central themes of the PADS electoral campaign?**

Although these are local elections our campaign will be very political. Our central slogan is "Vote them out!" ("folli" in Wolof). We are standing in order to beat the Socialist Party and throw out the team that has led the country for the past 35 years. The central aim of the PADS is to change both the people and the political institutions.

That is why we refused to enter the government when that was offered to us after the elections in February 1994 and the arrest of our leader Landing Savane and of Abdoulaye Wade, the leader of the main opposition party the Democratic Party of Senegal (PDS).

• **How will you resist the electoral fraud everyone expects?**

We don't have many illusions because we are aware that the electoral code, which in any case is not democratic, can be turned to the advantage of the ruling Socialist Party. That is why we have demanded the setting up of an independent national electoral commission charged with supervising the elections and ensuring their openness. Now the Socialist Party and the government have rejected this proposal. We also know that the whole administration, the Prefects and the Governors are on the side of the Socialist Party. There isn't the slightest doubt that the administrative machinery of the State will be mobilised to orchestrate fraud. Fraud has already started at the level of registration. At the time of the revision of the electoral lists we discovered that in certain places electors were struck off in a fraudulent fashion.

Fraud will also operate when the electoral cards are distributed - the Socialist Party will be watching out to ensure that its clients benefit. It will reach its height on the very day of the elections. Democratic control will be much greater in the major towns,

where the opposition is present.

The PADS has decided to mobilise, in every place where we think there is a chance of winning seats, representatives who can read and write, who know the electoral code and are well aware of their rights and responsibilities so that we can protest about and overturn cases of fraud. Where there is clear proof of fraud we have decided to call on the people to mobilise.

• **Has the Party defined its policy on alliances for these elections?**

During the last legislative elections we formed a coalition with two other parties (the PDS and the Socialist Unity Movement - MSU). This seemed correct at the time, but was later criticised by some of our electors and several other radical organisations.

We remember that, in 1992-4, the PDS, having taken a cavalier attitude towards the PADS in the Box-Senegal Alliance - which was, in any case, open to criticism in certain respects - ended up joining the government in 1994. Equally we failed to keep the PDS in the opposition until the municipal and rural elections, which would have strengthened the chances of the whole opposition beating the Socialist Party.

The PDS wants to have its cake and eat it too (participate in the government and ally with the PADS in opposition). By participating in the government the PDS preferred to break its pledges to the people and to its allies - the PADS, the leftist Socialist Unity Movement (MSU) and the Mustarchidin and Mustarchidat (very influential progressive Muslim movements).

The conditions under which Wade entered the government have made it possible to expose the limitations of this party. Those sections of the population who no longer see the PDS as a credible alternative to the Socialist Party would not understand our choosing to present common lists with this party. Broad sections of the population realise that the PDS, and especially Wade, are not there to sweep out the regime but rather to bring benefits to their party base and

negotiate a place in the government - which is not at all our aim.

The PDS will be interested in a coalition with the PADS, but the PADS has no interest in forming a coalition with forces such as the PDS, who would turn against us without hesitating if they thought it would strengthen them.

Today we believe that if we want to constitute an alternative pole we have to do so by going into these elections on our own and affirming our own identity. Consequently, our aim will be to beat the Socialist Party and to affirm the PADS as the left current. Wherever it is possible we will have our own lists.

In some places, where our party is very weak, we envisage an alliance with the MSU (with whom we made a joint campaign during the Presidential and legislative elections). In the department of Biloana (in Casamance, the rebel region in the South of Senegal) some important forces from the ruling Socialist Party have joined the PADS.

We will also open up our lists to independent candidates because we have fought for their right to stand - the Socialist Party and government are opposed from fear of seeing some of their members opt for this way of doing things.

As for the question of alliances, we have to explain that our party is very much in favour of unity since the PADS is itself the result of the fusion of four left currents in December 1991.

• **The Diouf regime will presumably use fraud to maintain its rule. Given this, why is your party putting so much effort into electoral work?**

If we insist on the need for the PADS to establish itself as an alternative pole of attraction it is because we estimate that there is a close relationship between these rural or regional elections and the next legislative elections in 1998 and presidential elections in the year 2,000. Today there is a feeling amongst people that nothing can be achieved with the Socialist Party or another Diouf. The PADS and its spokesperson Landing Savané appear, at the level of public opinion, as an alternative political force.

• **Will the PADS be standing many women candidates?**

The party militants have insisted that there be at least 25% of women on the electoral lists and that women should be eligible to be included in the first ten names on the list. Within the party leadership we have agreed in principle on quotas for women. The practical ways and means will depend on the mobilisation of women comrades and their willingness to take on the responsibilities necessary for being at the top of the list. In some localities, even municipalities, women will certainly be at the top of the list.

Apart from the issue of quotas on the PADS lists, the central demands which came out of the perspectives document passed by the national conference of PADS women



Landing Savané and Amadou Guiro of the PADS

dealt, in a general fashion, with the representation of women on electoral lists and the issue of women's economic power. The majority of women have no income, hence there is a need to develop initiatives at the regional level which would enable women to collectively experience management of their own organisations and financial resources.

The financial aspect of the electoral campaign is, in any case, more important for our party than the precise position of women candidates on the electoral slate. Because of our extremely limited resources, those comrades who stand for election as PADS candidates are obliged to pay part of their election expenses out of their own pockets. Women certainly don't have the same means to meet such costs. Many of them don't have even a minimum of economic independence to allow them to appear on the lists at the same level as men, even if they had the political abilities. To try to overcome this financial barrier which penalises women we have decided to make appeals to certain democratic organisations to financially support those candidates who have a chance of being elected.

• **What are your chances of success?**

This is the first time since our foundation in 1991 that the PADS has participated in local elections. Consequently this opening means a lot is at stake for us, particularly since in the last presidential elections in February 1993 our party came third with an admittedly weak, but still significant, vote of around 3%. This weak result is explained by the "useful vote", a consequence of the polarisation between Abdou Diouf on one side and Abdoulaye Wade (president of the PDS) on the other - as well, of course, as the inevitable electoral fraud. ★

Notes For more information about Senegal, read our interview with PADS leader Landing Savané (IV#268) and with Badara Ndiaye (IV#264).



The sweet smell of corruption

by Amadou Guiro

SUD NEWSPAPER IS ONE OF THE PREMIER organs of the free press in Senegal. It has played an extremely important role in the fight for democracy. At first a weekly it has subsequently managed to transform itself into a daily and establish a radio station. Because it supports plurality and is open to the people *Sud* poses a real threat to all those corrupt people in the regime. This threat is even more real today when the country is preparing for elections in which the inevitably large scale fraud will be denounced by this paper.

The *Sud* communications group has recently been sentenced because it brought into the public gaze the affair of Jean-Claude Mimeran, a French industrialist who has profited from enormous favours, particularly in relation to the sugar monopoly. *Sud* revealed that Mimeran had been caught by Customs importing refined sugar without permission.

To cover up this fraud the authorities have not been content just to claim that the sugar was unrefined; for the first time they have allowed themselves to sentence a newspaper to a fine of 50 million CFA francs (\$US 100,000) and to jail six of its journalists for five months.

Today the PADS is actively engaged in defending that organ of the press and, in a broader fashion, defending free speech and the freedom of journalists, who should not be at the mercy of big finance capital. What has been revealed is that the highest people in this country are in hock to Mimeran and the close complicity existing between this industrialist and the governing circles is well understood.

The recent condemnation of the *Sud* communications group is not simply a question of attacks on the freedom of the press but also reflects new forms of dependence in relation to imperialism.

Today, while brandishing the flag of liberalism and privatisation, certain sectors remain private fiefs. Mimeran has a near total monopoly of sugar and has no intentions of handing it over to national economic sectors, especially in the commercial sector.

The battle waged today by the administration against *Sud* newspaper and *Sud*-FM radio station to a certain extent reflects the struggle within the leading cliques. The crisis of the regime and the State apparatus is unprecedented. They have always succeeded in maintaining some level of cohesion at the top. Today we are witnessing clear splits, our mission to deepen them. ★

Towards a different Europe!

Alternative conference, with lots of demonstrations and other activities

- The Dutch Committee for a Different Europe invites you to take part in debates and actions for a social, green, democratic and feminist Europe.

- Preparations for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) are leading to the dismantling of public services and social security and rising unemployment in almost every EU member state.

- the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) has begun: the fifteen member states are negotiating to revise the Maastricht Treaty, the treaty that has propelled the European Union into its current credibility crisis. According to plan, these negotiations are supposed to end with the signing of a new treaty by the heads of government during their June 1997 Amsterdam summit.

- Together the EMU and IGC will largely determine the character of the European Union and thus the daily lives of Europe's citizens. But discussion of these developments is going on mainly among politicians.

- For the moment there is no broad debate about the threats posed by European integration, plans for an EU defense bloc, and "Europeanisation" of the French and British nuclear arsenals. Our Europe must be a Europe that carries out a strong social and environmental policy, creates jobs, eliminates the democratic deficit, offers equal opportunities to women and men, safeguards the rule of law, is hospitable to refugees, is open to the East and in solidarity with the South, disarms in order to contribute to peace, and promotes sustainable development both inside and outside Europe.

Parallel to the June 1997 Amsterdam Summit, there will be an alternative conference, demonstrations and other activities. We invite all progressive parties, groups, NGO's and others to take part in this Summit for a Different Europe.

Get in touch!

Committee for a Different Europe, c/o A SEED Europe, P.O. Box 92066, 1090 AB Amsterdam, Holland. E-mail: ander.europa@aseed.antenna.nl
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book notes

There is only one word: Resist

An introduction to the Peoples' Democratic Party (PRD) published by Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET) September, 1996, 40pp. US\$5 plus air postage.

- Foreward by Nico Warouw, International General Representative of the PRD.

The July 27 1996 crackdown

- Why is the dictatorship trying to destroy the PRD, by Max Lane
- The PRD in action, April 1995-July 1996: a chronology of actions
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- The PRD Program (excerpts).
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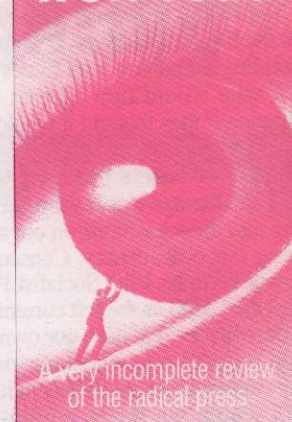
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