

international
VIEWPOINT
December 1996 Issue 283

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Latin America

The Indian road to revolution

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Neo-liberal economic reforms have gone further in **New Zealand** than in any other "advanced" economy. Geof Pearce reports on the "Kiwi crash"



News deadline: November 21st

Africa martyred again

The west has blood on its hands. Time to act.

Mark Johnson tries to unravel the crises in Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire.

THE CURRENT SITUATION WAS NOT JUST "foreseeable." We could hardly pretend to have expected anything else. What was the reality of the refugee camps? They throw together several hundred thousand people, for the most part totally disarmed. Immediately, the different cliques present try to pull strings. The Zairian army, unpaid and without officers, use the camps for their own ends: promoting the black market, trading on connections. The leading figures in the ex-Rwandan regime, the militia and various others, come to do business and mount their own politico-military operations.

The fish rots from the head down, as they say. According to Colette Braeckman, Africa specialist at the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*, "for President Mobutu, the refugees are a political and diplomatic card. The president's brother in law, and Zaire's generals, all take a cut of the humanitarian aid that comes through Kinshasa, and they have grown rich in the arms trade that feeds the conflict."

There was a combination of massive and incomparable poverty and enormous despair in the camps. And they became the arena of important power struggles. The stakes were not only military but economic, which is all-important in a situation of such poverty. People in the region are effectively fighting over the morsels of poverty.

Virtual control

The second element that made this situation predictable is the fact that Zaire is a state in name only. The regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko is totalitarian. Even *The Economist* magazine calls his regime "kleptocratic." This is a country the resources of which have been pillaged for nearly 30 years by one family, one clan, one man. As a result, apart from the presidential guard, the Zairian army is non-existent in operational terms. It seems to act more as a gang, dedicated to using its force against the people, to augment its meagre salaries.

Mobutu has been in power now for 31 years. This is an unspeakable regime - totalitarian would be a euphemism. Mobutu is responsible for the assassination of thousands of people. He has not allowed the slightest opposition, and has plundered the basic resources of the country to accumulate wealth for himself.

It could hardly have been otherwise. If there had been the slightest attempt to construct a real Zairian state in the 1960s (when most African countries gained political independence), the imperialist powers would



have de-stabilised the regime. Instead, Mobutu has been a devoted servant of the western anti-communist crusade in Africa. Among other 'great' causes, he supported the Angola Popular Liberation Movement (MPLA) and opposed the African National Congress (ANC) struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Mobutu, lord of chaos

After the implosion of the 'Soviet bloc,' Mobutu became less useful to his masters. His half-measures in the development of a parliamentary democracy made it more and more difficult for the United States to continue their unconditional support, and they began to look for a reliable alternative. But Mobutu chose not to go quietly. To remind his estranged western backers that he alone can prevent chaos in central Africa, he created chaos.

France, the main imperialist interest in the region, has always supported Mobutu. In recent weeks France has sent troops to Brazzaville, the Congo capital city, just across the river from Kinshasa, Zaire's capital. The only explanation for this intervention is to be ready to support Mobutu if the situation in

Kinshasa gets out of hand. The dictator himself seems to have recovered from his prostrate operation in Europe, and will presumably try to return to Kinshasa.

Opposition

The oppositions which appeared, particularly in Zaire, during the wave of democratic pressure in 1990-1991 are more or less totally absent or have become accomplices of the regimes. They play absolutely no role as a counter-force. The situation in Kinshasa, Zaire, where part of the opposition participates in demonstrations against "Rwandan aggression", demonstrates the role and nature of the majority of the opposition forces.

Having said this, Doctor Kenji of Zaire's Patriotic Front recently said that the rebellion in the east of Zaire is "a senseless adventure, which plays into Mobutu's hands. We should remain on guard, and not forget who the main enemy is." It illustrates to what extent the political and social situation has deteriorated in these countries. There regimes are extremely unstable, even imploding, yet at the same time the oppositions do not represent a credible alternative.

It is clear that the absence of state and economic factors weighs heavily on the current situation in the east of Zaire, bordering on Rwanda and Burundi. It is one thing to have camps containing hundreds of thousands of people in a real country; it is a completely different matter to have them in a country that is an abstraction, a virtual country, where no legitimate power exercises control over daily existence.

Genocide

The second element of the crisis is the aggravation of this situation by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. In about four months, almost one million people were slaughtered. Half of the Tutsi population had to die, because the clique around the dictator, President Habyarimana refused to share power with the opposition, and the rebels of the FRP. Habyarimana himself perished in the conflagration he planned in such great detail. Beyond this macabre justice, the genocide has gone totally unpunished. All the potential warlords of the region must be feeling more confident as a result.



The carnage only stopped when the FPR conquered the country and took power. The 2,700 UN "peace-keepers" didn't even try to stop the slaughter. But France was quick to send 5,000 troops to create a buffer zone the real purpose of which was to enable the genocide perpetrators to escape chastisement and regroup, shielded not only by French and Senegalese "peace-keepers" but by the mass of Rwandan Hutus who had been hounded into exile by the retreating Hutu militia and the fragments of the Rwandan army.

In the camps around Kivu, in eastern Zaire, the Hutu militia could reorganise itself in peace. And, of course, prevent its "human shield" from returning to Rwanda. They bought all the arms they needed from the Zaire military. And, it seems, from French, British and Italian arms dealers.

From their bases in the Zaire refugee camps, the Hutu militia began to organise regular incursions into Rwanda, eliminating remaining witnesses to the genocide, and destabilising the new FRP regime, which had stopped the massacre when it came to power. When the situation became intolerable, the Rwandan army counter-attacked. According to *Le Soir* journalist Colette Braeckman, "only the Rwandan army can put an end to this situation. This is probably the unspoken conclusion of the 'international community.' Rwanda has the will to put an end to this situation. No other country is willing to send troops to clear up this infection."

The border camps are now empty. Those Hutu civilians who have escaped from the Hutu militia have returned to Rwanda, where reception camps have been opened to receive them. The less fortunate have been driven deeper into Zaire as the Hutu militia retreat before the Rwandan army.



The impunity of those responsible for the 1994 genocide has had an impact at several levels. Those who have already committed crimes and are ready to commit new ones are forming new alliances. Today they are candidates for receiving arms or for again becoming linked to this or that state, this or that diplomatic interest. Their impunity also works in favour of the new rulers of Rwanda, who reason that since atrocities in the past went unpunished, they too can indulge in extortion or opt for military responses rather than working towards the necessary political and social solutions. Obviously all this is not only the responsibility of the local regimes or of African political movements. The outrage we are witnessing also flows from the responsibility of the great powers, who have played an essential role in supporting these regimes for decades now.

What else?

Any real solution will have to include measures for agrarian reform. Farmland is becoming more and more rare, because of population growth. Meanwhile, the financial returns from farming are falling, and the social surplus product is consequently stunted. This level of poverty, combined with the crisis and the dismemberment of these economies and states, ensures that conflicts inevitably break out over the division of what remains.

Social criteria no longer have any reality so people attach themselves to the nearest, most immediate entity - village, clan, different ethnic group. These are the sole references points that retain a sense for people. The reaction today is one of panic and withdrawal into this identification with

"otherness". There is above all a desire to take from or keep from the "other" - who equally wants to take from or keep from you.

Within this framework fragmentation is inevitable. We are not heading for a war between Tutsis and Hutus. The future looks much worse than that. If things continue to deteriorate there will be, here as elsewhere in Africa, fifteen or twenty small groups who will fight among themselves. An array of temporary alliances will be formed, based primarily on material interests which appear to us utterly derisory, but, for local people, will be quite literally matters of life and death.

What needs to be recognised, by the Rwandan regime and the "international community" is the need for a regional solution. There can be no Rwandan solutions to the problems of Rwanda, and no Burundian solutions to the problems of Burundi. There can only be regional solutions: not for reasons of immediate ethnic identity but simply because the problem results from poverty. One can develop neither Rwanda nor Burundi with just the resources of these two states.

The same is true for the eastern part of Zaire, which is not even connected by paved road to the capital, Kinshasa. For natural geographical reasons, this region needs to have an intense economic and social relationship with the other countries of the Great Lakes.

This is not about proposing a conference of these states and their existing regimes, as the French government is doing. Because the nature of the regimes in place is also, obviously, part of the problem. Take Burundi. The French government supported a boycott of the Burundi regime after the last coup d'état. Today France claims that a political solution for the region requires the participation of this same regime in an international conference. None of this makes any sense.

Resolving the problems of Africa in the medium term requires a halting of any sort of "Western support" for regimes such as that in Zaire, as well as all the existing cliques who will inevitably engage in similar policies if they manage to come to power. The only way is to put an end to these manoeuvres which, in the name of strategies and alliances, support profiteering and money-grubbing. Thirty years of these policies have created a humanitarian disaster. The scale of the disaster in the Great Lakes region is without precedent. But it is the third or fourth time the same pattern of crisis has developed in this region.

The 1996 European Union aid programme for the Great Lakes area of Africa is 284 million ecus (£230 million). European NGOs take 25% to finance their operations. Of the money distributed 65% has gone to the 2 m. refugees living in camps, surrounded by Hutu militias. Seven million Rwandans have received the other 35%. This leaves nothing for the Rwandan government to facilitate the return to Rwanda of Hutu refugees not involved in genocide. Without massive aid any re-integration of Rwandan refugees will be impossible. ★

Resisting the political police

Anti-authoritarian and civil liberties groups fight back

In recent years the Greek authorities have restricted individual and collective rights, in the name of "anti-terrorism." The anti-authoritarian and civil liberties movements have been on the defensive. But things may be about to change. One solidarity committee is internationalising the struggle

Yiannis Felekis

SINCE THE EARLY 1980s, GREEK REPRESSIVE organs have had two main concerns. Firstly, they have attempted to align themselves with the European and American "anti-terrorist" context at both the political and the "operational" level. Initially, the Greek police had very little support from the population, because of popular memories of the civil war and the dictatorship. At the same time, these authorities faced relatively frequent, high impact armed activities from a range of armed organisations, many of which enjoyed considerable social acceptance. While the overall level of violence was low in absolute terms, it was certainly a serious problem in the Greek context.

During this period, the repressive authorities were also confronted with a growing "street-fighting" tendency within the anarchist milieu (and, to a lesser extent, the Marxist far-left). This new dynamic was partly a shaking-free from the restraints of traditional dead-end, *passé* political currents, and partly the desire of a younger generation to state their own concerns in a dramatic, and different way, through direct confrontation with the repressive authorities, and the state in general.

To meet these two challenges, the repressive authorities unleashed a "pogrom of persecution" against the most radical elements of the anti-authoritarian struggle. This culminated in the arrest of a large number of militants, and their trial for armed activity. Meanwhile, whole areas of political activity were penalised through "black" campaigns accusing leading militants of being agents of organised crime, drug traffickers, and so on. The repressive authorities deliberately cultivated a climate of fear among the more conservative parts of Greek society, in an attempt to increase tension and bring about a generalisation of state repression.

Despite a number of important victories for the democratic movement, and partial setbacks for the forces of persecution, the 1990s have brought wide-reaching anti-democratic and anti-social "reforms". 1970s victories



which implemented the exercise of individual and collective rights have been abolished or stunted. The protection of social order is suddenly more popular than the protection of civil rights and liberties. The accused is increasingly judged according to his or her political and moral beliefs and behaviour than for the offense in question.

This year alone, sentences totalling hundreds of years were handed down against 500 demonstrators who occupied the Polytechnic School. They were arrested by the special MAT police units, after a violation of the right of asylum. Greek prisons are filled with drug addicts who have received several

• George Balafas Solidarity Committee

THE COMMITTEE IS PART OF A MILIEU OF collective action and direct confrontation groups, which trace their origin back to the fight against state repression and solidarity with political prisoners both in the period of political change in Greece (1974) and in the period from 1985 to the present.

Activity in solidarity with political prisoners, particularly those accused of armed activity, has been the backbone of Greece's anti-authoritarian movement. Over the years, a number of massive protests have been organised, and many partial victories for justice have been won.

Within this movement, the Balafas Committee has a particular identity. The central axis of work is specific activities of solidarity for George Balafas, who, since 1985, has been accused of murder, assassination, drug smuggling, and membership of the "17 November terrorist group."

After repeated trials, under constantly-shifting rules, and despite a patent lack of evidence, he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in November 1995.

At this point, the George Balafas soli-

separate sentences for the same activity. American agents have officially, openly taken over responsibility for "anti-terrorist" activities in police headquarters.

The George Balafas case [see below] has become the forum for a confrontation with far reaching implications. The Greek authorities, and their US "advisors" are using Balafas as the test case for a new trial procedure under which "terrorism" suspects will only physically be brought to court for the confirmation of a sentence which has already been imposed. This prevents any possibility of judicial defence. Meanwhile, the Balafas com-

mittee has proved itself capable of relating to the wider left. It increasingly articulates not only solidarity with George, but the defence of basic social and civil rights, and the fight against neo-liberal barbarism and imperialist domination.

On 12-17th January 1997 the committee will host a series of international meetings on the general theme of political prisoners and repression in Europe. The goal is to internationalise solidarity campaigns, exchange experience and information with similar groups in other parts of Europe, and discuss together the changing context of their anti-authoritarian work. ★

arity committee was created by activists of the far left and the anti-authoritarian movement. Comrades who have been victims of persecution by state forces over the last decade have a significant presence.

The Committee's concerns include:

- the "upgrading" of state repression.
- the pretended need to crack down on terrorist activities in Greece.
- the subjugation of Greek authorities to United States interests.
- the continuous, careful planing of injustice against "enemies of the state" and "enemies of society" by the judicial powers.

In May, the committee organised a large solidarity concert in Athens, which ended in a march of 1,000 people to the Parliament and the American Embassy.

An international meeting will be held in Athens from 12-19 January 1996. Similar committees and like-minded individuals are encouraged to contact the organisers ASAP.

✉ G. Balafas Solidarity Committee, Valtetsiou 35, Exarhia, 10681, Athens, Greece. ☎ (01) 775 3979 fax: 674 5302

Unemployed march in Sweden Britain: Euro-march preparations

by Goran Karrman

MORE THAN 4,000 PEOPLE, MOST OF THEM unemployed trades union members, marched against the social democratic government and its austerity program in Stockholm on Thursday October 18th

Initiated by a unemployed transport worker, and mother of four, the protest gained nation-wide attention and support. Among the speakers at the demonstration were the chairman of the Transport workers union, Hans Wahlstrom, and Hans Karlsson from the LO union federation. Notable by his absence was LO chairman Bertil Jonsson, well-known for his steadfast support of the ruling Social Democratic Party.

Prime Minister Goran Persson and Labour Minister Margaretha Winberg, have been touring Europe with their message of reassurance for diplomats and investors. The Swedish government will deliver severe cuts in indirect wages, without provoking unrest. Their message was even used by the German capital as a tool against unions and the SPD in the struggle against German workers' right to 100% of salary during periods of sickness.

The marchers in Stockholm showed another side of the coin, a growing sense of "enough is enough" among thousands of Swedish workers, employed or unemployed. Cuts in the country's once-famous welfare system have put Swedish workers in a situation not known for generations. Over 700,000 Swedes (14%) find themselves cut out of the normal job-market and the figure is rising. Meanwhile, severe cuts are being made in the unemployment benefit system, and the social security net, leaving tens of thousands of households on the brink of disaster!

No one could miss the anger and the frustration among the marchers on October 18th, and their open distrust of the ruling Social Democratic Party. "They listen to big business, and shove us aside," was one of many comments. "I'm a social democrat without a party," read one placard, capturing the sentiment of many participants.

Other placards and slogans showed the demonstrators awareness of the danger that European union, and the planned single currency, represent to workers. "Maastricht is a framework for generalised attacks against workers rights all over Europe."

There is a clear and growing need for co-ordinated actions all over Europe. This Stockholm demonstration took place at the same time as a French public sector strike (followed by over 1/3 of the workers concerned) As one Swedish worker said on national radio: "If this doesn't help us to get a change, then we'll opt for a solution à la française [French-style]" ★

Reprinted from *Internationalen*, Stockholm

Pete Cooper

The Labour leadership's reversal on the question of a referendum on the single European currency, and their virtual agreement with Tory Prime Minister John Major on the question is an indication of the depths of tension which exist in the British ruling class about this issue.

The Liberal Democrats are the only parliamentary party openly committed to going into the single currency on the first wave which will include Germany, the Benelux countries and France.

The disagreements between different sections of the British ruling class oppose those "Euro-philes" who export to continental Europe, and those "Eurosceptic" capitalists and bankers who are primarily interested in overseas investment and currency speculation.

Denis Healey, one of the more intelligent leaders of the Labour right, recently let the cat out of the bag about a new worry haunting Europe's rulers and labour bureaucrats: the danger of riots in the streets in response to the implementation of the Maastricht convergence criteria (whereby every European member state has to cut its budget deficit to 3% of total output.) The resultant cuts in social spending have led to some of the biggest demonstrations and strikes since World War 2 in every major European country. While we haven't seen such a reaction in Britain yet, Healey realises that such movements can be contagious. Such a reaction from below could help roll back the years of defeat which workers have suffered at the hands of the Tories. Particularly in the context of a Labour victory in next year's general elections.

The other side has the strategic advantage. The EU and the governments of the member states have organised themselves to chop welfare across Europe, while mass reactions have been confined to the national level. Each national government can say, with some justice, that they have no alternative if all the others are complying, they don't want to be left on a limb if the other countries press ahead, and so on.

Well, the planned European marches against unemployment could be just the start of that European fightback. British Labour MEP Ken

Coates called for support for the marches at a 100,000 strong rally at the end of a march in Southern Italy against unemployment and cut-backs in Naples, organised by the Refounded Communists (PRC). PRC General Secretary Benedotti has called for support for the marches, as has the German Green Party. In November the French organisations supporting the march organised a week of action, including sit ins and demonstrations.

Support is also building in Britain. The TUC Joint Consultative Committee, which coordinates County Associations of TUCs has overwhelmingly backed the marches, as has the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs and the AGM of the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network.

The next stages in Britain are:

- to produce high quality publicity to help build support and raise money towards the estimated £60,000 (\$90,000) needed to build the march.
- to produce 4 or 5 issues of a march paper in the lead up to and during the marches
- to mobilise 50 march volunteers for the European launch rally on February 1st/2nd
- to organise a national meeting in Sheffield on January 18
- to set up regional committees.

✉ Glen Voris, St Helens TUC Resource Centre, 21-31 Barrow St Helens WA10 1RX. ☎ 01744 755889

E-mail: <101326.41@compuserve.com> Euromarch information is also on the Web at <http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/>

British sponsors include:

Unemployment Organisations and Campaigns: National Unemployed Centres Combine, Welsh TUC Unemployed Centres, Bolton Unemployed workers Centre, Bury Unemployed Workers Centre, North East Unemployed Action Group, London Campaign against the Job Seekers Allowance, St Helens TUC Resource Centre, Salford Unemployed Workers Centre, Welfare State Network.

Members of the European Parliament: (Lab) Ken Coates, Mike Hindley, Stan Newens, Brian Simpson, Alex Smith. **Members of Parliament:** (Lab) Harry Cohen, Jeremy Corbyn, Alan Simpson; (PC) Cynog Dafis. **County Associations of Trades Union Councils and TUCs:** Manchester County Association of TUCs, Merseyside County Association of TUCs, Tyne and Wear Association of TUCs, Bury TUC, Hull TUC, Ipswich TUC, Leeds TUC, Leigh A/T TUC, Oxford TUC, St Helens TUC, Torfaen TUC. **Trade Union Organisations:** Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee (sacked Liverpool Dockers), UNISON Hillingdon Hospital Strikers, APEX GMB Holborn Branch, CWU Thames Central Branch, MSF London Region, MSF Welsh Regional Council, MSF Newcastle Engineering Branch, RMT Southern Regional Council, UCATT UD 253 Branch, UCATT UD 254 Branch, UNISON Islington A Branch, Communications Workers Broad Left. **Political Organisations:** Brent East CLP, Socialist Campaign Group (Supporters Network), Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance, Scottish Socialist Alliance.

Psychology Politics Resistance

Networks Festival, 14 December 1996, ULU, Mallet Street, London

✘ Psychology Politics Resistance (PPR) is a network of people - both psychologists and non-psychologists - who are prepared to oppose the abusive uses of psychology. This means challenging the ideas within psychology that lead to oppressive practices, supporting those who are on the receiving end, and using psychological practice positively to help those engaged in struggles for social justice.

✘ There are groups in London, Manchester and Nottingham, and networks of members in other towns. There is a PPR women's group, and (coming soon) groups for those in clinical psychology and educational psychology.

✘ This "Networks Festival" will bring together as many groups as possible, for sharing ideas and practical work, and stimulating the development of activist groups to organise against oppression in psychology. To run a workshop, hold a stall and/or be included in the pre-event mailings, please contact the organisers ASAP. Entrance £5 waged, £2 low/unwaged,

✉ PPR, Psychology, Bolton Institute, Deane Road, Bolton, BL3 5AB, ☎ (+44 01204) 528851, fax 399074, email <iaparker@bolton.ac.uk>

The olive belt?

Catalan left heads for Big Bang

Rafael Ribó, President of the Catalan wing of Spain's United Left (IU) has called for the formation of a local version of Italy's centre-left "Olive Tree" coalition.

by Adam Novak

RIBÓ'S NEW STRATEGY WOULD BE A RADICAL departure from the United Left project (known locally as Initiative for Catalunya – IC). The movement's original Manifesto envisaged IC as a "wide, pluralistic socio-political movement." *Not* only an electoral coalition, like Italy's Olive Tree. More importantly, most IC members, and voters, consider the movement to be Catalunya's only parliamentary anti-capitalist force. No-one in Italy would say that about Olive Tree. Least of all the supporters of Communist Refoundation (PRC), the left bloc formed by dissident Communists who rejected their party's evolution to the right in the late 1980s.

Made in Italy

The nearest thing Olive Tree has to a detailed manifesto is *Governe l'Italia* (*Governing Italy*) the 1995 book written by party leader Romano Prodi. *Governe l'Italia* is an explicitly social-liberal response to Italy's very specific situation in the early 1990s, characterised by the rapid development of "Berlusconi-ism," and the rising popularity of the post-fascist movement of Fini and the right-wing separatists of Bossi's Northern League.

Most of Prodi's policy suggestions: privatisation, labour market reform, public health care "rationalisation," and his unwavering commitment to compliance with the Maastricht Treaty are clearly to the right of Spain's United Left, even its most moderate currents (Ribó in Barcelona and the New Left current in Madrid.)

So why is the leader of Catalunya's most left-wing parliamentary force so attracted to an Italian formation that, politically, has more in common with Spain's centre-left Socialists (PSOE), or Catalunya's own Christian-social nationalists (CiU), who have run the provincial government for 15 years, and, at the national scale, have given conditional support to whichever party has been in power in Madrid?

Presumably because Ribó is dreaming of a grand coalition of the Catalan opposition. It is true that, together, the Socialists, IC and the centre-left Catalan Republican Left (ERC) could potentially displace the bourgeois nationalists who dominate politics in Catalunya, and municipal politics outside

the 'red belt' round Barcelona.

The problem is that the formation of Olive Tree in Italy is inseparable from the disintegration of B. Craxi's Socialist Party (PSI). This enabled the former Communist Party to slide to the right, re-inventing itself as the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS).

Unfortunately for Ribó, the centre-left in Spanish politics is solidly represented by the PSOE of Felipe González and, in Catalunya, by both the Socialists and the Catalan Republican Left (ERC).

So, it is likely that the main dynamic in a Catalan Olive Tree formation would be the self-liquidation of IC as a distinct, "real left" option, in exchange for a few shadow cabinet posts in a coalition led by the existing centre-left parties.

Corruption

The political context is hardly the same. For instance, politicians are corrupt in both countries. But Italian corruption scandals have hit parties on both sides of the spectrum. In Spain, most of the ethical and legal "time-bombs" are linked to the last few years of the previous, Socialist Party government, defeated by the conservative Peoples Party in earlier this year. In Spain it would be hard to capitalise on popular frustrations with corruption and state terrorism in an "Olive" alliance dominated by those who, until six months ago, saw both types of crime as an inseparable part of "realistic" government.

Ribó is expected to formally present his project for approval at the upcoming conference of Initiative for Catalunya.

Paradoxically, the most visible result of his proposal so far has been a new mood of unity-in-resistance at the left of IC, which may even lead to smaller anti-capitalist groups, including the Fourth Internationalist "Collective for an Alternative Left" finally joining the movement. ★



Ten hours against neo-liberalism and for humanity

Vrij Universiteit Brussel (VUB),
Avenue de la Plaine, Ixelles,
Brussels, Belgium.
Saturday, January 25, 1997

• The neo-liberal disorder. Is work an "obstacle"?

Michel Husson, author of *Misère du Capital. Une critique du néolibéralisme*, Militant of AC (Acting against Unemployment), France, and Pedro Montes, Researcher at the Bank of Spain.

• The debt-empire strikes back

Do the World Bank and the IMF really want to cancel third world debt? Eric Toussaint, Committee for the Cancellation of Third World Debt (COCAD).

• Resistances: liberation of indigenous peoples

Nellys Palomo, Chiapas, Mexico, and Rosendo Rojas, Member of Parliament, Ecuador.

• Public services faced with neoliberalism

Brenda Silvera, teacher and trade union activist, Montevideo, Uruguay, Sabine Dick, shop steward at Belgacom, Belgium, and João Machado, Economist, Brazil.

• The multinationals seen by "their" workers

with workers from V.W., Caterpillar, ICI, SEAT (Barcelona).

• Africa under the structural adjustment plans

Binta Sarr, Senegal.

• Liberation of indigenous women

Nellys Palomo, Chiapas, Mexico.

• Exploitation of children at work

Michel Bonnet, France.

• Rwanda: Genocide's creditors

Pierre Galand, President of CNCD, Eric Toussaint and Ndoba Gasana.

• Zapatismo v. neo-liberalism

Participation of a representative of the Zapatistas (Mexico)

• I accuse neo-liberalism

Albert Jacquard, author of *J'accuse l'Economie Triomphante*, France.

• Limits to globalisation

Robert Went, Co-director of the International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE), Amsterdam, Anke Hintjens (COCAD), and Nicholas Hildyard, co-editor of *The Ecologist*, Britain.

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conference notes

Tenth Congress of Portuguese PSR

By Luis Branco

The Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR), Portuguese section of the Fourth International, held its tenth national congress on the 1-3 November. Seventy delegates discussed and adopted, unanimously, political theses centred on the European question, namely the general critique and opposition against the Maastricht Treaty and project. The document included also an analysis of the first year of Portugal's Socialist Party government and defined the tasks for the PSR for the next two years. The thesis on organisation and plan of tasks was also carried unanimously.



VOTA PSR 

The PSR currently participates in the left coalition which governs Lisbon, Portugal's capital city, with three deputies in the municipal parliament. The Congress decided not to renew this agreement with the Socialist and Communist parties, given that the Socialist Party is now in government and that such a coalition would imply some compromise with and support to that orientation. Also, very concrete political conflicts now dominate the municipal agenda, such as policies of waste disposal by incineration, or the "Expo 98" project - a gigantesque investment in the Exposition which follows the immensely costly Seville bonanza, and which will lead to the collapse of the urban environment and the acceleration of property speculation. This theme was an important discussion of the conference, since it is a very important tactical question. A decision to present alternative slates in municipal elections planned for December 1997 was supported by approximately 75% of the votes.

The PSR will now participate independently (or in alternative left coalitions) in these elections with the aim of highlighting

question of the quality of life in the city (transport, environment, suburbs, drugs, security, etc), contrasting the party's radical and concrete alternatives with the weak proposals for continued management of the problems and capitulation or collaboration with the installed powers, as put forward by the main left and right-wing candidates.

In the second part of the Congress, delegates (and the media) concentrated on the question of abortion. In the coming months, the Portuguese parliament will discuss a partial liberalisation of the country's extremely restrictive abortion legislation. The Congress approved a motion calling for free abortion on demand and against the idea of a national referendum on liberalisation of abortion law, as has already been proposed by the right.

In the closing session of the congress, one member of the party, a medical doctor, stated publicly that he had already performed abortions outside the narrow legal time limits. This sharpened the terms of the discussion, since he risks 3 years of jail. This declaration was the opening story on the main Sunday news bulletins of the country's various TV channels.

The incoming leadership of the party, elected at this the 10th Congress of the PSR, maintained the effort for the renewal of the leadership by integrating more younger comrades, and comrades from two new regions where the PSR is now active (Braga and Algarve). Comrades aged 24 or younger now represent more than one third of the leadership of the party and in some cases the entire leadership of local branches. ★

Twelfth Congress of French LCR

by Jean Dupont

This congress took place after a period of struggle in which the militants of the Revolutionary Communist League (Ligue communiste révolutionnaire - LCR) have been particularly active. Over the last few months, the party's activities have met with a much larger echo in public opinion than was for a long time the case. Apart from the press coverage of this Congress, another sign of the change was the large number of guests (about 50, compared to 150 delegates' representing the members of the organisation).

The Congress approved the platform of the outgoing majority ("Position A") by 68%.² Ten "Proposals for a political alternative" were approved, and it was resolved³ to encourage a debate of "all the left" in the

first months of 1997 "with the aim of impulsing a dynamic of discussion between left militants and militants in the social movement[s]. [We] will test the possibility of appeals in this sense, directed at political militants, trade unionists, members of associations, and non-party members. At the next parliamentary elections, on the basis of these proposals, the LCR will discuss with all components of the left... and propose common candidate lists with all those who share a logic which converges with these 10 points,

ROUGE

want to fight the right, and who refuse the logic of a 'republican front' against the [extreme-right] National Front... The LCR will pursue this initiative on the local levels... even if the various national leaderships do not come to an agreement. And, in any case, the LCR will begin making preparations so as to be able to present about 250 candidates."

A special congress will be organised next year to discuss the possible change of the name of the organisation, and reforms of the organisational structure.

A new central committee (CC) of 60 members was elected, with proportional representation of each tendency at the Congress in the new leadership.⁴ One third of CC members are first-timers, half of them young comrades. ★

Notes

1. 29% of delegates were women (as are 30% of LCR members). The average age of delegates was 35.5 years, which is lower than at the previous congress. 39% of delegates had joined the LCR since 1990. The average length of membership in the organisation was 13 years. 65% of non-student delegates were trade union members (FSU [education] 46%, CGT 33%, CFDT 11%, SUD-PTT 6%). 46% of delegates had a national or local responsibility in the LCR. 23% had been members of another political organisation before joining the LCR.

2. Position A 67.6%/92 votes, Position B (TUC tendency) 13.9%/19 votes, Position C (R! tendency) 18.3%/25 votes.)

3. 102 votes for, 26 against, 8 abstentions, 2 non-voting

4. In the preparation for the congress, each tendency had equal space to present its point of view in the LCR weekly newspaper *Rouge* and in the members' newsletter. Each tendency received identical travel funds, and equal speaking time at each of the regional assemblies at which the congress was prepared.

The hidden face of Latin America

The struggle for the right to exist, in a system that doesn't care

The international division of labour is easy to understand, the writer Eduardo Galeano¹ once said. Some countries specialisation is to win, others is to lose. Unfortunately, Latin America is in the second group. The continent now only produces 4.5% of global trade.

Over the last few decades, we have gone from being an exploited region, to an excluded one. Nowadays, who cares about our 200 million poor, miserable and excluded citizens?

By Ernesto Herrera*

AT THE EVE OF THE 21ST CENTURY, ALMOST half (46%) of the Latin-American population lives "from hand to mouth". Modernisation has obviously modified our behaviour. We no longer work the land (because we don't own any). And if we try to hunt, or cut firewood, here in the sprawling cities of the south, we end up ill, or arrested, or dead.

Until a few years ago, poverty and misery were widely recognised as being the result of social injustice. Even the most archaic right-wingers didn't deny it. Today, with the tepid blanket of neo-liberalism covering all public discourse, poverty is "re-invented" as the just punishment for inefficiency and under-development. This isn't just the message from the international financial institutions and their local agents (our governments). Since the Berlin wall fell, plenty of Latin America's left wing intellectuals have also started bowing down to those on high.

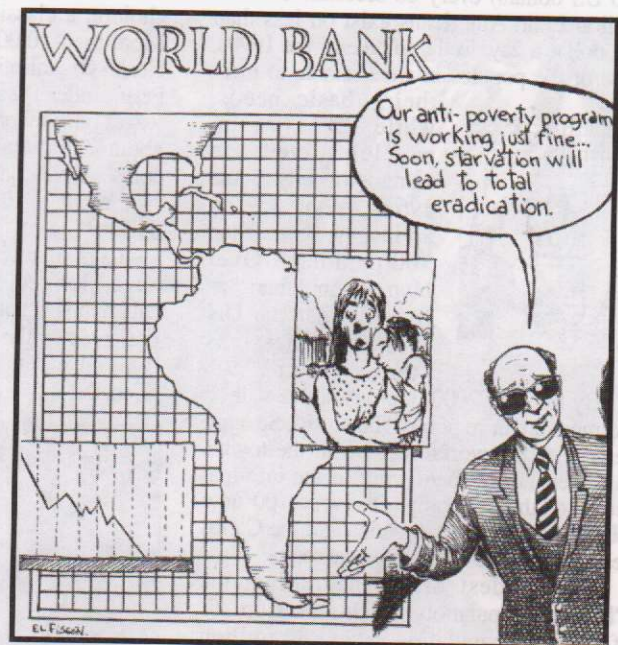
Few have much, many have little

Every year, Latin American states spend \$17,300,000,000 on weapons. About the same amount as the cumulative foreign debt of Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay and Uruguay.² Total debt in Latin America is about \$533 billion, even though most of our governments have meekly and diligently made interest payments for years and years now. The Brady plan³ now enables this debt to be transformed into shares in newly-privatised companies. This incredible plan didn't stop debt from rising 7.5% in 1995 alone. In this bog of fraud and waste, one in three Latin Americans survives (or not) on a daily income lower than one US dollar.

The impunity of the money-lords and their servants is limitless. Carlos Hernandez, Latin America chief at J.P. Morgan [investment bankers] recently enthused that "Latin America is one of the regions of the future, and we have to be present (*The Wall Street Journal Americas*, 1st July 1996). The allure of the region, for people like him, is the low price of bonds giving title to our foreign debt, and cheap shares in our public sector enterprises. Plus, of course, the new opportunities to invest and make money in our social security and health care systems, currently being privatised.

A few months ago, the governors of the Inter-American Investment Bank met in Buenos Aires to praise themselves on their contribution to structural reform (i.e. the denationalisation of our economies), the reduction in budget deficits (cuts in services) and taming of inflation (wage stagnation or decline). Even the "Tequila effect"⁴ is no longer a threat to growth in most of the countries of the continent. Everyone can look forward, then, to a new influx of foreign capital, which will lift us from under-development, and bury us up to our necks in globalisation.

The governors did spare time before the desert for a crocodile tear about the inevitable increase in unemployment and poverty. The Inter-American Corruption Bank, as it is more popularly known down here, did, however, reassure itself (and us) that "with an extra effort" in the application of government economic policies, "it is easy to imagine a more diversified economy, with solid fiscal, financial and monetary institutions. To use the words of Paul Samuelson, our wise and



powerful leaders will "soon transform the dinosaur of instability [that's Latin America] of before the reforms, into a lizard, after the reforms." (*Semanario Posdata*, Montevideo, 20 March 1996).

The technocrats' tools for the economic invigoration of Latin America are the same measures which have already been applied, with the disastrous consequences we have already felt: trade liberalisation, creation of new enterprises, price stability, and clarification of property rights. The imagination of these masters of deception is limitless. Out here in the real economy, the marketplace that millions of Latin Americans suffer from, things are developing rather differently than in the business studies text books.

Obscene inequality

Country	Proportion of revenue held by	
	richest 10%	poorest 20%
Brazil	51	2.1
Chile	46	3.3
Colombia	40	3.6
Costa Rica	35	4.0
Mexico	40	4.1
Panama	42	2.0

Source: Compiled by the author

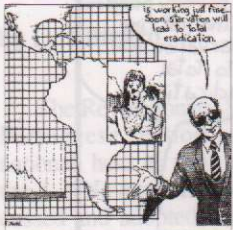
According to the World Bank's own figures, social inequality in Latin America has reached scandalous proportions,⁵ as the

* Uruguayan trade union leader, editor of Mas Alla magazine

★ Latin America

table on the previous table illustrates.

According to the World Bank figures, the rhythm of growth expected by the financial elite over the next ten years will not be sufficient to guarantee a higher general standard of living. In fact, there are two new poor people (those with a daily income lower than two US dollars) every 60 seconds. Over 86 million Latin Americans exist on less than one dollar a day. In the middle of the 1990s, 46% of the population were unable to meet



their basic needs, while 22% (94 m. people) lived in extreme poverty. Some 196 m. people live on an income lower than \$60/month.⁶ Over 60 m. Latin Americans live in what the UN FAO defines as "chronic hunger".

By the year 2000, Latin America will be the most urban region of the world. Seventy percent of the workforce live in the towns. But over half of them work in the informal sector of the economy. Of every 100 new jobs created in Latin America and the Caribbean, 83 jobs are in the informal sector⁷

The hardest hit is the indigenous ("Indian") population, which makes up 8% of the total population. These 34 million native Americans are the most vulnerable sector of the population. They are sicker and more malnourished than the rest of us. They have very little access to education. They are the poor among the poor. Almost none of them have a daily revenue higher than about two dollars.

In the towns, those under 25 years old are the hardest hit by unemployment and marginalisation. Murder is the second highest cause of death for the young today. The yearly murder rate in Latin America is 20 per 100,000 people, the highest rate of any continent.

Poverty is also female. One in three households is headed by an unmarried, separated, divorced or widowed woman. These are often the poorest families.

In other words, that great "transformation" of the economy which, the prophets said, would lead us to "modernisation" has only deepened social injustice to what were once unimaginable depths.

Social genocide

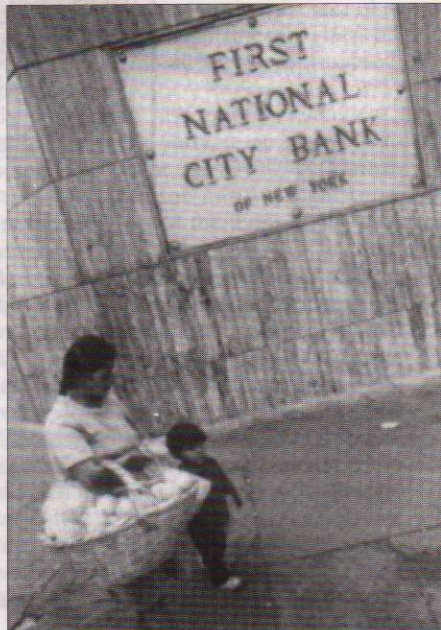
"Every year we loose about one million children aged under five. This is Latin America's gravest catastrophe. The main causes of death are lack of under-nutrition and infections. We have 30 million children who work for a living, half of them on the streets." These aren't the rantings of an old leftist, this is the Deputy Director of UNICEF, the UN agency for children.

Infant mortality is a clear indicator of poverty. In Latin America, 52% of our children (641,000) die within 12 months of birth. And 69% die before the age of five. The worst rates of mortality are in Haiti, followed by Bolivia, Guatemala and Brazil.

Life expectancy has risen in recent decades, but is still only 55 in some rural zones of Haiti, Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru and Ecuador. Illiteracy is higher than 30% in the rural and semi-urban parts of Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, Salvador, Ecuador and Paraguay.

In the last four years, Latin American doctors have registered 1,061,188 cases of cholera, a classic poverty-related disease. More than 10,000 people died. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that in Peru, under President Fujimori, where real wages have fallen 11% in the last three years, about 7,000 teachers infected with tuberculosis have continued working, rather than face a cut in their monthly salary of 150 dollars.⁸

Cuts in social security and health care have plunged the public services into a calamitous situation. Take Chile, the country presented as the neo-liberal success story of the continent. In the early 1970s, Chile allocated 3.5% of its state budget to health



care. The 1996 figure is 0.8%. This residual budget provides minimal care for the poorest 28% of the population, those who earn less than \$150/month. The rest of Chile's population is at the mercy of private medicine.

Dependency, or invisibility?

A few decades ago, dependency theory was very popular in Latin American writings. The theory stressed the difference between hegemonic countries, and the dependent, or dominated ones. Yes, we were exploited, but this did enable us to be integrated into the capitalist system. Dependency as a concept began to be replaced by "third world", but many Latin Americans kept their attachment to some concept of national liberation, inspired by dependency theory.

Now we face capitalist globalisation. The categories and meanings are changing again. Some talk of the Forth World, others of the "B World" others just of "The South".

Whatever words we use, we are talking about hundreds of millions of human beings

which the system has designated "unadapted," of regions of Latin America designated "unsuitable for integration". These are people who will never share in the booty, because they are part of it.

"What is left of dependency theory now that Latin America is more a continent excluded than a continent exploited?" the Argentinean Jose P. Flienmann recently asked,¹⁰ "Now that media globalisation is squashing national identities? After Henry Kissinger could smile and comment, after a good meal, that Latin America could sink into the Pacific, without disrupting the normal workings of the market economy."

Never mind dependency theory. In the face of this economic and social fiasco, we need to develop our own "right to existence" theory. Because, for the masters of this world, we simply don't exist any more. ★

Notes

1. (1940-), Uruguayan writer.
2. FLASCO: Latin American Social Science Federation
3. Presented on 10 March 1989, the Brady plan (named after a US Treasury Secretary) concerns, most of all, the medium and heavily indebted countries of the III world.
4. Expression created during the crisis of the Mexican peso at the end of 1994, to describe the repercussions of Mexico's crisis on the other countries of Latin America.
5. Report published in the March 1996 issue of *América Economía* magazine.
6. CEPAL
7. SELA
8. Alberto Fujimori (1938-): President of Peru since 1990, he has brutally applied structural adjustment plans designed by the International Monetary Fund. The world media praised this brutal "Fujishock", even after its true consequences were exposed by the massive cholera epidemic which broke out in early 1991.
9. Theory popularised, among others, by Andre Gunder Frank.
10. *Página 12*, Buenos Aires

Labor in Unison

Labor unions in MERCOSUR propose action against neoliberalism

The major labor unions of MERCOSUR, the Common Market of the South made up of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay have put forward a program to fight unemployment, low wages in their region resulting from their regional free trade agreement, neoliberal economic policies and globalization. The Coordinating Committee of Union Federations of the Southern Cone (Coordinadora de Centrales Sindicales del Cono Sur — CCSCS), headed by Vicente Paulo Da Silva, known as "Vicentinho," has called for a general strike next year in all of the MERCOSUR countries. The CCSCS will also bring together representatives of workers from all four countries, perhaps in Foz de Iguazu. Among the groups participating in the CCSCS meeting were the CUT and Fuerza Sindical of Brazil, the CGT of Argentina, the PIT y CNT of Uruguay, the ORIT and the CIOL.

Source: *Mexican Labor News and Analysis* Oct. 16, 1996

The indigenous revolt

A central part of the Latin American revolution

The Indian peoples' struggle for autonomy is a central part of the revolutionary project in Mexico. On the following pages we reprint the resolution on this question which was passed at the recent congress of Mexico's Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT). It is an ambitious attempt to integrate the indigenous struggle into a revolutionary project for a Latin American country.

[Extracts from the introduction]

THE ZAPATISTA RISING HAS AGAIN EMPOWERED the Indian peoples' struggle and substantially increased its political importance. In this way, the propositions we made before the Zapatista rising about the autonomy and rights of the Indian peoples have been relaunched at the propositional level and especially at the interlocutory level by the Indian peoples confronting the totality of society and the state.

The PRT congress did not want to simply reaffirm the necessary solidarity with and endorsement of the Indian peoples' struggle. With the presence and proposals of PRT militants among the Indian peoples, especially but not solely in Guerrero, a special resolution was submitted to the congress. The PRT has thereby become the first party to adopt a specific resolution in favor of autonomy for the Indian peoples. It is, moreover, an effort to focus on the issue from a revolutionary Marxist perspective. It is the first document of the congress to be published, precisely because of its importance and the need to study and distribute it.

It is our contribution to the debate that has opened on the subject, which should also find expression in the legislative branch, as well as a contribution to the National Indigenous Forum, initiated by the EZLN, and the ANIPA (Multinational Indigenous Assembly for Autonomy), for both of which the PRT congress reaffirmed its support and participation.

As a result of this resolution, the demand for the autonomy of the Indian peoples has been incorporated into our strategic perspectives, in our declaration of principles and the program revised by the congress. This was compared during the congress to the adoption by the PRT of its role as a feminist party more than fifteen years ago, that is, integrating feminism into the party program



as approved by the congress and now, incorporating the struggle for the autonomy of the Indian peoples on this level.

This latest renovation is part of another that historically closes a part of the cycle of crisis opened some years ago in the party by currents that opposed and denounced the development and growth of the PRT in the peasant movement (and now, we can clearly say, among our country's Indian peoples) as an adulteration of the Bolshevik party project. It is among the renovations we have made since then on the need to build the revolutionary party among other revolutionary subjects like the peasant movement and the urban popular movement. The delay can be located in our slowness to recognize that this growth among the peasantry was basically among the Indian peoples. This

delay can also be explained but not justified by the pressure of the "red professors" who condemned our supposed deviations in building a proletarian party. Having transcended this debate, it is now possible to dedicate more balanced energy and effort for the construction of the party in the working class and among workers in general. New opportunities for struggle here are certainly opened with this crisis, though it may be more slowly than in the countryside.

Some try to be "bigger Zapatistas than the Zapatistas themselves." But we stress the need for a national political party, taking into account the imbalance between the levels of consciousness and struggle in the countryside and in certain regions (basically Chiapas) and the rest of the nation and the situation of the workers in the big cities. ★



The Eighth National Congress of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) was held in Mexico City from June 19-21, 1996. Along with other resolutions, the Congress passed this resolution on the right of the Indian peoples to autonomy.

I. General Considerations

1. Contemporary society is based upon the capitalist economy as a dominant system, but its reproduction and functioning is only possible in articulation with precapitalist and semi-capitalist forms of production through the world capitalist market. There is no country that is not articulated in the world market, whatever its level of development. The continued existence of a series of "backward" countries and other highly developed ones, interdependently related, can only be explained on the basis of the law of unequal and combined development.

2. Mexico is a capitalist country - disadvantageously integrated and subordinated to the plans of North America imperialism through NAFTA - which is losing its national sovereignty and leaving to its fate the larger part of the Mexican population, among whom non-capitalist or uncompetitive (in this type of market, because of their technological backwardness) capitalist economies predominate.

3. The model of neoliberal development imposed since the De la Madrid presidency has not and will not succeed in levelling our country with its North American allies, but has been successful in the massive production of poor people, who in the context of their insertion into international capitalist accumulation, precisely fulfill their function as consumers of commodities and in lowering of the costs of production through abundant cheap labor.

4. The economy of the Indian peoples of Mexico and Latin America functions with precapitalist forms of production, or in some cases semi-capitalist ones, but is related to the capitalist economy through the market. The latter, as the predominant form, attempts to eliminate the former ones, but as it does not succeed, it accepts coexistence with them, giving them the characteristics of dominated, subjugated and superexploited economies. It conditions them as a function of the interests of the global reproduction of capital.

5. The Mexican state, in its efforts to homogenize the nation, hoped to destroy the culture of the Indians. From the colonial era until the present, different paternalist

indigenous policies have been orchestrated with the premise of incorporating or integrating the Indian peoples into "national development," based on an intensive process of acculturation and mixing, leaving the values of pre-Hispanic culture only to the rhetoric of speeches projecting pride in the nation's roots or to exhibit the richness of Mexican folkways to foreign tourists. All this has been merely a prop for capitalist rule.

6. Capitalist development by its nature introduces inequality and favors certain social classes such as the different sections of the bourgeoisie (commercial, agricultural, industrial and financial) to the detriment of other classes such as the working class and the peasantry, and among these, the Indian peoples. Thus, just as on the international level there are oppressor and oppressed nations, on the national level, besides exploiting and exploited classes, an oppression exercised by sectors of all social classes has developed alongside large populations oppressed for being Indians. This is what some intellectuals have called a situation of internal colonialism, especially as related to the manner in which the Indian people live.

7. As the present millennium ends, at the dawn of the 21st century, a minority is dying from eating too much, while the immense majority dies for lack of food. This is where decadent neoliberal capitalism has led humanity. Meanwhile, socialism, which emerged with such vigor at the beginning of the 20th century and promised to end the system of exploitation of human by human and inaugurate a free and democratic society, "failed" with the fall of the Soviet Union, due more to the bureaucratic degeneration of the workers' states than the supremacy of the reign of capital.

8. While Mexico argues over a decrepit and anti-democratic regime, the oppressed Indian people, who have nothing to lose, are attempting to democratize this country and save a national sovereignty trampled upon by the current corrupt, sellout government.

9. The Indian peoples, after more than 500 years of resistance and struggle against death and extinction, are now the worthiest allies of the working class in the coming Mexican socialist revolution. In their origins and their Mesoamerican civilization, so long negated, are the seeds of the truly egalitarian society we seek.

10. With the completion of the 500th anniversary of the Spanish invasion and conquest, the Indians are no longer presenting only demands for survival, but a central demand that is clearly political: indigenous autonomy, a demand that synthesizes the difficult problematic in which they find themselves and the alternative that they propose to resolve it. Its content is qualitatively superior to federalist schemes and theory that still dominate because of the rule of the despotic PRI regime. Its form can be a unique model for the exercise of democracy and free association for the first time, after 504 years of discrimination, racism and humiliation.

11. The inauguration of a regime of auto-

nomy exceeds the capacity and possibilities of a "semicolonial" bourgeois society like Mexico. Because of its anticapitalist and national character, its full realization will not come under capitalism, but it can be advanced in a limited form, as long as a class perspective and the socialist objective are not abandoned.

12. The demand for autonomy is for the Indian peoples to establish their own government with the purpose of freely designing a strategy of integral development. That is, it is a form of government that allows them to choose their own destiny. A Mexican government based upon a regime of autonomy would allow the development of a new, more just relation with all peoples, without risking national integrity and unity. Moreover, it would be the best formula for a harmonious national concert based on respect and support for the cultural diversity that permeates the country. It is the path to erasing the differences between the "hidden Mexico" and the "imaginary Mexico" that has so punished the most unprotected sectors, especially those in rural areas. Thus, autonomy for the Indian peoples is nothing more than the freedom to govern themselves with their own laws.

13. The conquest of autonomy will be the product of the national democratic movement. This is why the Indians are so enthusiastically in the ranks of the democratic struggles that are led today by the different popular sectors, especially the Mexican peasantry. There will be no autonomy without democracy in our country, but neither will there be a democratic state unless it recognizes the right to an autonomous regime to all those peoples that demand it.

14. The Indian peoples are situated in the poorest sectors of the class structure; attempts to proletarianize them have failed. While there is an important sector of Indians who have migrated to the big cities, they have been integrated, more than into the working class, into the larger and larger informal sector of the economy or the lumpen proletariat (declassed elements). Yet, within the indigenous communities, there is also a quite distinct class stratification. Not all Indians are equal. There are a handful of rich rural bosses and an immense majority of the poor. Relations of exploitation exist within these communities because capitalism has penetrated Indian life, with all its structural and superstructural baggage, to such an extent that it has imprinted the fundamental characteristics of the consumer society. In Mexico, the most important transmission belt has been the state party system itself.

15. Before the incapacity and crisis of the dominant system, not only in resolving the basic problems of the Indian people, but also in its insistent criminal policies toward them, the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), a political-military organization appeared on the scene on January 1, 1994, declaring war against the neoliberal PRI government just when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was going into effect. This ended the comprehension of

the Indian struggle as one for survival; it was now becoming a resistance struggle to win a life of dignity with justice, freedom and democracy. War had to be declared to reach a peace. With this came, most outstandingly, the demand for autonomy as a political alternative to the Indian problematic. This will not be resolved merely with money handed over like alms, but with democracy. Autonomy is the Indian contribution to the democracy that all Mexicans desire, because we understand it as a process of the appropriation of politics, the economy and culture by the people themselves, Indian or non-Indian.

16. When the Indians' enemies say that they are separatists, they either have no idea of what they speak, or are hoping to fool national public opinion. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the most outstanding Marxists such as Lenin, Trotsky and others have come to the conclusion that all internationalist revolutionaries should support national liberation struggles, both by people and nationalities, such as different ethnic groups, under the principle of the right to self-determination of all the world's peoples, including the right to form independent states. Nevertheless, at no time has the separation of the Indians from the Mexican Republic been posed, but rather the creation of a new level of government (the autonomous regions) within the context of national sovereignty. The autonomous regions must not be on a lower level than the municipalities; on the contrary, they should be above the municipalities and at the same level as the states. In some cases they could be similar to municipalities inside the states; this would depend on the concrete situation. That is, even new multiethnic states could be created through the integration of indigenous territories.

17. The viability of indigenous autonomy is based on the very fact that the indigenous peoples, despite everything, still maintain the fundamental aspects of collective organizational forms. Their economy, while one of subsistence, is of an integral character, because they produce almost all of what they consume, at least their basic products and those of primary necessity. That is, its relation with the market is supplementary. Therefore, a Law on Autonomy and the inclusion of the right to autonomy in the constitution, on the one hand, will only be the legal sanction of a persisting reality, but, on the other hand, would finally offer a real strategic and political solution to one of the nation's great problems.

18. The autonomy we demand is not the legalization of backwardness, nor the constitution of reservations. It demands a governmental regime where, in the context of a real democratic federalism, the autonomous regions receive an annual budget from the federal government sufficient for the exercise of their functions. As a new level of government, they should have the right to the same treatment as the federal entities. But they will have the advantage, upon their assimilation of all the advanced science and technology

that humanity has currently created, combined with their communitarian and collectivist forms of government, of being able, with greater speed, to attain a more democratic society without waiting the amount of time that other peoples have needed. More precisely, they will in this way enter into a process of permanent revolution.

19. The current struggles for autonomy are of a strategic and historical character as they accumulate the most valuable of the contributions of the Latin American peoples such as the Nicaraguans, of Marxist thinkers like Mariategui and other contemporary revolutionaries and intellectuals like the EZLN's Subcomandante Marcos himself. But they will also value the positive and negative experiences of the world's other peoples, like the Basques in the Spanish State in Western Europe.

20. Today, the essential characteristics of the regional autonomy regime needed in Mexico are contained in the Project for a Decree Initiative for the creation of Autonomous Regions proposed by the indigenous organizations grouped in the Multinational Indigenous Assembly for Autonomy (ANIPA). This document foresees in a more developed manner the powers of this new level of government, its relations with the Federation, the states and the municipalities. It moreover assigns a fundamental role in the autonomy process to the indigenous woman. There will be no free and democratic autonomy regime if it does not recognize the equality of rights between men and women.

21. The adoption of an autonomy regime will be by the free decision of the peoples. As a democratic right, it must be of a voluntary character in the sense that it cannot be imposed, and while it is a political necessity today, it cannot be of a forced nature. The forced implantation of any autonomy statute would only lead to failure, like the attempt at forced collectivization of the peasantry in the 1920's in the former Soviet Union and other historical experiences that teach the same lesson.

II. Axes of Political Action

Any diagnosis of the situation of the Indian peoples of Mexico will reach the same conclusion. They live in extreme poverty. They suffer the results of history at almost every level. They live in marginal areas where basic public services (such as health care, roads, water and light) are scarce; their economy uses traditional technology, their agricultural and artisan activities are at a subsistence level, and extensive agricultural practices, are prevalent, with their strongly negative effects on the ecosystem. NAFTA has no viability for the indigenous economy, which is uncompetitive and of little profitability. Agricultural problems are many and attempts to solve them have created victims. There is a high level of emigration in the dry season, with prejudicial effects upon the education of children. This very poverty and meagre wages lead to malnutrition, while mortality and morbidity are alarmingly high in various regions. The people live in indis-

criminate and overcrowded conditions. There is a glut of statistics to prove these judgments. Moreover, the phenomena of alcoholism, illiteracy and other social ills sharpen in these times of crisis, expressing themselves in various forms from family disintegration to the loss of cultural identity. In addition, they experience policies of racism, discrimination, "bossism" and anti-democratic practices in the greater number of our towns.

Nevertheless, all the problems that the indigenous peoples suffer are the product of and emanate from a political regime of exclusion. Indigenous peoples as still treated as children unable to solve their own problems and paternalistic governments preserve the essentials of these conditions, at best. But in the face of the new assault by the neoliberal model, the Indian future is increasingly uncertain, to say the least. Facing such a complex problematic among Mexico's Indians, who represent more than 10% of the total population, grouped in 56 peoples with their

National Indigenous Congress

THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CONGRESS (CNI), an independent assembly of Indian peoples, met in Mexico City in the second week of October, with 680 delegates from 45 ethnic groups in 23 states participating. The highlight of the event was the arrival of Comandante Ramona, a Tzotzil woman from Chiapas, who came as the official representative of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

The Congress was convened by the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN), the political arm of the EZLN, in order to try to break the military encirclement and political isolation of the EZLN. It became something more: a major convention of indigenous peoples to put forward solutions to the problems of Mexico's Indian peoples.

The Indigenous Congress opposed the militarization taking place throughout Mexico, and called for reform of 14 articles of the Mexican Constitution. The CNI adopted a final resolution titled "Never Again a Mexico Without Us." Among the most important points raised by the final resolution are the following:

- The Mexican Army should leave the indigenous communities which it occupies in several states and release political and indigenous prisoners.
- The government should fulfil its agreements with the EZLN.
- The Mexican government should give legal and constitutional recognition to the existence of the indigenous communities, and should grant them the right of self-determination in the form of autonomy. The government should recognize the indigenous peoples' customary practices and create a pluralistic legal system. ★

own officially registered languages who live throughout the national territory (not only in Oaxaca, Guerrero or Chiapas - but this is not merely a question of numbers or minority status) and starting from the fact that this is a problem of political exclusion, we make the following proposals as our main axes of activity:

1. Demand the fulfillment of the San Andres Larrainzar, Chiapas agreements, both by the national executive and their formalization by the legislature and the continued strengthening of indigenous organizations in the context of political pluralism so as to discuss the best alternatives to our great national problems with other sectors. At the same time, also demand the creation and strengthening of the national commission of verification of the agreements from the Working Group on Indigenous Rights and Culture.

2. Establish alliances with other oppressed sectors and especially with the peasants to struggle in a united way for a real political reform of the state that will allow the attainment of a democratic and inclusive government. This implies reforming the national constitution, local constitutions, as well as other laws that emanate from them, so that the Indian peoples will have all of their political rights recognized and may exercise them freely.

3. Guarantee the equal representation of indigenous women in all popularly elected

offices and in public administration through the establishment of effective mechanisms designed and controlled by women themselves.

4. Inaugurating an autonomy regime for the Indian peoples and other peoples that demand it, as the basis of a new federal pact and the support for a new, just relationship between the state, national society and the Indian peoples.

5. Recognition of the autonomous regions and municipalities decided upon by the Indian and non-Indian peoples, making a reality of the accords on this matter between the EZLN and the federal government taken in the Working Group on the Peace Dialogue in Chiapas. This obliges a territorial re-ordering of the country, the states and the municipalities.

6. Guarantee the political representation of the Indian peoples in the federal and local congresses and local councils in a proportional manner conforming to their percentage in the population.

7. Freedom for all Indian peoples to choose their own authorities and popular representatives, whether in accord with their own customs or through a party system. This means that indigenous customs would also be officially valid as the mechanism for the election of delegates, commissioners or municipal officers or presidents as well as deputies and other popularly elected offices. Nevertheless, we support the validity of custom only when they do not threaten individual guarantees and rights, especially those of indigenous women.

8. The registration of independent candidates to give non-party social organizations access to spaces of popular representation.

9. A redistribution of electoral districts, re-organizing the indigenous municipalities to create indigenous electoral districts, mainly to constitute new, multi-member districts to ensure the political representation of the Indian peoples. This means carrying out a re-municipalization and redistricting taking into account the new demographic reality with the criteria of social justice.

10. Assigning budgetary resources to the commissioners and municipal authorities, rural commune commissioners and other traditional authorities of the Indian peoples so that they may carry out their functions with enthusiasm and in an efficient manner.

11. Creating a parity commission between the federal government (the executive) and the indigenous organizations to elaborate a constitutional reform that lays the basis for a new national project. This implies creating a relation of forces favorable to the Indian movement so as to force the government to negotiate.

12. To help organize a National Congress of Indian Peoples, as well as regional and state congresses, in order to define for all the Indian proposal for the nation and government that we want, and at the same time place it before the consideration of all of Mexican society.

13. Struggle for a new model of rural, regional and integrated development in

which the Indian peoples elaborate their own proposals that will allow them to converge with the rest of rural and urban society.

14. Continue participating in the construction of the unity of a plural indigenous movement, as well as continue supporting the dialogue for peace taking place in San Andres Larrainzar, Chiapas.

15. Fight for the implementation of a program of national public security that officially recognizes the communal security forces as one of the mechanisms that guarantees justice on the basis of customary law among the Indian peoples.

16. The formulation of programs by cultural and development offices and institutions in coordination with indigenous organizations.

17. The official adoption of indigenous languages on the same level as Spanish by the national educational system, as well as the constitution of a Secretariat of Indian Peoples with its own organizations and qualified personnel that can develop a plan of national, integrated development giving priority to professional education, including the creation of indigenous universities.

18. The administration of the INI and other offices serving the indigenous population by the organized Indian peoples themselves so they can give an opportune response to their most urgent affairs such as carrying out a program of rural employment, nutrition and supply of basic foodstuffs for women and children.

19. Establish agreements between the government and the organized Indian peoples to make use of radio, television and the press to regularly inform about national indigenous affairs.

20. For a new Article 27 in the constitution that guarantees the territorial integrity of the Indian peoples and avoids any new form of marginalization. There must be a real regional autonomy regime that gives real powers to the Indian peoples. Ernesto Zedillo's proposal is very limited and insufficient as it only recognizes communal and municipal autonomy, which already legally exist, though are dead letters in practice. We do not want this type of autonomy. The autonomy we demand must have resources or it will not be. Only in this way can we really move toward democracy in this country.

21. Distribute and carry out the resolutions of both the National Indigenous Forum and the project for an autonomy law formulated by the ANIPA. Moreover, we must continue to strengthen the spaces for national and international coordination of the Indian movement, respecting the rights of all to free party affiliation and their own religious and ideological beliefs. The only guarantee for advancing toward a pluralistic unity of the movement is practising internal tolerance of political and ideological differences in these organizations based upon a convergence toward common objectives: the struggle for democracy, justice, freedom and peace with dignity. For us, this is part of the project for a new revolution. ★

Translation by Michael Pearlman



Christian Base Communities

THE CHRIST BASE COMMUNITIES (CEBs) celebrated their 25th anniversary in Mexico in the second week of October with a congress in Tehuantepec called "Way of Life, Resistance and Hope, Toward a Society of Justice, Fraternity and Solidarity." The 2,500 religious and lay delegates from about 50 dioceses of Mexico called for a church that "takes the side of the poor."

Led by Arturo Lona Reyes, Bishop of Tehuantepec, the delegates called for a rejection of economic neoliberalism, "the way of death." Over the last 25 years, Lona Reyes has been accused of being a Marxist, of organizing guerrilla movements, and of joining the left-wing Worker, Peasant, Student Coalition of the Isthmus. (COCEI). There have been several attempts on his life. The Bishop criticized the Catholic Church for its "authoritarianism" and lack of democracy.

The Christian base communities have been committed to work in poor urban communities, among poor farmers, and among Mexico's 10 million Indians. They also organize groups to defend human rights, raise political consciousness, and take up workers rights and labor union issues. ★

Women in movement

Six hundred women from 27 organizations met in Mexico City in the first week of October in the National Assembly of Women in Transition to Democracy, one of the largest and most important women's meetings since the Mexican women's suffrage movement of the 1930s.

The Mexican media call this one of the most important such meeting since women won the vote in 1958. The women, representing all the major political parties, women's and feminist organizations, and women workers and peasants groups, adopted a "National Women's Agreement for the Transition to Democracy."

The convention was held with the understanding that feminist radicals would not raise the abortion issue, which would drive out the delegates of the National Action Party (PAN) and some other delegates as well. Lesbian issues were also on the taboo list.

The assembly's final document called for affirmative action for female representation in the political parties. The ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) both recently adopted new statutes calling for 30 percent minimal representation of women in both party posts and for candidates for general elections.)

The women's "National Agreement" also called for improvements in the social security system, the right to housing, and protection of the environment.

Women's Workers Rights

Many of the women's demands deal with labor issues. Women called for recognition in the Gross National Product of the unpaid domestic work done by women, for adherence to the standards of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) regarding the protection of motherhood, and the suppression of the sex trade in women and children. The group demanded equality of rights for all people regardless of sex, and equal pay for men and women.

The women's assembly asked the National Commission of Minimum Wages to create a committee to analyze the minimum wages of women, and raise them. The assembly also demanded an end to employers requirements that women prove they are not pregnant in order to be hired, and for an end to the practice of firing women for pregnancy. ★

Source: MLNA, 16 October 1996.

Bitter disappointment

Daniel Ortega runs pro-capitalist campaign



by Pierre Sylvain

SANDINISTA LEADER DANIEL ORTEGA BENT over backwards to reassure the right of his democratic and responsible intentions. The former FSLN President of Nicaragua made such a display of good manners towards the USA and his conversion to the market economy that the media gleefully reported that the former guerrilla had "renounced any kind of revolutionary project."

The problem is that Ortega wasn't pretending. His electoral campaign reflects the steady evolution to the right of the FSLN (Sandinista) leadership since they lost power in the 1990 elections.

Six years ago, the Sandinistas left power with their heads held high. They knew that they had been defeated because of the weary, ten year war against the US-backed contras. Economic disruption and heavy human losses had beaten down the resistance of the Nicaraguan people, otherwise attached to the Sandinista revolution which overthrew the Somoza dictatorship in 1979.

In 1991, the FSLN Congress revealed a widespread commitment to continuing the struggle: to defend the gains of the revolution from the parliamentary opposition, and through the trade unions and mass movements. There were many strikes against the counter-reforms of the new government of Violeta Chamorro.

Indignant voices at the Congress demanded to know the truth about the *piñata* — the frantic wave of privatisations and transfers in the final weeks and days of Sandinista government. Ortega, who as President had allowed, even encouraged these measures, later claimed that he had acted to ensure that the FSLN controlled sufficient resources to continue the struggle.

Other militants protested the corruption and personal gain of leading Sandinistas, and pointed to the ease with which the right and the media could now point to the Sandinista leadership as a privileged caste of red busin-

essmen, more concerned with fluctuations in the rate of inflation than stagnation in wages and abuses of the people's liberties.

Bad as the *piñata* was for FSLN image and morale, it is not the main reason why Ortega, and a large part of the Sandinista leadership, now embraces capitalism.

At the 1991 Congress, and again at the 1994 Congress, Daniel Ortega mobilised the militant base of the party to consolidate his personal authority, and neutralise the opposition. Particularly the current around Sergio Ramirez, president of the FSLN Parliamentary group. Ramirez, who demanded a "clarification" of FSLN policy — at that time characterised by a mixture of critical support for the Chamorro government against attacks from the far right, and resolute commitment to struggles against the neo-liberal policies of the same government.

Several months later, Ramirez left the FSLN. Following a crushing defeat in these latest elections, the future of his "Movement for Sandinista Renovation" is uncertain.

The collapse of the USSR, and the brutal reversal in the balance of forces in central America also took their toll on the Sandinistas.

Salvador's FMLN laid down its arms and negotiated "peace" accords in conditions which could only lead to its splintering and demoralisation. The Guerrilla movement in Guatemala is hardly doing any better.

In the face of such a depressing scenario, the Zapatista revolt in southern Mexico was not enough to reassure Sandinista leaders that there was still an alternative to neo-liberalism.

Nicaragua's new president is the rightist candidate, Arnoldo Aleman. He preaches tolerance and national unity to rebuild the country, but he is effectively the prisoner of those who made possible his victory. In particular, Miami-based business circles dominated by former supports of the Somoza dictatorship, and virulent opponents of the Cuban Communist leadership.

This is the 'hard' right which the Sandinista's tried to outflank with their overtures to the Chamorro government, and by Ortega's conciliatory electoral campaign. He even chose a representative of the COSEP Entrepreneurs' Organisation as Vice-Presidential candidate.

Despite its drift to the centre, the FSLN still won the votes of all those who understood that the best way to struggle against the continuation of the austerity programme was to prevent the election of Arnoldo Aleman. But this is unlikely to provoke a change in the policies of a party in which Ortega has effectively neutralised and marginalised opposition. Looks like time to go back to the source of revolutionary *Sandinismo*. ★

PT does well in municipal elections

Best results in areas where the left co-ordinated the PT campaign

The Workers' Party (PT) has extended its vote to new areas of Brazil, doing best in towns where it ran a radical left, rather than a moderate campaign. Results were particularly good in the southern-most state, Rio Grande do Sul, where Fourth International sympathisers have been elected mayors of the two largest cities, Rio Grande and Caxias.

João Machado*

THE ELECTIONS WERE DOMINATED BY LOCAL and regional themes. Most campaigns concentrated on the record of the outgoing municipal team, not national issues.

The elections also revealed the divisions between the parties which support the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso.¹ This disunity only accentuated the local nature of most campaign efforts.

The left was also divided. Two centre-left groups presented their own candidate lists in several towns: the populist Democratic Workers party (PDT) of Leonel Brizola, and the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) led by Miguel Arraes. In 1989 and 1994 the PSB supported the PT's presidential campaigns.

Election results were good for the PT. We won more votes than any other party in the 26 State capitals, and more than 20% nationwide. The hard right Brazilian Progressist Party (PPB) won 17%, and President Cardoso's own party, the Brazilian Social Democrats (PSDB) came third. Outside the state capitals, the PT usually came second.

Our vote is not higher than in the last elections. But a slight decline in areas where we were strongest (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte) was compensated by a clear growth in areas of the north and north-west where the party had been very weak. The vote confirms that the PT is the main opposition party facing the federal government, and that we are able to form an alternative pole of attraction to the government.

We are becoming stronger, geographically speaking. This is due to our natural growth — by this I mean that, across the country, we are putting forward more and more well-known local candidates: people who have already taken responsibilities at the municipal level, and can present themselves as a real alternative to the other party lists.

The fall in support in Rio and Sao Paulo suggests that we can expect some slip in support in other areas where we are traditionally strong. This is due to fatigue more than any-



thing else. Opinion polls have not indicated a connection in voters minds between PT government and bad practice. The problem is more that, in a number of areas, good practice is perceived as the work of honest individuals, rather than of PT activists.

The decline in support is also linked to the internal divisions in the party. In some regions, like Diadema, a working-class suburb of Sao Paulo, the PT candidates and the outgoing PT administration refused to collaborate on the campaign.

In Sao Paulo, PT candidate Louisa Erundina chose not to attack her opponent, Cesó Pitta, the hand-picked successor to Mayor Paulo Maluf, a key leader of the Brazilian right since dictatorship days. She based her campaign on her personal experience as Mayor of Sao Paulo (1989-92). She even tried to change the opposition profile of the PT through her campaign slogan "Erundina: the PT which says yes!"

She was obliged to withdraw this slogan, under pressure from the rank-and-file and the leadership of the party. But the result of her ultra-moderate campaign was that she went from an initial 30% support (against a very powerful, populist incumbent) to less than 20% of first-round votes.

The results of these elections confirm the argument of those of us who have been arguing for the PT to re-affirm its own identity, rather than seek alliances with other parties to our right. The national leadership warned us that our left coalition strategy in Salvador and Recife (the two largest towns in the North-East), Belem (Para State, North Brazil) and Maceio (capital of Alagoas State) was too narrow. They said we would lose votes for the party. In fact, the results were higher in these towns than in the rest of the country! The PT had much weaker results in those towns where we were in alliance with sections of the centre-right PMDB, or even Cardoso's own PSDB. In Belem, the position of the PSDB governor was weakened by the

massacres of landless peasants earlier this year. The PT in Para State, which actively supports the Movement of the Landless (MST), clearly benefited from the mobilisations in response to this outrage. Across Brazil, the Movement of the Landless is probably the most dynamic social movement. It is massively popular.

The most interesting PT electoral results came from the southern-most state, Rio Grande do Sul. This is the most politicised state in the country, and the PT has a strong presence. We have held the town hall in the state capital, Porto Alegre, since 1988, and we had a good score in the 1994 state and presidential elections.

One of the reasons for our strength is that, in Rio Grande do Sul, the PT operates as a real, unified party. The left-wing within the party is the dominant element, and the differences between the various currents do not prevent the party making a useful intervention. Since 1988, all the currents in the PT have participated in the municipal administration of Porto Alegre, which has over 1.5 m. inhabitants, implementing policy in a homogenous way, on the basis of an open debate within the party.

As a result, the party has deeper roots here than in some other parts of the country. At the centre of PT work here is the Participatory Budget [IV #282] which has won the support of a majority of the population. First introduced here in 1988, the process of decentralised discussion and modification of the budget and work plan of the municipal authorities is much more developed in Porto Alegre than in other PT-run town halls.

As a result, PT candidate Raul Pont won 52% of the vote in the first round, and the PT candidate in the state's second largest town, industrial Caxias do Sul (500,000 pop.) is almost certain to win in the run-off, having scored 49% in the first round. These victories will have a positive effect on the whole party. They show the importance of a unified party, based on democratic party life, and not on the popularity of a few personalities. These Rio Grande candidates are members of Socialist Democracy, the current in the PT identified with the Fourth International. Their strong results show that a left profile for the PT is more than justified. ★

Notes

* Leading member of Socialist Democracy (DS), a current inside the PT identified with the Fourth International

1. The Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB), Party of the Liberal Front (PFL — the main support for ex-president Collor), the Brazilian Progressist Party (PPB — traditionally the most right-wing of the conservative parties), and the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB, under the dictatorship known as the MDB).

Kurdish fratricidal war

Interview with Iraqi Communist leader Raid Fahmi

Armed conflict between rival factions of the Kurdish guerrilla movement in the north of Iraq flared up again in July this year.

The Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein profited from the confusion to attack the exile bases of various factions of the Iranian opposition, including the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK).

Turkey too seemed to be on the point of intervening across the border.

But on 31 August Saddam Hussein made an unprecedented move. He sent troops into the region to support one of the Kurdish factions, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Massud Barzani, which was retreating under the attacks of the rival Kurdistan Patriotic Union (KPU) of Jalal Talabani.

Salah Jaber discusses the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan with Raid Fahmi, a member of the exile leadership of the Communist Party of Iraq.

Raid Fahmi: The fratricidal war between Kurdish groups had already made it possible for all the regional powers to intervene in the region, through their local agents. Iraqi Kurdistan has been subjected to a wave of sabotage actions: car bombs, assassinations, assaults, and so on. The general climate is one of mistrust, and internal struggles.

Nevertheless, there was until recently a "thin red line" which could not be crossed: the nation as a whole recognised the Iraqi dictatorship as its main enemy, and refused any idea of direct co-operation with Saddam Hussein.

Obviously, various fractions have had relations with the Baghdad regime over the years, for obvious commercial and administrative reasons. But this latest intervention marks a new step.

• What happened, exactly?

On August 31st, Massud Barzani's KDP forces, together with military units under Saddam Hussein's control, advanced towards Erbil, the main town in Iraqi Kurdistan. In the first days after occupying Erbil, Iraqi troops targeted the offices of opposition organisations for search, confiscation and destruction.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi secret services

started arresting militants, on the basis of a list they had already drawn up. They set up their headquarters in the Kurdish Parliament building in Erbil.

Sections of the ruling Baas party were also re-established, with members recruited locally. Local Baas members had mostly left the region during the 1991 Kurdish revolt (following the Gulf War), after which Kurdistan was established as an autonomous zone, with Erbil as its capital.

During this latest intervention, Iraqi forces were particularly determined to expel all the Arab Turkmen population from Kurdistan, since, for Baghdad, any Arab living in Kurdistan must be an opponent of the regime.

After a few days, the Baghdad army withdrew from Erbil, but remained further north than their initial position on the 36th parallel. Saddam's secret services left behind them a functioning network, in Kurdish uniforms.

The Iraqi army didn't intervene in the conflict between the two Kurdish factions for control of Suleimaniyeh, the largest urban settlement in Iraqi Kurdistan, with about 800,000 inhabitants. But they continued to provide Barzani's KDP with logistic support.

• What about the civil population?

Talabani's retreat from Suleimaniyeh provoked a massive exodus in the direction of the Iranian frontier. About 50,000 people left the town. Many of them thought that the town would be occupied by the Iraqi army.

When they realised that only Barzani's troops would enter Suleimaniyeh, some of them turned back. Although those who had crossed into Iran were prevented from returning.

The KPU radio deliberately spread panic among the population, with talk of a blood bath in Suleimaniyeh. In fact, Barzani quickly announced an amnesty for KPU supporters in the town, and began to re-build contacts with the other factions.

• What was the Communist Party response?

Our strategy was to resist the Iraqi forces, without entering into direct combat with Barzani's men. We withdrew from Erbil, but not from Suleimaniyeh.

In the days between the KPU retreat, and the arrival of Barzani's troops, our peshmergas (soldiers) tried to prevent looting, and maintain control over the hospitals, essential buildings and the Dokan dam, which provides water for Erbil.

• And the rest of the Iraqi opposition?

The other parties have now withdrawn from Iraqi Kurdistan, apart from ourselves, and the Union of Islamists. This is a local Kurdish party which co-operated with Barzani in the re-integration of the displaced population in Suleimaniyeh, but did not participate in the military occupation. It does not have the same policies as the pro-Iranian Daawa party.



★ Iraq/Kurdistan

• What is Barzani doing with his new dominant position?

He is trying to re-animate what we used to call the "Kurdish government," on the basis of an agreement with other political forces outside his own KDP. We expect that he will contact us, and the Union of Islamists. Barzani also wants to re-establish the Kurdish parliament, and incorporate deputies from the KPU. The old parliament was divided 50:50 between the KDP and the KPU, with a few co-opted representatives of smaller groups. The Communist Party wasn't represented.



For the moment, Talabani refuses to recognise either this new parliament, or the legitimacy of those KPU members who

remained in the areas now under Barzani's control. He is apparently preparing a counter-offensive.

The situation in Erbil is different from the rest of Iraqi Kurdistan, in that all the infrastructure of the opposition has been destroyed. Saddam's secret services are well established there, whereas they are still in the phase of constructing their networks in the other regions. Most of their networks fell apart during the "internal blockade" which Saddam imposed on Kurdistan after the Gulf War.

Saddam has lifted the internal blockade, which has certainly improved the living conditions of the population, by facilitating the provision of food, petrol, and other essential products. But Saddam is not just trying to respond to popular unrest. He also recognises that only by ending the blockade could he re-introduce his agents, and re-build his satellite organisations.

• According to the international press, some Kurds would not oppose a return to rule from Baghdad, if this could end the fratricidal war between Kurds.

Maybe. Just like some Iraqis say they would accept an Israeli invasion, if it would get rid of Saddam. People in Kurdistan are tired. The conflict between the factions has partitioned the country. Moving from one zone to another is a challenge. The militias are bloated with young men, who have no other source of income. They make their own laws. Economic life is paralysed.

Most of all, people recognise that this bloody conflict between Barzani and Talabani has nothing to do with the national cause. It is a factional struggle for the narrow interests of each party.

• There is no real political difference between them?

No. It's all about zones of influence, not conflicting political projects. The Communist Party has consistently opposed this conflict, and attempted to create forums for

mediation. Unfortunately, they don't listen to us. Both factions think they can impose a military solution. This testifies to their shortsightedness.

The population is not massively attached to either faction. In 1991, over one million civilians left their homes rather than come under the control of advancing Iraqi troops. During the recent transfer of Suleimaniyeh, most people stayed where they were.

• What does the USA want to see?

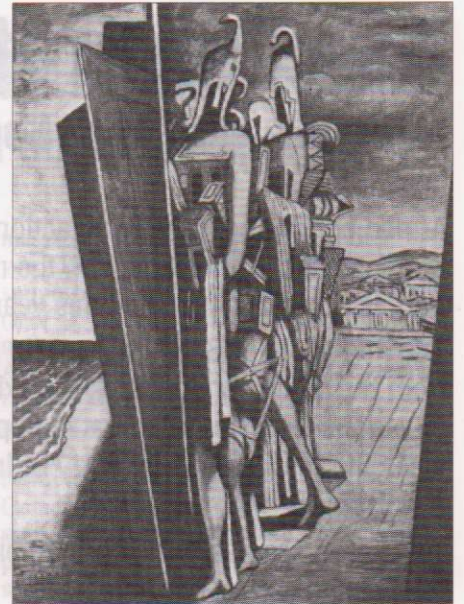
President Clinton is clearly frustrated by this conflict between the Kurds. US interests have repeatedly offered to mediate between the warring factions. At the same time, the USA is not seriously pursuing a political solution, since any "normalisation" of the situation in Kurdistan would enable the "Kurdish experience" to develop and innovate. Washington and Western Europe would then have to take a firmer position concerning political rights and economic interests in Iraqi Kurdistan. And they don't want to have to answer these questions.

The Americans don't particularly want to see an autonomous political entity in Kurdistan, or even a federal relationship with Iraq. They were only drawn into the region in 1991 by the combination of the Gulf War, and the resulting Iraqi intervention into Kurdistan, and massive refugee movements.

Washington would prefer it if Iraqi Kurdistan had a status inferior to that of independence, since sovereignty in Iraqi Kurdistan would affect the other states which currently lay claim to parts of the Kurdish homeland. The problem for Clinton is that the conflict between the Kurdish factions in Iraq has provoked the displeasure of the neighbouring states, including Turkey, linchpin of US strategy in the region, and Iran, which also hopes to benefit from the new situation. Saddam Hussein has also demonstrated his ability to profit from the division between Kurdish groups. All this is pushing the USA to reconsider its position on Kurdish issues.

Washington knew all about Saddam's preparations for his intervention in Kurdistan on August 31st. The US has agents in place here, and regularly over-flies the region. Their military response was concentrated in the south of the country, and, even when they demanded that Saddam withdraw, they did not insist that he retreat behind the 36th parallel. SO it seems that the extension of the tentacles of Iraqi central power into Iraqi Kurdistan is no longer unthinkable and unacceptable to the Americans. Clinton clearly stated that the aim of his missile retaliation was to "reduce Iraq's capacity to menace its neighbours [Kuwait and Saudi Arabia] and United States interests." No mention of Kurdistan's national interest here.

For Bill Clinton, Kurdistan is a "humanitarian" issue, and a political embarrassment. In my opinion, the US is working towards some kind of disengagement from Kurdistan. But who will replace them? What deals have or will be made? It is too early to say. But it is interesting that Iran chose not to make a



provocative reaction to the Iraqi intervention. Some say that Talabani's sudden retreat before Barzani's troops was provoked by a lack of Iranian support for him. Even the Baghdad government seems to be involved in this new re-organisation of Kurdistan. And all the regional powers have their card to play.

• What new set-up can we expect?

Who can say? Either the empty "autonomy" we had before, with Barzani as the top man, or some new structure. Barzani seems willing to negotiate with the Iraqi authorities, but still insists on international support while he does so. To establish his guarantees, Barzani is re-contacting Washington, in the hope of persuading the big NGOs to come back to Kurdistan.

Talabani might counter-attack, or he might accept to negotiate, recognising the international pressure. Some kind of agreement with the Baghdad regime seems likely, in a formula which will be acceptable to Turkey. Iran will be tacitly involved, although publicly that country is still the boggy-man.

One thing is clear. Kurdistan is no longer a secure zone for the Iraqi opposition. ★

• These events have enabled Saddam Hussein to consolidate his power.

Though there are rumours of trouble even within the state structures.

That's right. The gulf between the regime and the people has deepened even further recently. Discontentment has even spread to members of the political structures, and other regime employees. There are signs of an emerging conflict at the core of the regime, even within the ruling family. Saddam Hussein's son in law Hussein Kamel fled to Jordan, then returned to Iraq, where he was assassinated. We haven't heard the end of this story. There are rumours of conflicts within the armed forces, mutual vendettas, and so on. Two of Saddam's brothers are cur-

rently under house arrest. There is even a dispute between Saddam and his son, Uday.

This latest conflict in Kurdistan enabled Saddam Hussein to regroup his forces, and dampen the internal conflicts. The morale of the troops has improved. But the causes of the crisis are just below the surface.

UN Resolution 986 [permitting Iraq to resume limited oil exports] is now frozen. This was a big blow for the enormous majority of Iraqis, who placed so much hope in this partial lifting of the embargo. Nevertheless, the regime has made a few breaches in the US-led encirclement of the country. Will we see a lifting of the embargo? Will the "international community" accept the idea of Saddam remaining in power?

One thing is clear. The USA didn't intend to topple Saddam Hussein, either in 1991 [the Gulf War] or afterwards. Analysing US policies and initiatives, one realises that they have never targeted the Iraqi regime as such, but only that regime's regional potential, and the possible menace a Baghdad regime could pose for Washington's allies in the region.

Recent events show that the "external factor" has lost importance. The internal factor, the importance of which we have always stressed, is now decisive. But the opposition is divided, and the nation is exhausted, particularly because of the blockade.

The situation in Kurdistan is an unpredictable element. Will the new context be a factor strengthening the regime, or will it open a new period of instability? One effect of the exclusion zone was to isolate the Kurdish question from the rest of the country. What now? Will the Kurdish struggle become part of the national, democratic struggle of Iraq? The next few months will give us some answers.

• What is your position on the embargo?

Lifting the embargo has been a central demand of the Communist Party ever since it was imposed. This blockade is a punishment inflicted on the people of Iraq, not on the regime. Our party has argued in favour of using the possibilities for at least a partial loosening of the embargo which have been expressed in successive UN resolutions (#706, #712, and now #986), without accepting these concessions as an alternative to the lifting of the embargo.

It was a crime for the Iraqi regime to reject resolution #986 a year and a half ago. This rejection increased the suffering of the people. Our party is in favour of accepting, and complying with resolution #986. Of course, this is not sufficient for re-animating the economy and re-building the country. All it can do is reduce the human suffering. We also call for the de-freezing of Iraqi assets abroad, and an end to the levies imposed on Iraqi exports.

In the early days, we were one of the few forces in the Iraqi opposition which was firmly opposed to the embargo. We had some problems with other opposition groups, which felt that lifting the embargo would



benefit the regime, which would be against the interests of the opposition. This might be true, but you shouldn't try to weaken Saddam Hussein by making ordinary Iraqis die of hunger.

• Outside Kurdistan, what form does opposition take?

There are a range of non-organised opposition activities. These vary from the rumoured plots by groups of soldiers to the groups of young people who write slogans on the wall, or distribute leaflets. Overall, though, the forces of opposition in the centre and south of the country are too weak to confront the regime's repressive machinery. Each new independent local organisation is menaced by repression. The opposition is constantly threatened. And weak.

The regime's position might be weak, but this hasn't affected the repressive apparatus, which has a long experience, and a budget which hasn't been affected by the generalised austerity measures of recent years.

The embargo and the economic crisis have made it even more difficult to organise the masses. People are pre-occupied with survival.

• What about the organised opposition?

There are four major currents in the Iraqi opposition: Kurdish, Islamist, Arab nationalist, and democratic Communist. This summer's events in Kurdistan were a severe blow. Efforts to unify the struggle were turned back. There is less room for manoeuvre than before. On the other hand, maybe these events will permit a certain clarification of issues, within the opposition.

Might we see a lasting division within the Kurdish current? Will part of the Kurdish movement abandon its opposition to the Baghdad regime? It is too early to be sure.

The opposition inside Iraq faces new tasks. The recent events confirm the central importance of internal factors, rather than external factors like the USA. Once again we have been shown that the USA does not want to overthrow the Saddam regime.

Realising this truth should enable us to work for a new convergence of opposition forces, on the basis of a clearer, more solid national platform, and with a better

appreciation of the problems of external interference in the Iraqi opposition.

We recognise that the internationalisation of the Iraqi question imposes the necessity of co-ordination with forces across the region. Geography obliges. Nevertheless, the opposition should have a national programme, and national priorities, shaping our attitude towards any and all forces we must deal with in order to overthrow the dictatorship. Unfortunately, in certain cases the Iraqi opposition has put its struggle in the service of a regional force, or an international project. Let us hope that these latest events will put a question mark against this kind of behaviour.

• If the regime falls, what is your programme?

Our short term action programme includes the promotion of democratic liberties, and the establishment of a provisional government integrating all the currents, including the Islamists. The main task of this government would be to prepare free general elections. Our party has no veto over any political force. Nor would we accept any interference in our own affairs.

As for our long term strategy, we need to deepen our consideration of a number of questions, about which we have so far only defined some basic principles. For us, socialism remains an option, but we do not think that it is on the agenda, given Iraq's current situation. We need to re-organise the economy, but we are against the dominance of the private sector. We want to keep the fundamental economic resources, like oil, in the public sector.

The democratic question is at the heart of our project. We are no longer willing to sacrifice democracy in order to protect a social measure which we would consider progressive. Life has taught us an important lesson: all social gains are fragile, unless they are backed by popular mobilisation. So we shouldn't underestimate democracy. It is through democracy that we can achieve, and protect, social advances. ★

*Moustafa Salam and Sonia Leith also contributed to this interview

Metro mobilizations

200,000 march in Toronto to protest cuts

October saw strikes and a demonstration of about 200,000 people in Toronto to protest cuts to jobs and social programs in Ontario, Canada's largest province. These "Metro Days of Action" were among the most significant mass protests in Ontario history, and in recent Canadian history outside Quebec.

Julia Barnett and David McNally

THE METRO DAYS OF ACTION WERE organized by the Metro Toronto Labour Council and the Metro Network for Social Justice. First Nations ("Indians"), social justice, anti-racist, feminist, student, and youth activists turned out, alongside trade unionists, parents, teachers, the unemployed and members of community-based organizations to participate in the two days of striking, picketing, leafleting and demonstrations.

At 2 AM on Friday, October 25th protesters gathered outside the Toronto Transit Commission yards and stations to shut down the transit system in defiance of a court injunction designed to limit effective picketing. This militant show of solidarity meant that by 7:00 AM management was forced to close down the system. By this time some 300 picket lines had been set up across the city at government offices, postal stations, universities and colleges, boards of education and other unionized workplaces. There was even a taxi cab convoy along Toronto's busiest highway slowing traffic to a halting speed. The streets of Toronto were empty as hundreds of thousands stayed away from work and school. Across Metro [the Toronto region] demonstrations occurred in several municipalities led by local "Fight Back Coalitions" which organized thousands of people for the first time.

By noon thousands of people gathered outside the Toronto Stock Exchange to voice their anger at the main backers of the Conservative government's ideological and economic agenda — big business. Hundreds of protesters stormed the Stock Exchange building, only to be greeted by the riot police and organized labour marshals. After speeches and chanting against a system that

puts profits before people, protesters marched through Toronto's financial district in a marvellous display of self-organization. This march — without a show of central leadership or marshalling — culminated in a major rally gathered at the Ministry of Education and Training where thousands showed up to voice their anger against cuts to education.

The following day over 850 buses brought protestors in from all over the province to join hundreds of community organizations and labour unions for a long and vibrant march. First Nations people and community groups led the way and for three hours a human chain with banners and placards filled a five kilometre march route making its way to Queen's Park, the seat of the Conservative (Tory) government. The mood was militant, empowering, festive and uplifting.

If ever proof was needed that we have an opportunity to build a new mass protest movement, it was provided during the Metro Days of Action. Not just because of the large numbers of protests and rallies. Also through the upsurge of grassroots organizing that took place across Metro, as in community activists, workers, students, parents and others came together to organize and mobilize for strikes, rallies and demonstrations. These local committees and fight-back coalitions represented the beginning of a new kind of rank and file democracy and solidarity as people discovered a sense of their own collective power.

Since the success of the Metro Days of Action, a major split has emerged in the Ontario labour movement. A group of unions (the "Pink Paper" group) has called for labour to abandon mass actions in favour of simple electoral support for the NDP, the social-democratic party in English-speaking Canada. These unions' mistrust mass labour-community mobilizations they do not control and wish to return to more traditional forms of business unionism.

The unions whose leaders want to continue some form of mass mobilization include the Canadian Auto Workers (which recently waged a largely successful strike against General Motors of Canada), the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and teachers unions, which have mobilized massively in the face of huge cuts to education.

But even these union leaderships have failed to offer a perspective for grassroots organizing and rank and file action intentions. The leaders of these unions still use bureaucratic methods that discourage self-organization. The far left argues for a sustained fight back that goes beyond calling people out every few months (as the labour leadership has done so far). We need an escalating campaign built at the rank and file

level and designed to culminate in a province wide general strike.

For this reason, many activists are trying to find ways to continue to build the grassroots committees that emerged in October. One promising initiative in this area has been the development of a group known as the Committee for a General Strike (CGS).

The CGS first came together in early October after labour activists and anti-cuts activists received a message advertising an upcoming meeting that said "*Please answer the following question: Is the fight against the Harris government being waged in order to A. Get the Tories to understand the error of their ways and soften their agenda somewhat; or B. Create a vast social mobilization that renders Ontario ungovernable and forces them out of office well before their term expires. If you answered 'A' then this meeting is not for you. You just wouldn't enjoy it. If you answered 'B', however, it's right up your street and you should make every effort to be there.*"

The 35 activists who gathered on October 5th in response to this call decided to launch the CGS and to use the Metro Days of Action to publicize a founding meeting. Two subsequent meetings have pulled together the beginnings of a network of activists who are organizing around three main demands:

- That unions and social movements commit themselves to trying to defeat the Harris government before its mandate ends.
- That the labour movement should set a date for a province-wide general strike.
- That a broad based Solidarity Congress of union and social movement activists should convene to build the grassroots leadership network that will be necessary for a successful general strike.

At this point it is not clear if the CGS will be able to bring together a significant enough layer of community and union activists to build meaningful support for its main demands. For the moment, however it is the only grass roots alternative for activists who wish to push forward the anti-Harris movement in Ontario. The coming months will be crucial in the fight against the Harris government. It will be vital to keep building coalitions and rank and file networks that can sustain some of the energy and hope that emerged during the Metro Days of Action in order to prepare for the battles ahead. ★

Note

1. United Steel Workers Union of America, Communications Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Service Employees International Union, the International Association of Machinists, and the Power Workers Union (a non-official split union of the Canadian Union of Public Employees).

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Collaboration addicts

Quebec's trade union leaders just can't say no to the Parti québécois!

Bernard Rioux and Marc Bonhomme

THE MACHINERY OF COSY CONSULTATION between bosses and trade union leaders might be starting to squeak in Germany, but it is still running as smooth as silk in Quebec. For the time being, at least.

Consensus between government, employers and trade unions returned to centre stage when the pro-sovereignty Parti québécois (PQ) defeated the federalist [pro-Canadian] Liberal Party in 1994 elections to Quebec's *Assemblée Nationale*.

Hyper-mediatised tripartite consultations were introduced when the PQ came to power in 1976 after a decade of important labour mobilisations. These "summits" have been a major weapon in diffusing labour militancy.

In 1980, the PQ timed its nationalist "summit" during the referendum campaign for sovereignty. This time the summit comes after the heartbreaking defeat of the movement, which won only 49% of votes cast in the October 1995 referendum.

The Canadian government now realises that they cannot be sure to defeat the next referendum on Quebec sovereignty. So they are implementing "Plan B" — increasing the legalistic barriers to self-determination.

The Parti québécois has made a preemptive strike... against the local population. Their goal is to eliminate Quebec's budget deficit, so as to be in a stronger position when the next referendum comes along, some time after the year 2000.

At the March 1996 Summit, the government told trade union leaders that re-enforced nationalist government would be able to heal the wounds of unemployment and public sector cuts, provided that the unions accepted the employers' goal of a balanced Provincial budget by the year 2000. Union leaders were broadly sympathetic, but demanded this latest summit, to deal

specifically with the question of employment.

Quebec's Prime Minister Lucien Bouchard opened the proceedings with an honest definition of the summit's real objectives: creating a social and economic environment which corresponds to the globalisation of the economy. Bouchard promised rapid deregulation. In particular, the government will abolish certain decrees which govern wages and working conditions in the clothing, wood products and glass industries. The Prime Minister also promised deregulation of the health sector and the workplace safety regulation system.

Bouchard will balance Quebec's Provincial budget by cutting social expenditure, privatising public sector enterprises, downgrading working conditions in the public sector, and introducing or increasing the cost of access to public services. The next budget alone will include cuts of about C\$ 3 billion, which will cost us at least 36,000 public sector jobs.

The biggest mass campaign these last two years has been the Women's March against Poverty. One of the central demands of the Marches has been pay equity between men and women. This has obliged the PQ to propose a rather weak law on wage discrimination, to be voted by the end of this year, but coming into effect 12 months from now. Employers will have an incredible 10 years to bring their pay practices into line. Even this half-measure is too strong for the employers, who used the summit to warn government, union leaders and, of course, the media, about the unemployment risks linked to the new legislation.

Apparently, these "reforms" don't represent a burden for the working population heavy enough for trade union leaders to consider a re-evaluation of their quest for Consensus-at-any-price. These "consensus

addicts" have accepted the government objective of bringing unemployment down from 12% (1H96) to 8% by the year 2002. And before the rank-and-file could react to this show of "realism," union bosses made further concessions, in reaction to the opposition of their "social partners" in government and the boardrooms. The new "realistic" goal is to only reduce Quebec's unemployment rate to the all-Canada average of 10%, by the end of the century.

[Which] jobs for all?

In the summit declaration on employment, the trade unions accept that productivity and flexibility at the enterprise level are essential factors of economic growth, and that "one must" help Quebec enterprises to confront the competition in the world market. Quebec's employers were reticent about this employment summit when it was announced in March. But after sitting down with the current trade union leadership, the bosses are proving real masters of the mediatised summit game.

One proposal from the summit is voluntary job-sharing. In other words, the spreading of part-time jobs, and an increase in job insecurity. The only positive element is the reduction in the working week from 44 hours to 40, over the next four years. But there is no clause in the new agreement which obliges enterprises to compensate for reductions in the working week by hiring new workers. And, of course, the four year implementation period gives the government's new Secretariat for De-Regulation plenty of time to make more radical changes in labour legislation.

Workfare not welfare

The government and the employers have discovered the "social economy". The unemployed of Quebec are to re-gain their dignity

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and motivation by doing socially useful labour, in exchange for a small bonus on top of their existing benefits (which they will lose if they don't participate). The government is overjoyed at the prospect of progressively withdrawing from a range of sectors, and replacing paid employees by cheap, tied labour. The employers and the financial sector are hardly complaining at a measure that seems to buy social peace, at a price much lower than the "savings" though cuts in the public sector workforce. The health sector alone has lost over 13,000 jobs over the last 12 months.

Tax the rich?

Apart from job-sharing, trade union leaders also had a lot to say about the need to redistribute wealth through a tax reform. But as the summit approached, these proposals were watered down into a single, negative demand: refusal of any reductions in enterprise taxation levels. The summit then negotiated a consensus position of reducing social security contributions for those employers who create new jobs. All the union leaders' previous talk of the iniquity of the tax system was forgotten once they entered the summit. Consensus requires no less.

Community activists made the fairly moderate demand that the summit pledge to ensure that the poorest 20% of the population should become no poorer than they are today, and that services to this segment of the population should not be cut. Activists hoped that by making a low demand, they maximised the chances of winning an agreement from government.

The government did promise not to worsen the living conditions of the disabled. But these are only 20% of recipients of social security. The other 80% have no promise of protection. A C\$ 250 million Anti-Poverty Fund has been created. But disbursement guidelines suggest that it will finance workfare (forced labour for welfare recipients) and other measures supposedly increasing the "employability" of the worthy poor.

Bosses' joy, youth revolt?

Employers left the summit visibly overjoyed. Prime Minister Bouchard has reinforced his position relative to his more populist rival Jacques Parizeau, who retired from the leadership of the PQ after blaming the October referendum defeat on "money and the ethnic [English-Canadian and im-

migrant] vote." Bouchard will now be more confident as he confronts the hard-line section in the PQ which wants to re-introduce legislation forbidding public commercial signs in languages other than French, and committing the party to a strategy of declaring independence quickly in the aftermath of any successful referendum, rather than first trying to negotiate a new form of partnership with the federal government.

Representatives of the major women's movements and community groups withdrew from the summit just before the final declaration. Enough was enough, they said, explaining that their constituents had been marginalised, and hard-hit by recent cuts in health and income-support programmes, and that the summit had made no real promise to prevent further impoverishment. But they were careful to insist that they were not "slamming the door". After all, the employers had "come part of the way."

Students at Quebec's *Cegeps* (pre-university colleges and technical institutes) had launched a strike movement at the beginning of the summit. This movement dynamised the humble demonstration called to "support our representatives" inside the Summit. This breath of fresh air obliged student leaders, otherwise famous for their pro-PQ sympathies, to walk out half way through the summit. The strike movement may even spread to the universities: the summit not only failed to freeze fees, but promised to increase them in December 1997.

The Education Minister accuses the students of having "gone all the way" before she had even had a chance to announce her "reforms". And the major newspapers dismiss this youth radicalisation as the corporatism of little-rich-kids. In fact, beyond its immediate demands, this new student mobilisation expresses the frustration of a younger generation revolted by neo-liberal marginalisation, and the lack of a "project for society" which would nourish resistance to national oppression and the aspiration towards independence. The organised sector of the younger generation is expressing, in a confused way, the revolt of all the excluded.

In recent years, Quebec's angry women have taken the lead, with the marches against poverty. Now it is the turn of the youth. But unless the working class shakes itself out of its lethargy, Quebec's students might not have enough breath to go the full distance. ★



Michel Mill

Michel Mill (Michel Lafitte) was a revolutionary, a militant for Quebec's independence, for the rights of indigenous people, a trade union activist, and an active internationalist. He was also a brilliant orator, with wide cultural references. When it was time to organise something in Montreal or elsewhere, Michel was the man with 1001 contacts. Michel wasn't born in Quebec, or in a French-speaking family. Though his French (and his Quebec accent) was so good that few people noticed. Michel joined the Fourth International in English Canada, but his Trotskyist education and experience helped him recognise that the Quebec national question was the weak link in the Canadian bourgeois system.

For Michel and the other Fourth International comrades in English Canada, the full development of the national and social liberation struggle of Quebec was in the interest of working people in English-speaking Canada too. He moved to Quebec as a young man, and spent the rest of his militant life struggling to help the working class wrest control of the struggle for independence from the nationalist Parti quebecois (in power from 1976-1984 and again since 1994).

The 1980s were hard for all of us in the movement, with the defeat of the referendum on sovereignty in 1980, and the subsequent downturn in labour struggles and other social mobilisations. Michel could have easily taken refuge in a well-paid cocoon (he was an excellent interpreter). But he didn't. Nor did he move back to Ontario when the struggle in Quebec died down, and large parts of the left in English Canada and in other countries lost interest in our struggle.

In recent years, Michel was optimistic about the transformation of the Quebec New Democratic Party (social-democratic) into the anti-capitalist, and pro-independence Socialist Democracy Party (PDS). When the CIA dusted off their list of undesirables during the Atlanta games, Michel was turned back when he tried to fly to Mexico (via Miami) to participate in this summer's International Meeting for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism [IV #281]. In the months before his death, Michel spent a lot of time encouraging the recomposition of a serious Marxist revolutionary pole in English Canada, through the fusion of the Fourth International supporters in Socialist Challenge into the New Socialist Group.

Michel devoted himself to keeping the embers of resistance alive during years of passivity, so that others could take up the struggle when the time came. We will remember him. ★

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Life under Clinton, again

Four more years of bipartisan attacks on the poor

by David Finkel and Dianne Feeley*

THIS WAS AN ELECTION THAT DISGUSTED EVEN hardened commentators. "Mr. Clinton and Mr. Dole completely altered their political personas, embracing beliefs they had never before believed in...The press can only wonder at the cynicism of the people they cover," writes Maureen Dowd in the *New York Times*. Ordinary people conveyed their sentiments with the lowest voter turnout in Presidential election history – less than 50%.

The United States now faces a peculiar period of political "cohabitation." To be sure, it is not unusual for government power to be divided. In recent U.S. history, Republican Presidents have typically faced Democratic Party majorities in one or both Houses of Congress, and since 1994 the Democratic President Bill Clinton has had to work with a Republican-controlled Congress. But the situation following the November 1996 election is rather different.

Firstly, President Clinton won an easy re-election victory, the first sitting Democratic President to accomplish this since 1964. He was aided in this by Bob Dole's clumsy and ineffectual campaign and by a period of sustained economic prosperity for much of the middle and professional classes.

At the same time, working class and African American votes, along with a majority of women, flowed overwhelmingly to Clinton for fear of the consequences of a right-wing takeover of the White House.

Yet the Republicans, for the first time since 1928, kept control of both Houses of Congress, even increasing their majority in the Senate. The union federation AFL-CIO committed \$35 million to the declared goal of defeating Congressional Republicans, yet only 19 of the 72 first-term Republicans, highly vulnerable because of their association with the notorious House Speaker Newt Gingrich, were ultimately defeated.

Union leaders get what they asked for

The labor leadership of AFL-CIO President John Sweeney can be expected to declare "victory" on the grounds of Clinton's reelection, although the same result would have happened even if labor had not spent a



dime. In any case, Clinton owes the union leadership nothing: first, because he made no promises to them, and second, because they made no demands on him.

Indeed, the likely "reward" for organized labor's massive political expenditures will come in the guise of "campaign finance reform." When legislation to regulate political campaign spending is introduced, it will sharply restrict the right of unions to engage in funding party campaigns.

It is a commonplace that U.S. election campaigns have become obscene exercises in non-stop fundraising. In 1996 it cost the two parties \$800 million apiece—or twice what they shelled out in 1992. Corporate interests vastly outspend unions (and needless to say, get far better value for money on their political investments), but union spending is labelled a "special interest" that needs to be curbed to preserve democracy.

Democrats (the beneficiaries of union campaign spending) will probably acquiesce to such restrictions, perhaps as part of a back-room deal to keep Democratic National Committee officers from going to jail for taking illegal campaign contributions from Indonesian billionaires.

Third Party Candidates

The campaign to have consumer activist Ralph Nader run for President on the Green Party was launched less than a year ago. A campaign with no money, and a candidate who didn't spend much time campaigning, and was only able to secure ballot status in 22 of the 52 states. Nonetheless, Nader was credited with 580,940 votes, or about one percent of the popular vote.

In the capital, Washington DC., Nader got more votes than billionaire third candidate Ross Perot. But Nader's best score was in the state of Oregon, on the Pacific coast, where he received 4.1% of the vote.

One of Nader's campaign goals was making the Greens into a truly national organization. Thus it is important to note that his campaign was able to win ballot status for Green parties in Connecticut, Nevada, Vermont, Wisconsin and Washington, DC. Green Party candidates were elected to City Council offices in at least three California cities. Greens have won local office for School Board, City Council and County Commission seats in twelve states.

Affirmative Action Defeated in California

California's Proposition 209 passed (54% in favor). Mistitled the California Civil Rights Initiative, this was an initiative seeking to outlaw all affirmative action based on race, ethnicity, gender or national origin. Part of the problem is that although California's population is at least 50% people of color, whites make up 77% of the voters. Three out of four African American voters rejected Prop. 209, as did 55% of California's voting Latinos. Forty percent of white voters opposed the proposition (43% of white women and 36% of white men).

*The authors are members of the editorial board of *Against the Current* magazine, and the US socialist organisation Solidarity.

Alternative (?) votes

• Green (Nader)	580,940
• Workers World	29,118
• Peace & Freedom	22,593
• Socialist Workers Party	11,513
• Socialist	3,376

Explicitly socialist candidates polled about 70,000 votes nationally.

A strong "No on 209!" campaign hammered away at the racism of the measure, pointing out that right-wing supremacists such as the Louisiana Republican David Duke supported it. When the day came, San Francisco voters rejected Prop 209 (71% against), as did Los Angeles (55%).

The Value of "Bipartisanship"

Clinton and the Republican Congressional leadership have pledged themselves to "bipartisanship" in government. "Bipartisanship" is a quality that is highly prized in the elite discourse of U.S. political commentary, precisely because it means government with no principles and with no need to respect popular opinion.



The realities of "bipartisanship" have been illustrated in the passage of the most destructive single piece of social legislation of this century, the "welfare reform" bill.

From colonial times through the present, the state has identified two kinds of poor—those who are "deserving" (widows and children) and those who are not (those who never married, and their children). Benefits have always been stingy for the second category, although since the 1930s all the poor were entitled to some guaranteed aid. No longer! The undeserving poor are entitled to aid a mere five years per lifetime.

Without creating any jobs or expanding child care, and while decreeing most job training programs off limits, the federal government now demands that women with children over three years of age work at least twenty hours a week. Perhaps the most outrageous provision in the new set-up is the allocation of \$250 million (over five years) "to provide education... mentoring, counselling, and adult supervision to promote abstinence from sexual activity...."

An equally delicious fruit of "bipartisan" rule is the passage of Clinton's anti-crime and anti-terrorism bill, whose assault on basic rights of legal appeal and due process exceeds the fantasies of the Nixon, Reagan and Bush regimes.

On to the Second Term

In Clinton's second term, the U.S. ruling class looks toward an era of "bipartisan" government to carry out several urgent tasks. These include, especially, the restructuring of old-age pension and medical benefits (social security and Medicare/Medicaid).

Ostensibly these funds need to be "saved from bankruptcy" to ensure benefits for future generations. In fact, they will be sharply slashed and, quite possibly, changed from universal social entitlements to means-tested welfare programs, in order to avoid a possibility too ghastly to contemplate: the need for slightly higher corporate taxation to pay for them.

Cuts in social benefits, of course, are familiar recent phenomena in Germany,

France and other countries. But social protection is much weaker in the United States, as has been the resistance to demolishing it. Social security used to be politically invulnerable, precisely because it is a universal entitlement rather than a means-tested welfare program. Not now. "Bipartisan" government affords a unique opportunity to attack it.

Despite its many attractive features for the elites, "bipartisan" government does not necessarily mean political stability. There are a number of storm clouds on the horizon—although, tragically enough, the threat of insurgency from below does not immediately appear to be one of them.

Cloud One

Precisely because the differences between the capitalist parties in central matters of economic policy have largely evaporated (Clinton having reinvented himself as a Republican), the level of personal viciousness has expanded to fill the vacuum of substantive debate. It's true that there is plenty of ammunition, inasmuch as Bill and Hilary Clinton and a number of their associates are undoubtedly indictable and/or impeachable in assorted sleazy financial and political manipulations, as is their nemesis Newt Gingrich for his own misuse of "educational" funds for partisan political purposes.

One possibility, then, is political negotiation through overt or covert blackmail and counter-blackmail, which is likely to result in an even more alienated and depoliticized electorate.

Cloud Two

Second, the consensus (or armed political truce) between the parties on budgetary policies, with the agreement to balance the budget at least on paper by the year 2002, could be severely disrupted by an ordinary cyclical economic downturn. This crisis could be made worse since the federal government has already "off-loaded" so many of its own traditional responsibilities onto state governments that some of the latter might face bankruptcy in a recession.

Cloud Three

Third, parts of the world that are of crucial strategic importance to U.S. capital may be very difficult to police in the next few years. Look next door. Mexico faces the acute danger of social disintegration, while the chances are at least even that the Canadian state will fragment after the next referendum on Quebec independence.

Further afield, Clinton's big successes, the imperialist "peace process" in the Middle East and the carve-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina, are severely strained. It now seems clear that U.S. troops will remain in the former Yugoslavia long past the date promised for their withdrawal, a prospect for which there is no public support in the USA.

Clinton will also be under right-wing domestic pressure to implement all the absurdist features of the Helms-Burton bill

against Cuba, a course of action that will encounter resistance and even retaliation from America's European partners. Even "bipartisan" government may not save Clinton from reaping the whirlwind of this particular piece of malicious electoral opportunism.

In short, corporate capital enjoys unchallenged political ascendancy and, for the moment, virtually complete hegemony in U.S. political debate. But it remains to be seen whether the consolidated "center-center" coalition will be able to effectively govern or whether it will crash on the rocks of self-inflicted petty scandals. Let alone whether it can respond to any real crisis which develops. ★



Robert D. Dullea

"Bob" Dullea was born on July 16, 1901 in a rural community in northern New York, the youngest of three children. At the age of 26 he married Margaret, and they toured Europe.

By 1931, he was working as a bond salesman. Like others of his generation, he was radicalised by the great depression. He joined the Socialist Party in Cleveland, Ohio in 1932. In 1936, Bob and Margaret were won over by the ideas of Trotskyism. Two years later, they were among the founding members of the Socialist Workers Party. Bob was a delegate to the first convention of the SWP, where he, and the other delegates, voted to assist Leon Trotsky in the call for the establishment of the Fourth International.

In 1940, Margaret and Bob opened a radical bookstore in lower Manhattan, near the SWP headquarters. Unfortunately, it did not thrive. They remained active members of the SWP until 1953, when they left with Bert Cochrane. Bob and Margaret remained sympathizers of the Fourth International. As long as their health permitted, they attended the public meetings of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action, subscribed to our press, and contributed as best they could to our fund-raising drives.

Bob died on August 22. We will miss his cheery voice answering the phone. Successive leg operations had confined him to a wheelchair. But until a month before his death, he visited the local "Y" five days a week to play bridge.

Bob's lifelong commitment to the Fourth International closed with a generous bequest to the organisation. We will remember him. Our deepest commiserations to Margaret, his wife, comrade and companion of seventy years.

Dorothea Breitman

The Kiwi crash

New Zealand's election raises more questions than it solves

We publish this extended analysis of the election in New Zealand for two reasons. Firstly because this is the "first world" country where neo-liberal reforms have been most ambitious. And secondly because of the lessons to be drawn by advocates of electoral reform and coalition politics in other countries.

Special report by Geof Pearce

ON SATURDAY 12TH OCTOBER, NEW Zealanders voted in their first general election under the new Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) voting system. After six years of unpopular government, and a campaign conducted in a climate of escalating industrial action and student occupations of University Registries it had been widely anticipated "Centre-Left" parties would sweep the ballot boxes: in fact they won 13% less votes than they did in 1993.

Expanding from 99 to 120 seats, the New Zealand Parliament now consists of 65 constituency MPs and 55 list MPs. A majority of 61 seats or more is required to form a government. Tactical and strategic voting enabled the parties of the right to translate less votes into more seats: 52 (8 for Act and 44 for National as against the Lefts' 50 (37 for Labour and 13 for the Alliance).

The balance between left and right was so fine that the election has given a self-proclaimed Centre-party, New Zealand First (which won 14.2% of votes and 17 seats) the power to appoint the next government.

Throughout the campaign, Labour and National denigrated NZF leader Winston Peters as a populist and a racist. And yet, within hours of the poll closing, we witnessed a procession of senior Labour and National people pledging affection and respect for Peters and firing the opening shots in vulgar and ugly bidding war of cabinet posts offered and policies to be sacrificed to win NZF to their side.

Peters built his campaign on the tale of National's 1991 policy betrayals and the party's links to big business. Moreover, NZF stood on a similar policy platform to Labour. For these reasons, it was expected that NZF would join in Labour-led government. That may still happen, but only after Winston Peters has wrung every concession he can from his "Bonapartist" position.

National will stay on as caretaker government until the Governor General [who



represents the Queen of England!?) is satisfied that a viable new government, minority or majority coalition, can be formed. The Governor General has given the parliamentarians until the New Year to reach an agreement and said he will call for a new election if they cannot do this by that time.

The new parliamentarians are now pondering how they can form a government after an election in which nearly 90% of people voted to stay on the current economic path but almost 60% also voted for the government to spend a lot more on health and education and to address social ills.

The People have spoken - but what did they say?

National did well to hang on as the biggest party in an election campaign underscored by strikes and student occupations – but most people voted against a National government.

The new parliamentarians now have to form a government after an election in which nearly 90% of people voted for parties that said they would keep to the current economic path but almost 60% of people also voted for parties that said they would spend a lot more on health and education and to redress social ills caused by economic reforms.

While MMP did not help clarify the direction of the country it did ensure a more representative parliament: the number of Women MP's has gone from 20 to 35; the number of Maori MP's from 4 to 15; there are more MP's with a Pacific Island heritage and the first Asian Woman MP.

Convergence & demarcation

The campaign started out a head-to-head free for all contest. The two biggest parties, Labour and National, argued that radical liberalisation had put the economy on the right track, NZF largely agreed but said the reforms had gone too far, ACT largely agreed but said they had not gone far enough. Labour and NZF distinguished themselves from National by saying part of the government surpluses being generated should be used to redress and eliminate the ills of society (inequality and poverty) rather than to repay debt or cut tax rates.

National stood on its record, arguing that New Zealanders now live in the "golden age of the 20th Century, - and another round of tax cuts next year. To their right, ACT wanted to press on with economic liberalisation. Under the banner *Values not politics*, ACT said it would continue to sell state assets, issue vouchers for health, education and welfare, set a flat 7.5% income tax rate and establish a second set of courts (to bring competition into the justice system).

The Christian Coalition looked as if it might break the 5% threshold till spokespersons argued for bringing back the death penalty, that hanging was too good for homosexuals, that unmarried mothers under 20 should not get state benefits and the state should not provide abortions. Their leaders tried to break with the right fundamentalist image but even National decided to stress their distance from the fundamentalist right.

Labour campaigned for capitalism with a human face, keep the economy that generates state surpluses but use those surpluses to address social problems, under the slogan *New Heart, New Hope*.

The Alliance pushed a moderate social democratic programme: some economic re-regulation and tariff protection, progressive income tax, swapping the 12.5% GST (consumption tax) for a 10 cents per \$100 Financial Transaction Tax, free health and education under the banner *Leadership you can trust*.

NZF sold itself as the centre party with a policy platform combining authoritarian Singapore-type state led economic development and social policies generally to the left of the Labour Party. NZF campaigned on the slogan *Putting New Zealanders First* (ahead of foreign investors) and for fidelity in politics as against those since 1984 where promises made before elections were broken the day after.

In social policy NZF was generally to the left of Labour (e.g., where Labour pledged free health care for under 8 year olds, NZF said free health care for those under 13). But Labour was to the left of NZF on industrial relations, migration and law & order issues.

The Alliance distinguished itself from Labour and NZF by saying it is impossible to change society without changing the economy and using budget surpluses to redress the ills of society is doomed to failure since it is the same economic structure that produces the surpluses that also producing the inequality, poverty and intolerance that Labour and NZF had pledged to eliminate.

Changing Fortunes

When it was recognised National was unlikely to win and Labour was the least likely of the alternatives to led a government to change the economy, the media began to promote Labour as the realistic and responsible alternative to National as against its "flaky" NZF



and "extreme left" Alliance rivals. In the Leaders' debates, Labour leader Helen Clark's style won over undecided voters. Labour's final lift came in the debates on coalition governments.

NZF had a bumpy ride through to the election. It was cast as racist for its anti-foreign control and restricted immigration policies although, ironically this struck a chord with Maori voters. NZF also provided a home for National supporters who worried about the influence of the far right and Labour supporters who worried that Labour would ally itself to the "extreme left" Alliance.

Disaffection and Leadership

NZF got a big boost from Leader Winston Peters' scathing attack on leading NZ companies who set up a dodge in the

Votes and seats in the new parliament

Party	Vote (%)	Seats		
		Con*	List	Total
ACT	6.2	1	7	8
Christian Coalition	4.4	0	0	0
United	0.9	1	0	1
National	34.1	30	14	44
Labour	28.3	26	11	37
New Zealand First	13.1	6	11	17
Alliance	10.1	1	12	13
Others	9.4	0	0	0

* Constituency seats

- Compared to 1993 support dropped for National (-1%) Labour (-6%) and the Alliance (-8%).
- In 1993 Labour and the Alliance won 52.8% of the vote. This year, NZF, Labour & Alliance won 51.5%.

Cook Islands to evade hundreds of millions of dollars of tax. Maintaining his criticism in the face of media denigration and million dollar law suits, Peters tabled a wine-box full of documents in parliament exposing the scheme. Peters' relentless pursuit forced a

public enquiry (the "Wine-box Enquiry") and polls showed NZF support rose and fell in line with evidence presented at the enquiry.

There is also widespread distrust of the politicians from the established parties. The NZF constitution allows NZF electorate MP's to put the interests of the constituency ahead of those of the party. The Alliance approached the problem from the other end, requiring candidates to sign a pledge to resign from parliament rather than vote against any policy the party stood for in the election.

Media

Old fashioned campaigning, street corner meetings and door knocking, proved ineffective against television evening "news" in influencing public opinion. Reflecting the degree of atomisation since 1984, a lot of people said they found door knocking intrusive and they resented it. Far more effective were the campaigns stage managed as to present an image at public meetings reported in the news programmes.

But orienting to news programmes let the media set the agenda for the campaigns, this was determined to be coalitions rather than party policy and it cost the Alliance and NZF dearly.

Coalition tactics

Once it became evident that his "steady-as-it-goes" message was not working, National Party leader Jim Bolger tried to spook the stock markets, warning everything could be lost on October 13 - with the spectre of the three-headed monster of Labour, NZF and Alliance and the dangerous loopy policies of the left.

Only the despised Business Roundtable echoed his warning. So Bolger went to Australia to invite market leaders there to say they'd withdraw investments from New Zealand if Kiwis voted for a change in economic direction. But the "markets" appeared sanguine about the possibility of a Centre-left government, US Credit rating agencies going so far as to say this was unlikely to alter the country's credit worthiness.

Bolger's threats did however shift the political debate for the remainder of the campaign, away from parties and party policies towards coalitions and tactical voting.

The Right

Questioned as to how, in the light of the polls, National would be able to form a majority government Prime Minister Bolger reckoned some Labour MP's would split and join National rather than join a left coalition with the Alliance (David Lange, previous Labour Prime Minister agreed with him on that). But, in reality, National either had to look to NZF in the centre, or to the radical ACT or conservative Christian Coalition on the far right to find coalition partners.

But the polls showed National was losing supporters to NZF and suggested many more would go if National coalesced with far right parties. As a result, co-

operation on the right was limited to tactical voting arrangements. The new electoral system created a bewildering range of possibilities.

- ACT leader Richard Prebble told his supporters to cast their constituency vote for National and only their party list vote for ACT.
- Early in the campaign, National withdrew a candidate from a Wellington seat, to support the United candidate there.
- In the eleventh hour of the campaign, the Prime Minister withdrew support for another National candidate (in Wellington Central), and endorsed the ACT candidate there.

The Left

Most of the two-thirds of voters disadvantaged by past "reforms" looked to the three parties to the left of National for redress. NZF, Labour and the Alliance bitterly contested the election right to the end which ruled out any form of co-operation - including tactical voting.



Winston Peters, the part-Maori leader of New Zealand First

Labour and the Alliance joined in the portrayal of NZF as racist, populist and authoritarian. Meanwhile, Labour and NZF joined National, ACT and the media in depicting the Alliance as proposing high tax and big government spending. In fact, 70% of people would pay *less* tax under the Alliance proposals. But the party was never able to get that message across.

Labour leader Helen Clark often campaigned about the need to adopt a social democratic approach to economic management, which ought to have put Labour close to the Alliance (which asked Labour for talks about a policy basis for a coalition arrangement). Unfortunately, Labour's leading figures invariably spoke far more harshly of Alliance economic policies than they did of National's.

Labour and NZF refused to discuss coalitions until after the election - when

parties knew what cards had been dealt to them by the voters. Meanwhile, the Alliance and NZF painted themselves into opposite corners on the question of coalitions. This cost both parties dearly and strengthened Labour. The Alliance responded to Labour's rebuff by arguing that the old parties had abused the voters' trust to such an extent that the people should not be asked to vote for them unless they know exactly what they are voting for.

Alliance was surely right to say that people should know before election day who would be dealing with whom. But this did mean that Alliance lost support, as people realised this policy meant that the Alliance would not be in the next government. As a result, many Alliance supporters cast their electorate votes for Alliance candidates but their party list votes for Labour, to show who they wanted in government.

NZF ruled itself out of any coalition with ACT or the Christian Coalition but not National. Running second in the polls at the time, NZF slipped backwards when the public realised that Peters, who built his reputation as a crusader against National and its big business allies, would not rule out an accommodation with the "enemy."

One lesson should be clear to the left. Once Labour ruled out coalescing with National or parties to the right of it, people switched allegiance from the Alliance and NZF to Labour.

Labour came out way ahead of its centre-left rivals, due in part to people casting their electorate vote for the Alliance or NZF and their party vote for Labour. Had they split their votes the other way round, the left parties would have had won more seats in parliament.

The Alliance won 11.7% of the votes cast for the 5 main parties, 9.8% of those cast in Auckland but 23% in the seats centred around Christchurch, New Zealand's second biggest city.

New Zealand First took a major step forward by winning all five of the *Tangata Whenua* electorate seats (reserved for Maori voters). These had been held by Labour since 1935.

ACT's success is due almost entirely to tactical voting. The party won 10.6% of the party votes cast in seats centred around Auckland, New Zealand's biggest city, compared to an average of 6.9% for the country as a whole. In part this is due to Auckland having a regional economy which is relatively independent of, and growing faster than, the national economy. Nevertheless, ACT won its lowest share of party votes in the Auckland working class electorates of Manurewa (2.7%) and Mangere (2.3%).

National will stay on as caretaker government until the Governor General [who represents the Queen of England!?] is satisfied that a viable new government, minority or majority coalition, can be formed. The Governor General has given the parliamentarians until the New Year to reach an agreement saying he will call for a new election if they cannot do this by that time.

The last word on the elections goes to Sir Ron Trotter, leading businessman and member of the Business Roundtable knighted during the term of the 4th Labour Government, who, at a shareholders' meeting, sent a warning to parliamentarians that they must form the new government without delay - because the comparative advantage obtained from past measures has largely disappeared as other countries adopted Kiwi-style reforms and the new government will be required to continue and intensify the "liberalisation process". ★

• Who's who in New Zealand politics

• **ACT** (Association of Taxpayers and Consumers) is a radical right wing party formed and led by past Labour & National MP's who were sacked because of their radical right views or who left when those parties would not press on with radical right reforms.

• **The Christian Coalition** links Christian Democrats (a split by a National MP) and Christian Heritage. It combines right economics with fundamentalist Christian values.

• **National** is a standard Tory party which has governed for 33 of the 45 years since 1951.

• One MP was elected on the centre **United** list, formed by breakaway National and Labour MP's. Under the slogan *More Heart than National, more sense than the rest*, United presented itself as the obvious coalition partner for National in an election where National could not win outright.

• **Labour** was formed by trade unions in 1916 and won the allegiance of working people during the Depression of the 1930's when it overrode international banks to introduce sweeping and far reaching social democratic reforms.

In 1984 Labour buckled to the international banks and implemented the deepest programme of counter social democratic reforms seen in the world. Labour says it has retreated from its radical free market stance in the sense that the objective has been achieved and it is no longer necessary to continue driving to the right.

• **The Alliance** is made up from five parties: **New Labour** (split from Labour in '89), **Green** (formed around the same time as New Labour), **Democrats** (with roots in the Douglas Social Credit of the '30's), **Mana Motuhake** (Maori Nationalist split from Labour in the '70's) and **Liberal** (split from National in the early '90's). The Alliance is a moderate social democratic party cast as extreme left by parties who jumped way to the right.

• **New Zealand First** split from National when that party broke with conservative social democracy in the early 1990's. NZF combines elderly aggrieved at pension claw-backs, young Maori fighting for change and the supporters that National alienated when it turned to the right of Labour in 1990. ★

The struggle for democracy in Indonesia!

An introduction to the People's Democratic Party (PRD)

• **Previously announced as *There is only one word: Resist***

Published by Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET) November, 1996, 48pp. US\$6 plus air postage if outside Australia.

• Foreword 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
- Rebuttal of accusations against the PRD by PRD centre on July 31, 1996
- "Unite with the People" - statement on the capture of PRD Chairman, Budiman Sujatmiko, August 12, 1996.

What is the PRD: documents

- Manifesto of the PRD: July 22, 1996.
- The New Order and Capitalism.: An excerpt from a document outlining the nature of Indonesian society and a program for democratic transformation adopted at the April, 1996 founding congress of the PRD.
- The PRD Program (excerpts).
- The Urgent Needs and Demands of the People
- A Peoples Coalition Government and its commitments
- Mass organisations affiliated to the PRD.
- The artistic voice of the PRD: poems by the chairperson of the People's Art Network, Wiji Thukul.

Background

- Winning Democracy: a new stage for the progressive movement
- by Max Lane of ASIET and Australia's Democratic Socialist Party

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Breaking new ground

Interview with Matt Robson, President of New Labour

• **You now have a much stronger base in Parliament, and new resources. How will you use them? what steps will you be taking to maintain solidarity with the grassroots of the Alliance?**

Firstly, to mobilise public support behind the progressive policies of the Alliance - for example, repealing the Employment Contracts Act, which was a union-smashing device, and which is now on the political agenda in Australia too. Secondly, to advance the work of the Alliance in the electorates. And, thirdly, to work with all progressive sectors including the labour movement.

• **How important was the new electoral system in your step forward?**

With the new MMP system, we have a more democratic representation because of the existence of list MPs. Constituency MPs are elected on a first-past-the-post basis, which often means that they are elected on a minority of votes.

In contrast, List MPs are elected on the basis of a proportion of the party vote throughout the country. This is an obvious democratic advance: we are no longer shut out of the parliamentary institution by the undemocratic nature of the first-past-the-post elections.

As a smaller party, we have only one constituency MP, and that is Jim Anderton, who has built a solid base in his own working-class seat in Christchurch, and he won over 50 per cent of the vote in that seat.

Our 13 List MPs will be spokespeople for the party at the national level, representing various sectors of our concerns, such as the labour movement, women, health, and Maori questions. So the potential for them to organise, mobilise, and educate is far greater than most constituency MPs.

• **Women are the majority of your caucus - 7 out of 13 MPs.**

This is no accident. It's a conscious decision of the Alliance to work against the socio-economic discrimination against women. The fact that we have leading women in the Alliance is part of that progressive program that the Alliance stands for. It's a big advance for New Zealand, and it's a big advance for the Alliance. It's something that we're very proud of.

• **What role will the New Labour Party play in the future?**

The New Labour party was the party that initiated the talks which led to the formation

of the Alliance in 1991. Since then, we have worked closely with the other parties to build a co-operative political movement. We'll continue to do that.

We'll also be advocating New Labour's program for the working class in New Zealand. And, at the same time, we will work with the strengths of our partners in the Alliance. For example the influence of Green politics inside the Alliance has been a part of the wider appeal of the Alliance.

• **Why did the Alliance vote fall so dramatically (from 17 to 10 per cent) during the last week of the campaign?**

First, we had ranged against us the whole apparatus of the establishment - the press, the other parties and the Business Round Table. United (on the centre-right) decried the Alliance as a party which would lead to economic ruin.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party put on its left-wing face. Large sectors of the population were under the illusion that Labour had changed, and would now defend their interests. Despite the fact that David Lange, former leader of the Labour Party, warned voters that Labour wasn't to be trusted, since both Labour and the National Party were "cross-dressers in economic policy." He has now resigned from politics. The trade union bureaucracy also actively worked against us, despite the support we received from many trade union members.

There are of course, tactical and organisational matters that we have to look at very objectively to see how we can improve on putting our program forward.

• **The Alliance policy on coalitions proved unpopular with voters...**

The propaganda was so intense that voters were led to believe that the Alliance, since it wouldn't be part of a government, wouldn't be influential. Many voters decided

that it was better to be "part of the action", through, perhaps, Labour and New Zealand First joining together to defend their interests. However there was wide scale public support for our position that parties should talk beforehand and declare their coalition policies, and who they'd go into coalition with, rather than "doing a deal" once the votes were counted.

A public opinion poll taken before the election suggested that 69% of the population agreed with our proposal. Nevertheless, many people did express the opinion that you have to be "realistic." In other words, half a loaf is better than no loaf at all.

After the election, New Zealand First has shown its real colours, as a reactionary, extreme chauvinist party. It has entered a bidding war for cabinet seats with Labour and National.

I think this has meant that our position has gained respect. Through this experience many people realise that they were tricked, and that our position was the correct one, even if it was somewhat unpopular at the time. So we don't regret it, since we do have to educate our supporters, or potential supporters, on the need to end the game playing of normal bourgeois politics.

• **Winston Peters' New Zealand First holds the balance of power. They could form a government with National, or with Labour.**

"Balance of power" is a misnomer. What Peters holds is the casting vote on who can make up the government. He is damned both ways. If he goes in with National, he exposes his true colours to ex-National supporters who had placed their faith in New Zealand First. If he goes in with Labour, he drags Labour even further to the right than they already are. Both parties will have to break their promises on social spending, or raise taxes, so either way, they break their promise.

Whichever coalition finally forms a government, the role of the Alliance is to go through this experience with the masses, and use our Parliamentary position to explain why it is important to hold the party to its policies both before and after an election. Only the Alliance offers that.

We're very optimistic because we believe that we have a unique opportunity, together with our allies throughout the world, to mobilise people against the direction followed by so-called social democratic parties. ★

M. Robson was interviewed on Oct. 25 by C. Twyford for Australia's *Green Left Weekly*



It's official: NZ Monthly Review has ceased publication. Both the magazine and the Monthly Review committee have run out of steam. Subscriptions will be transferred to Political Review.

In times like these, producing a left magazine is a thankless task. On behalf of those who missed the Special General Meeting on 2nd November, our regrets and thanks to the editors and distributors. [AN]

PO Box 13-483 Armagh, Christchurch, New Zealand

“Roger” the economy

The economic miracle that never was

In less than a decade, New Zealand went from being among the most social-democratic countries in the world, to probably the most open market economy. This change was obtained almost without resistance. Free-market consultants around the world hold New Zealand up as a model for other countries to follow. No wonder.

Geof Pearce

LIKE MOST OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, the New Zealand economy almost stopped growing after 1973. Real growth rates in 1973-1990 were under 0.5%. Social democratic methods suddenly seemed unable to revitalise the economy.

In response, New Zealand governments, massively supported by the major international accounting and consulting companies, went further than any other imperialist country in the drive to “get the economic fundamentals right.”

MacJobs

Over 200,000 new jobs were created between 1991 and 1996. Of course, many were part time. And, at the same time, over 165,000 jobs were lost. Most of these were full time. Most of the new jobs came in the service sector. In the old days, non-essential trade was only allowed to take place Monday-Friday between 8am and 6pm, enabling most people to enjoy a normal home life.

In 1990 the Labour Government passed the Shop Trading Hours Act Repeal Act, which lifted absolutely all restrictions on trading hours. In 1991, a National party government virtually abolished minimum and maximum work periods.

Statistics Minister Williamson considers any New Zealander who works for at least one hour every week to be “employed”. In reality, of course, most New Zealanders want to work on a full time basis. The country has New Zealand has the second highest rate of involuntary part-time employment for men in the OECD, and the third highest rate for women.

The sad reality is that, after nine years of almost total labour market flexibility, the real unemployment rate is still higher than it was in 1987

Peanut salaries

Real wages fell by over 6% between

May 1991 and December 1995: a period in which the economy grew by 19%. The true scale of this fall in living standards is masked by the small number of massive wage increases, and increased inequality. Workers have few chances to improve their situation. One survey suggests that 43% of employers have reduced overtime rates, and 42% have frozen them. Similar regression can be observed in bonuses for anti-social hours.

If you are under 20 years old, there is no minimum wage applicable for you. For older workers, the hourly minimum is about US\$4, although companies increasingly employ workers as self-employed “agents,” at a lower wage.

With the introduction of tuition fees, university students now compete with high school students for part-time and casual jobs in the large retail and fast-food chains.

Poverty

Church leaders estimate that one in five New Zealanders, and one in three children, live in poverty. Two thirds of the population live in households with a gross income of less than US\$20,000.

Work till you drop

The retirement age has been increased from 60 to 65, and the government tells people to save for their own retirement, since future state pensions will only cover the “bare necessities of life.” Consultants from Price Waterhouse now suggest raising the retirement age to at least 70 years. The life expectancy for New Zealand men is 72.

Lucky for some

New Zealand now has more millionaires per head of population than any country in the world. How did this happen? Redistribution. From 1991 to 1995 the share of wages and salaries in national income dropped by 2%, and the proportion taken up by investors revenue increased by 3%. In cash terms, this means cutting wages by \$2 billion and adding \$3.8 bn to investors’ dividends every year.

Debt and sovereignty

For the second time since 1857, the government has eliminated its foreign debt. The problem is that the private sector has borrowed much more from foreign bankers than the state has paid back. Combined public and private debt to foreign parties increased from NZ\$1 bn. in 1976 to over NZ\$ 70 today. “New Zealand has the world’s best fiscal and monetary policies,” enthuses the British magazine *The Economist*, before admitting, that, strangely, “it remains the developed world’s most indebted country.”

Most state debt was repaid with the

windfall profits from privatisation of airlines, banks, radio stations, railways, telecommunications, shipping companies, steel mills and forests. Many of these companies are now controlled by foreign interests. Over half the shares on the New Zealand stock exchange are foreign-owned, as is most of the real estate in the centres of most of the larger cities, and in the tourists resorts. Foreign ownership of farms and forests is also increasing.

New Zealand’s open economy certainly encourages investment. But New Zealand companies now invest more overseas than offshore companies invest inside the country.

The Reserve Bank has been given draconian powers to manage money supply independently of government, in order to keep inflation within an acceptable band (0-2%). But inflation rates in the imperialist countries are at an all-time low anyway — New Zealand’s great success is to have the 8th

lowest inflation rate in the OECD, at the cost of real interest rates of 8-10% — higher than almost any other OECD country. These rates have increased mortgage repayments for the 71% of New Zealanders who have borrowed money to buy their own home.

These high interest rates have also discouraged productive investment, and pushed up the exchange rate as speculative money floods in. The New Zealand dollar has risen 26% against the US dollar since 1991. This makes it more and more difficult for exporters to find markets for New Zealand products, unless they can slash labour costs even further. The national sheep flock has declined by almost one third since 1994, to 40 million head. Four out of ten farms are now smaller than 20 acres: the size at which a family could hope to earn a reasonable income on the land.

Roger isn’t stupid

Economic growth has stalled. Unemployment, poverty and homelessness are rising. Labour Finance Minister Roger Douglas, one of the architects of the reforms, is less popular than he once was. He entered these elections at the head of ACT in the face of dismal poll results, Douglas handed the reins over to Richard Prebble (past Labour Cabinet Minister) and Act began to climb.

The slap in the face from voters probably doesn’t bother Douglas. He has to all extents and purposes now left New Zealand politics, for a much more satisfying career as an international business consultant. ★



book notes

Democracy in Mexico

By Dan La Botz

IN TEN YEARS TIME, WE MIGHT LOOK BACK on the Chiapas Rebellion of January 1994 as the beginning of the end for Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The Zapatista uprising, and the collapse of the peso in December of that year undermined support for the PRI at home and abroad, creating an unprecedented crisis. We cannot be sure how or when the end will come. But if the progressive movement is unable to carry out a democratic transformation, we will see continued social disintegration, and maybe even a military coup.

This book was prompted by the Chiapas rebellion, but is not primarily about that uprising. It is rather an attempt to put the Zapatista revolt into the larger context of Mexican history and society. The focus is on the struggle for democracy, which, for La Botz, means not just free and fair elections, but human and civil rights, and the rights of labour.

Democracy in Mexico is an excellent introduction to the forces of "civil society" and their origins in Mexico's turbulent history. La Botz includes thumbnail sketches of the major figures in Mexican politics: from President Ernesto Zedillo to PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and popular deputy Rosario Ibarra.

The book shows signs of being compiled hastily. Some materials could have been condensed. Other parts betray their journalistic origins. The author admits that this book is neither completely comprehensive nor precisely representative. But this is largely because of the ambitious task La Botz has set himself: to introduce us to the peasant revolt in Chiapas, the workers' movement in the maquiladoras of the northern border, the women's movement in Mexico City, and the citizens movement for civil rights and political reform.

Democracy in Mexico tells Mexican history from the point of view of those on the bottom. As the author explains, "the working class constitutes the all-important absent factor in present Mexican politics. Controlled by the PRI and its 'official' unions, faced with economic crisis and severe repression, workers have so far failed to create either independent unions or their own political party... The challenge from below— the struggle for democracy— continues to be driven by poverty and injustice. In the long run, the PRI's inability to overcome its continuing economic crisis will provide the motor that drives democratic opposition forces to struggle again and again to free themselves from the PRI and perhaps, too, from the domination of capital. The combination of a one-party state and an economic crisis will drive peasants to rebel, civil

society to fight for reforms, and eventually force workers to fight back as well. When the working class enters the struggles of civil society, and allies itself with the demands of Indian peasant rebels, the challenge from below may yet bring democracy to Mexico." [AN]

Democracy in Mexico: peasant rebellion and political reform, by Dan La Botz. ISBN 0-89608-508-2: \$35 (paperback, 1995). South End Press, 116 Saint Botolph St., Boston, MA 02115, USA.

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- ▲ Residency, Separation and Services: Living Conditions: Denial of residency rights; closure; building permits, taxes (with case studies)
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• 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.

• There is no 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.

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Socialistisk Information

Issue 100 of Danish Fourth Internationalist magazine

Socialistisk Information (Socialist Information - SI) was launched in 1981 as one of the practical results of the fusion between the Socialist Workers Party (SAP) and the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialists, a group which had been working inside the Left Socialists (VS), a relatively heterogeneous party born in the 1960s

"By the beginning of the eighties, it was clear that the faction fight inside VS had become irreconcilable," recalls editorial board member Mads Bruun Pedersen. "It was not possible to continue inside the framework of the VS. So we decided to work for a fusion with SAP".

In the first issue the aim of the magazine was among other things described as: "to contribute to a regroupment of the Danish left on a revolutionary basis." According to Pedersen, "from the beginning, the plan was that *SI* should be a part of the discussions on the left. Through our own contribution and analysis of the situation in Denmark and internationally. But also by involving other currents." In the third issue, representatives from SAP, VS and the Socialist Peoples Party discussed socialist democracy. Later issues carried debates on "the left and the Labour majority in Danish politics", the character of the Soviet Union, the relationship between "autonomous" (radical anarchist) groups and the left, the Gulf War and the role of the United Nations.

Issue 100 includes one article on the current discussion in Denmark's Red-Green Alliance, and another one on the relations between small parties on the Stalinist left.

SI is a small magazine. But in 1988 it attracted

national attention, when it published a 48 page supplement, "Democracy with an unknown partner" exposing a secret tunnel under Copenhagen, used by the Danish intelligence service. "The next day our story was published on the front pages of several big newspapers, but was of course never confirmed," Pedersen remembers. "And it was not only the press who were interested. We had a visit from a man with a strong Russian accent who wanted very much to buy a copy. After all, the tunnel did run directly underneath the Russian embassy!"

For the first ten years, *SI* was published 4-6 times a year, but when SAP's weekly, *Klassekampen* (*Class Struggle*) fused with two other left papers in 1991 (creating the broad left *Red Thread* weekly, recently relaunched as *The Socialist - Weekend*, *SI* became a monthly, with a more important role within SAP, and in the party's relations with the rest of the left.

In recent years, the magazine has given particular priority to articles about the situation in Ex-Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia. These articles (some published simultaneously with *International Viewpoint* and our French and German sister-publications *Inprekor* and *Inprekorr*) have given *SI* a good reputation among people working in solidarity with a multiethnic Bosnia. At the party organised in October to commemorate the publication of issue #100, the editor of *The Socialist - Weekend*, and a leading member of the youth organisation, Rebel, both stressed the importance of *Socialistisk Information* as a international and critical socialist magazine. ★ [MBP]



Against the Current

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Science and Society

Fall 1996: Special issue on Marxism and Ecology, edited by biologist David Schwartzman

Address: 445 West 59th St, New York NY 10019, USA. <scsji@cunyvm.cuny.edu>

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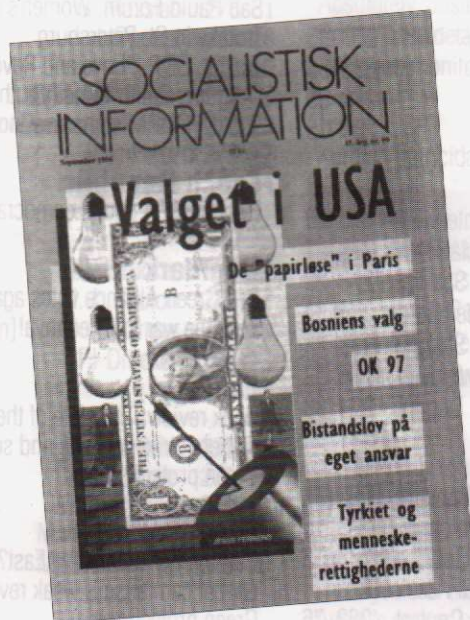
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The Italian Left: Through Fascism, War and Revolution: Trotskyism and Left Communism in Italy • Pierre Broue, The Italian Communist Party, the War and the Revolution • Provisional European Secretariat of the Fourth International, Manifesto to the Italian Workers, Peasants and Soldiers •

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US Labor Party Founding Convention on video

☎ Labor Beat, 37 Ashland, Chicago IL 60607, USA. 26 minutes. \$25.00 (outside US \$30.00)



Networking

Denmark: Red Green Alliance

Enhedslisten - De rød-grønne, Denmark's Red Green Alliance, is now on the internet, with homepages in Danish, English and German.

<http://www.enhedslisten.dk>

Campaign to Abolish Third World Debt

COCAD (aka CADTM) has updated its Web page. Additions include a report on the "counter-summit" in Lyon in June 96 and a special report on the Zapatista "Encuentro Intercontinental" held in Chiapas of July/august 96 (published in the September issue of IV). The page also offers information about COCAD's own "Day against neo-liberalism and for Humanity" which will be held on the 25th of January 97 in Brussels at the Free University (VUB)

Plantinstraat 29, B-1070 Brussels, Belgium. ☎ 32.2.5226127/ email: cadtm@linkline.be

<http://www.linkline.be/users/cadtm>

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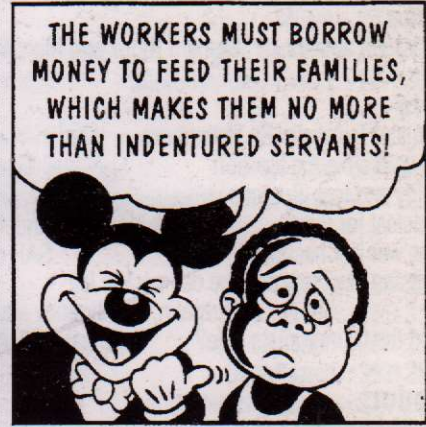
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MICKEY MOUSE GOES TO HAITI



by Steve Bloom*

A "DISNEY/HAITI JUSTICE CAMPAIGN" WAS launched in New York City this fall to protest the miserable conditions faced by workers in Haiti, Thailand and other countries, who sew Pocahantas pyjamas, Mickey Mouse t-shirts, and other garments which end up in Disney stores throughout the world.

The campaign attempts to make clear the links which connect the plight of workers in all of these places. These links exist not only on the corporate level, but also through such institutions as the World Bank and the IMF.

Production for Disney in Haiti is organized by sub-contractors who pay as little as 28 cents an hour. The merchandise is then sold at an enormous profit. For example, a pair of Pocahantas pyjamas cost \$12 in New York City. The Haitian workers who actually made them earn 5-7 cents. At one company, Classic Apparel, 40 workers can produce 2,400 Lion King children's outfits in a single day with a total retail value of \$29,000. The workers' share is about \$110.

From a daily wage of \$2.25-\$2.40 per day, an employee at one of these companies pays \$1.60 for transport to and from work and a simple lunch. Rent costs around \$7 per week. It is no wonder that these workers are chronically in debt, and it isn't unusual for them to have to borrow money at interest rates as high as 25-40 percent.

Recent increases in the Haitian minimum wage were countered by the contractors, who merely upped the piece-work quotas that their employees had to produce to impos-

sible levels. One worker told the campaign: "I cannot feed my six-year-old son or send him to school with the little money I make."

Working conditions are miserable. Often there is a lack of clean drinking water, adequate ventilation, or sanitary facilities. Female workers are routinely subject to sexual harassment and abuse by male supervisors. Workers who speak to government officials or the press about the conditions they face, or try to organize a union, or even complain to management, are simply fired.

Haitian workers report that they are sometimes given labels to sew into the clothing that say "Made in USA."

Disney spokespeople claim that everything that is done by companies they contract work to is legal in Haiti. Meanwhile, Michael Eisner, CEO of the Walt Disney Company, paid himself \$97,600 per hour in 1993. He is among the top-paid corporate executives in the U.S.

Some workers in Haiti are making an effort to organize at Disney subcontractors. There have been three wildcat strikes at Classic Apparel this year. The Disney/Haiti Justice Campaign is calling on the Disney corporation to monitor the situation and refuse to do business with subcontractors who fail to meet their workers' demands:

- A wage of at least \$5 per day (double current rates, and adequate to meet the minimum needs of a Haitian family of five).
- A guaranteed right to collective bargaining.
- Improved working conditions such as cafeterias and clean drinking water.
- An end to indiscriminate layoffs, repressive

practices and firings for union organizing.

On September 21, 1996 an initial picket took place at the flagship Disney store on Fifth Avenue in New York. Dozens of activists from the Disney/Haiti Justice Campaign held up banners and signs, and gave out thousands of leaflets explaining the plight of Haitian workers. Unlike most protests in New York which are generally ignored by passers-by, scores responded to the request that they sign a petition, or mail in a postcard, or make a contribution to the organizing efforts. Media coverage was also better than activists expected.

Subsequent actions have generating a similar response from shoppers who find out for the first time about the sweatshop conditions faced by workers in Haiti. ★

* Steve Bloom is a member of the U.S. socialist organization, Solidarity

Get involved!

- An International Week of Action will be organized from December 7-14 1996.
- The Campaign has petitions and postcards to be sent to Disney, and fact sheets and other materials which you can adapt for local organizing efforts.
- Other materials, including a "Mickey Mouse Goes to Haiti" video, is available from the National Labor Committee, 275 7th Ave., New York, NY, 10001; telephone (212) 242-3002, fax (212) 242-3820.

Contact the Disney/Haiti Justice Campaign, PO. Box 755, Fort Washington Station, New York, NY 10001; (212) 242-0986. E-mail inquiries to <bloom@soho.ios.com>.