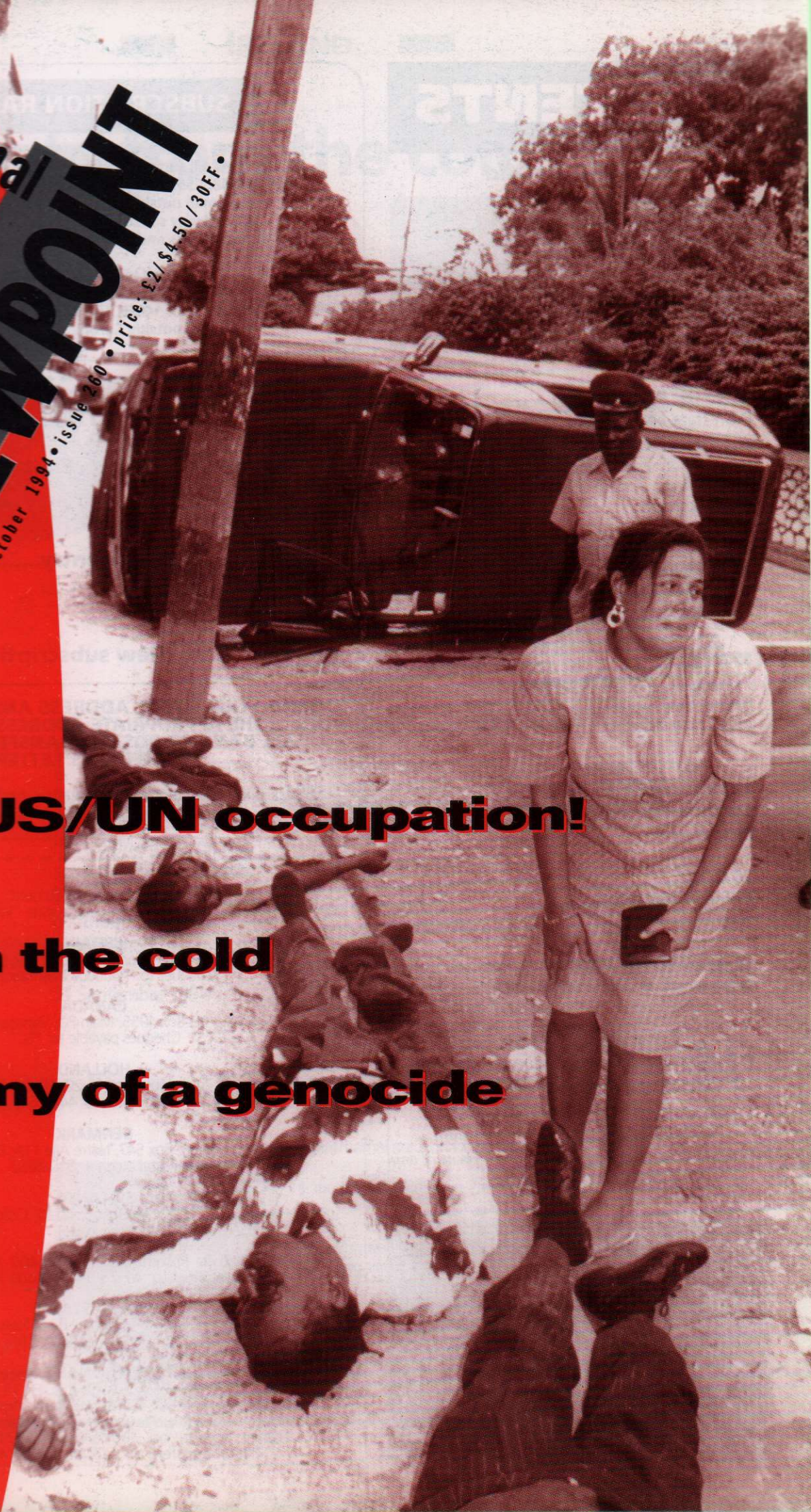


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Haiti :  
**No to US/UN occupation!**

Ireland :  
**In from the cold**

Rwanda :  
**Anatomy of a genocide**

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**W**e apologise for the late production of this month's issue and the slight reduction in the number of pages — due to circumstances beyond the control of *International Viewpoint's* editorial staff. We hope readers will bear with us in the event of any other unforeseen problems.

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# In from the cold



**I**F YOU turn to the back-pages of *An Phoblact* (Republican News) you will find an invitation to join Sinn Féin, an organisation which is "dedicated to forcing a British withdrawal from the occupied Six Counties, the reunification of our country and the establishment of a democratic socialist republic."

Four frenetic weeks after the IRA cease-fire was first announced; four weeks in which we have watched "infamous" Republican political leaders come in from the cold; it is reasonable to ask how Sinn Féin's current strategy, carefully crafted over the last few years, takes them a little closer to their above stated aims?

Moreover, what concretely has the oppressed nationalist community in the North gained in return for the IRA's "complete cessation of military operations"?

Is the IRA's decision due simply to war-weariness and a recognition of the limits of armed struggle, or, even while we believe that the root cause of the war has always lain with the British State, is it the accumulation of serious propaganda blunders, for example the Warrington bombing (north-west England) in March 1993?

Undoubtedly, both of these factors have played an important part in the decision. Yet if these were the only factors to take account of, surely a cease-fire could have been called much sooner.

Clearly, it was only when the new "nationalist consensus" was finally ready to be publicly unveiled, and with it the promise of great strides forward in the struggle for national self-determination, that a cease-fire could be called.

This new consensus appears to be the leitmotif of Sinn Féin's current strategy. Encompassing the South's Fianna Fail and the North's Social Democratic and Labour Party, alongside Sinn Féin, and with the added support of the Clinton administration, it is a very high risk strategy. Sinn Féin leader Pat McKeown, in an interview for *International Viewpoint* (pages 6-8), outlines the basis for the present consensus:

- ◆ no internal solution to the North;
- ◆ the Irish people have the right to national self-determination;
- ◆ that agreement can only come when the British begin to disengage from Ireland;
- ◆ and that all nationalist parties which have policy in favour of Irish unity should work together.

Is this, as Sinn Féin believes, a strong foundation on which to build?

**PENNY DUGGAN**  
&  
**ROLAND WOOD**  
take an initial look at the developments in Ireland since the IRA's cease-fire. There will be further contributions in the coming months.

31 September 1994

Much depends on the place the nationalist consensus plays within Sinn Féin's overall strategy, because while the minimum basis for consensus, as outlined above, would seem to favour important elements of Sinn Féin's thinking, there can be little doubt that they are only a junior partner in this alliance. Under such circumstances can Sinn Féin project an independent line, recognising that its strategy cannot be based solely on one element?



### Unarmed struggle

In the 8 September *An Phoblact*, an article entitled "Objectives for the unarmed struggle" suggests that the answer is "yes", going so far as to tell us that the cease-fire will actually see an intensification of the Republican struggle. The article concludes by outlining the main axes of the movement's immediate campaigns:

◆ Issues of political and constitutional change. On the constitutional side, sovereignty, the end of partition, the ending of British rule in Ireland, the unionist veto, the Government of Ireland Act, all of which must be addressed if a lasting settlement is to be secured. The political shape of an agreed Ireland must also be debated, and while republicans have their own model of society, which may differ from that of other parties and which they will have to argue for, constitutional change is the prerequisite;

◆ Issues of democratic rights. The recognition of political mandates, the end of censorship, the implementation of legislation which will effect equality in employment, the rights of Irish

speakers, the dismantling of repressive legislation, are not concessions sought by republicans, but democratic rights which every citizen is entitled to;

◆ Practical issues which in the short term will encourage the ongoing peace process. Demilitarisation on the ground includes a drop in patrols, harassment and surveillance, the re-opening of border roads. Paroles, rapatriations and release of political prisoners, an end to exclusion orders also fall into this category."

Little wonder then, if mass support is to be won around these issues, that the party points to the importance of its accumulated political capital: a social base, even if a minority one, which has been through a very difficult twenty-five years, and while it shows understandable signs of exhaustion, has emerged undefeated.

### "Time to go"

On 20 August, a mere eleven days prior to the IRA's declaration, 10 thousand people took to the streets of Dublin demanding peace and British withdrawal from Ireland. Organised by Sinn Féin under the auspices of the "Time for Peace — Time to Go" campaign, it was the largest expression of anti-imperialist sentiment for a number of years.

In the immediate wake of the cease-fire we have witnessed a significant increase in agitation and mobilisation with regard to the withdrawal of British troops and the Unionist dominated Royal Ulster Constabulary from nationalist areas in the North; closure of military and police checkpoints; re-opening of cross-border roads. If Sinn Féin can demonstrate that it retains the capacity to remobilise its social base more consistently, as an integral element of an independent line, it must not be underestimated, even while it may be accepted that at this stage its base remains rooted almost solely in the North. In the South it is virtually non-existent. Nonetheless, the construction, by Sinn Féin, of a counter-balance to the "diplomacy" of negotiations is clearly needed.

In our interview, McKeown goes further. He confirms the view that, while the nationalist consensus is important, it is not, on its own, a solution, and that there is no consensus about the kind of Ireland which the "nationalist family" want to see. Sinn Féin, McKeown reminds us, does not hide its commitment to a Thirty-two County democratic socialist republic, and that therefore a part of their current strategy will be the establishment of a Thirty-two County consensus amongst the anti-imperialist left.

McKeown appeals to the Irish left, particularly those who in the past have been hostile to the armed struggle, to begin to work together with Sinn Féin, adding that "there are no excuses any more." Indeed. Yet while McKeown himself recognises the grave weakness of Sinn Féin's own standing in the South, going so far as to describe it as "retarded", who on the anti-imperialist left is in any better condition?



### Social weight

Clearly anti-imperialist sentiment still exists and can be mobilised. However, because the existing organised forces from which an anti-imperialist consensus could be forged are so small, there can be little doubt that, at an initial stage at least, it would have much less social weight relative to the nationalist consensus, regardless of whatever guarantees may be sought and received from Sinn Féin that it would be considered of equal importance.

This is not, however, an excuse to dismiss the necessity of such a project. Rather, it is to honestly recognise that the main nucleus of

**"I'M NOT against the cease-fire, I'm just against dirty dealing, but this isn't my game, it's a dirty dishonest game."**

**"If they [Sinn Féin and the IRA] really do believe they can put their faith in the [...] system to deliver, they had better be right because if they are wrong they won't be leading the struggle for very long."**

**Former Mid-Ulster MP  
Bernadette Devlin McAliskey** ★

a re-surgent anti-imperialist left still lies in the Republican movement, and it is for this reason that while weaknesses are evident — for Sinn Féin and the Irish left as a whole — particularly in relation to the South, every move Sinn Féin makes towards projecting an independent line in the peace process and re-mobilising its social base should be supported.

At this stage there have been no concrete gains for the nationalist community, particularly in the North, but it would be premature to deny categorically the positive psychological impact which the cease-fire has brought, enabling the Republican movement, given a steady course, to sail in a larger sea. ★

## **Unionists — Victims of their own history?**

"THE Unionist leadership fear change, however limited. They feel more secure with the failed policies of the past than with the prospect of building a better, a different future. Yet, the partition of Ireland has not only failed nationalists, it has also failed Unionists. It has encouraged in them a paranoid distrust of all nationalists. And despite deals between some Unionists and the British government, most Unionists do not trust the British.

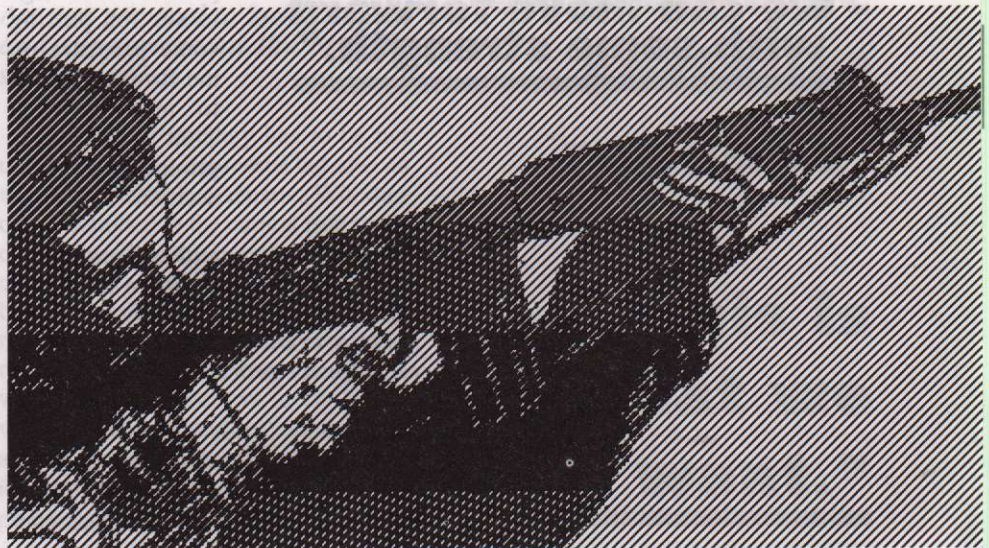
"Consequently, Unionists face a future of unremitting uncertainty, dependent upon the whims of whichever British government is in power, fearful of the encroaching tide of history which year by year undermines the artificial majority created in 1921.

"The British have spent millions of pounds in propaganda to try to portray what is happening in the north of Ireland as irrational sectarian strife. But the division of our people was institutionalised by partition; the nature of the Six County state demanded division for its survival.

"Sinn Féin is firmly convinced that as long as Unionists are assured of a veto over change, then there is neither reason nor incentive for them to move beyond the laager wall.

"Sinn Féin have said that we need and want the consent, agreement and involvement of Unionists in deciding the future of this country. But to deliberately confuse the issue of consent with the upholding of a veto over any change at all is to perpetuate division and conflict.

"The partition of Ireland was brought about by a British act of parliament for which not a single Irish vote was cast." Sinn Féin chair **Mitchell McLaughlin** (from *Green Left Weekly*, 14 September 1994) ★



# "Struggle is not over"

**PAUL FLANIGAN**, a member of the Irish Committee for a Marxist Programme, which groups together supporters of the Fourth International, spoke to **PAT McKEOWN**, a member of Sinn Féin's Ard Chomhairle (national committee), on 13 September 1994.

**O**N THE 31 August the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced a complete cessation of military operations. What, in the opinion of Sinn Féin, prompted such an historic announcement?

It's complex because there are a whole range of things that have come together over the last couple of years. A nationalist consensus has been built in Ireland — of that there should be no doubt. It would be wrong to call it a consensus on all issues — but at least there is consensus that the Irish people have a right to national self-determination. How that unwinds still remains to be worked out.

That has led to a situation where the Irish case is being presented with some unity. The IRA, in those circumstances, are simply saying that there is the potential to move this situation on to negotiation and dialogue — and by all means let's try it. It is now down to Sinn Féin to move the situation on.

So there a number of things which we have helped to change in the last four to five years — to the point where the Dublin government are at last showing some interest in Northern Ireland; you also have the US government, which have at last shown some interest from an Irish perspective. So the stage is set for putting some pressure on the British to begin to make moves. That's the background to the IRA decision.

*Did the developments in South Africa and Palestine have an influence, either positively or negatively, over the decision to embark on a "peace process"?*

Certainly. South Africa moreso than Palestine. The developments in South Africa have had an influence on Republicans, as indeed they have internatio-

nally, on all movements for freedom. I think the South African form of struggle provided us with a direction which had generally been overshadowed by the armed struggle. We have been saying to our people: the struggle is not over — we are only at stage one of beginning to resolve the conflict. What we have seen in South Africa over the last ten to fifteen years is where the struggle is at here, and we need to evolve it in a political way.

A cessation of military operations does not mean the end of progressive demands. In fact it's the opposite. The lessons of the ANC, and their ability to unite Black African consensus, is something we are trying to pick-up on here. If we can unite nationalist consensus we can move forward with some strength.

*Would it be fair comment then to say that the armed campaign has been replaced by a political strategy centred around "nationalist unity"?*

Nationalist unity is ultimately important at this time. But I don't think that on its own it's a solution, because in Ireland nationalist unity means working with some very right-wing politicians. It doesn't mean that we have a common view of the kind of Ireland we would like to see. Therefore, while nationalist unity is important at this particular moment it is by no means the sole key to the solution. I think that the key to the solution of our problem is reliance on the political determination which our people have shown over twenty-five years.

*But is there enough common ground among nationalists today to present the British government with a sort of "political ultimatum" concerning the future of Ireland?*

That will be the business of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation — to put some meat on the bones. There certainly is a commonality of interest in the nationalist community. The definition of where that takes you needs to be worked out at the Forum. The role of that body is to secure the interests of the nationalist community but also those

**"If we can unite nationalist consensus we can move forward with some strength."**



In the early 1980s important links were forged between Sinn Féin and the British left. Ken Livingstone (left), the former Labour leader of the Greater London Council, is seen here with Sinn Féin President, Gerry Adams

who presently see themselves as Unionists.

The consensus amongst nationalists at present is that agreement can only come when the British begin to disengage from Ireland. All the nationalist parties have policy in favour of Irish unity, so we're simply saying to them: if that's your policy let's start working for it. And to a degree we have been able to move them on that front.

***Everything we know about the London/Dublin framework document for a lasting settlement points to a devolved assembly at Stormont. How does Sinn Féin propose to respond to such a document?***

The nationalist consensus is that there is no internal solution to the North. That is dealt with most clearly in what became known as the Hume/Adams document. The document isn't public but the principles of the document are and it quite clearly accepts that there is no internal settlement. An assembly in Stormont could not become a governing body of the Six Counties, as was the case in the past. It has to be part of wider framework. We have said that the framework document is negotiable. Nothing is written in stone. Similarly, we've said that in the Downing Street Declaration there are large parts of it which we don't agree with and want renegotiated. So we are approaching this with some agreement — not complete agreement — but at least we feel that there is agreement on key points, one of which is that there is no internal settlement for the North.

***You have begun agitating around civil rights and security issues. Do you envisage the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) supporting such campaigns?***

I think that it's going to become increasingly difficult for the SDLP to sit on the outside. For example, the RUC are unacceptable to nationalists as a whole not just Sinn Féin supporters. So, as we address the RUC occupation (of nationalist areas, for example west Belfast) the SDLP will be forced to address it too. I don't foresee a situation where they'll be picketing RUC barracks — a middle class party will not move in that direction. But I think the dynamic of the pickets and other protests will force the SDLP to take a stronger line — to the extent that they will be forced to move by us, rather than us moving with their agenda.

***Are you prepared to look for allies and supporters on the broadly socialist left?***

Part of our strategy has to be not only a nationalist consensus but also an anti-imperialist consensus. Whether others committed to the current nationalist consensus like it or not, our party is committed to a democratic socialist republic. We make no bones about the fact that this is what we want. So, it's imperative that at the same time as we deal with British involvement in the North, we also build a movement which creates a new society throughout the whole island of Ireland. In the past one of the problems we have had with the broad

**“...our party is committed to a democratic socialist republic. ... this is what we want.”**

left is that some had problems with the armed struggle. That's out of the way. There are no excuses any more, and what we're saying is "let's get down to it" because if we want to create a political force for socialism the onus is on all of us.

***A new political situation means a new electoral challenge for Sinn Féin. How is the party going to differentiate itself from the SDLP or Fianna Fail in order to challenge their electoral mandates?***

If you look at the Twenty-six Counties it gives you a good idea of where we've become retarded. In the North we have a solid electoral base, albeit a minority nationalist one. We believe we can increase it by forcing the real issues out into the open. To a degree, when armed struggle provided the dynamic, we didn't touch upon all the issues which involved even Northern nationalists. Sinn Féin was not always seen to

not anti-Sinn Féin. To a degree, the whole situation has been transformed. Until last year Sinn Féin was a party which was never heard, because we were censored off the airwaves. Now, people not only know about our policies on national re-unification but also those on social and economic issues. We are different from the parties which currently exist in Ireland and I think that there is tremendous potential for us.

***We are entering uncharted political territory. A lot of things could go wrong. Does Sinn Féin have a fall back position if this happens?***

We have embarked on a particular strategy, but it's by no means the only option available to us in our struggle with Britain — never mind our struggle throughout whole of Ireland. What we're very sure of — and I think this is where our confidence lies — is that we have people who have been through twenty-five years of very hard and difficult struggle, and

have remained committed to it. We have no doubt about the integrity of our base. So, we are saying to our base: If we've got it wrong — you change it. If this leadership is taking the wrong direction you should oust them and put in place a leadership

which will respond to your view of the situation. The only reason we have got this far is because of that strong base, which keeps throwing up new ideas, initiatives and strategies. With each stage of the current strategy we will do what we have always done; review our position and decide on how far it's taken us. If we think that we've got it wrong we'll be first to go back to our base and begin to look at how to build alternatives.

***If Sinn Féin is able to achieve a "breakthrough" on the national question leading to a favourable settlement does this mean that the party will disband?***

No. We have policies across the board. We want, and seriously expect at some stage in the future, to have influence on a Thirty-two County Irish State or to be the governing party. We have been "pigeon-holed" in to being a party sole around the issue of British rule in the North. We have been quite conscious of that so that even in times when all our energy was taken up around that single issue we were still able to develop other policies. Now, more people will come into the party. In the Twenty-six Counties people joining Sinn Féin were harassed by the State security forces, but now I think that is going to ease. I'm convinced that Sinn Féin have the way forward for the Irish people. Our objective is to become the government of the Irish people — operating under socialist policies. ★

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**"In the North we have a solid electoral base... we believe we can increase it by forcing the real issues into the open."**

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provide a voice for all nationalists. So I think we have a wider field to work in now. In the Twenty-six Counties it presents all sorts of opportunities. Generally, Republicans in the South were fixated by the armed struggle. They saw their primary role as support for the armed struggle in the North. Therefore Fianna Fail and others have had a clear run with little opposition. I think there is a viable alternative in terms of a left, of a progressive party. I think Republicans have the credentials to lead, or be part of the leadership, of such a party and from this point on our comrades in the Twenty-six Counties will begin to be aware that they're swimming in a sea which is

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**"Struggle is not over"**

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# No to US/UN occupation!

**IN THE wake of the US occupation in Haiti we were sent the following draft statement from the US revolutionary socialist organisation, SOLIDARITY.**

**W**ASHINGTON'S plans for Haiti are now fully outlined. They include an occupation carried out through two instruments: a reorganised military and police on the one hand, and an economic restructuring, on the other. This will bring Haiti back in line with the rest of the Caribbean, where formal democracy, dominated by an elite, have eagerly accepted a neo-liberal economic programme.

Everyone in Haiti believes that the US embassy and US agencies, from the CIA to US Aid for International Development (AID) were involved in the coup that overthrew Jean-Bertrand Aristide three years ago. After all, General Raoul Cedras et al were on the CIA pay-roll. But then Washington leisurely waited while State terror took its course before giving the "final" ultimatum to the coup leaders. The wait allowed the popular movements to be weakened by repression. As a result, 5 thousand were killed, 300 thousand driven into hiding, and 40 thousand attempted to leave the island in boats — most of whom were returned by the US Coast Guard into the hands of the military.

So Washington sent the troops in like some cowboy who's been asked to save the town. The majority of the Congressional Black Caucus thought Washington could intervene on the side of good this time, helping to alter the balance of forces. But that is a misreading of Washington's motives and aims. Haiti, after all, is an important source of cheap labour for the two hundred US businesses that employ over 100 thousand Haitians. And US AID has already spent over \$26 Million to keep it that way. It worked with Haitian busi-

nessmen during President Aristide's government in opposing the raise of the minimum wage from fourteen to fifty cents and hour.

Washington "lost" the 1990 Haitian election, when Marc Bazin, the candidate the US backed with more than \$2 million, was one of many candidates who lost to Aristide and *lavalas* movement. Following the coup Bazin was illegally installed by the military — but he didn't last. So the one alternative to Aristide that Washington had was quickly used up.

## Submission

Now Washington has set the stage to win what they have not been able to through other means. They demand that Aristide submit to a gain through other means. They demand that Aristide submit to a structural adjustment policy, to an amnesty of those who used State terror against the popular movement, and to a recognised military and police force. These conditions are an attempt to repudiate his demand for justice and sever his government from the grass-roots organisations that were his base.

Of course the US media lap-up all of Washington's proposals like so much cream. Why question the ability of the US military when they have trained and armed the Haitian army in the first place?

The first US occupation (1915-34) led to the suppression of peasant revolts, a disarming of the population, and a complete overhaul of the Haitian army. Since that time, it has been reorganised, armed and trained by the US military. Sixty-five percent of the Haitian military has already received US training!

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Eds. Penny Duggan & Heather Dashner

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

According to Allen Naim's 3 October article in the *Nation*, Major Louis Kernisan will be in charge of retraining Haiti's policy. He sees the infamous section chiefs, who terrorise the rural population, as, on balance, a positive force. Naim captures Kernisan's sensitivity to civil rights:

"Popular uprising? Under the watchful eye of 6 thousand or 7 thousand international observers? I doubt it. This is only the kind of shit they've been able to get away with when there is nobody watching... They tried that before and it brought them two years of embargo and their little guy in golden exile in the States."

While US spokespeople emphasise that the "worst" human rights violators will be removed from the army, it looks like the fox is in charge of the chicken coop!

### Popular movement

However, the US plans can be pushed off centre by the intervention of the popular movement in the streets of Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haïtien. US soldiers stood by and saw members of FRAPH (the para-military goon-squad) shooting into demonstrations. Back home, the American public got a good look too, through the extensive media coverage. So, after initially standing on the sidelines, the US military was forced to begin to disarm the Haitian military, and then FRAPH. But despite these moves, the basic US goal remains the same: to insure the continuation of a repressive apparatus. Accompanying this first goal is the other aspect of Washington's programme: the economic strings.

A structural adjustment plan, presented by Aristide "advisers", Leslie Voltairre and Leslie Delatour, to the World Bank last August commits Haiti to halve its civil work-force, privatise public services, slash tariffs and import restrictions, end price and foreign exchange controls, grant aid to the export sector, enforce an "open foreign investment policy", rewrite corporate law, limit the scope of State regulation, and create special corporate courts with judges who are particularly sensitive to the problems of economic efficiency. In return, Haiti would receive \$800 million in "aid", including \$80 million for its foreign debt.

Imposition of this plan would jettison any possibility of raising the minimum wage, granting aid to the peasant sector, subsidising prices so the poor

would have access to basic foods, or relaunching needed health, sanitation and literacy campaigns. Although the Haitian Economic Plan promises to invest half of the proceeds from privatisation in providing infrastructure and housing in the poorest areas, the promises are vague.

The Clinton administration has attempted to surround President Aristide with "advisers" who will be able to "open doors" for Haiti in the international community. These will attempt to prevent Aristide's government from carrying out the radical reforms it began to initiate in its first seven months of office. But in addition, Washington has also attempted to box Aristide into holding the next presidential election in December 1995, when he will have actually been in office less than two years out of his five-year term. Nothing in the Haitian constitution necessarily calls for such an election. It merely states that a president is to serve for a five-year term and may not stand for immediate re-election.

Neither the Bush or Clinton administration defended Aristide against the CIA disinformation campaign (whose informants were the Haitian military officials who carried out the coup against Aristide); neither did they ever put into place a tight embargo — as Aristide and the mass movement in Haiti had demanded — against the military regime; and neither did they aid those who fled the repression. In fact, last year Haitian imports to the US increased by forty-four percent over 1992. As late as this April, the US Ambassador to Haiti, William L. Swing, explained in an eleven page message to Washington that "the Haitian left manipulates and fabricates human rights abuses as a propaganda tool."

While Haiti may seem like a poverty-stricken and distant country to most to Americans, it is a significant source of superprofits for US business. American-owned businesses forced by the embargo to shut down temporarily are impatient to re-open. As a recent *Christian Science Monitor* article quotes Robert Antoniadis, president of a hand-crafted gift-ware company: "I can't think why they are making us wait another month." Both US manufacturing and agricultural interests want to make sure Haiti is an appendage of the US market. State Department talk about how the Haitian markets can "conquer".

Moreover, in the NAFTA/GATT world order, US workers are told that jobs which paid \$15-20 an hour will

now be done for \$6 an hour. Otherwise, they will go to Mexican workers for \$1.50 an hour; if they do not want them, the jobs will move on to Central America for seventy-five cents and hour — and if they will not do them, then they go to Haiti for fourteen cents! In this sense, all US capital feels an interest in the cheapest possible Haitian labour.

Of the two specific demands raised in the seven-point agreement between the illegal Haitian government and Jimmy Carter one was over granting amnesty to the people Clinton had finally called murderers, rapists, and terrorists — although he conveniently left out that they are drug runners too — and the second dealt with immediately lifting the embargo.

### Distrust and hatred

Why have so many US politicians expressed so much distrust and hatred for Aristide? It is not just an expression of racism towards a president who is Black, but also because Aristide is not a conventional politician who rose through the ranks of the political/diplomatic ladder. He was the spokesperson for the grass-roots movement as it flowered in the post-Duvalier period. It is a movement of peasants, trade unions, students, women, poor communities, and it is rooted in the *ti legliz* — the church of the poor. Aristide's base is the popular movement, the overwhelming majority of Haitians, whose demands cannot be met at the same time a structural adjustment policy is carried out. Those who hungered and thirsted for justice went to the polls in December 1990 and overwhelmingly smashed through "business as usual" in the Haitian State. They defended their vote in January, when a coup attempted to steal it from them. And now, Clinton is gambling, that they have suffered sufficiently from the repression of the last three years so that they cannot rebuild themselves in time, they will fail to rebuild the bridge between Aristide and themselves.

It is clear what Washington's programme is, and it should be clear to all that it has nothing to do with the restoration of popular democracy, but only the facade of its narrowest outline. It is continued support to the five families that rule Haiti and the US multinationals. As a matter of fact, Carter and Clinton's call for amnesty asks President Aristide and the Haitian parliament to begin by violating Article 147 of the 1987 Haitian Constitution, which specifically prohibits granting more than "political amnes-

ty" to coup plotters. That is, they may be granted amnesty for the act of the coup, but not for the crimes of murder, terror, and rape.

What remains to be seen is whether the popular movement, no matter how bloodied, can rise and reshape itself. Solidarity activists, US grass-roots movements and socialists need to clearly oppose Washington's manoeuvres. We need to give solidarity to the Haitian masses, who have fought tenaciously for generations to secure democracy and justice.

● **Support the Haitian people's right for President Aristide's return and right to function without conditions!**

● **The Popular Movement yes! US/UN occupation no!**

● **The right of political asylum for Haitian refugees! Shut down Guantanamo! ★**

# Asphyxiation

**//** FIDEL Castro has a victory. He has compelled Mr Clinton to reverse an American policy that, since the Cuban Refugee Act of 1966, gave automatic US entry to anyone leaving Cuba. Mr Clinton now is sending refugees picked up at sea to Guantánamo, the US naval base in Cuba, and putting those who reach the United States into camps. This is a comprehensible response to the anxiety of Floridians and others over the new and deliberately provoked refugee flow, but it is nonetheless a US humiliation.

"It is the latest event in America's 35-year obsession with Fidel Castro that

produced the Bay of Pigs debacle in 1961 and the collaboration of the US government with organised crime in a series of increasingly grotesque projects for Mr Castro's murder."<sup>1</sup>

This comment by the American journalist William Pfaff bears witness to the unease provoked in the United States by the lack of symmetry in the immigration policy adopted towards, respectively, Cubans and Haitians. The latter, fleeing the pitiless repression of the dictator Raul Cedras, are considered as economic refugees and deported to Guantánamo, while the second, judged victims of the "tropical gulag", benefit from a privileged political status. The fear of a massive Cuban exodus on the eve of the crucial mid-term Congressional elections in Florida led Clinton to change a policy which was over twenty-five years old, and whose main principle consists in reinforcing the embargo to stimulate illegal emigration while dissuading legal emigration which is regulated by the accords signed between Cuba and the US in 1984.

## Tensions

The objective is a double one; to increase the pressure on Cuba itself, to increase the tensions there, and to put the haven of American liberty in a good light, through the clandestine arrival of Cuban "balseros".<sup>2</sup> But the internment, in camps surrounded by barbed wire, of tens of thousands of refugees on a military base, makes a joke of all democratic principles evoked by Washington to justify its Caribbean policy.

Moreover, the viability of such a "solution" is doubtful; the confrontations, even before the arrival of the Cubans, between Haitian refugees and US marines at the base (sixty-five people were wounded) indicate the explosive character of such human concentration. In this sense, Castro has effectively turned against his enemies

## THE U.S. ...

...movement in solidarity with the pro-democratic forces in Haiti opposed the US occupation of Haiti with demonstrations and vigils in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Philadelphia, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area, Washington DC. Since last July most solidarity organisations had been operating under a planned action called for the day of the intervention or the following day.

Organisations in solidarity with Central and Latin America worked with the Haiti groups to build the meetings or demonstrations. However all the actions were small (50-300), limited to the revolutionary left, peace forces and Haitians living in exile. This is partly due to the fact that President Bill Clinton identified US interests with opposing human rights violations, and specifically called the leaders of the military coup murderers, rapists and torturers in his 15 September address to the nation. The majority of the Congressional Black Caucus, usually a grouping taking progressive political positions, and Randal Robinson, an African American whose group, TransAfrica, had been instrumental in opposing US investment in the South African apartheid regime, called for US military intervention and supported the occupation.

Because the US media portrayed the mainstream debate over US intervention in Haiti as one in which the right was opposed and the progressive forces supported it, few Americans knew that the Haitian popular movement and the US-Haitian solidarity movement were opposed to any form of intervention and called for the tightening of the embargo. In fact, the media presented the embargo as only hurting the poor which the rich got richer. Of course this was true as long as there were loopholes in the embargo. So far many Americans, there seemed to be no other alternative to ending the military coup and its horrific repression but to send in the troops.

The Haitian solidarity movement, which has only the most minimal national co-ordination, recognises the need to educate the American population in the face of the tremendous distortions presented by the range of politicians and the media. In early October, for example, the US media portrayed the paramilitary bterror against an unarmed civilian population as "Haitian-on-Haitian violence".

A ten-hour teach-in at Wayne State University, sponsored by the Michigan Committee for a Democratic Haiti, and African Studies at Wayne State University, and endorsed by many university programmes as well as community groups, was held on 29 September, the eve of the third anniversary of the military coup. On the following day, many forums and rallies commemorated the anniversary itself. **Dianne Feeley** ★

1. *International Herald Tribune*, 25 August 1994.

2. A rudimentary raft made with tyres and bits of wood, so as to cross the straits of Florida, or around 150 kilometres.

the gun aimed at his own head. Unlike Erich Honecker, who closed the frontiers of East Germany, Castro opened his, thus avoiding the repressive option. Indeed, it was following attempts to stop refugees fleeing (leading to deaths and injuries) that serious incidents took place in July in Havana, provoking for the first time hostile public demonstrations. By allowing the malcontents, the down and outs, the unhappy or marginalised youth, to leave, Castro hoped to stiffen the ranks and rebuild a broad consensus broken by the breadth and duration of the crisis.

### Gravity

But none of this can hide the gravity of the situation on the island. The collapse of exchanges, the economic disorganisation following the disappearance of what is still called the "socialist camp" in Cuba, have amplified considerably the effects of the US embargo in force since 1960.

Even if it does not explain everything, this embargo, reinforced in 1992, has catastrophic effects, often underestimated in Europe, although noted by the American press. All trade with the island is virtually forbidden. Boats which trade with Cuba cannot dock in American ports for at least six months. Most Americans expose themselves, in principle, to legal proceedings if they visit the island. Even the UN sanctions against Saddam Hussein's Iraq authorise the purchase of food and medicines for humanitarian reasons; but, in Castro's Cuba, US food and medicines can only be obtained when they result from donations.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly, the embargo is not alone responsible for the crisis. The brutality of the break with the ex-USSR has led to a veritable economic collapse. The logic of development (or rather non-development) implied by the subordinated integration of Cuba in Comecon has been suddenly broken, depriving the country of its sources of supply and its export markets. Some basic articles have suddenly disappeared, products as indispensable to agriculture as fertilizer and insecticides are no longer available. Replacement parts for the repair of factories, in particular in sugar, no longer exists. This largely explains why the last two "zafra" (sugar cane harvests) have been the worst for three decades.

One cannot, however, avoid the question of the government's own responsibility for the current economic difficulties. As Roberto Robaina, the

Cuban minister for foreign affairs has put it, "bureaucratic obstacles" have also contributed to the crisis,<sup>4</sup> and more generally the economic policy chosen by Castro himself, characterised by an arbitrary and voluntarist centralisation, which leaves no place to local initiatives, can be criticised. The contradictions of the economic reforms undertaken since 1993 and the inequalities which have flowed from them, and the legalisation of the dollar, have profoundly disorientated a population previously united (in still significant proportions) around a project of social justice and national liberation. It is this consensus of resistance which has been broken by the needs of what is now called the struggle against "egalitarianism", judged responsible by the Cuban leaders for the very low productivity of labour. This judgement led to vigorous protests during the workplace assemblies held earlier this year where the waste and corruption of the leaders was criticised, without any programmatic alternative emerging.

### Fate

The end of the Cuban crisis is not predictable, in that the fate of the island is over-determined by the historic conflict which opposes "the most powerful state in the world to one of the weakest". This smacks, in Pfaff's words of "the realm of political pathology".<sup>5</sup> But US diplomacy cannot be reduced to psychiatry. It is guided by two parameters; the needs linked to internal policy (the weight of the Cuban electorate in Florida, on the eve of Congressional mid-term elections in November and in two years for the presidency) and those linked to foreign policy. In addition to the crisis in Cuba there is that of the Dominican Republic, where fraudulent elections a year ago reinstated a quasi-nagenerian dictator violation of human rights can no longer be counted, and the economic situation gets worse and worse. In Jamaica, the situation is hardly better. Outside the islands, the countries bordering the Caribbean (Mexico and Venezuela) could in the years to come experience a destabilisation which would compromise the proposals for the enlargement of Washing-

ton's economic sphere on the continental scale. In this optic, the Cuban issue remains vital to the US. Eliminating this anomaly is not just an economic imperative, but a political one; it underlies the control of the region and the credibility of the world's most powerful nation.

After the end of the cold war, how can such harassment be legitimised, if not by the necessity of overthrowing the dictatorships and re-establishing democracy? Pfaff ironically remarks: "Only a truly innocent man could say, as Bill Clinton said on [19 August], that all the United States wants for Cuba is that it be swept up in the hemisphere wave of 'democracy and freedom'."<sup>6</sup>

### Infernal

The Cuban emigrants are fleeing first and foremost from an infernal everyday existence; but political asphyxiation also aggravates their demoralisation and despair. In this sense, the crisis is not only social, but also institutional. The gap between the cultural level attained by the new generations and an authoritarian and repressive mode of government has never been so large. The germs of revolt which now manifest themselves witness to it, even if they only represent a minority.

But the so-called democratic normalisation which is demanded of a small, poor third world country is a denial of justice; it hides — just like so-called humanitarian intervention — other priorities, it masks the oppression of the weakest by the strong.

Like all embargos, this one has been imposed — and recently re-enforced — on the Cuban people, to bring it to its knees. Its lifting is the first of democratic demands. ★

3. *Time*, 29 August 1994.

4. *Le Monde*, 4-5 September 1994.

5. *International Herald Tribune*, 25 August 1994.

6. *Ibid.*

# Asphyxiation

# Anatomy of a genocide

**AFTER** Bosnia, the world watched Rwandan kill Rwandan. Yet the genocide did not appear from nowhere. **FRANÇOIS VERCAMMEN** argues that behind the misery lie concealed political responsibilities and material interests.

**M**ORE than a million and a half deaths, more than two million refugees, some hundreds of thousands of sick and wounded — out of a population estimated at seven and a half million. Civil war, racist massacres, famine, epidemics... One can hardly imagine the consequences of the Rwandan drama, in the short and long term, for individuals and for society, for the country and for Africa. A “rational” analysis of the events is not easy, but is necessary, for behind the indescribable chaos and this absolute misery are concealed political responsibilities and material interests.

“This drama is completely incomprehensible”, say some collaborators of the NGOs who have known Rwanda for many years. Other commentators single out “natural” causes; the “congenital” cruelty of human beings, or “ancestral” ethnic rivalries. The colonial mentality nourishes such reflections; “the backwardness of the blacks”, or their “too superficial conversion to Christianity” are evoked.<sup>1</sup> But much more serious is the fact that, as Alain Destexhe, secretary general of the Médecins sans frontières states: “The genocide is denied, international responsibility is hidden and the culpability of the authors is buried in the general unhappiness.”<sup>2</sup>

## Planned genocide

Nobody can avoid this conclusion. Rwanda has been the theatre of the planned genocide of the Tutsi community; 500 thousand deaths in six weeks according to the Red Cross, more than a million in three months according to the joint co-ordinator of the UN office in Rwanda.<sup>3</sup> These people have been systematically massacred (90% outside of the towns) on the basis of their ethnic origin. Their property has been stolen. Their houses have been pillaged and burned. These were unarmed civilians; there was no confrontation, either war or civil war. Children, women and pregnant women were particularly targeted. There was no place of refuge, certainly not the hospitals and the churches. The assassins sought a final solution.

The comparison with the genocide of the Jews by Hitler is completely valid. There are only two differences; the absolute number of victims (the Nazis exterminated six million Jews) and

the fact that the Nazis employed the infrastructure of a modern industrialised country. The Habyarimana clan had to content itself with more mundane means of destruction and small calibre weapons. But the goal, as in Nazi Germany, was a final solution, a genocide; the planned destruction of an entire people by mass murder, with the goal of stopping its social and biological reproduction.<sup>4</sup>

No comparison is possible with the acts which members of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) committed and might still commit in the future. Their attacks on the Hutus are obviously reprehensible, but are acts of revenge.

## No accident

The genocide of the Tutsis was no accident, nor was it an explosion of spontaneous violence. Neither can one speak of the violence of war — even if a war was under way at the time of the deeds and the genocide was part of it (such as the massacre of the Jews by the Nazis). One can still less speak of a return to the Middle Ages. The genocide of the Tutsis was not some act of atavism; it was a modern phenomenon, an indication of the barbarity which surges forward to the extent that the free market generalises itself and the social crisis deepens. On 6 April, a plane was shot down most professionally in the skies above Kigali; the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi died in the crash.

In the hour following, the presidential guard — the nucleus of the Rwandan army — took over the capital. The troops, accompanied by death squads, raided a number of houses on the basis of prepared lists. Within several hours barricades were set up on the roads. Every Rwandan who passed was stopped and asked to present their identity cards (which state ethnic origin) and a massive carnage was unleashed throughout the country, in deliberate and planned fashion.

1. *Le Soir*, 26/07/94; Dirk Thijs, Knack, 10/08/94.

2. *Libération*, 08/08/94.

3. *De Standaard*, 25/08/94.

4. Frank Chalk et al, 'The History and Sociology of Genocide', Yale University Press, pp. 16-17.

**"...almost all genocides are accompanied by massacres which target that part of the community which refuses to collaborate. ...a climate of terror is vital. ...a choice of killing others or being killed themselves."**

In the course of the first hours, as many Hutus as Tutsis were killed. Did it amount, then, to ethnic violence? Yes, but the motives of the assassins were obviously political; they wished to block the implementation of the Arusha accords, because these meant the dismantling of the power and privileges of the Habyarimana clan. The genocide began with a series of political assassinations inside the Hutu community, the goal of which was the elimination of those Hutu leaders disposed to form a government of national reconciliation with the Tutsis. Thus, the prime minister of the transitional government, Agathe Uwilingiyaiamana, five other ministers, the president of the constitutional court, the Hutu presidents of a number of opposition parties, and some opposition businessmen, were all murdered. An alternative to the Habyarimana clique was eliminated, and the political choice became a "purely ethnic" one; a Hutu government or a Tutsi government. The genocide had been given a political perspective.

### **Rejection**

At this stage the assassins still had to surmount two significant obstacles; the mixing of Hutus and Tutsis on the social, family and professional levels had to be eliminated; and the natural rejection of the massacre of fellow human beings had to be broken.

These obstacles exist to every genocide, which is why almost all genocides are accompanied by massacres which target that part of the people which refuses to collaborate. For this, a climate



of terror is vital. It is necessary to create a situation in which the adversaries of genocide inside the community are permanently confronted by moral insecurity; with a choice of killing others or being killed themselves. And with the risk of being killed by either camp; by the ethnic rival or members of one's own group. Only this terrible insecurity and — the next stage — active or passive collaboration (under constraint) in ethnic carnage allows the creation of the extreme conditions in which "the human" in us is destroyed. The story of the massacre at the hospital in Butare is an apt illustration; the Hutu personnel were forced by the Hutu soldiers to participate in the elimination of their Tutsi colleagues, to prove that they were true Hutus.

The imposition of ethnic loyalty and ethnic purification as a means of social cohesion soldered in the blood of genocide, represents a gigantic social regression which has long term consequences in social relationships, in the collective memory and in the individual mentality. Thus "The Shoah" had enormous consequences for Jewish people world-wide, and on the relations of Jews with other

people, notably Palestinians. Thus also the "question of culpability" surfaces constantly in Germany, fifty years after the Nazi extermination.

### **Sole means**

The negotiation and signature of the Arusha accords in August 1993 convinced the Habyarimana clan that genocide was the sole means of maintaining itself in power. The genocide did not come from nowhere. It came in the context of a profound crisis with social, economic and ethnic aspects; "The regime totters", stated the *Gazet van Antwerpen* on 3 October 1989, "The country is experiencing an unprecedented crisis" recorded *Le Soir* on 10 March 1990, "There is a sense of an end of the regime" according to *La libre Belgique* on 3 October 1989.<sup>5</sup>

In September 1990, a series of human rights organisations were set up to denounce the growing number of disappearances, arbitrary arrests, individual aggressions and collective massacres.

5. Cited in Reyntjens, 'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise', Kathala 1994.

# "Tribe" Anatomy of a genocide

The RPF offensive which rapidly reached the gates of Kigali, was not the cause of this crisis, but the regime reacted by hardening its grip on power, through repression and racism. The corruption of the 1970s and early 1980s was monopolised by the Habyarimana clan, originating from the north-west.

The Hutu businessmen in the rest of Rwanda (often the poorest regions) were not invited to share the spoils, explaining the rapid success of the Hutu opposition parties. Moreover, after its successful 1973 coup (the so-called moral revolution, supposed to prolong the so-called social revolution of 1959), the Habyarimana clan politically and physically eliminated the other wing of the ruling Hutu elite, based around Gregoire Kayibanda.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth noting that a conference of the Tutsi diaspora held in New York in Summer 1990 demanded negotiation for the peaceful return of the refugees of 1959. This demand remains unfulfilled.

Habyarimana survived the crisis at the end of 1990 solely because of French aid (along with short-lived Belgian support). From then on, the situation was dominated by the preparation for war against the RPF. The army went from 5 thousand to 34 thousand men and was armed to the teeth with modern weapons, with the assistance of France.

## Intense

The social and political contradictions remained intense (with already a million refugees). To bring the situation under control, Habyarimana decided to stoke up ethnic contradictions; quotas were introduced at every level, controls on ethnic origin (inscribed on passports) multiplied, and racist propaganda was stepped up.<sup>7</sup>

From the second half of 1992, the daily newspaper *Kangura* began a campaign of propaganda, seeking to demonise the Tutsis, exalting Hutu racial purity and denouncing the rapaciousness of the Tutsis who "wished to take over everything", as well as advocating the right of the Hutus to arm themselves in self-defence. Although, the ideological backbone of the genocide was being put in place, this fascist campaign covered

itself with a mantle of respectability; large photographs were published of President Habyarimana shaking hands with President Mitterand of France. It was in the name of Western democracy that the exclusion of the Tutsis and the exclusivist domination of the Hutu majority were "justified".

It was also in 1992 that the infamous Interhamwe (those who combat together) and Inpuzamugambi (those who have the same goal) gangs were set up. From 1993, quotas were set; a militia was set up in every prefecture (local police area), composed of around two hundred armed citizens.<sup>8</sup> The project of the "self-defence of the people", prepared by the government since August/September 1991, had entered into reality.<sup>9</sup>

Blacklists were drawn up and circulated, which mentioned, in order, the names of the people who were to be killed. The death squads multiplied the pogroms (by early 1993, 2 thousand people had already been massacred).<sup>10</sup>

The creation of the radio station "Milles Collines" was the final touch to the preparation of the final solution. The radio multiplied the appeals to murder: "The graves are not yet full. Who will help us fill them?"<sup>11</sup> This station also dispensed practical advice, such as how to invade a house and round up its inhabitants.<sup>12</sup>

## Premises

In January 1993, the Rwandan human rights federation published a report which stated explicitly that "The premises of genocide exist."<sup>13</sup>

Who was pulling the strings? As in a classical fascist regime (the Western model was being followed!) the genocide rested on a double structure; an legal institutional structure and an illegal clandestine structure, the first being a cover for the second. The centralisation of the two structures was realised in Rwanda in the Habyarimana family. Habyarimana was the president, his wife and his brother who together led the "network zero", which directed the State apparatus, both civil and military. The presidential guard was the hard core of the army, while the civil administration for-

med a well furnished network of governors, prefects and mayors.<sup>14</sup>

When the genocide entered its final phase, after 6 April, the State apparatus played the greatest role. The mayors armed the population, kept the blacklists, and went from house to house with the local military authorities and the "illegal" armed bands to execute their sinister designs. It was these gentlemen also who, faced with the RPF, organised the "scorched earth" policy and forced the population to follow them to the Zairean frontier and the refugee camps. And it was State officials who in the camps continued to direct the people and, by terror and constraint, prevented them from returning to Rwanda.

## "Monsieur Z"

The illegal structure, which took the initiative before 6 April, was directed from the "synagogue" as the house of the president's brother-in-law is known. The brother of Agathe Habyarimana, Protais Zigiranyirazo, nicknamed "Monsieur Z", had already been condemned in Canada for violence against Rwandan students. From his headquarters, he and his staff planned pogroms, massacres, individual assassinations, and the purchase and transport of clandestine arms. It was also from "the synagogue" that the hate campaign of Radio Milles Collines was directed. An important role was played in this latter by Ferdinand Nahimana, the regime's propaganda chief.<sup>15</sup> A Belgian, "Monsieur George" took the microphone, but the president's brother-in-law was the principal actor.<sup>16</sup>

6. Ibid, pp. 30-31.

7. Stephen Smith, *Libération*, 28/05/94.

8. Colette Braeckman, 'Chronique d'une tragédie annoncée', Dossier du Grip 1994, p. 13.

9. See "secret" exchange of letters of the government reproduced in 'Arming Rwanda', report of Human Rights Watch, Dossier du Grip, Annexe C.

10. Report from the International Commission on Human Rights Violations in Rwanda.

11. Els Temmeman, *De Morgan*, 14/04/94.

12. Stephen Smith, op. cit.

13. *Le Point*, 30/07/94.

14. Reynjens, Knack, 20/07/94.

15. See his 'Rwanda, émergence d'un état', L'Harmattan 1993.

16. *Le Soir*, 18/04/94.

The real turn towards genocide came in December 1993. The last "official" French soldiers left the country ("official" because informal training of the Rwandan army and death squads continued). The first of the Arusha accords was implemented; between Christmas and New Year, the RPF was allowed to station six hundred men at Kigali (for, as has been remarked, the Rwandan Tutsis, unlike those in Burundi, had no means of defending themselves against Hutu State violence.<sup>17</sup> The application of the accords was sabotaged and slowed down, but pressure mounted from every side. It was then, that, with its back to the wall, the regime decided to embark upon genocide.

Firstly, the political centre was eliminated. All the Hutu opposition parties became brutally divided by the pressure of the regime's campaign of ethnicisation ("For or against the RPF"). Some did seek a rapprochement with the RPF on the basis of the Arusha accords.

In December, according to Collette Braeckman, the president's entourage openly distributed arms to the population. "Uncontrolled" massacres spread. Thousands of uprooted youth who are the product of the social crisis formed shock troops...<sup>18</sup>

### Forbidden

A new stage was reached in February 1994 when, after a further massacre of at least forty-nine victims, UN troops were forbidden to intervene. This injunction lifted an important psychological and political obstacle for the assassins, according to an eyewitness.<sup>19</sup>

In March, the presidential guard began to encircle Kigali. Negotiations recommenced at Arusha, and the accord were again confirmed. Was the attempt against the presidential plane the response of the ruling clique? In any case, the death of President Habyarimana provided the ideal pretext.

A "crisis committee of the Rwandan Army" (or a part of it) took power in a military coup d'état. An interim government was formed, composed solely of Hutu hard-liners, including some personalities who had led the 1959 revolution but been swept aside in 1972. (This throws some light on the internal conflicts and the recent nervousness at the summit of the army and among the presidential guard.) A new alliance was formed between the hard-liners of the Habyarimana regime and the radical Hutu leaders of 1959, an alliance to which President Habyarimana would

have constituted an obstacle, according to a Hutu human rights activist, Gasana Ndobu.<sup>20</sup> It also sheds light on the most paradoxical question: Why, as seems to be the case, was Habyarimana assassinated by his own presidential guard?

The genocide met with no resistance. The famous "international community" remaining absent. Nobody intervened when there was still time to do so. Certainly not France; since 1990 it has been at the side of the assassins, notably through the person of Lieutenant-colonel Chollet, a military adviser in Rwanda.<sup>21</sup> Nor did the Belgian soldiers intervene, either, not even when Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and the Belgian paratroopers who protected him were killed. Why? Nobody is ready to admit what the governments (thanks to their information services) and the UN (thanks to its official reports) knew: The genocide had been planned for several months. Everyone had an interest in doing nothing! ★



17. *Le Soir*, 11/04/94.

18. *Le Soir*, 08/04/94.

19. The account of an NGO worker, Dominique Evrard, *Le Soir*, 25/04/94.

20. *L'Express*, 21/04/94, p. 14.

21. *Libération*, 18/05/94.



# "Triumph" rooted in fraud

**DESPITE** all our hopes, and the grave crisis in the Mexican State, the election results on 21 August were disappointing. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) won both the presidential and parliamentary elections with just under 50% of the vote, the more rightwing National Action Party (PAN) achieved nearly 30% while Cardenismo, in the form of the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) took only 16%. To try to find out why the expectation of peaceful electoral change was frustrated is not merely an intellectual exercise but a distressing necessity for the leftwing democratic movement.

**HECTOR DE LA CUEVA\***  
Mexico City



**T**HERE can be no denial that on 21 August the sixty year old State party system made its full weight felt in the Mexican election. Its "triumph" was rooted in large-scale fraud, manipulation of state resources, and corporate control, intimidation and blackmail. The results can only postpone and lead to a more bloody transition to democracy and the end of a dictatorship which, although it does have a real social base, oppresses more and more the majority of those who voted for it.

Some extremely serious mistakes were made by the democratic camp, which contributed to the results. Sections of the democratic movement are now beginning to believe that under a State party system there can be no free elections, nor can democratic forces hope to win, until the mechanisms of control are broken and there are new rules by which to play.

In any case, what has been shown by the results is that the transition to democracy will be a long and complex process. In this process the National Democratic Convention (CND), founded in Chiapas on the initiative of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) must

play a central role. The CND represents the ultimate popular army-in-waiting against the State. Consolidating and broadening the Convention, organising resistance to fraud, advancing a programme of struggle which will go beyond the present political situation, and repairing the democratic and leftwing forces while learning lessons from our defeat, will help to prevent another illegitimate government — or at least reduce the time period before the PRI dictatorship can be challenged once more.

## Fraud

The PRI wanted not only to win the election but to win an absolute majority. It also wanted to force its real opposition into a poor third place. One strategy was to crush public opinion and to demoralise that opposition by way of an avalanche of opinion polls purporting to show that it would win.

Further, there is no doubt amongst the democratic movement that, independently of other political factors (which will be dealt with later), on 21 August a huge fraud was committed which effectively distorted the vote. Gradually, more and more evidence of this fraud has come to light. As Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the PRD presidential candidate has stated, there were around 10 million fraudulent votes, or nearly 30% of the officially registered vote.

The government made good use of its six years in power to prepare the ground for the fraud, carrying out numerous practice exercises in local and federal elections. The result was an almost "clean" fraud (with neither the violence nor theft of ballot boxes expected by the Mexican and international observers) which combined placing false names upon the electoral register, refusing to place potential electors upon it on the basis that they were for some reason ineligible to vote and, later, removing electors from it. Nor should we forget the hundreds of people who had more than one voting document and who on

\* The author is a member of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International).

election day were taken from one polling station to another to vote for the official party, there being more voting papers than voters, the buying of votes, the direct intimidation on election day itself, or the later manipulation of data which has produced results which do not coincide with polling station records.

In contrast, the democratic opposition did not make use of the six years of Salinism to prevent the fraud. There was a great deal of naivety and too great a faith in purely political measures. In the end there was too little time for it (or Civic Alliance/Observation 94, the main citizens' grouping concerned with overseeing the elections) to set up an effective system of monitoring the various forms of fraud and, more importantly, preventing it.

Documenting and systematising the fraud, to show how it was possible, is a task of first importance for the democratic movement. On this depends not only in large part its credibility with the public, so that it will be supported in future actions, but recovery of its confidence in itself.

### **Weight of the system**

Although the importance of the fraud cannot be underestimated, there were other factors which determined the result.

The PRI is still able to rely upon a considerable social base. There is nothing strange in this, despite the crisis in the State system of domination. After all, Pinochet achieved almost 50% of the vote in the Chilean referendum. A dictatorship can have an important social base without ceasing to be a dictatorship, and this is especially true of the PRI, with 65 years in power and a complete political and social network.

Although the apparatus of domination is cracking, the system showed at the election that the mechanisms of corporate control continue to weigh heavily upon broad sectors of society. Many of the votes in favour of the PRI came from citizens still influenced by its ideology or by direct coercion from these mechanisms.

Corruption — which in 65 years has permeated and corroded the whole of society — and clientism also brought in a large number of votes. In addition to those votes bought directly, others were bought by promises of favours, land, payment of debts and so on. The clientist programmes created by President Salinas de Gortari under the guise of combatting poverty (the National Soli-

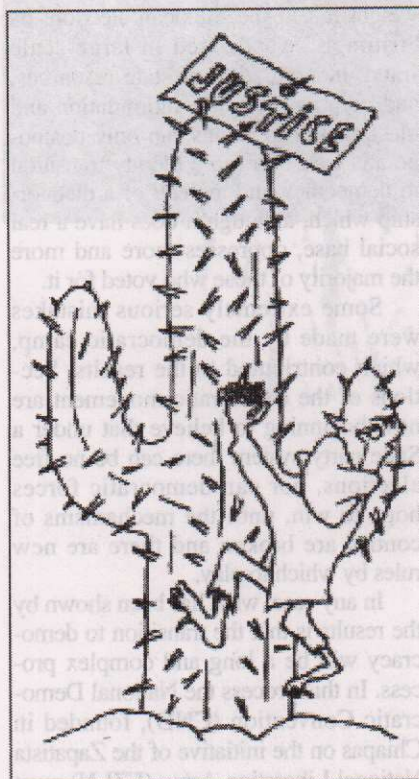
darity Programme — Pronasol — and the Country Solidarity Programme — Procampo) also had an effect.

In addition, the PRI also built for its "victory" by spending thousands of millions of dollars belonging to the State. Not only did it spend State money directly upon its campaign, it reduced its foreign currency reserves by at least fifty percent in the last six months before the election using the money to maintain the value of the Mexican dollar and to bolster the economy generally.

The only thing more offensive than the "triumph" of Ernesto Zedillo is the success of Salinismo in having increased poverty to desperate levels in order to later exploit it, buying votes with charity, corruption and promises.

### **Real vote**

It is also vital to understand the nature of what we might term the real vote. If the votes of PAN and PRD are added together, then there is a majority for change. However, if it is the PRI and PAN votes which are added — which would seem more appropriate — then this is not the case. Even if the electoral fraud makes it impossible to tell whether or not there is a majority for change and, if so, how great it is, it is clear that a large proportion of the vote was for these two parties, and was a conservative vote, not one which calling for the removal of the State party system.



PAN captured an enormous number of votes. In addition to its conservative ideology, its gradualist strategy and the political alliance between its leadership and the government gave specific meaning to these. Particularly as a result of the televised debate between the PRI, PAN and PRD presidential candidates, PAN recovered its role of protagonist and wrested a large number of votes from the Cardenistas. There is also evidence that in some cases the fraud favoured PAN. Some commentators have taken the view that, while the PAN vote was a vote for change, it was a vote for a "soft landing". Others have seen it as the triumph of the gradualist approach. Without doubt it is an obstacle to the defeat of the State party. The best that might be said is that it is a vote for its partial correction. In this sense also it represents a conservative vote.

There are many explanations for the real vote for PRI and PAN. There seems to be agreement that it was a result of fear of what might happen if there was a vote for change. However, there is no agreement on what was behind the fear. Cecilia Soto, the presidential candidate of the small Workers' Party (PT) which has increased electorally during the last six years, has stated that Zapatista Subcommander Marcos gave many votes to Zedillo. There are even some Cardenistas who believe that Cárdenas' vote was damaged by his rapprochement with the Zapatistas, and particularly by his visit to the EZLN in Aguascalientes. They believe that the people were afraid of "violence" from the Zapatistas and therefore from Cárdenas, and that he should have pursued a more moderate line, when the reality is that if anything damaged his vote it was the confusion generated by his toning it down. This will be dealt with later.

In fact the Zapatista uprising, as is widely recognised, awoke huge sympathy and gave great impetus to the movement for change; towards the end of the campaign it gave it the CND.

Those who gave votes to Zedillo were the killers of Luis Donaldo Colosio, the original PRI candidate, assassinated on 23 March during a campaign meeting. So did those political mafias which, while presenting themselves as civil pressure groups, sowed doubt upon the feasibility of defeating the State and said that it was searching for a "civilised rapprochement".

The people were not afraid of Cárdenas or the Zapatistas but of a violent reaction from the State, of mafia terrorism, of boycott by big business and

United States capital. In other words, they were blackmailed by the powerful, as occurred in Nicaragua. Overcoming this fear is a major challenge for the democratic and revolutionary forces in Central and South America, if they are to come to power.

However, none of the above political considerations must be allowed to disguise the serious mistakes which contributed to the Cárdenas campaign not achieving the massive vote which it had calculated upon as being sufficient to overcome any fraud.

For one thing, the campaign did not in reality take heed of what Cárdenas repeated again and again: that the 1994 election was different to that of 1988. The "Cárdenas effect", which in 1988 took the system by surprise and produced a widespread conviction that his candidacy was the way to bring down the PRI and an end to the crisis which was crushing the State, would not repeat itself automatically. Further, in a country undergoing great changes, the struggle for the vote would be more difficult. Notwithstanding this, triumphalism began to paralyse the campaign.

### **Mistakes**

By triumphalism is meant not the belief that victory was possible, but that it was taken for granted that the popular vote was guaranteed and that it was merely a matter of removing the obstacles to its recognition. Mistakenly, it was more preoccupied with convincing the most reactionary sectors both inside and outside the country that it should not oppose a democratic victory, rather than with winning a majority of the popular vote. For some months the speeches and activity of Cárdenas were directed principally at these sectors, and this ambiguity created great confusion concerning the programme and objectives of the Cardenista movement. It was forgotten that the only way there can be negotiation with the powerful is by first winning majority popular support, and that the best way of attracting those who have doubts or fears is by taking a firm stance.

The campaign also gradually lost its social definition. Originally it imagined a scenario in which there would be polarisation not along party lines but between social blocs. The Cárdenas candidacy was to be the expression of the majority popular bloc, and should rest upon a broad social spectrum, upon social committees and citizens' groups, not just political organisations. Yet such

vision became secondary. Speeches became less positive, offering few alternatives and avoiding commitment on social issues.

No less costly was the signing on 27 January of the inter-party pact which gave breathing space to the government when it most needed it, when it found itself cornered by the effects of the Zapatista uprising.

The most spectacular mistake of the Cárdenas campaign was without doubt the televised debate on 12 May which, for a number of reasons, had catastrophic consequences from which it found it difficult to recover. The most grave was that PAN was able to present itself as a serious protagonist and so the electoral contest became one between three parties, rather than simply between the PRI and the PRD.

The PRD also lost a great deal of credit by the way in which it selected its deputies, senators and assembly members. It reneged upon its public commitment on the percentage of candidates who would be non-party members (meaning from the organisations which made up the National Democratic Alliance); there was a disgraceful display of internal fighting, which resulted in a short-sighted and bureaucratic approach when it came to selection.

The last two months before the election saw the campaign re-orient itself towards political mobilisation, contact with the people and a more committed approach to social issues. However, it was too little, too late.

### **Evolution in political situation**

The national political situation has produced all kinds of about-turns and surprises this year

On 1 January the armed insurrection of the EZLN moved national politics towards the left, encouraging radicalism and the hope that the Priista regime would come to an end. The assassination of Colosio moved the political scene back to the right, by injecting uncertainty, fear and conservatism.

However, the assassination was only the most dramatic manifestation of the decomposition of PRI power. The public perceived this, and it lost a great deal of prestige.

The crisis pervaded the atmosphere; the regime found itself held at bay. Although the democratic opposition did not cease its activity, with hindsight it is clear that it squandered its chance. Nothing should have been accepted

which would not make a radical change to the rules of the game, including election organisation. It was mistaken in its calculation that it would achieve such a huge vote that fraud could be overcome.

What is painful is that, while the Zapatistas made sacrifices and played their part in creating that chance, the democratic citizens' movement did not do the same.

The regime has recovered a certain degree of control over the situation, both on the economic and political plane. It has now defused the most explosive elements and, although there is the internal divisions amongst the ruling class on the one hand, and on the other the founding of the CND, they have as yet not had a decisive influence on the mind of the State nor on the conscience of the broadest sections of the population.

The results are there to see; but it would be a serious error of judgement to suppose that the situation is intractable and that the regime is about to enjoy a new period of stability. The State party continues to be rocked by conflict and the democratic tasks which have characterised this period still remain.

### **Tasks and perspectives**

What was made clear on 21 August is that the transition to democracy, and the end and dismantling of the Priista dictatorship, will be both a longer and more complex process than anticipated. But the process is on-going. A Cárdenas victory would have avoided many problems and reduced the time period: This was the view of those on the revolutionary left who decided to support his candidacy. This is what the Zapatistas understood, who in contrast to sectarians and ultra-leftists, knew that he could not nor should not avoid the electoral scene, and that the consequences of their actions would touch all of us, even though we preferred to close our eyes.

While others have a gradualist vision of transition, we believe that for there to be real change there must first be a rupture. In the short term the possibility of this was posed in the possibility of a Cárdenas victory. What has happened now is that the rupture has been postponed, and it will be a great challenge to discover the routes by which we may once again reach this possibility.

The advances made in proving the illegitimacy of the election, the persistence of the democratic movement against the State party, the possibility that major financial scandals will come to light and that new evidence will be

# "Triumph" rooted in fraud

uncovered of the crimes in which the "mafias of power" are involved, and further infighting and fresh splits amongst the decadent Priista "family" will continue to threaten the regime. All this is happening within a framework in which, despite the announcement of growth and stability following the victory of the PRI, Salinismo has left undermined key areas of the economy and generated huge unrest, including amongst sectors of the business world — not to mention the majority of the population, for whom any growth which has taken place in the last six years has been nothing more than a growth in poverty and unemployment.

The most difficult problem for the PRI continues to be Chiapas, where there is a strong possibility that the electoral fraud will be overturned and which is still on the brink of civil war. While clearly the EZLN did not benefit from the outcome of the election, its local and national presence cannot be effaced by the government. Even away from the Chiapaneco problem, the existence of armed organisations is a permanent problem for the State.

## Gradualism fails

There continues to be head-on struggle with the State party dictatorship. Gradualism has proved to be a failure, yet in return for some minor concessions it has continued to give it oxygen.

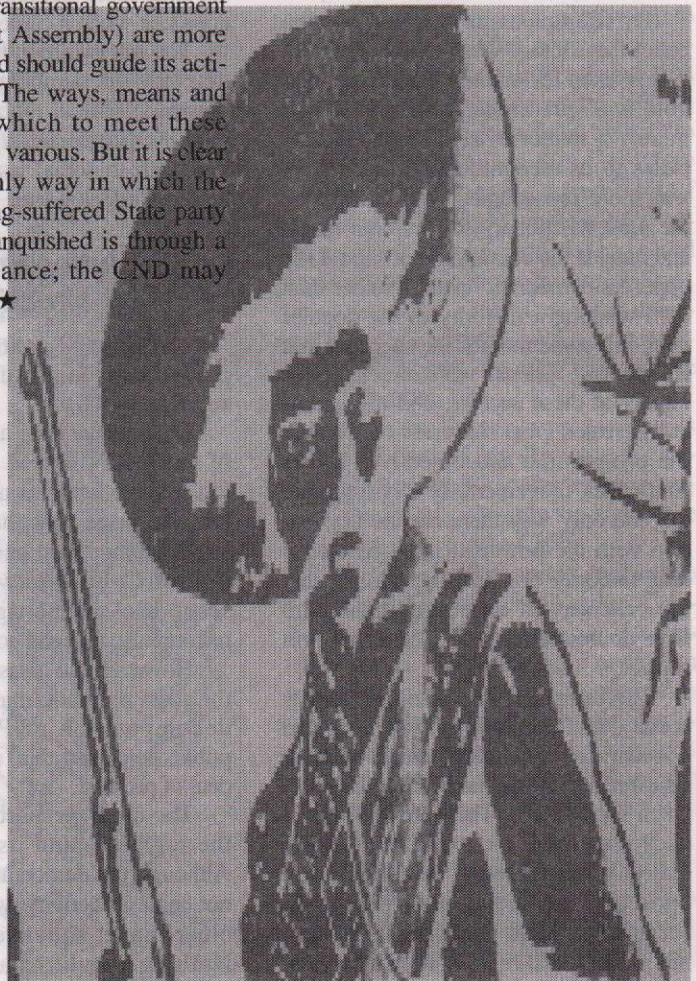
On all fronts, not just political, we must put forward initiatives aimed at the dismantling of the State party. To do so we must politicise the social struggle in the unions, the urban areas, the country, and so forth.

Changes also have to be made in the importance ascribed to the various social and political protagonists which have been struggling against the State party. As a result of the election result we are possibly witnessing the wane of the Cardenista leadership in this struggle. This is not because Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas did not demonstrate great integrity or was not important, but because the role of the political forces is changing in the new scenario. If the pre-electoral scenario — with the social and citizens'

movement, the Zapatistas, the "mediating" forces and the Cardenista campaign — was inevitably compartmentalised, the post-electoral scenario is even more so. It is vital that we learn to combine, co-ordinate, and synchronise the different social and political protagonists.

The National Democratic Convention founded in Aguascalientes, Chiapas, should play a fundamental role in this. Seen in defensive terms, the CND represents the ultimate army-in-waiting to deal with the oppressive intentions of the regime and its preservation is vital for all. However, seen in the medium term, the CND should be the space in which the different social and political protagonists in the struggle against the State party dictatorship are unified and which forms a focus for change at this moment of crisis in traditional politics.

The CND cannot give respite to the regime. The objectives upon which it was founded (a transitional government and a Constituent Assembly) are more valid than ever and should guide its activity at all times. The ways, means and time period in which to meet these objectives may be various. But it is clear today that the only way in which the extensive and long-suffered State party system will be vanquished is through a broad social alliance; the CND may serve as the seed. ★



# EZLN demands respect

**Communiqué from the Underground General Committee of the Zapatista  
Army of National Liberation, Mexico.  
15 September 1994**

**To the people of Mexico:  
To the peoples and governments of the world:  
To the national and international press:  
Brothers and sisters:**

The Underground General Committee of the EZLN denounces and declares the following:

1. Salinas de Gortari has deceived both national and international public opinion with his so-called desire for dialogue. The supreme government is preparing for a military solution by increasing the number of troops and military experts in the field of operations, intimidating the civil population and the suppression and murder of fighters by its paramilitary forces.
2. The armed forces of this wicked government have now sent ten divisions to the southeast with which to crush the honourable voice of the Zapatistas. With these even greater in number than the 50 thousand federal troops already here, the supreme government is attempting to strike fear into the rebellion of the EZLN against the fraud and illegitimacy which it is aiming to establish with the support of the communications monopolies in Mexico.
3. The federal troops which occupy the municipal centres of Ocosingo, Altamirano and Las Margaritas have begun patrols outside their actual territory and gone into Zapatista territory with the intention of provoking our troops, intimidating the civil population and forcing an end to the ceasefire.
4. The federal air force has resumed night flying, carrying out low-altitude flight manoeuvres above civilian areas. During the night of 12 September, the same date that the usurping power threatened the Chiapanecos with suppression, federal army warplanes carried out intimidatory manoeuvres above dwellers in the towns of Las Margaritas and Ocosingo.
5. In high governmental circles a military solution has already been decided upon. They are only awaiting an opportune moment in which to attack the Zapatista positions.
6. The EZLN is addressing itself to the federal army, to its high command, officers and soldiers to ask that, although it has been decided that armed force should be the response to our demands for democracy, liberty and justice, it conducts itself in accordance with military honour and with respect for the civilian population. Our troops are ready to fight back and have received orders to defend our land until the last. We will fight with honour and dignity.
7. An end to the ceasefire upon the part of the federal troops, and the consequent outbreak of war, fits in with the scheme of the usurper Salinas de Gortari for the creation of a situation favourable to his desire to hold on to power.
8. In response to the warlike attitude of the usurper of federal executive power, the EZLN has placed all its troops on "Red Alert".
9. The EZLN reaffirms its decision to hold to its demands of:

**Democracy!**

**Liberty!**

**Justice!**

**With respect.**

**From the mountains of south-east Mexico.**



# Contradiction and ambiguity

**SINCE the electoral victory of the ANC, South Africa has entered a long period of reform of its State apparatus. The assumption of power by the government of national unity, the complex arrangements for the establishment of ministerial cabinets, the parliamentary re-organisation, the setting up of provincial executives; these only constitute the most visible aspect of a profound restructuring, whose object is to accommodate the old State apparatus to the ANC.**

## **PETER BLUMER**

**S**EVERAL significant debates have emerged as a consequence of these multiple adjustments and reforms. In addition, South Africa has for several months witnessed a massive strike wave in cars, commerce, transport and public services. These discussions, conflicts and theatrical set-pieces attest to the significant contradictions between the social dynamic which impelled the ANC until recently and the realism which it is today forced to apply in command of the State. This contradiction will become increasingly apparent to those sectors which remain attached to the old radical jargon of the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Yet it was already clearly identifiable before the elections when the ANC published its programme of orientation for the five years to come.

This Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is a document of great importance. Not only because it is supposed to guide the policies of the ANC (we will see elsewhere that its function is very much more ambiguous!) but because this type of docu-

ment also expresses a profound tendency, broadly hegemonic under current conditions, inside a number of radical, anti-imperialist, indeed post-revolutionary, movements, in the world. A comparison with similar elaborations made in other countries would constitute a good aid to understanding the spirit of the times.

What makes the RDP a particularly interesting document is that it can be interpreted in two parallel, totally contradictory senses. It serves as a beacon to those who hope the crisis can be overcome through social consensus. But it also serves as an argument for those who wish to see the immediate satisfaction of their demands. We will see, after having examined the RDP, what the attitude of the new government is in relation to the unvarnished reality of these social contradictions.

### ***Rebuilding the nation***

The RDP is today presented as the ANC's fundamental programme to break with apartheid, poverty and racial inequality. In reality it originated as a demand of COSATU, South Africa's principal trade union federation and a member of the political bloc around the ANC. COSATU wished to obtain a clear engagement from the ANC on social objectives, so that it could justify its full participation in the ANC's electoral list. The latter had shown itself incapable, since the opening of negotiations, of producing an economic and social project of any real coherence. Finally, after a lengthy period of writing and several versions, the definitive document was presented as the basic text of the ANC's future governmental policy. This programme reflects, then, the compromises which have been made in the course of its elaboration. But it expresses above all a political strategy which is shared, each in its own way, by the three leaderships of the Congress Alliance; namely the ANC, SACP, and COSATU.

The term "reconstruction" invokes simultaneously the notion of the destruction wrought by apartheid and the idea of the construction of a "new nation". The RDP is, then, conceived to satisfy all sectors of society. No member of the

current government of national unity, notably those of the National Party, would have any difficulty in finding in the RDP the arguments to denounce and curb any over-audacious social policy. On the other hand, by taking into consideration only a section of the document and ignoring its general methodology, radicalised sectors can locate demands of the first importance (housing, education, the questions of land or health, the place of women in society, and so forth). This document contains everything — and its opposite.

### ***Evaluating needs***

It could certainly not be said that the RDP failed to fix in detail its precise social and economic objectives. Rare indeed are those programmes which, like this one, take care to propose, with supporting figures, the satisfaction of the most urgent needs of the black population. It fixes quantitative objectives in the fields of housing (see p. 23), electrification and schools; in each area it proposes a policy of positive discrimination in favour of black people in general and also of women. With such a commitment from the government it is not surprising that numerous activists, in the trade unions or the civics, have demanded that the government apply the RDP and the whole RDP... as promised. This detailed form of programme, supported by concrete figures, is indeed, a good example of what can, in a given context, motivate and radicalise a social movement starting from concrete choices.

But the RDP does not stop there. So many details, so many social promises, immediately raise other questions. How can the programme be realised? On what social forces is it based? How can it be financed? Around these key points the whole of the document swings, to reveal a political objective completely contradictory to the social promises it contains.

Because it implicitly deals with the whole of the socio-economic relations of the country and because it claims to be a project of post-apartheid transition, the RDP puts forward an analysis of the old system. Indeed, its analysis of the post-apartheid period constitutes the first problem. It amounts to ending the "distor-

tions" that apartheid has introduced into the South African economy. The term of distortion invokes a notion of model: as if apartheid had been a perverse detour in contrast to an abstract ideal of a virtuous functioning capitalism.

That is in any case what one is led to understand by phrases like the following: "The apartheid system severely distorted the South African financial system. A handful of large financial institutions, all linked closely to the dominant conglomerates, centralise most of the country's financial assets." In other words it is apartheid, and not the inherent tendencies of capitalism, which have favoured the monopolisation of the economic and financial system.

Using the same method, the RDP, invokes the "racial distortions" of society. A euphemism which allows the question of the redistribution of income and wealth to be approached as if it amounted to simply overcoming a temporary imbalance. No reference is thus made to the social relations which will obviously persist beyond the disappearance of the segregation laws.

### **Apartheid: an unseemly detour?**

The notion of distortion is very fashionable in the ANC. The term had already been employed four years ago by Joe Slovo, general secretary of the SACP, to describe the "distortion" of socialism in Eastern Europe. This formulation allowed its author to avoid the roots of the problem of the social nature and the political determinisms of the Stalinist regime.

Adapted today to apartheid this terminology allows the by-passing of the structural relation which linked apartheid and capital's need to realise value. The ANC thus confirms its old analyses: apartheid was a sort of anachronism in relation to the needs even of a market economy. It is this analysis which allowed the ANC to advocate an alliance with the enlightened sectors of the big financial bourgeoisie against the backward "Boers", without doubt the embodiment of the famous "distortion".

This old theory is maintained in the RDP. It amounts to saying nothing about the fundamental relations of production which structured the history of apartheid and attributing the responsibility of the past to contingent factors. Thus, the RDP continues the mechanical approach traditionally adopted by the SACP in its "theory" of "colonialism of a special type": "We must not perpetua-

te the separation of our society into a 'first world' and a 'third world' — another disguised way of preserving apartheid."

This very undialectical juxtaposition of "two worlds" leads to the conclusion that one of the two societies in

existence should have the right to "catch up with" the other. As if it amounted to a simple historic imbalance or a democratic deficit which prevented a part of the population from benefitting from the potentialities of the "first world".

The tasks of the moment would on the contrary necessitate the greatest clarity on the political processes at work for the past twenty years. If the struggles of the masses have played a central role in the modification of the relationship of forces and in the debates inside the ruling class, other very important elements have intervened which impelled, starting from the end of the 1980s, the current transition.

### **A complex mutation**

To recapitulate our analysis... Combined with the powerful social mobilisations of the 1980s there was:

- A recession from 1981, that is even before the social explosion.
- A world economy in full mutation accompanied by growing pressures for new commercial relations freed from all protectionism. This is why, in the course of the 1980s, the intelligent sectors of the regime and of industry understood that these international changes would necessitate a modification, voluntary or forced, of the relations between South Africa and the world market; less protectionism, more exchanges, different monetary mechanisms... Apartheid (specific labour market, strong protectionism, big public sector, weak internal demand) had become contradictory to the needs of capital, unlike in the years from the 1950s to the 1970s.
- A world political situation which changed starting from 1985, notably with the Gorbachev regime, accompa-

### **RDP: housing**

"ABOUT 50 thousand houses were built in South Africa in 1992. This figure could reasonably be increased to over 300 thousand units each year by the end of the RDP's five-year programme. At minimum, one million low-cost houses should be constructed over five years."

This promise has already made a lot of ink flow. The premier of the Johannesburg-Pretoria region says that he wants 150 thousand houses constructed in five years, which some on the right have called a "utopian dream", while the Minister for Housing, Joe Slovo, prefers a figure of 50 thousand nationally in the first year and 300 thousand by 2001. ☉

nied by a perspective of negotiated settlements of various regional conflicts. These changes played against the liberation movements and in favour of De Klerk. The latter, in his famous speech of 2 February 1990 declared: "The dynamic developments in international politics have created new opportunities for South Africa as well. Important advances have been made, among other things, in our contact abroad, especially where these were precluded previously by ideological consideration..."

The South African ruling class knew, then, that it had to make a turn, but the social struggles of the 1980s still limited greatly the margins of manoeuvre. It was the decline of the mass movement, from 1987, and the international changes which permitted the regime to seize the opportunity and take the initiative. A review of all these events is absolutely necessary to understand the current reality. This neither detracts from the centrality of the mass struggles of the 1980s nor the intrinsic importance of the current political and institutional changes. But to ignore the other elements would lead to a simplification which would tend to justify the current policy of national union. Those who, in 1980, claimed that the opening of official negotiations represented "the victory of the liberation movement" and the preparation of a "transfer of power" can no longer retrace this history without contradicting themselves. The ANC and the SACP which, in the past, justified the self-limitation of their strategy by recourse to a false economic analysis of apartheid (the supposed "backwardness" of this mode of accumulation in the South African context of the 1950s-1970s) today avoid any reference to the structural factors in explai-

# Contradiction and ambiguity

ning the political events of the past four years. Everything is attributed to the strength of the liberation movement and the genius of the ANC.

## A false realism

The RDP's fidelity to this old method allows its authors to propose an exit from apartheid through an exit from recession, the latter to be achieved through an expansion of internal consumption and the reduction of inequalities. For this, the text of the RDP uses the traditional macro-economic indicators of liberal economics: growth, productivity, competitiveness... All except one; that of profit. At no moment, either explicitly or implicitly, is it said that the guarantee of certain

anticipated profit is the basic reference of the private investor that there could be no virtuous social contract which satisfies, durably and at one and the same time, the employees and the employers. The private sector which accepts the RDP as a necessary but conjunctural exercise of the ANC has, for its part, cast very much doubt on the possibility of satisfying at the same time the social needs of millions of people and industrial profits. An economist of the Rand Merchant Bank has, like others, indicated that the RDP "does not directly address a major prerequisite for creating jobs, namely vigorous private sector fixed investment, and the saving which underlies such investments".<sup>1</sup> *The Financial Mail* of 9 September, after having signaled that the strikes of this year have led to "losses" of 3 billion rand, throws out this warning: "Growth — to say nothing of the RDP — won't survive a prolongation of that sort of loss. Nor will social stability, nor an ANC-dominated government." These people at least do not remain silent on class contradictions.

In the context of the current class relations in South Africa, the government must seek to guarantee a high level

of profit to obtain a good rhythm of private investment. It will be necessary then to confront the problem of labour costs. The RDP does not clarify what it means in seeking to "improve the capacity of the financial sector to mobilise more resources and to direct these activities set out in the RDP..." This could only be done by a considerable contribution from the State to create the conditions of profitability of productive investments and by a sufficient rate of exploitation of the labour force. It is the very opposite of what is claimed by

Alec Erwin, former leader of the trade union left and today Deputy Finance Minister: "We have just come out of an exploitative society and we have no intention of going back into one."<sup>2</sup>

He continues: "We are continually advised to ensure low wages in order to compete in the world economy. This is a narrow view which does not understand what is happening in that economy." It is thus Erwin, one of the principal advocates of the RDP, and his colleagues, avoid acknowledging that the main question for the capitalists is that of the cost of labour and the rate of exploitation. They prefer to use the vague term of "competitiveness" which modestly conceals the harshness of conflict over the price of the sale of labour power. However, during the big strike wave of the last few months, many trade union leaders have had to reconsider this essential problem. Among them, Enoch Godongwana, the new general secretary of the metal and car workers union, NUMSA: "The key issue is wage anomalies in the industry. We wanted these eradicated over two years, the employers said four, we moved to three. The employers are worried about cost implications... The employers put counter demands of flexibility, compulsory overtime and a no-strike clause. They wanted wording in agreements tightened. What will we say to our members? What is new for them?"<sup>3</sup>

No more or less fleeting "political will" can overcome the traditional mechanism of the capitalist organisation of labour. If it is, for example, completely correct that the RDP proposes positive action for both Blacks and women, this will nonetheless come up against the needs of the market. The fractioning of regulations, the manipulation of all sorts of prejudices and simple competition between workers allow a reduction of the pressure of wages. The end of apartheid will not then signify the end of segregation according to skin colour, sex, region or age. The laws of the market will be sufficient to maintain, in part, racial discrimination: the cost of housing

## RDP: land

"THE LAND programme has two aspects: redistribution of residential and productive land to those who need it but cannot afford it, and restitution for those who lost land because of apartheid laws... To redress the suffering caused by the policy of removals, the democratic government must, through the mechanism of a land court, restore land to South Africans dispossessed... This court must be accessible to the poor and illiterate. It must establish processes that enable it to take speedy decisions."

This legal rule poses a lot of problems given the spontaneity of the movements. Joe Slovo has had to state that the government "will not legalise any actions which will undermine the rights and expectations of such communities, and will not legitimate a process of queue-jumping."  
(*South African Labour Bulletin*, June 1994) \*

investments, and more specifically the guarantee of the great social contract which the RDP seeks, supposes in advance that the owners of capital are guaranteed an increased rate of profit! This profit which remains founded on a necessarily unequal distribution of the wealth produced on unpaid productive labour. This silence on the essential factor of capitalist functioning is not a prudent or tactical omission, but a conscious act. It is precisely because the

1. *Weely Mail and Guardian*, 08/07/94.

2. *South African Labour Bulletin*, January 1994.

3. *Financial Week*, 11/08/94.



in certain areas of town, the price of certain cultivable lands, unequal access to credit, the privatisation of certain forms of education.

### **The European model**

The RDP's philosophy of "growth" is inspired, although this is not stated, by the period of the 1950s and 1960s in Western Europe (what has been called the "thirty glorious years"). During this period, completely singular in the history of capitalism, there was a concomitant growth of labour productivity, profits, wages and mass consumption. The social democrats saw in the rise of workers' incomes the sole motor of growth... It is this approach which now structures the RDP's hope of a great virtuous social contract, capable of channelling all forces towards the "reconstruction" of the country. But to take as a theoretical model this particular period of European capitalism is an absurdity: the place of South Africa in the world economy today has nothing in common with the highly industrialised states of post World War II Europe. These countries themselves have now emerged from this form of accumulation, with no hope of returning to it.

Still inspired by the Keynesian model, the RDP proposes a legislative vigilance on the part of the State to avoid the exaggerated effects of the market. It is again Alec Erwin who puts things most clearly: "The RDP is by no means anti-market but realistically accepts that the market is incapable of effecting major structural reform (...). The RDP seeks to develop conditions that allow market forces to be more effective within a larger and restructured economy." But the very nature of this State — as overseer of the general conditions of commodity production — limits all pretensions of radical reforms of the laws of the market. Capitalism obviously needs a state regulation, without which it would be reduced to a chaotic confrontation of private initiatives. The necessity of this central mediation by the State is as old as capitalism: no capitalist society has ever functioned on the basis of the "pure market". South Africa has for a long time been a good example of the central role of the State in assuring the optimum conditions of capitalist accumulation. The problem then, lies elsewhere. What State, and what are the social objectives of its intervention?

The RDP is a document which remains very unsatisfactory even so far

as these pretensions are concerned. Its project of an anti-trust policy, very far from what was put forward in the Freedom Charter, does not even reach the formal level of the legislation of the US and Germany (whose effectiveness in those countries is well known!). The problem is not then, summarised in the alternative presented by the RDP: "We are convinced that neither a commandist central planning system nor an unfettered free market system can provide adequate solutions..." It is moreover quite piquant to see former supporters of the Stalinist system utilising such an argument to propose a third road, a virtuous intervention of the State, astonishingly independent of the social forces which it is charged with reproducing.

### **Normalisation and verticalism**

The RDP desires, on the other hand, that "civil society" involves itself in and reinforces the application of the reforms. This terminology is new for the ANC, the SACP and COSATU. For obvious reasons related to racial oppression the ANC has never used an expression as fluid as this which obscures the national question. As for the SACP, it made great play of the centrality of the working class inside the oppressed Black population. So what exactly does this new concept mean?

The RDP deepens the ambiguities by describing this "civil society" now as something limited to the popular rank and file organisations, now enlarged to include all forms of grouping, employers' associations included. Elsewhere in the text "civil society" would also concern the diverse forums of negotiations which were set up starting from 1990 and which bring together, among others, the representatives of the old regime, the employers, the trade unions and the ANC. The RDP proposes that these forums (for what little time they continue to exist) "continue to build consensus around industrial and trade policy. In particular, they must address the needs of industrial sectors forced to adjust and the question of how to share the costs of adjustment; identify new economic sites of competitive advantage; develop aspects of industrial

and trade policy, and deal with problems of extending infrastructure meeting basic needs."

This has nothing to do with an appeal to self-organisation, independent and democratic, so as to favour popular vigilance in a delicate and tactical phase of the transition. Neither determined counter-power nor independent rank-and-file movement; what is proposed amounts, on the contrary, to imposing a sterilising dialogue with the bosses on the mass organisations which emerged from the struggles of the 1980s. "Civil society" is called to participate in the application of the RDP without any particular social and political independence. The objective is that of a strong verticalism by which the mass organisations and the NGOs will be reliably "supportive" of the ANC's policy in government. A number of events have already illustrated this perspective. One of the most significant is undoubtedly the reaction of the leaders in the face of land occupation movements. When an acceleration of these actions developed in the region of Pretoria and Johannesburg, Joe Slovo, principal leader of the SACP and minister of housing, said that, in some cases, these occupations were orchestrated "by outsiders who do not have the best interests of (the squatters) at heart, but who are instigating such actions for their own personal and political gain (...). We have waiting lists and negotiations in progress on an overall housing strategy which will include a mortgage indemnity scheme to encourage lending by the banks, a national housing bank, and a revamped subsidy system (...). In the meantime we must try to eliminate wild squatting through political intervention by the ANC's social structures, by the civic, and other organs of civil society."<sup>4</sup>



4. *Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 10/06/94.

# Contradiction and ambiguity

Another problem has emerged in relation to the NGOs which are to be involved in projects linked to the RDP. These organisations are very numerous in South Africa and some could be tempted to wish to capture at any price a part of the "market" in "reconstruction". But the intervention of the ANC has, in this respect, been very marked by authoritarianism and by the hope of political normalisation. All of which is contradictory with the supposed value placed on "civil society"!

## Bosses and workers

Finally, there is the question of the "democratisation" of workplaces. There again, the road proposed by the RDP is a million miles from the known reality of the capital-labour relationship. Rather than starting from the various experiences gone through in the country in the past few years, like the quality circles and workers shareholdings (ESOPs), the ANC above all the COSATU leadership persist in proposing a utopian "co-responsibility" or "co-management" between bosses and workers in the workplaces.<sup>5</sup> "Legislation", says the RDP, "must facilitate workers participation and decision-making in the world of work. Such legislation must include an obligation on employers to negotiate substantial changes concerning production matters or workplace organisation within a nationally negotiated framework (...) Affirmative action measures must be used to end discrimination on the grounds of race and gender, and to address the disparity of power between workers and management..."

Here again, the inspiration comes from the European model, indeed more specifically from the German model. But the confusion is maintained between an enlargement of trade union rights in the workplace and the responsibility of workers' organisations in management decisions. Indeed, even in Europe, the right to access to the general accounting of workplaces or the right to an "opinion" on restructuring plans have never allowed workers' organisations to determine (or even co-determine!) industrial decisions. How can one do better in a country like South Africa where the

racial question in labour relations is not ready to be resolved? But the trajectory of the RDP is all the more equivocal and dangerous when a section of the employers hope to pacify the social field by measures of co-optation and bureaucratisation of the workers' movement. Several attempts have thus been made to promote trade union participation in the capital of enterprises (union shareholders) and to propose no-strike bonuses for workers.

## Who pays the bill?

There remains the social needs, immediate and concrete, which the ANC proposes to satisfy. But who will pay for the RDP? A special fund should theoretically cover the needs of the RDP for the next five years, to which a modest contribution from the government budget will be added. The fund is to amount to 37.5 billion rand over five years. For the current fiscal year the government's contribution will amount to 2.5 billion rand, or 3 percent of consumption spending.

The justifications for this arrangement are many. The main one is that no burden imply imposing on the profits of the big companies and upsetting the rich through radical changes in taxation. The government of national unity is credible in the eyes of the National Party and the right only if the ANC refrains from attacking the main social equilibria. In the course of the last three fiscal years the State budget deficit has been successively 4.3, 8.3, and 6.9 percent of GDP. It is expected to be around 6.6 percent for the fiscal year 1994-95. The direct financing of the RDP by the government budget, combined with a necessary control of the public deficit, would then imply a vast redistribution of income in favour of the State and the workers to detriment of capital. The financing of the RDP rests instead, then, on an appeal to national and international sponsors: governments and foreign institutions, international investors. Conveniently, some ANC members stress their aversion to a society too much controlled by the State. The exterior financing of the RDP is, according to them, linked to a rejection of any "command economy"

perspective. Reality is more prosaic, however. The economic policy which is being implemented is a liberal and monetarist one. The central bank has invoked the risks of inflationary pressure and Alec Erwin, as deputy finance minister, has said that privatisations must be seriously taken into consideration as a means of reducing the public debt.<sup>6</sup> If one takes into account only the main financial and monetary indicators, avoiding any consideration on the relations between classes, these conclusions are obviously inescapable!

Moreover, the debate over the military budget has also illustrated the internal tensions within the ANC over the budget. We have already seen the new defence minister and ANC leader, Joe Modise, declaring his support for the maintenance of military spending at its current level. The "white paper" to be published by the government in order to "apply" the RDP only confirms this tendency. Monetarism is dominant throughout this document and privatisations appear to be seen as a central instrument for balancing the budget. During the last COSATU congress there was considerable pressure brought to bear on the unions to support these policies.

## The voice of the rank-and-file

The wave of strikes over the last few months has been a perfect illustration of the social contradictions of the current transition. Already between January and June 1994, that is before the elections and just after them, there had been 1.4 million strike days, double the total of the preceding year. The *Sunday Times* of 24 July commented: "This week the trickle of workplace stoppages threatened to grow into an unprecedented flood of strike actions with COSATU fighting to re-assert its authority. Without the res-

5. This notion of co-management dates back to the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s in the former trade union left, essentially around the NUMSA leadership and in the ANC. See Geoff Schreiner, *South Africa Labour Bulletin*, July/August 1992. Also the proposal, in 1992, for "co-determination" from the miners' union, the NUM. Or again, the debate on the installation of a negotiated "Total and Quality" plan at PG Bison, *SALB*, January 1992.

6. *Business Day*, 14/09/94.

pected founding general secretary, Jay Naidoo, and around sixty other key leaders who have left to serve in the government, frustrated workers have begun to take matters into their hands. And so far they have opted for strikes, strikes and more strikes.<sup>7</sup>

In the recent past workers demands were dampened by recession. Today, when the economic cycle seems to be going in the opposite direction and they wish to catch upon what they have lost, they are faced by the criteria of competitiveness for export, the GATT constraints, and the reduction of import duties. The pressure on wage-earners has deepened and retrenchments are frequent. The workers had, moreover, hoped for significant changes in their status after the electoral victory of the ANC.

Yet racism has been maintained in the workplaces as have wage disparities which also reflect racial divisions. The strike in the Pick'n'Pay chain of shops has illustrated this, to the extent that the strikers were, as in the past, violently attacked by the police. Indeed, at the COSATU congress held at the beginning of September, Nelson Mandela did not hesitate to criticise the workers, demanding that they should not focus on narrow sectoral interests and should take into consideration the 5 million unemployed.<sup>8</sup> More frankly, the *Cape Times* commented, under the headline "Well said": "The RDP cannot be built on economic chaos, and it will take the best efforts, patience and understanding of both labour and management to ensure productive harmony."<sup>9</sup>

### **Rebuilding trade union independence**

Many militants have seen the RDP as a means of better legitimising their demands. Rather than denouncing the "traitors" in power, is it not better to organise the various social movements for the implementation of the promises contained in the RDP, thus clarifying the political debate? This road should certainly be explored. But it is necessary to avoid any illusions on the end of the honeymoon and the reconstruction of a mass political alternative to the left of the ANC and the SACP. The outcome of the recent strikes illustrates this. Neither the Pick'n'Pay workers nor the car-workers achieved victory. Work has recommenced in the car industry while the employers' press gloats: "For despite putting a brave face on their decision to accept the employers' final offer of 10.5 percent wage rise and return to work this

week, the mood at union headquarters is far from upbeat."<sup>9</sup>

The strength of the political and trade union leaderships and the ideological hegemony of the ANC weigh against the possibility of a rapid clarification. The risk is that a movement based around demands could exhaust itself before the appearance of an alternative leadership. A great deal of attention must be paid to what is going on in the trade union movement and the SACP. But the potential remains modest, taking into account the accelerated bureaucratisation of these organisations and the international situation.

Dozens of national trade union leaders have been nominated to the national and regional governments. This contributes, for the moment, to a semi-integration of the trade union movement in the machinery of the State. Several recent episodes illustrate the tendencies at work. Among the most spectacular was that of the projected consortium of the trade union federations, COSATU and NACTU, with the Black employers' organisations (NAFCOC and FABCO) to examine the possibility of the investment in the casinos of the South African enterprise Sun International. For COSATU it was a means of gaining access to the kind of financial resources previously available to it through foreign donations. Such was the argument of John Coppelyn, leader of the textile trade union, former leader of the trade union left in the early 1980s, now an ANC deputy and also "COSATU investment adviser!" As to Sun International, the aim would be to secure lucrative contracts with regional and local governments in which COSATU will have a strong influence. But what of the unionised workers of Sun International? Another case is that of a vague project for an international conference centre at Durban for which a lobby has been set up bringing together the local ANC leaders, the minister of public works, leaders of COSATU and also Inkatha supporters. Jeff Rabele, the minister of public works, had the nerve to say that this project (evaluated at 200 million rand) confirmed to the RDP. A company was created, involving both the former treasurer of the ANC for Southern Natal, Mzi Khumalo, and an Inkatha leader.<sup>10</sup>

Thus corruption is escalating, while numerous ANC leaders are integrated in the leadership pools of some big enterprises. The first lines of fracture which appear could, then, not necessarily correspond to a division between adherents of the current policy and the more radical sectors. The probability is greater that we will see a conflict between two partially antagonistic forms of bureaucratisation, that of the State and that of the trade union movement, still very dependent on its mass base. Between the two the space for building an independent force will be narrow. ★

**ACCORDING to a recent study (Weekly Mail and Guardian, 17 June 1994), the expenditure of a black person in South Africa represents on average only 11% of that of a white. The whites, who represent no more than 13% of the population, account for 54% of household expenditure. Moreover the recent strikes allowed some newspapers to comment on the inequality of wages in the workplaces. At Anglo-American the directors earn almost 62 times the wage of a worker. The ratio is 96:1 at ABSA and 126:1 at Murray & Roberts.**

7. *Business Day*, 08/09/94.

8. *Cape Times*, 09/09/94.

9. *Financial Mail*, 09/09/94.

10. *Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 19/08/94.



me. It goes without saying that these tasks are extremely difficult, and cannot be accomplished simply through the conversion of former managers and members of the nomenklatura into capitalists. At the level of the masses, the moral and political rejection of the bureaucratic establishment is undoubtedly linked to generalised illusions about the free market and private initiative. But the reality of the backwards transition has quite rapidly dissipated these; the great majority of the population has experienced increasingly serious difficulties in everyday life and old woes such as unemployment, poverty and hunger have re-appeared on a wide scale while only the narrow layers of the privileged have benefited from the new order. In addition, the new regimes have had to face a world economic situation of prolonged stagnation, generating contradictions and difficulties which can only fall on the masses, the more so in that the hoped for "aid" and investment has not materialized. It is hardly astonishing in these circumstances that in the past year tendencies which seek to rehabilitate the past have strengthened themselves in a number of countries. It seems obvious that these obstacles, above all those of a structural nature, exist in China, but there are also specific factors.

### New course

In the first place, the new course followed by the Chinese took shape in an economic context quite different to that of the former USSR and its satellite countries in the course of the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, international capitalism, reassured by the relative stability of the country and its economy, has realised more investment projects, loans and commercial agreements than in the former Soviet Union or other countries. It is very probable that this attitude will be maintained in the coming years, given the need for capitalists to assure new markets. After all, even modest percentages of market share represent considerable value in such an enormous country.

In the third place, the formation of a bourgeois or neo-bourgeois social layer could be facilitated by the rehabilitation of the former bourgeoisie, never completely destroyed, by the influence of Hong Kong, which will soon be reintegrated into the People's Republic, and by the existence of a solid bourgeoisie of Chinese origin which plays an economic role of the first rank in several Asian countries, such as Indonesia and Malay-

sia, and which seems ready to enter the game. These factors, above all the first two, have effectively contributed to the realization of the new course. However, it does not follow automatically from this that a gradual and "peaceful" restoration of capitalism is on the agenda. The private sector, both national and foreign, still has a very limited weight, and one could say the same thing in relation to the bourgeois embryos; the Chinese bourgeoisie abroad can contribute capital and knowledge but due to its relative weakness as its exteriority, it will not be able to play a decisive role in the transformation of structural relations and still less in the conquest of political hegemony. No comparison is possible with Germany where, despite a completely different relationship of forces and other favourable conditions, the structural assimilation of the former GDR has come up against much greater difficulties than were foreseen. Nor should one underestimate the fact that the process which has developed until now and which is far from representing a restoration of capitalism, has experienced bottlenecks, conflictual tensions and grave contradictions in different areas; all these tendencies could lead to veritable explosions on the political and social level. Last but not least, it is the greater stability of the existing system and greater solidity of the dominant bureaucratic layer which aggravates the more strictly structural problems.

### Evolution

The second thesis, according to which the reformist choice could in the long term support a physiological evolution towards socialism, is based upon the following factors: (i) the relative stability of the political framework (State apparatus, administrative apparatus, armed forces, and so forth) under the unchallenged leadership of a strongly centralised party; (ii) the expanding economy and the fact that the political regime can make its choices within the framework of an economic plan; (iii) the ethnic cohesion of a country where there are no centrifugal forces comparable to those which tore apart the USSR and Yugoslavia; (iv) despite the vicissitudes of the 1960s and 1970s, the greater continuity of the ruling group which allows a generational shift without enormous traumas. There are also other factors, which will have a still greater significance in the future.

Firstly, it should not be forgotten that the agricultural economy, which

remains predominant, is not organised on a collective basis, nor even on the basis of co-operatives. 200 million families own on average 0.7 ha — and this represents "the biggest obstacle to progress" in the countryside where "such a set-up cannot meet the needs of modern farming". (*China Daily*, 2 November 1993) At the same time, it favours, at least tendentially, an accumulation of the capitalist type, and so there is possibility for conflict.

Secondly, large-scale state-owned industry continues to be considered as the "pillar of the industry". However, it is currently less dynamic than the private sector. A high percentage of enterprises are in deficit and could be subject to restructurings, indeed in part to privatisation. More generally, integration in the international economy will increasingly affect (whether directly or indirectly) the industrial and tertiary sectors. For example, at the time of the measures adopted in the summer of 1993, the Chinese leaders first took care to consult the World Bank.

### Content

Thirdly, the planned economy is increasingly being emptied of its content; it less and less constitutes a counterweight to the tendencies stimulated by the existence of the private sector, the dynamic of a non-collectivist agricultural economy and the mechanisms of the market. For the past year or so official texts have spoken increasingly explicitly of the transcendence or suppression of the planned economy. In November 1993 and important text from the Party central committee, while not overstating its case, redefined the significance of planning, explaining that plans must be based upon the market, limited to fixing the broad lines of intervention and rest essentially on the interventions of the central bank and fiscal mechanisms.

While revolutionary Marxists have never denied that the market has a role to play in a phase of post-capitalist transition, there is still the question of whether or not decisive choices are dictated by the market. If the orientations which have been already sketched out are accentuated as seems to be intended, the

1. The Chinese abroad total 55 million. But their specific economic weight is enormously greater than their percentage of the population of the different countries concerned (for example, in Thailand, they represent eight percent of the population, but control eighty percent of commercial capital and half of the banks). Their economic "conglomerates" function as multinationals at the Asian level.

# China in transition



Chinese economy will not go in the second direction. Further there is also a progressive erosion in the State monopoly on foreign trade, despite the fact that this monopoly should constitute an essential protective measure so long as the world market remains dominated by the imperatives of capitalist accumulation.

## Tibet

Moreover, while the national questions do not have the same significance as in other countries (the fifty-five national minorities represent no more than eight percent of the total population), there remains the problem of Tibet which has persisted, with its chronic tensions and conflicts, since immediately after the revolutionary victory. Problems have also emerged in relation to other nationalities; for example, serious conflicts took place last year with the Moslem community in Qinghai. Independently of the national questions, there are also other, often vigorously denounced tendencies. These tendencies operate on the provincial level (many provinces have populations larger than those of the larger Western European countries); internal protective barriers have been established, investment is stimulated in some provinces to the detriment of others, decisions adopted by the Beijing government remain unimplemented, and so forth. One notable point of discord has been income tax. In 1978 the share going to the State corresponded to thirty-four percent of GNP; this was down to fifteen percent by 1992 and has since fallen again. It is too soon to say if the recent tax reforms have succeeded in restoring order.

Finally, the State and Party apparatus is changing. It bears little resemblance to its incarnation during the revolution and the first years following victory; new recruits are far from being the same as their predecessors. The army is no longer immune from the tendencies at work in society as a whole and the traditions of the Long March are now hazy.

It is worth recalling that the army manages autonomously vast and profitable economic sectors in, as stated, a context where a symbiosis is taking place between sectors of the political and technocratic bureaucracy and embryonic bourgeois layers, and where there are growing international links

## Dynamics

In conclusion, the conflictual tensions at work, in different forms, with different intensities and dynamics, throughout the history of post-revolutionary China have seriously deepened throughout the past fifteen years. The more traditional tensions and contradictions intertwine with the new ones resulting from transformations already carried out or planned. Chinese leaders and commentators are aware of this dynamic. Grave worries had already been expressed before the explosion of 1989, and recently voices have once more been raised. For example, a report to a seminar of the institute of sociology in Beijing had the following to say: "Despite the rapid economic growth and social development, experts predicted problems, which might lead to disorder. One potential challenge to social stability next year is likely to come from the effects of the separation of central and local government taxes... Other social

problems likely to arise in the coming year include the widening income gap in different economic sectors, social problems in the under-developed western areas and increase in crime... While the economy and society maintained a vigorous development, all kinds of conflicts and problems have accumulated and intensified." (*China Daily*, 2 November 1994)

Are these merely tendentious formations seeking to justify certain decisions and above all the persistent refusal to adopt measures of democratisation at the political level? Possibly, but these worries have a certain foundation.

## Exodus

Inasmuch as there is a gigantic rural exodus, which will get worse, without any solution being apparent in the short to medium term; inasmuch as growing disequilibria are emerging between different agricultural sectors which the enlarging of the "market economy" can only aggravate; inasmuch as the gap grows between rich peasants, local bureaucrats, and broad layers of peasants on the road to pauperisation; inasmuch as the structural framework itself — that is the preponderance of family-managed businesses — represents a substantial obstacle to any real modernisation and to the growth of the necessary production to satisfy the food needs of the population without having recourse to massive imports whose consequences for the balance of payments are known, how could one not worry about the situation in the countryside?

There is no need to dwell here on the situation of bankruptcy in which a high percentage of big state firms find themselves, or on the uncontrolled growth of regions which are in the vanguard of privatisations and the expansion of joint ventures, with all sorts of social and economic tensions. Urban and industrial unemployment, which is of a dimension comparable to that of the rural exodus, will also lead to disequilibria, conflictual situations and phenomena of disintegration. More generally, the "liberalisation" or further extension of the "laws of the market" will inevitably have negative effects on the living conditions of broad layers of the population; it is enough to

recall the key problem of housing. The layers which will be the victims of growing inequalities which the official ideology, far from condemning, presents as inevitable, indeed, desirable, are still less likely to accept such a state of things inasmuch as the last few years have nourished a consumer society psychology.<sup>2</sup>

All this potential for conflict piles up in a political context which has not fundamentally changed. Social pressures will have a tendency to concretise price increases, the housing crisis, the insufficiency of wages, and so forth, will express their discontent, advancing their own demands and having recourse to spontaneous mobilisations, indeed outright riots. For their part, the bourgeois layers in formation and the middle layers will seek to suppress the obstacles to their further growth and the augmentation of their specific socio-political weight, which are represented, in the final analysis, by the existence of non-capitalist relations of production and property and by the maintenance of the post-revolutionary hegemonic political apparatuses. Keeping a due sense of proportion, China could be marked by the contradiction which lay at the root of the crisis of the USSR in the 1980s; the contradiction between a civil society which has, despite all, ripened and become more demanding, and archaic and sclerotic political structures. If this will be no physiological development of a social dialectic which opens the road to the construction of socialism and wrenching conflicts, capable of provoking new repressive and authoritarian interventions, will inevitably develop.

### Reformist

It is in this context that the bureaucracy, in its diverse structures and outside of any reformist operations, will try in its own manner and with its own methods (that is to say with the defence of its own interests as the priority) to maintain the role that it attributes to itself, that of the element of necessary cohesion in a complex and tormented society.

This bureaucracy has the same roots as the dominant layers of other post-revolutionary societies formed after the two world wars. But an ancient tradition has exercised and continues to exercise an influence on the behaviour and ideological dynamic which it adopts.<sup>3</sup>

Without abusing historical analogies, nor forgetting that any fundamental political and sociological characterisa-

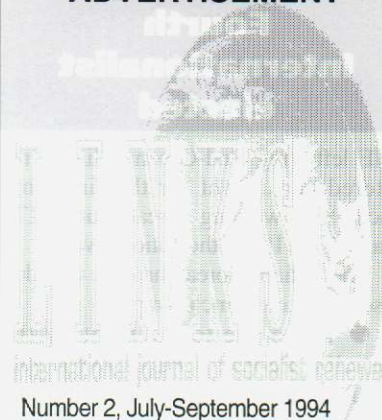
tion must base itself on the mode of production and the relations of property, we will recall that one of the most lucid historians of China, Etienne Balazs, has written in a series of essays under the title of the 'Celestial Bureaucracy' (Galimard, Paris, 1968): "In the last analysis, the originality of China consists in having created a form of monocratic regime where the civil bureaucracy of lettered civil servants, as a social group, clearly dominates the State... Each episode of Chinese history bears witness to it; without the civil servants to hold the feudals, to maintain with a grip of steel the unity of the empire, particularities would have carried the day and, with the division of sovereignty, the whole of Chinese civilisation would have shattered... And then — without exception — the alternative to the reign of the bureaucracy, in peasant China, was disorder... Many traits of People's China recall the old imperial regime; the primacy of the State and the class of privileged functionaries — in this perspective the Party bureaucracy would be the substitute for the mandarin; the importance of public works carried out by millions of coolies; the constant surveillance by the police; the intolerance of an enlightened but totalitarian absolutism, with its paternalist side, its sentiment of superiority, its conceit and its pride; and finally, the importance of the individual, incapable of escaping the social pressure of the collectivity and its conformism... It is the Statism and the absolute power of a bureaucracy which seems to constitute the real common denominator of the old and the new regime in China." (pp 32, 40, 316-317)

Today, while Balazs would rectify some expressions, the substance is the same: no qualitative change in the direction of socialist democracy has been introduced. Moreover, if the new orientation leads to an emergence from the national isolation of the policy of self-sufficiency, this is being achieved through a partial integration in the mechanisms of the world capitalist economy and not by the conquest of a supranational dimension of capitalism. In synthesis, this is the impasse in which China today finds itself. ★

2. The director Ning Ying has said in an interview: "In some ways, it is obvious that consumption brings pleasure and that everybody is happy to be able to buy things. But in other ways, it is tragic; a whole culture is in the process of disappearing and, in exchange, we are importing western models without discrimination." (*L'Unita*, 13 November 1993)

3. It seems that one of Mao's favourite pieces of reading material was a kind of political manual for the imperial bureaucracy, 'The Universal Mirror of History', written in the 11th or 12th century by Sima Guang.

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## DENMARK: Fourth Internationalist elected

THE left-wing Red-Green Alliance re-entered parliament for the first time since 1987, winning 6 seats out of 175 available (3.1% of the national vote).

The Alliance breakthrough was due to several factors including:

- The move to the right by the Socialist People's Party (SF). The Alliance was able to present itself as the real left opposition and won particular support from youth looking for radical alternatives.

- The Alliance was the only group opposing the the European Union, clearly differentiating itself from the SF which had participated in a "national compromise" in order to win a 'yes' vote in the second Danish referendum (see IV, no. 246, June 1993).

In 1987 the Left Socialists (VS) lost their parliamentary representation. Two years later, the Red-Green Alliance was formed on the initiative of the VS, the Communist party (DKP) and the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP, Danish section of the Fourth International). Since then the Alliance has developed into an independent organisation with no special privileges for any affiliated party. However, of the six parliamentary deputies elected one is a member of the SAP, while two each come from the DKP and the VS, and one from the KAP (an ex-Maoist party).

The election campaign included demands for a reduction in the working week to thirty-hours, tax reform paid by the rich, anti-militarisation, a collective transport system, and ecological agriculture.

The six represents an important, if small, breakthrough for the European radical left, and a particularly important step forward for the Fourth International with the election of Sören Søndergaard, our first parliamentary deputy in Europe. Further coverage in next month's *International Viewpoint*. ✪

## OBITUARIES

THE journalist, historian and revolutionary militant **ISAAC AKCELRUD** died in **Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**, on 16 September.

Originally from Santa Maria, in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, Isaac was born in 1914 into a family

descended from Ukrainian Jews. He began as a militant in the National Liberation Alliance of the 1930s, before joining the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) in 1936. Acting secretly under the pseudonym of Josino Campos, Isaac was party secretary for agitation and propaganda in Rio Grande do Sul.

As a candidate for the State constituent assembly, he emerged as a party member in 1945. In 1950 he moved to Sao Paulo, where he became the editor of *Hoje*, linked to the PCB.

It was in Rio, as editor of *Imprensa Popular*, that Isaac played a central role in the discussion in Brazil of the Khrushchev report, presented to the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union Communist Party, which denounced the crimes of Stalin. Persecuted by the PCB leadership, he left.

He then began to work for the mainstream press in Rio and Sao Paulo, though without renouncing his leftwing ideas. In the 1970s he was a correspondent in the Middle East and it was during this period that he grew closer to "Trotskyism".

A member of the Workers' Party (PT) since it was founded at the beginning of the 1980s, he was also a member of the tendency Socialist Democracy (DS, Brazilian supporters of the Fourth International), in which he played an important role. He contributed to the end to the DS paper *Em Tempo*, and was one of its fiercest supporters.

He was equally militant in the movement Peace Now, which advocates disarmament in the Middle East and also often contributed to the press of the "Movement of those without land". During the 1980s he wrote works upon the Middle East and upon land reform, as well as a considerable number of articles upon Brazil and international politics.

Despite diabetes, Isaac was still an active militant at eighty years old. In August 1994 he took part in a whole series of meetings in Sao Paulo, including a DS meeting where he forcefully explained his concerns around the PT electoral campaign.

Isaac Akcelrud was, until the last day of his life, a true class fighter. ✪

BORN in Chile on 11 February 1911, **ENRIQUE SEPULVEDA QUESADA** died in **Paris** on 18 June 1994. A paediatrician by profession, he dedicated his life to the revolutionary struggle.

While still a young university student, he joined the group "Advance" in the struggle against the dictatorship of

Carlos Ibanez del Campo (1927-1931). He then joined the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky. He founded the Revolutionary Workers' Party (POR) in Chile, and ran the general secretariat during the 1930s. In 1965 he founded the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) and was its general secretary until 1967. He then moved away from it.

Under the Allende government he was leader-writer for the daily newspaper *El Clarin* (with the largest circulation - 200 thousand - in the country) and wrote a weekly column in *The Nation* from 1970 until the coup d'état by Pinochet in 1973. He was imprisoned but was able to escape to Argentina, only to be imprisoned and tortured by its military junta in 1976.

He succeeded in leaving around 1978/9 and took refuge in France. Author of a number of theoretical works on Marxism, he demonstrated equally great qualities in these as in his political leadership.

His ashes have been taken to Chile by his companion Ana. ✪

**BOB SMITH**, a well known labour movement and trade union militant, died in April of this year, in **Birmingham, England** at the tragically early age of 46.

A man of immense energy and personal warmth, he was devoted to the cause of socialism. Every tribute to him at funeral, attended by 250 people, and at the subsequent memorial meeting, made reference to his good humour, generosity and lack of sectarianism.

Bob, who came into socialist politics at the end of the 1970s, found himself excluded from the Labour Party in the early 1980s. It was at this time that he quickly rallied to the Fourth International in Britain.

He will perhaps be best remembered for his work in the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement, both locally and nationally. Combined with consistent trade union activity, as a member of the printers' union, the GPMU, he was the embodiment of the kind of militant which makes the labour and revolutionary socialist movement tick.

After consultation with his friends and comrades in Birmingham, it was decided that his determined work needed a permanent memorial and a fund has been established for that purpose. Part of the money raised will go towards a volume of writings, 'Here to Stay, Here to Fight', about the struggle against racism and fascism.

Donations can be sent to: **'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU, England** ✪