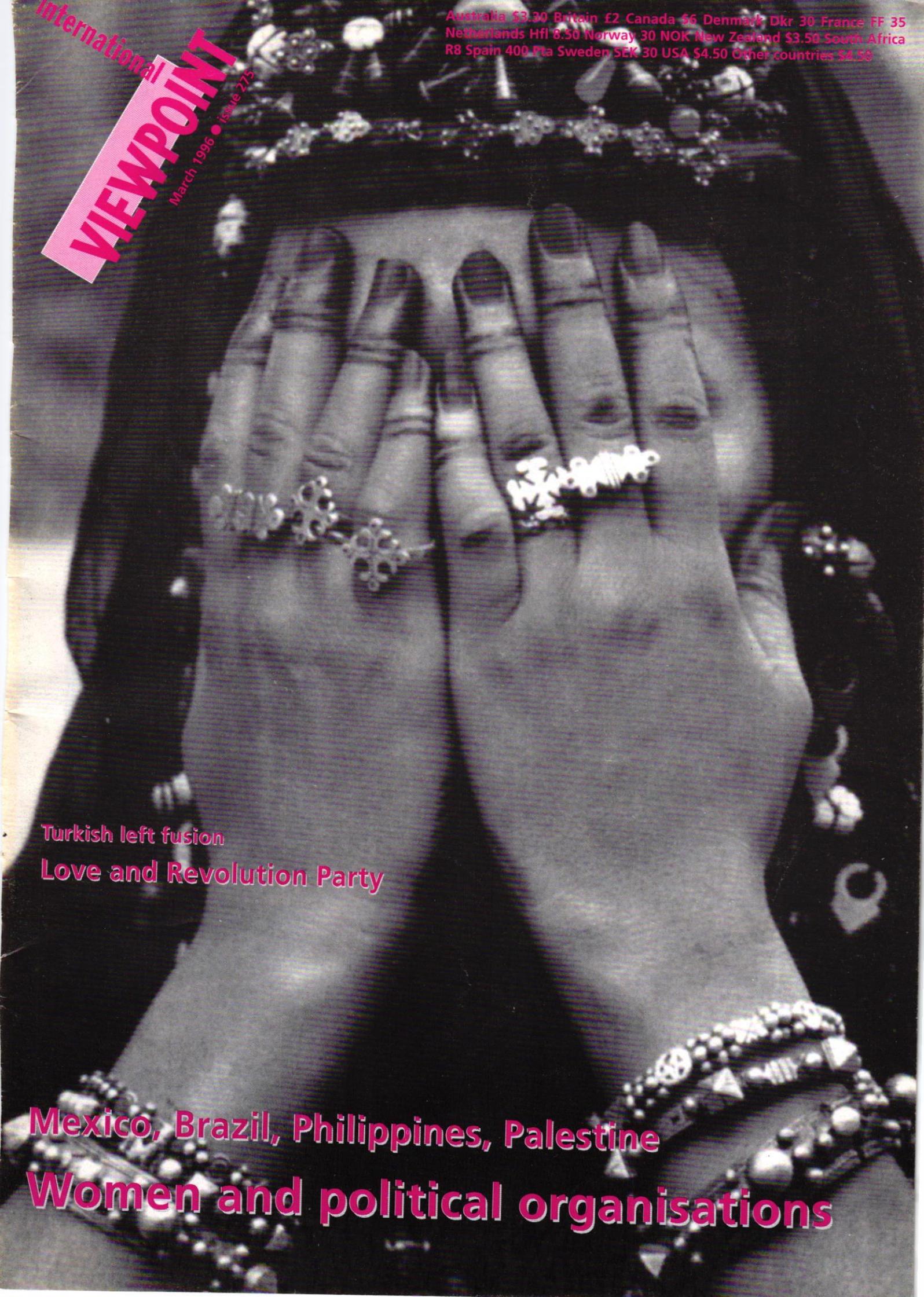


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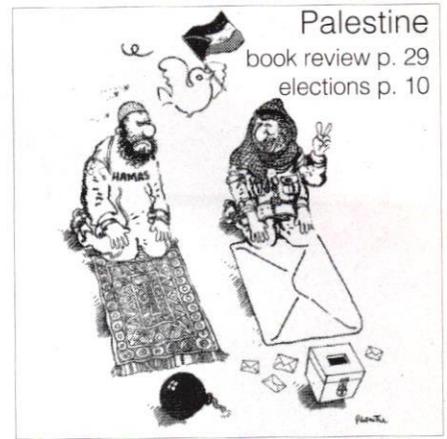


Turkish left fusion  
**Love and Revolution Party**

Mexico, Brazil, Philippines, Palestine  
**Women and political organisations**

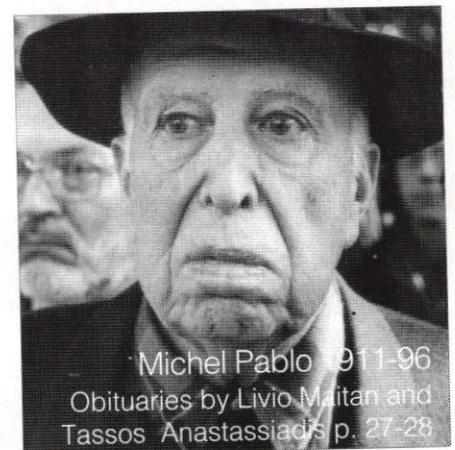
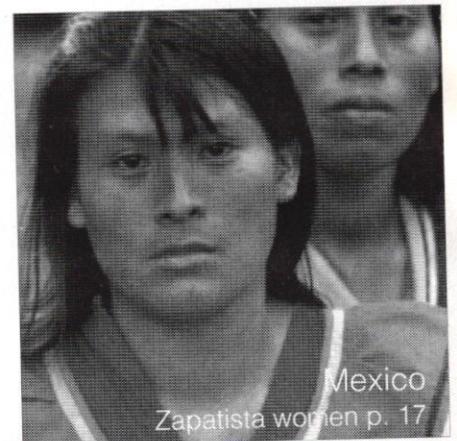
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Haiti:

# German ambassador dismissed

The German ambassador to Haiti has been replaced after deputy Winfried Wolf exposed his racist and sexist views in an article published by the left press in Bonn, Berlin and Paris. But the mass media and government have ignored Wolf's major exposure: Germany's threat to cut development aid unless Haiti intensifies its privatisation programme.

In November 1995, Wolf, a member of parliament for the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism), visited the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico as part of a delegation of the German Parliament's Committee for Economic Co-operation. On his return he wrote a report exposing US and German blackmail of Haiti: the world's richest countries are threatening to cut development aid to the world's poorest country, unless it privatises the telephone company and the Port-au-Prince power station. As Wolf explains, these are the Haitian government's only (and largely insufficient) resources for financing its own priorities: health care, literacy, and agrarian reform.

The article also exposed the intolerable arrogance of Germany's Ambassador to Haiti, Guenther Dahlhoff, an outright lobbyist for privatisation. Dahlhoff told the German parliamentary delegation that Haiti's poverty is the result of its "overpopulation". This overpopulation, according to Dahlhoff, has 'cultural' roots: "The Haitian woman is always willing and the Haitian man always can...", he said.

There was little reaction when the article was published in early January 1996, in a range of low-circulation socialist and radical publications, including Germany's *Junge Welt*, *Socialistische Zeitung* and *Konkret*, and the French weekly *Rouge*. Nor did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs react when the PDS group in Parliament raised the incident on 19 January. But the big press began to cover the case.<sup>1</sup>

Things really started to move when fellow delegation-member Gabriele Fograscher confirmed Wolf's report, and added that Ambassador Dahlhoff had even compared the style of one of Haitian President Aristide's speeches with that of Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels.<sup>2</sup>

Now, Germany's Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, was forced to act. Dahlhoff was summoned to Bonn. He did not deny the facts, and was removed from his post for "sexist and racist statements". According to Wolf, "this is an

unprecedented, but welcome step" in the history of German diplomacy.

The big press almost exclusively concentrated on Dahlhoff's sexist statements. These made a stir in polite society, and satisfied a certain voyeurism on the political and media scene. The political background, to the comments, the desperate situation in Haiti, and the responsibility of Germany and the US for the maintenance and even aggravation of the dreadful conditions in the country were not on the agenda of the debate. German and US linkage of development aid to quick privatisation was in the big media.

Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel was congratulated for his 'decisive' action towards the offending diplomat. He was equally 'decisive' in his January 30th letter to Winfried Wolf, in which he criticised the deputy's 'indiscretion'. Wolf should have turned to 'his' Foreign Minister, Kinkel wrote. The next day Kinkel violently attacked Winfried Wolf in a meeting of the Bundestag Committee for Economic Co-operation: Wolf's behaviour had "damaged German interests", the minister thundered. Kinkel, former head of Germany's BND intelligence service, threatened the radical deputy: "from now on, I will observe you scrupulously. Something could happen in your life!"<sup>3</sup>

Kinkel said that Wolf should have "avoided alarming the public". If he had raised the matter in private, the Minister continued, it would have been possible to merely reprimand the outspoken Ambassador in Port-au-Prince, but not remove him from his post.

Sympathy for Winfried Wolf's action is not restricted to the Haitians or to the socialist and radical milieus in Germany and abroad. The priest Albrecht Bausch, president of the Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) Peace Prize,<sup>4</sup> defended Winfried Wolf's right to inform the public. The pastor characterised ex-ambassador Dahlhoff as a "slanderer, full of contempt for the Haitian people and their government, whose

declarations and priorities in the struggle against misery are absolutely reasonable". Bausch rejected all parliamentary claims that Wolf should have raised his concerns in private.

Peter Hesse, a member of Germany's ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party, and president of the "Solidarity in Partnership for the One World" foundation,



wrote thanking Winfried Wolf for his outspoken article. "Even a German with a liberal-conservative outlook must side with the oppressed in a country like Haiti," he wrote.

This is certainly an extremely marginal position in the conservative camp. But it shows the possibilities of launching a debate on the real character and effects of foreign policy and "aid". ★

#### Notes

1. *Badische Zeitung* (daily), 12 January 1995.
2. The mass circulation illustrated weekly *Stern* covered this story in its 25 January issue, with details leaked to the big daily papers two or three days earlier.
3. See Winfried Wolf's report of this strange conversation in the 5 February 1996 issue of the daily *Junge Welt*.
4. In 1993 the Aachen Peace Prize was awarded to Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Source: compiled by Jean Dupont using information supplied by Winfried Wolf's parliamentary office. For more information contact: Winfried Wolf's Office, Parliament (Bundeshaus), D-53113 Bonn, Germany. Tel.: 49-228-1681791. Fax: 49-228-1686068

# "More journalists than delegates" at PDS Congress

The Fourth Congress of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) took place in Magdeburg on 3-4 February 1996. Among the West German delegates was Angela Klein, journalist at the left bi-weekly newspaper SoZ.

● International Viewpoint: What are the main changes since last year?

Klein: This conference was much better organised. In 1995 the outgoing leadership produced, at the last minute, yet another formal distancing of the party from Stalinism [the PDS is descended from the East German Communist Party (SED)]. The leadership's attacks on the "Communist Platform" minority seemed to lump any radical anti-capitalism with "Stalinism". Their openly stated aim was to make the PDS into a respectable part of the political system.

One year later, party leaders came to the conference with a (previously circulated) "Tasks" document proposing concrete campaigns against mass unemployment [10.8% in the country as a whole, 16.8% in Eastern Germany], in defence of social benefits, local government autonomy and democratisation, and against the intervention of German armed forces abroad.

## Solidarity Subscriptions

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

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

Delegates responded to the leadership's invitation to discuss and amend this radical-sounding document. But somehow the debate was less polarised than in 1995. The possibilities for the crystallisation of a radical, anti-capitalist opposition within the party seemed even weaker than last year.

There were more journalists present than delegates. A bad sign. And something which is educating conference participants to speak "to the media" rather than to the conference.

● But if the leadership's proposals correspond to the practical needs of the party, and are open to amendment, why should there be a "radical opposition"?

The PDS is still not completely committed either to a reformist strategy, or a revolutionary one. Obviously, parliamentary activities are pushing the party towards adaptation to the system. Particularly given our good electoral results in the municipalities and "lands" (states) of the former German Democratic Republic [East Germany].

The Party leadership kept this problem out of the centre of conference discussions.

Roland Claus, PDS leader in the East German "land" of Sachsen-Anhalt had previously said that we should consider participation [as junior partner] in a government coalition with the SPD. But at congress he only defended his current policy of "tolerating" the Social Democratic Party (SPD) government of the Land. Even so, this does mean supporting a policy of loyal management of the capitalist crisis.

What was missing at this congress was a sincere balance sheet of this experience of support for a SPD government. And a sincere evaluation of the "adaptionist" policy of the PDS in a large number of municipalities.

● Do the Communist Platform make a systematic criticism of this tendency towards "adaptation"?

Klein: No. They oppose, in a correct but rather abstract way, the idea of governmental coalitions with the SPD.

But the Platform did not use this congress to raise the issue of "adaptation" in municipal government, or "tolerance" of the SPD government in Sachsen-Anhalt. The Communist Platform's own strategy is reformist: the good old "minimum programme - maximum programme" logic.

The main articulation of frustration with the logic of submission to supposed "objective constraints" of political co-management came from the Young Comrades Working Group (AG JG). Their amendments went in the right direction, but were so vague that the "practitioners" at the top of the party will have little trouble interpreting them any way they like.

● What were the most important amendments?

The amendment declaring PDS opposition to any intervention of the German army abroad, including participation in an United Nations operation. This amendment reinforces the struggle against those, particularly in the parliamentary fraction of the party, who want to "soften" our position". Another important amendment made it clear that our commitment to a reduction in the working weeks includes the demand that this should be without loss of salary. Very important!

My group's amendments, underlining the importance of the struggle against 'Maastricht' Europe, arguing that the construction of the PDS in Western Germany cannot continue to be seen as an "appendage" of the party in the Eastern lands, and establishing a link between our immediate tasks and the socialist perspective were not adopted. But the first of these proposals did meet with considerable interest among delegates, particularly from the Eastern parts of Germany. This is certainly a 'plus' for debates in the coming period. ★

### Notes

Angela Klein, a Fourth International activist inside Germany's Association for Socialist Politics (VSP, formerly the United Socialist Party), was interviewed for IV by Manuel Kellner. She was present at the PDS Congress as delegate for Kreuzberg (West Berlin).

# "Love and Revolution" party

Over 15,000 people participated at the creation of the new Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) on 22 January. The new group, already nicknamed the "Love and Revolution" party, brings the absolute majority of Turkey's far-left militants and leaders together in one organisation.

The ÖDP is the result of the fusion of two organisations. The Common Initiative for shaping the Future (GBKP), which includes the remains of Dev-Yol (Revolutionary Way), the country's leading revolutionary organisation of the 1970s, and the Socialist Party (BSP), itself a regroupment of several left groups, including the Fourth International supporters, Yeniyol. The GBKP brings just over 3,000 members to the ÖDP, the DSP a little less. But the new party has already attracted some 4,000 non-aligned activists: Marxist intellectuals, feminists, ecologists, youth, student and pacifist militants. Three generations of radical left militants, previously fragmented into rival currents.

The Fourth International supporters of Yeniyol had already worked for the unity of a number of groups in the BSP. As vice-president and, in recent months, General Co-ordinator of the BSP, Yeniyol leader Masis Kürkçügil was able to co-ordinate an active Yeniyol participation in the process of construction of the ÖDP. Following the fusion of the BSP and GBKP, Kürkçügil was elected to the Central Committee of the ÖDP (which has 24 members). He has also been assigned responsibility for the international relations of the new party. Another Yeniyol leader, Özlem O, has been elected to the 100-strong "Broad Leadership", the 'parliament' of the ÖDP.

**by Masis Kürkçügil**

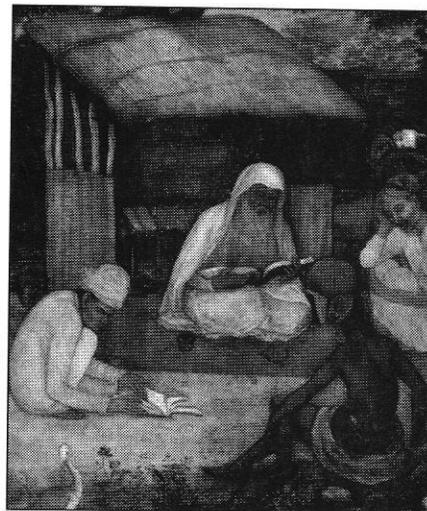
**WHEN WE FOUNDED THE BSP TWO YEARS** ago, we characterised it as a partial fusion of Marxist and socialist forces. We stressed that other steps were still needed if we were to realise a true union of the ensemble of left forces. We were already thinking about a rapprochement with the comrades of GBKP. It is important to recognise that the BSP, on its own, was not able to unite, or mobilise, enough forces to create a mass socialist party.

Nor was the GBKP able to meet its own goals. It had attracted several sectors which had left the Social Democrats after the 1994 elections. But it had not adopted a clear programmatic self-definition, like the BSP had.

The GBKP wanted to unite all the sectors struggling for democracy, in the interest of the "forces of labour". But the organisation consistently refused to define itself as a party, preferring an 'untidy' programmatic identity: limited more or less to a plan of action.

Despite all this, most of the left considered the BSP and GBKP to be rather similar organisations. It was difficult to justify the existence of separate organisational frameworks. Neither party could win wide credibility for its project. Their fusion was, then, above all a 'marriage of reason'. There is still no clear, unambiguous common project. We are heading in that direction, through a synthesis of the two organisations. Until now, each party has emphasised its own activities and discussions. But, as the new party develops its activities, and organises its own discussions, the situation will clarify.

One could argue that a heterogeneous party of distinct organised groups each firmly attached to their former identity, and a mass of 'non-aligned' individual members who do not define themselves as socialists. On the other hand, Turkish workers wouldn't see the point in any kind of new left organisation which was not a united party. Such a structure would remain marginalised from the real social and political dynamics. So the only solution was to advance towards a common party, with an action programme which will define a common identity in function of the actions and debates which this common action will generate. Nor should we forget that, whatever the worries of some of the



founders and members of the ÖDP, the media and public opinion certainly see the new organisation as a unified socialist party.

It was not easy to come this far. We went through a number of difficult steps. In 1995, the GBKP invited us — as individuals, not as the BSP — to a series of political discussion. That summer we formed a commission for informal contacts between the two parties. In September, they accepted our invitation to jointly organise our Peace Festival (centred on the Kurdish question). This was a big success in Istanbul and a number of other cities. Meanwhile, at the BSP June Congress, we adopted a clear motion in favour of unity with the GBKP. In October, we organised a series of common meetings, bringing together 200 leading members of the two organisations. The first discussion covered the political situation in Turkey and the world, the second dealt with the model of the party and "the way to do politics".

We discovered that whenever we tried to elaborate what we should do, there was no real divergence. But as soon as we tried to define something in formula and words, complete confusion developed. We resolved to continue the discussion, at the level of representatives of each group. Then, all that was left was to deal with the formal questions.

By this time, the BSP considered the fusion to be a reality. When the Kurdish nationalist HADEP party (successor to DEP) proposed an alliance for the December 1995 parliamentary elections, we delayed our reply until we had consulted the GBKP. Unfortunately, we were unable to

## ★ Turkey

make a national agreement (though certain sectors and local groups of the GBKP did participate in the BSP-HADEP electoral campaign).

The point of no return was the joint meeting of 1,500 militants on 26 November 1995. Fusion went ahead, in practical terms, under the pressure of the base of both parties, before the leaders had come to a formal agreement.

We formalised the fusion by a well-mediated festival in Ankara, attended by 15 000 people. The bourgeois media have given the new party reasonable, though somewhat condescending coverage. They seem to have been seduced by the new

party's nickname, "Love and Revolution Party".

The ÖDP already has 10,000 members: more than the BSP and GBKP (which had about 3,000 members each). Many of the new members are quite young. We expect to have 20,000 members by the time of our first Congress, in six months.

Such rapid growth brings risks for the socialist identity of the party. This is not a period of upturn and growth in the class struggle. So building the ÖDP is somehow 'swimming against the current', in respect of our political objectives.

But the party keeps growing. New members are signing up. Most are former

social democrats, disappointed by the evolution of their leaders. These new militants are politically to the right of the organisations which founded the ÖDP. This revolutionary core could find itself 'diluted' by the newcomers, many of whom have the traditional, Kemalist [secular, modernist, nationalist] ideology of Turkish social democracy, which is reformist to the core.

This risk of dilution is a necessary evil. But a real problem for the smaller groups, like Yeniyol, which are well to the left in the new party, and risk finding their weight and representation on leadership bodies further reduced after the first congress of the new party. ★

## No heroes, no martyrs, and no gurus!

ÖDP President Ufuk Uras was elected by unanimity. Masis Kürkçügil asked this 36 year-old lecturer in Economics and International Relations about his views on the new party, the Turkish left's heavy heritage of sectarianism and Stalinism, and the tasks ahead.

### ● How do you define the ÖDP?

The ÖDP defines itself as a mass, left party, oriented towards internationalist, libertarian, self-managed socialism, based on the solidarity of opposition and left forces, created to respond to a political need in Turkey. Our conception of socialism is a critical appropriation of Turkish and international socialist theory and experiences. Unlike classical left and socialist parties, we see our construction as a process starting with the base, and growing upwards. We reject hierarchical relations, and we are developing a party project which we intend to be unambiguous and transparent.

● The ÖDP unites forces of very different origins. Internal democracy must be very important.

Of course. From the inaugural meeting of the new leadership, we have stressed the pluralist nature of the party. A range of voices express themselves in and through the ÖDP. There is no room for any "first among equals". No heroes, no martyrs, and no gurus!

But this is not the political culture here in Turkey! So we have to improvise, to build a new tradition. By correcting, and overcoming old habits, particularly the sectarian tradition. It will doubtless be a difficult process. But we hope we can create an amenable climate for such a development..

● How do you personally evaluate the Soviet and Chinese experiences?

You can approach this question through the old debate between Lucas and Bloch. Lucas thought that the worst kind of socialism would be better than the best kind of capitalism. But Bloch argued that bad socialism wasn't socialism!

In 1921, the Kemalist regime assassinated the leaders and many cadre of the Turkish

Communist Party. Three months later, they signed a state treaty, the Turco-Soviet Accord, with the Soviet union. Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin all held high positions in the Soviet leadership. Not one of them asked himself if the establishment of privileged relations between the two neighbouring states, over the bodies and blood of Turkey's Communist leaders, represented a political or ethical problem. They gave inter-state relations a higher priority than international solidarity between the [Communist] parties. You could argue that our history gives us some early indications of the future development of events.

A series of other examples demonstrates how Marxism was sabotaged in the USSR and China. How it became a frozen, official ideology. An obstacle for all of us.

ÖDP members have a critical view of these experiences and political traditions. Which is why we are trying to develop, within the party, mechanisms which will eliminate any bureaucratic methods.

● Your programme stresses internationalism. What does this mean concretely?

Internationalist traditions are weak here. A big handicap for us. Much of Turkish socialist ideology is characterised by nationalism, provincialism. But our party sees internationalism as an essential precondition for the realisation of our project. We offer solidarity to all those who share our objectives of egalitarian, libertarian, self-managed and internationalist socialism. And we are ready to take our place in all international opposition platforms.

● And the Kurdish question?

We are for a bilateral cease-fire, an immediate end to hostilities, and peace. We support any civic initiative in this direction. The real problem, though, is seeing which

parties will sit down and negotiate a peace settlement. All the other Turkish parties are pro-war, pro-army parties, which want to maintain the status quo.

In the [Kurdish] region, we consider as legitimate representatives those HADEP candidates who won the election in their constituencies (even though they were not able to join the parliament in Ankara, since their party did not receive 10% of the state-wide vote.

● Is the ÖDP an institutional party or a street party?

Both. We aim to be present in parliament, which will make our struggle in the street somewhat different from that of some other left groups. But, since we come from the street, our presence in parliament will have a very different dimension from that of the other parties there. Our first such challenge will be the partial municipal election in June.

Ethics, and the way one does politics, are very important for us. Marx wrote in the Communist Manifesto that the bourgeoisie had created the world in their image. We want to do the same, though without falling into 'workerism'.

● The media are calling you the "Love and Revolution Party"

This is very good for us. Political life in Turkey has traditionally been asexual, while even the left has been dominated by a male, patriarchal and macho political culture. "Love and Revolution Party" might suggest that we love revolution and socialism. But it also stresses that love and revolution are inseparable. Take "Land and Freedom", Ken Loach's film about the Spanish civil war. These people are at the front. They struggle, and they fall in love. All at the same time. People who see the film will understand the ÖDP a little better! ★

## Women and political organisations



Introduced by Penny Duggan

Women throughout the world continue to fight for the most basic democratic and material rights — to control their own bodies, against violence, for work, for decent living conditions. Their determined fight has on many occasions brought results, gains have been made and attacks resisted. Often in these struggles they look for support from those social and political organisations which stand for the rights of the oppressed and exploited, trade unions, movements fighting for national liberation, left-wing organisations which stand for the rights of all working people. This support is often forthcoming and many women indeed participate actively in these organisations.

However, we also see that these organisations fail to integrate women and women's demands. Problems faced mainly or exclusively by women are rarely prioritised. And almost nowhere are women adequately represented in the membership and leadership of radical groups and social organisations.

The following articles present socialist feminist experiences from round the world: as an illustration of the similarity of the problems faced and to give some ideas for change.

- Members of the Philippine Communist Party before it went into crisis, talk about how the hyper-centralised and vertical functioning of that organisation affected them as women activists and in their ability to respond to the reality of women's situation in their different regions. The crisis of the PCP, with its challenge to many of their previously-held ideas, has also made it possible to develop new thinking on this question.
- Julieta from Mexico discusses a new political experience: the Zapatistas in Chiapas. She shows how a movement that has consciously rejected traditional forms of political organisation can encourage women's participation, but that the evolution of attitudes is a long process.
- A South Africa feminist explores the difficulties of ensuring that women's specific needs are taken into account in the transformation of local government under the ANC-led government.
- A report on the Palestinian elections underlines once again that, whatever women's commitment and sacrifice in such movements, when it comes to politics and governmental power, we find ourselves relegated to secondary positions.
- A Brazilian trade unionist discusses the work of her teachers' union, and the Workers' Party (PT), in creating the consciousness among women of the need to fight women's oppression.
- The British Labour Party has accepted a legal challenge to women-only shortlists (pre-selection) for parliamentary candidates. A mechanism which would have ensured at least some women candidates.

If progressive organisations cannot integrate the interests of all the oppressed and exploited, we fight with one hand tied behind our back. We hope this dossier provokes discussion on ways to overcome the marginalisation of women, and of women's demands. ★

# “Now you can participate as a whole person”

The women's movement in the Philippines used to be dominated by the hyper-centralised policies of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). After a



difficult period of discussions, crises and splits, a number of post-CPP groups have integrated ideas and practices from

the “new social movements,” particularly feminism. Penny Duggan discusses this process with Fatima (People's Communist Party in Mindanao), Luisa and Mila (Revolutionary Workers' Party in Visayaz), and Lorena (Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Luzon).

*IV: What issues have women mobilised around?*

**Mila:** In the recent past the women's movement has been initiated and led by the [Communist] Party. But recently, due also

to international influences, a number of women's organisations like Gabriela have taken up the question of sex trafficking. Another issue which has developed into a campaign which has been adopted by Gabriela and other women's organisations such as Asian Women for Human Rights is the question of the ‘comfort women’. These are women who were forced into prostitution by the Japanese occupation forces during World War II. Their organisation is called Lola [‘Grandmother’] Filipina. Those women still alive are all grandmothers now. They are fighting for justice, and compensation. The main political significance of their campaign is the exposure of the extent and effects of fascism, especially against women, during World War II.

They also agitate around sexploitation and sex-trafficking of women today, but most of their work is still at the level of institutions. There is not yet a strong women's protest movement against sex-trafficking. Beijing did not produce any solid results for women's interests and organising in the Philippines.

*IV: Have the prostitutes from around the former US bases articulated any demands? That they should be included in the re-conversion programmes, or receive other help or treatment?*

**Fatima:** Batis and other organisations of prostitutes attend to the rights and welfare of the base prostitutes. They tried, unsuccessfully, to have themselves included in the remit of the priorities for the US bases conversion plan. These are not really very big organisations. They're linked to NGOs. Prostitutes are working for themselves for health reasons. It's not really a feminist movement

We are not the only people who help prostitutes organise! One priest, in particular, has organised prostitutes to defend themselves as prostitutes. Not to be forced to perform painful or sado-masochistic acts. To force their clients to use condoms, and so on.

*IV: What are your various parties doing?*

**Mila:** The general tendency has been for the Party to organise women work around general political issues to isolate the class enemy. And then on the specific political objective of organising women to perform revolutionary tasks. So perhaps that's the reason why there's no strong women's movement which takes up the concrete questions of women in a sustained way.

**Lorena:** The Party conception is that, by working with the peasant sector on the struggle for agrarian reform or working with workers fighting for higher wages, benefits, better working conditions, and nationalist industrialisation, you improve conditions for the whole class. There is perhaps less attention to the gender questions that are particular to women within these classes.

Our political movement has tried to protect or to promote women's rights alongside the people's struggle, the people's revolution. In our view, of course, there has to be a balance between political and gender questions. But today we have come to realise the need for a socialist feminist movement, impregnated with the particular character of the Philippines as a people.

The struggle for national liberation, and beyond that, for socialism, will not automatically resolve all problems of gender oppression, unless gender oppression is consciously studied and oppressed. Gender liberation cannot be achieved without the radical transformation of the entire society. So in



tackling the women's problem we consider that there has to be radical change within the Philippine society.

In taking up gender questions, we should look in particular at oppressed and exploited women such as peasant and working class women and all the other marginalised groups of women.

We have just founded Sorilaya, a new socialist feminist peasant organisation. Over the next year we will be organising sectoral organisations, working closely with peasant organisations and developing projects that will help women and children in their communities, such as livelihood projects, child care, socio-economic projects, and education classes for the children. For example, if there are sexual harassment cases among peasant women, among the workers, Sorilaya will struggle along with them.

**Luisa:** We work in "Women," an organisation of working women and urban poor women. For March 8 we are planning for an action which will focus on the plight of women who are being laid off as a result of the Philippine 2000 programme. What we want to see is an action or a solid mass women's movement that can really develop a consciousness of fighting, struggling women who would like to take positive action, collective action to make a difference in their lives. Of course this campaign will be on workers' issues: but these are also women's issues.

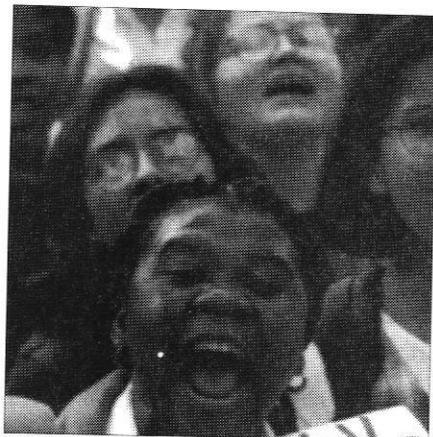
*IV: What are the specific demands of these campaigns?*

**Luisa:** Women workers are the last ones to be hired and the first to be laid off. Many garment factories have been closed. And this is a sector where women form most of the workforce. Then there is the problem of sexual harassment at work. And other women's rights to which the government should give particular attention.

There are three sources for a women's movement; women workers, poor urban women, and overseas workers and their relatives in the Philippines. In the first two sectors we already have structures and activities.

**Fatima:** In Mindanao, in the old days, everything was prepared for us, prescribed for us [by the Party]. The orientation of women's work was decided for us, on our behalf. The party national bodies prepared orientations on behalf of the entire party. They even prepared the orientation papers on women's work for the entire national movement. Not a very beautiful picture. But things are more promising now. At our last

conference, in November 1994, we decided to make women's work an integral and important part of our work. And to produce new orientation papers on women. We have three kinds of women on Mindanao: the Moro, the Filipinos and the indigenous women. We have already scheduled all-women's conferences for each group (because each group has a different view of



themselves). This is what we call the tri-people approach to our work. I'd like to emphasise that it is the women comrades, and the progressive women in the mass organisations who will participate in the making of this organisation. Another resolution adopted at our last conference called for the establishing of women's committees in the various organisations, in the hope of promoting gender consciousness among women and also with men.

In the regional organisation, we have focused on the question of gender sensitivity. A substantial proportion of the women comrades are already in leadership positions. And discrimination by men comrades towards women comrades is not very widespread. Maybe because there is a tradition of assertive women being placed in strategic and vital positions. Discrimination can be contained. There are women guerrillas, and women in the party leadership. The most important thing is that not only the party, but also the mass organisations (which are usually legal [above ground]) have also adopted gender sensitive planning in their discussions. We ensure that people are very sensitive to the gender issue. This is not only a question of conviction, but also of practice.

In some ethnic groups, women do not traditionally participate in political decision-making. But now they have their own women's committee. They conduct their own discussions, and plan what to do as women and as real partners of their husbands. And they can begin to make decisions without the consent of their husbands. Among the indigenous peoples,

the Party facilitated the promotion of women to the leadership bodies. We argued that women are very capable for leading and making decisions for their communities, and that their skills are needed. After centuries of women's absence from the decision-making structures of the indigenous peoples, women took their place this year! This was all the more a success in that these women have been elected by their own people, and not by the party.

*IV: How has your group's perception and activity in women's work evolved over the years, particularly following the crisis and split in the Communist Party?*

**Luisa:** The early women's movement in the Philippines, 25 years ago, was clear and explicit about the socialist basis for feminism. But in later years, when we were struggling and trying to build the military, protracted people's war, our attention and priorities shifted. The lesson we have learned is that a definite socialist basis is foremost. This comes with the realisation that the party itself should be socialist: the best ally for a socialist women's movement.

Our criteria of success used to be how many women we could recruit to the New People's Army, and how many women commanders we had. Nowadays, we have different criteria and standards for accomplishing and evaluating the or the development of women comrades.

**Mila:** It has been a big realisation to recognise that women are a major social force: more than half the population, with concrete issues which, are also reflections of exploitation and oppression by the capitalist class. We realise that, in the past, we had elements of a utilitarian attitude to organising women for the anti-capitalist struggle. Though it must be said that they also contributed a lot to strengthening the revolutionary movement

**Fatima:** This has been a liberating process. Before, we were always the victims of 'prescribed' campaigns, which did not fit our local situation. National campaigns are based on the national picture, but in our region we have three peoples concentrated in one place! We were so obedient! Well, that's democratic centralism. Or, rather, centralised democracy: the campaign is decided nationally and then everybody toes the line. In our case the debate gave us a venue to think. Because even thinking and speaking your thoughts had become anti-leadership, especially if you talked outside of the prescribed notion of what the Philippine revolution would look like.

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The debate give us more leeway to really study more which orientation best suits us. Before, our situation was analysed by somebody "up there". An artificial reading, followed by the imposition of a corresponding strategy. Now we really put a lot of weight on the question of gender. We are not only discussing about women. We have also gay organisations in our region. And the indigenous peoples are also at the same level of exploitation and oppression as



women and gays. Now we have the opportunity to discuss all these things openly, and to look for more concrete options on how to advance. We are in the process of liberating ourselves. At the same time, this provides a venue for more democracy. Because, before, democratisation of opportunities was very rare. Especially in the

regions. We appreciate very much the democracy we are now enjoy, and which we hope to develop. We hope that this democracy will be a new basis of unity, rather than unity-through-respect-for-authority, as was the case before.

**Lorena:** In the past, the stress was more on the political side, on advancing the people's revolution. Then there was a stage when sexual differentiation was stressed more. We are in the process of rethinking, reformulating what best fits the present realities. We are no longer bound by national policies, policies which were rooted in 1968, the year of the founding congress of the Party. These policies were based on Philippine realities of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. But, today, we are freer to rethink, reformulate and sum up the experience of the movement and how it addresses women questions.

The question of democratic centralism is now being discussed frankly. So is the question of the indigenous people. There is discussion about what the struggle for self-determination means. All these things can be discussed more freely than before. In the old days frameworks came down to us from a very powerful authority that had to be followed by everybody. This is not the case nowadays.

*IV: So is it easier to be an activist today? Has the way you relate to your comrades changed?*

**Luisa:** It is easier to be a woman activist now. It is much more obvious that you are coming in as a whole person, and therefore

as a woman as well as a revolutionary. It used to be that there was one part of you that was not completely committed. Today you can participate as a wholly committed person. Including a commitment in aspects that previously you could not think about, because the ideas were prescribed from above. Or, rather, you yourself imposed limits on what you thought about. Now, we realise that the highest level of being a revolutionary for a woman should be as a feminist revolutionary.

**Lorena:** The male comrades no longer accuse us of 'sexism'. Which suggests that they do not feel threatened any more.

**Fatima:** Single women still have more opportunities that you can seize, more tasks that you can carry out. But after you get married, things change. Some of us wait years before getting married, and before having children. Because we are afraid that it will be an obstacle to our work.

The interviews took place in late November 1995

## Women and the Palestinian elections

Eileen Kuttab.



Women constituted 42% of voters in the January 20 Palestinian elections. About 28 women candidates participated in the elections; only four percent of the total candidates. This hardly represent the level of scope and contribution, role and achievements of Palestinian women in the national struggle, let alone the demographic weight of women. Only five of the women candidates won seats on the council. This fact can be contributed to the following factors:

- The low status of women and their low level of representation in the decision-making processes in all the political parties. At the same time, women in the parties had no clear plan of action as to how to improve their status — largely due to the complicated relationship between the national and social liberation struggles. It was difficult for women to initiate an internal front in their parties when the priority has always been the national struggle. This has hindered the development of a gender-conscious agenda that would have attained higher-level and effective positions in the party. Women candidates were not really supported by their political parties. Some were forced

to withdraw their nominations for the sake of a male candidate.

- The women's movement was divided on the issue of participating in the elections. Debate on participation occupied most of the time, preventing women who wanted to participate from advancing their arguments on the question of quotas.

- The cultural

restraints of traditional Palestinian society made lobbying and campaigning for women candidates more challenging and put additional pressure on women's performance.

- The Multi-District System, in which the number of assigned lists was limited (and very low in some areas), decreased women's chances of success.

- The financial obligations and commitments that were required for campaigning prevented some qualified independent women candidates from running.

- Finally, some male candidates used the *hamula* (clan) as a tool to promote themselves; for women, it was difficult, if not impossible, to use this traditional institution in the same way. ★

Eileen Kuttab is a supporter of the opposition left, the coordinator of the Women's Studies Center at Birzeit University, and the head of the women's unit at the Bisan Center in Ramallah.

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# Gender and local government in the transition

**OUR EXPERIENCES OF THE STATE IN SOUTH Africa** under apartheid have been almost a caricature of the general [feminist] findings on the masculinity of the state, writes *Jenny Robinson*. Men dominated the state, in terms of those elected by whites to parliament, or by other race groups to unpopular state structures at local or national level. They also dominated the state bureaucracy, which was structured according to hierarchies placing women employees at the bottom of the pile. Those state institutions which interacted with African people - from local native administration departments to the national Native, or Bantu Administration Department - were overwhelmingly male. They were dominated by a masculine culture drawing on the traditions of policing, mine and farm labour control, and on paternalistic (and punitive) images of the 'father'. They also sought to exercise control over those living in urban townships by promoting "family life" and male dominance in the household.

"Our yardstick should be the extent to which changes in local government, both now and in the future, improve the daily lives of the most disadvantaged sectors: black communities, women, the poor, the rural areas".

Moses Mayekiso<sup>1</sup>

This masculine state apparatus perceived its objects of administration to be male heads of households, keeping control over women, who otherwise were thought to be "loose and disorderly".<sup>2</sup> As we well know, single women were not allowed to rent or own houses in townships, but had to rely on men for access to these state resources. The alliance which some writers have suggested was forged, historically, for a variety of reasons, between the masculine white state and the traditional authority of black men<sup>3</sup> is even now potentially a stumbling block to efforts to transform the state, especially at the local level and in rural areas, where traditional leadership is still strong.

These are all issues which we need to think about as we consider gender and the new local government dispensation in South Africa. From the election of representatives on the new councils to the

ways in which bureaucracies will be transformed and the types of policies which they will implement, women's organisations should be thinking about ways in which their interests can be advanced or will be hindered in this transitional period. This paper is a preliminary effort to sketch out the terrain: much more work remains to be done!

## NEGOTIATIONS

In 1993-94 the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) brought together representatives of local, central and provincial local government organisations, and national civic organisations (including a delegation of extra-parliamentary groups.

Negotiations for this level of government were set up very differently from those for national government. Whereas the African National Congress (ANC) strategy of a two-sided table had failed at the constitutional negotiations, the delegates to the LGNF agreed to divide into statutory and non-statutory delegations. This dualistic interpretation of stakeholders in local politics was also embodied in the national legislation governing the creation of local level negotiating forums and interim local government structures, prior to the staging of the first non-racial elections for local government.

The non-statutory alliance in the LGNF was led by the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), an umbrella body of civic organisations formed in 1992 to replace the disbanded United Democratic Front. SANCO had initiated the payments boycott which had brought the authorities to the negotiating table in many different localities. During the course of the LGNF, though, SANCO consulted with, and was joined in its delegation by members of the ANC and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), principally the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU).

## GENDER SENSITIVE EFFORTS

From the beginning of the negotiations the alliance organisations were sensitive to the issue of gender, stating in public platforms that any new local government

structure had to be democratic, non-racial and non-sexist. An effort was made by the non-statutory side to ensure that there were sufficient women representatives at the negotiations. This effort failed, however, as few women were appointed to the LGNF, and those who were and who attended never managed to make a concerted impact on the proceedings.<sup>4</sup>

The LGNF itself was constituted in a way which left out a number of important groupings interested in local government. The definition of membership formalised by the (already constituted) forum was that an organisation wishing to join the LGNF had to be nationally constituted, be a stakeholder in local government (or motivate its particular interest in local government) and be a part of either the statutory or non-statutory delegations. Political parties were not permitted to join on the grounds that they had representation at the Multi-Party Negotiating Forum, where constitutional discussions about local government would also take place.<sup>5</sup>

Political parties, women's organisations, business groups and regionally based organisations were therefore excluded from the negotiations. While this meant that the ANC alliance had more control over the negotiations that otherwise might have been the case, it also meant that a variety of groupings with interests in local government could not make a contribution to the technical details and the compromises which were negotiated. This included minor political parties, such as the Democratic Party (DP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) which has since emerged as a major disruptive force in the implementation of the Local Government Transitional Act (LGTA) in KwaZulu-Natal.

Unlike the constitutional negotiations, where each political party had been pressured into including women on their negotiation teams at all times, the LGNF did not incorporate women into the negotiations in any structured way. And there were very few women including in the negotiating or advisory teams or working groups. Gender issues were also not addressed in any detail at all. Passing comments from key (male) spokespeople during the plenary sessions, or during

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caucus discussions to select representatives, and even the inclusion of the desire for a "non-sexist" local government system in the mission statement of the LGNF, seem to have had no impact whatsoever on either the deliberations of the LGNF or the final recommendations and legislation produced.<sup>6</sup>

The Women's Lobby failed to meet the LGNF admission criteria. In their application, the group wrote: "We are deeply concerned that there may not be sufficient numbers of women involved in this planning. We fear that issues which women are even more familiar with and knowledgeable about than men may be overlooked. Local development must have the input of women interacting with men to achieve fundamental changes and improvement."<sup>7</sup>

It is possible that a concern for the gender implications of the legislation might have made stronger legislative provision for representative structures to oversee the implementation of the Act, or might have picked up the gender bias inherent in the partially ward-based system of representation finally agreed to. Some provision for gender selectivity in the decision-making of transitional local government structures might have been made, and it might even have been possible to agree on gender-based monitoring of the new councils' activities.

### WOMEN'S ISSUES SIDELINED

Individual party agreements regarding women's representation on party lists (especially the ANC, where a hard-fought campaign from the ANC Women's League has guaranteed one-third representation for women) may ensure that a reasonable number of women do serve in local government structures. However, experience with the Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) has not been encouraging. A system of partial ward-based representation, together with the persistent failure by all parties to seriously address gender issues (and not just women's participation) will probably mean that women's issues are sidelined from local councils and bureaucracies, unless women's organisations challenge this.

Ward-based structures are likely to produce mostly male representatives at this stage, where local political organisations are strongly dominated by men, and where it could be argued that "politics" is still seen as predominately a

male occupation. SANCO, the leading organisation in the local government negotiations, has been strongly criticised for the predominantly male character of both local and national structures. While senior leadership in the organisation is taking these criticisms very seriously, comments from the podium will, unfortunately, not be enough to challenge this. [...]

### GOVERNMENT OF LOCAL UNITY

The nature of the compromise reached at the LGNF is important for understanding why women's position in terms of representation on councils is not likely to be improved during this phase of transition. The strategies for power-sharing at the local level are complex. The compromises embodied in the bill used the apartheid structure of the cities to create councils in which white representation would be disproportionately high. Together with the extremely high ceilings set for agreement on key development issues (finance and planning) in these councils, the white population in most cities would have a large and potentially disabling veto on many key decisions in the new local government.

Undemocratic demands for a property or business vote were deflected by means of the "government of local unity" formulation (although the government tried to insert these requirements until the final stages of drafting the bill). But the demand for local options, to appease the recalcitrant conservative party negotiators in the LGNF and the government representatives, meant that the pre-interim period was to see potentially very little change in those areas unwilling to oversee their own demise. And the agreement on the interim phase (a long five years, during which the Government of National Unity is to negotiate a final Constitution for the country) embodies a strong compromise on the question of racial representation in local government. Given the absence of sensitivity to gender issues by most white parties, this racial compromise is also a significant compromise in terms of women's representation and the possibility of putting in place strong gender-aware local development policies. Whereas in the past there were more women involved in white local councils than in national politics, the reduced opportunities for participation by previously white parties in the regional and national parliaments may mean that these women are squeezed out of local government in favour of more prominent men.

The combination of ward and proportional

representation was widely seen as a useful way of accommodating both the black majority interest in most cities and the wealthier and more geographically dispersed white ratepayers. The final compromise, however, was premised upon exactly the apartheid geography which the local government negotiations were designed to transform. [...]

### COMPLEX JUGGLING ACT

In Port Elizabeth, local structures of the alliance voted for half of the representatives to the TLC. This mirrors the ward-based voting expected when the elections for interim councils are held. Out of this process, only two women were elected. Five more women were nominated amongst the other half of the alliance representatives. These city-wide representative were meant to enable the alliance leadership to ensure some balance on the council according to race, gender and skills, and to allow different sections of the "alliance plus one" to contribute members to the council. However, this complicated strategy resulted in there being a total of only seven women out of a non-statutory component of fifty. This falls far short of the ANC's stated commitment to one-third representation of women on party lists. Combined with the overwhelming predominance of men on the statutory side of the TLC, this has meant a pre-interim council that is not good news for women in terms of formal representation.

### TAKING UP GENDER ISSUES

However, the Port Elizabeth case is also interesting in that it offers an example of how, despite the poor representation for women on these councils, gender issues can still be taken up in an effective way. TLC Councillor Sureshni Moodliar and other women have been motivating for gender issues to be taken seriously in the planning of development in the city.<sup>8</sup>

In a party with a stated support for non-sexism, it is difficult for representatives to refuse initiatives which insist on interrogating council policies in gender terms. And although Port Elizabeth is unusual compared with most larger cities in that the ANC has (for the moment) an absolute majority on the council, there are some useful lessons for other cities. Like the need for some mechanism to support and

co-ordinate women's initiatives at the local government level. As Moodliar argues, "there is a need to co-ordinate... as part of a national framework... because you have the sense of being very isolated and



very lonely in a way."<sup>9</sup>

A Gender Commission has been set up as part of the Port Elizabeth TLC to consider ways in which council policies can be made more gender sensitive. An Affirmative Action committee will deal with the question of women's place in the council's employment structure. Despite initial resistance from men on the council, it seems that critical thinking about gender and council policy is spreading beyond the group of activist women. Moodliar notes that:

"... if you raise a gender concern, there's no argument around it, there's no debate, there's almost no interest in it. There's always a laugh afterwards, and it's always 'OK, go for it!'. It's because they're not informed anyway. Apart from their own prejudices, they're just not informed. They'd rather not try to understand it. I think that it's going to be a slow process of consciousness-raising for people within the council. But the more often you do it, the more it starts to have some impact. Some men are starting to question gender representation whenever we elect a small committee or an ad-hoc working group. Men are saying this, which is interesting."

#### OPENING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

One important aspect of the thinking of this group of women is that channels for continuous communication between the council and women in the community need to be set up. It is envisaged that these could enable women to be informed as to the services and facilities which are at their disposal, and also to ensure that their voices are heard on local government and development issues. This is an important initiative as it offers a critique of 'needs' or 'interest' based planning by representatives who presume they know the concerns of local women.

Given the complexity and heterogeneity of the category 'women', this kind of process could be very important in helping the ongoing transformation of policies to ensure their sensitivity to the position of different women in particular localities. It also reflects some initiatives in other countries, such as the Philippines and some Latin American countries, which have attempted to maintain a connection between women's organisations, NGOs and women's desks within the state. But one of the big obstacles to establishing these kind of state-civil society links in South Africa is the relative weakness and fragmentation of women's organisations. In the absence of a substantial women's movement, other sorts of channels will need to be experimented with here.

#### INTERROGATING LOCAL LEGISLATION

Women representatives on the councils

are also interrogating local legislation and policies for any gender biases. These kinds of tasks are very time-consuming and demanding of specific technical and legal skills. So far, there seems to be no national initiative to take up substantive gender concerns at the local level. Pressure should be put on support services to research and advise on these issues, and especially to explore ways in which certain changes to legislation and policy can be legislatively enforced at a national level, rather than being left to the initiative of individuals in particular localities. Also, any local government training programmes for new councillors should actively incorporate training on gender issues.

#### WOMEN NEED TO MOBILISE

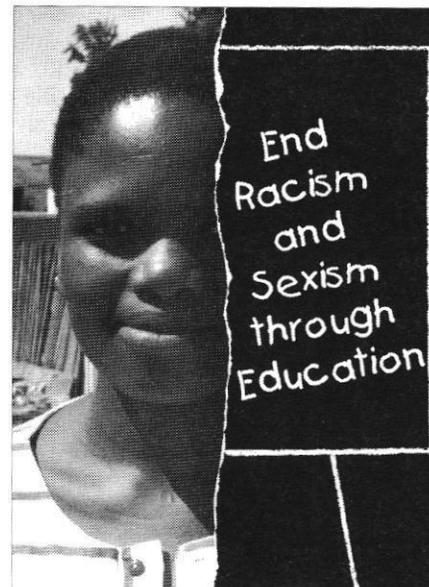
There is a significant strategic advantage to be gained from the presence of even a few committed women representatives on the new councils. This is largely because of the legitimacy accorded to gender sensitivity both by ANC policy and by current development discourse, especially as embodied in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which is very gender sensitive and which can be used in a very practical way by women on councils to promote gender issues. Local women's organisations need to mobilise in order to ensure that this is achieved [...]

Much faith is currently being placed in local authorities to implement the RDP. There are many reasons for being worried about this! The level of compromise embodied in the Local Government Transition Act is one. Local authorities have significant power to shape local development through land use planning, budgetary decisions and style of management. It is precisely these areas that are most resistant to change. The first two because any changes are subject to a special two-thirds majority (under the LGTA); the third because of the long history of dominance by white men of the local authority bureaucracies.

There has also been a great deal of concern about the problem of turning around a system of local government oriented to 'control' to one that deals with 'development'. Certainly, the old Black Local Authorities bear the marks of a completely inadequate apparatus, with little or no capacity to deliver anything. Historically, these structures were central to the state's efforts to politically and socially control African people.

Ironically, many of the mechanisms which were seen as essential for 'proper control' - housing, organised and serviced townships, education, efficient state apparatuses (for the implementation of influx control, for example) are also

important for the current aims of development. Where state capacity has not been undermined, local authorities, especially in former white areas, do have technical experience and capacity to deliver these services. The crucial issue,



though, in terms of a reorientation to 'development' is the absence of skills related to the process associated with delivery, especially within a participatory approach to development, and an awareness of the political implications of development.

#### DELIVERY OF SERVICES

In terms of gender, these last issues are crucial. The services which local governments are charged with delivering on an equitable basis across the city in terms of the new Act cover a range of concerns central to women's roles in reproduction, and also as breadwinner in many, if not most, homes. The local state must, among other things, be responsible for the delivery of water, electricity, sewerage, for the planning of land use, zoning, transportation, health services, and the promotion of economic development. For women who bear the burden of meeting their household's reproductive needs, the provision of services such as water and electricity substantially affect their daily lives.

Exactly how, where and under what conditions these services are delivered are important questions for most women, and the gender-specific nature of these facilities needs to be taken into account by planners and service providers. Women's dual role in most households, where they are both key breadwinner and have primary responsibility for meeting reproductive needs, means that other issues such as transport and broader

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economic policies also need to be considered from a gender perspective. [...]

A council which is sensitive to gender issues would have to ensure that planning at the budgetary level provides for meeting the needs of the community in a way which does not subordinate women's particular needs and demands and which enables women's participation in determining council priorities.

Organisations in civil society which are called upon to participate with the state in planning would need to have proper representation from women to ensure that planning can take place without male bias.



### GENDERED EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

The local authority workforce is stratified on gender lines. A recent study of Durban City Council<sup>10</sup> shows that women are concentrated in the clerical staff, which also has a higher preponderance of Indians and coloureds than most other levels. Women labourers and clerical staff also predominate in the divisions of culture and recreation (museums and libraries) and health. With the large clerical establishment of sections such as city services and waste management, women dominate in clerical positions in these divisions. Labourers are overwhelmingly African and Indian men, with some women working in community services and culture and recreation. Some sections have 20-40% women in positions of middle management, but senior management is overwhelmingly comprised of white men, except for culture and recreation and community services, where some Indian and African people are employed in such positions. A sizeable proportion of African men are employed in middle and senior management positions in the transport service unit.

# Agenda

In other words, the employment structure is strongly stratified by race and class, with women predominating in traditionally female jobs, and opportunities for promotion outside these roles being severely circumscribed.

An important approach to changing this profile, the study suggests, would be to



concentrate on training and promotion within the organisation, rather than relying on hiring already-qualified people from outside. This usually just reinforces the socially ascribed positions which resulted in the stratified internal labour market in the first place. However, the poor representation of women, and especially black women, outside of traditionally female jobs which do not include a career path towards management outside of these traditional domains, means that even this strategy would be ineffective in changing this level of gender discrimination, as opposed to racial discrimination.

### LESS PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

A 1993 study of Johannesburg, Bedfordview and Cape Town city councils found that women were being paid less for doing the same job as men.<sup>11</sup> Johannesburg City Council employed 17,318 men, and only 3,362 women. Once again, men dominated the senior and middle management positions, with women congregated in administrative and clerical grades, and in gender-specific jobs. A 'hidden' grade of casual and temporary labourers — mainly black women — was also noted. This reinforces the generalised finding that women in

local government, when they are employed at all, are employed in substantially inferior positions to men. For black women, this is

even worse, except where traditional jobs open up opportunities for advancement.

All this means is that, except for libraries, clinics and community health, the services which most affect women are being delivered and designed primarily by men.

The work culture which is created is overwhelmingly male... Women who

newly find themselves in senior bureaucratic posts may find this culture daunting.

SAMWU is taking up some issues which will help address the position of women in municipalities, such as an affirmative action policy and a parental rights campaign.

### MAINSTREAMING GENDER

More significantly, the masculinity of the local state bureaucracy can make initiatives to promote women's position in relation to council policies and services much more difficult, as the British and other examples show. Observers note that some measure of change has been possible, but both the the masculine, rational and competitive structures of the bureaucracy and the lack of support for women's issues from a male-dominated institution has meant that women's initiatives have struggled to transform local state institutions.<sup>12</sup>

There are numerous debates concerning appropriate institutional forms to reinforce women's initiatives at the local level, such as women's desks or gender positions within each division of the local bureaucracy, or a more thorough 'mainstreaming' of women's concerns.<sup>13</sup> Feminists have hotly debated whether female bureaucrats, or 'femocrats', make a difference to the advancement of gender-specific planning and administration. Evidence concerning the success of these strategies is also ambivalent<sup>14</sup>. Franzway S, Court D and Connell RW, *Staking a Claim* (1989), Sydney, Allen and Unwin.

### ENSURING REPRESENTATION

These strategic dilemmas certainly deserve more attention and scrutiny within the South African context. But I would suggest that the more pressing political issue at this time is for women's

organisations to attempt to ensure that there are at least some representatives on the new councils who can take up these issues and ensure that this debate about the specific form which women's initiatives could take in local government is able to take place. The alternative is that gender issues fall off the agenda of local government, and that they will have to be raised at a later stage, when political circumstances may not be so favourable.

At the interface between the local state and the communities it represents, the ways in which civil society is organised and participates in local government planning can also be influential for the success or otherwise of gender issues. In South Africa, where community organisations have played a central role in national political struggles against apartheid, women have been largely excluded from positions representing communities in negotiations with local governments about planning and development issues. Participation of women and the representation of their needs and interests in these processes is therefore strongly compromised. Without a local state which insists on promoting consultation with women, their contribution to the character of development in the localities will remain marginal. While there are numerous ways in which development is affected by organisations, forums and processes which are not part of the local state as such, there should be some responsibility on the part of the local state to ensure that its intentions promote the democratic participation of all people in the area, including women.

There are numerous aspects of local development initiatives which require a gender-sensitive perspective and input from women or from gender-sensitive planners concerning women's requirements. Access to housing, and the location of new housing developments both require consideration of the position of women, especially of women-headed households, and of the specific opportunities and constraints facing women as they attempt to make a living.

Inner city housing and services, for instance, would make a significant difference to the position of these women whose survival strategies depend on centrally-located informal markets, and who currently sleep on the streets, with no access to services in order to secure their livelihoods. It would also make a difference to female-headed households employed in the formal sector, for whom a central city location would enable easier access to a wider range of services and facilities. And, since most of the poorest households rely on the income of women to survive, it is not only women's socially

imposed roles in production which require the attention of local planners. The enormous gains which could be made in terms of welfare and development if women's access to better paid and more secure jobs could be promoted, also needs to be realised.

**HARD TIMES AHEAD**

The current position is not encouraging. Poor levels of representation, inadequate investigation into the ways in which gender issues can be addressed at the local level, and an overwhelmingly male local bureaucracy do not augur well for gender-sensitive local government in the transitional period. On the positive side, the strategic terrain is favourable, in that gender issues are firmly on the national

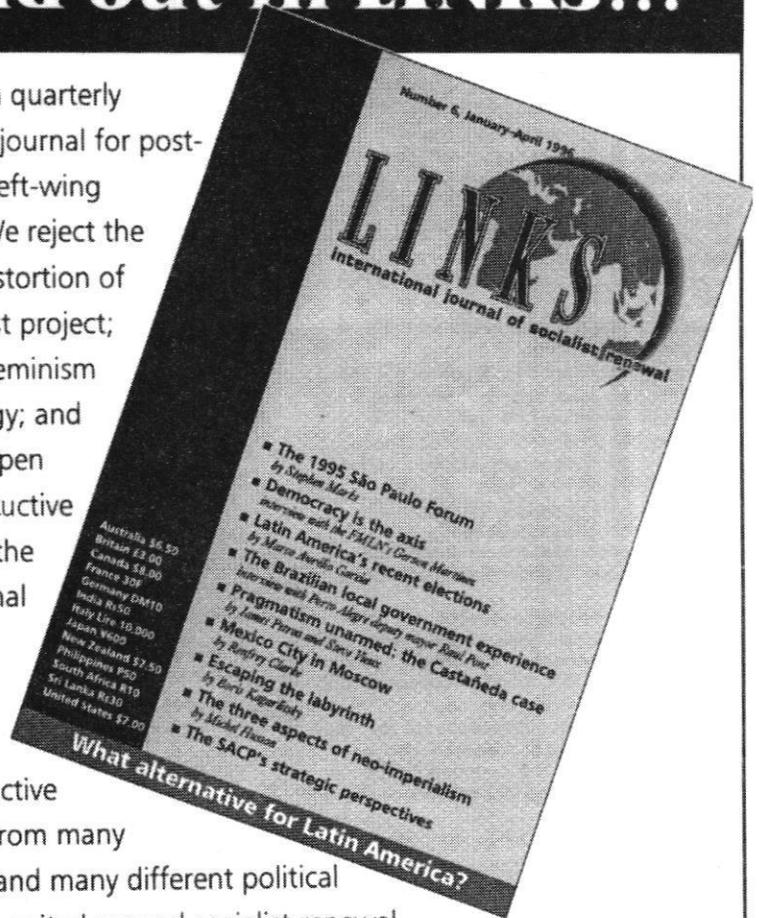
policy agenda, though (as yet) poorly implemented. The current development discourse also provides a lot of leverage in pursuing gender issues at the local level, where the priority of local authorities is now development.

Women in different localities need to mobilise in order to ensure that at least some minimal level of representation is secured though party lists or ward-based candidates. The ANC, for example, should be strongly reminded of its commitment to 30% representation of women on all structures. From this basis, demands can be raised at the local and national level for women's concerns to be more properly incorporated into local level governance and development, and for the masculinity and male bias of the local

# What alternative for Latin America? Find out in LINKS...

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state to be addressed. Networking among women and about gender between different local authorities, as well as more proactive support and training from national NGOs, agencies and governmental bodies could also assist in ensuring that the transition from control to democracy and development at the local level does not exclude women. ★



Notes

1. President of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), at the launch of the Local Government National Forum (LGNF), Johannesburg Civic Centre, March 22, 1993.
  2. Linzi Manicom, Ruling relations: rethinking state and gender in South African history, paper presented at Conference on Women and Gender in Southern Africa, Durban, February 1991.
  3. See Walker, C (ed.) (1990) Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945, Cape Town, 1995, published by David Philip, and Jeater, D. Marriage, Perversion and Power. The Construction of Moral Discourse in Southern Rhodesia, 1894-1930, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993
  4. According to Leile McKenna.
  5. Membership and Participation in LGNF, Report by the Managing Committee, June 30, 1993.
- The author is a lecturer in the Department of Geographical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Natal.
6. Moses Mayekiso, opening remarks to LGNF, Johannesburg Civic Centre, March 22, 1993. "Secondly, we must ensure that more women participate in the process of restructuring local government in South Africa. Looking around I see that much work needs to be done by all parties to the Forum in this regard. But more than participation in the negotiation processes, we need to ensure that women become centrally involved in the running of local government itself."
  7. Letter to Dirk Strydom, Deputy Director, Local Authority Development, March 19, 1993.
  8. Letter from S. Moodliar to the editor, Agenda #24, 1995
  9. This and all subsequent references to Moodliar are based on an interview with her in Port Elizabeth, April 1995.
  10. Towards Restructuring Local Government, carried out by the Centre for Community and Labour Studies (CCLS) at the University of Durban-Westville, 1994.
  11. McKenna, L, Gender character and composition of local government, paper presented to the Foundation for Contemporary Research/Urban Sector Network Conference on Gender and Local Government, Cape Town, February 1995.
  12. Halford, S "Feminist change in a patriarchal organisation: the experience of women's initiatives in local government and implications for feminist perspectives on state institutions" in M Savage and A Witz (eds.) Gender and Bureaucracy (1992) Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
  13. Gwagwa L. and Todes A, "Engendering local government structures", paper presented to the Foundation for Contemporary Research/Urban Sector Network Conference on Gender and Local Government, Cape Town, Feb. 1995.

Agenda is a South African feminist quarterly. Recent issues have focused on reproductive rights and on sexuality. Forthcoming issues will focus on the environment, a comparative look at women in South Africa's provinces, and media, arts and communications. A one year subscription costs R52 inside the country, R60 in Southern Africa, and £30/\$52 US in other countries. Address: Room 7, Ecumenical Centre Trust, 20 St. Andrews Street, Durban, 4001, South Africa. Tel. +27. 31/3054074, fax 3010740.

## State reverses Labour policy on women

Britain's opposition Labour Party has accepted a tribunal ruling which rejects women only shortlists for selecting parliamentary candidates Terry Conway explains.

The British House of Commons is one of the most male dominated legislatures in the world. Only 166 women have ever been elected to this bastion of "democracy". Of 270 Labour Party MPs in the current parliament, only 38, an indefensibly small proportion, are women.

In 1993, after many years of campaigning by women in favour of measures to improve women's voice in the party, Labour Party Conference agreed to move to a policy of making "women-only shortlists" compulsory in the selection of parliamentary candidates in half the constituencies that became vacant.

Many women on the left had supported women-only shortlists as part of a larger campaigning package that would allow women more say in the party. We were unhappy that it was only this measure that had been agreed, and not other demands — such as the right for five resolutions from National Labour Women's Conference, a stronghold of the left in the 80s, particularly on international politics, to go automatically to national Party Conference. We were concerned that women-only shortlists by themselves, without measures of accountability on the women selected, would serve only as a way for women in favour with the party hierarchy to be elected, rather than those campaigning for women's rights. But, despite these reservations, we supported the move as a small step in the right direction.

In the run up to the 1995 Labour Party Conference, party leader Tony Blair made a public statement making clear his unhappiness with even this limited step forward, saying that the policy was "not ideal" and would be dropped after the next election. But the party conference endorsed a number of resolutions that reaffirmed the policy. Thirty-five women candidates have been selected as a result of women-only shortlists. Many of them will represent Labour in marginal seats, which the party is not certain to win.

Two male Labour Party members, Peter Jepson and Roger Dyas-Elliott, who wanted to stand in seats where all-women shortlists were agreed, appealed to an industrial tribunal. This body ruled that women-only shortlists were a breach of Britain's sex discrimination laws. At the end of January 1996, the Labour Party National Executive Committee decided not to appeal against the decision. This means that, unless there are further legal challenges, the 35 women so far selected

will stand, but that in ten other constituencies where women only shortlists have been agreed but selection had not yet taken place, the contests will now be opened to male candidates.

The decision of the industrial tribunal has wide ranging implications, both in the power of tribunals to interfere in the democratically agreed decision making powers of a political party, and in reinforcing the limits which British law imposes on positive action in employment. In the mid-80s, when the British left was relatively strong in local government, especially in the large cities, important steps were taken in improving women's position in the job market, albeit sometimes in a fairly superficial way. But many of these gains have been rolled back in recent years. The decision of the tribunal is yet another nail in that coffin.

But it is the decision of the Labour Party not to challenge the tribunal ruling which gives most cause for concern. As one woman who has been selected as Labour parliamentary candidate via an all-woman shortlist told *Tribune* newspaper, if the party lets the matter drop, Britain's ruling Conservative Party "will be able to argue that the strategy of all-women shortlists was flawed, and that it has failed to produce the best candidates". This view was endorsed by Ann Pettifor of the Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC) who told *Tribune* "The Party should challenge this decision. It is the law that is making an ass of itself and giving the Tories a stick to beat us with". LWAC also pointed out that procedures exist that would have allowed an appeal decision within three months. Labour leaders' claims that the process would take up to 20 months, causing problems with the impending general election, are false.

It seems that New Labour is more concerned with pandering to male prejudice that trying to combat the gender gap that still exists. A Party that wants to be elected would do well to note that a recent opinion poll showed that while the party had a 36 point lead over the Tories, amongst women its lead was only 28 points. ★

The author is a leading member of the International Socialist Group, British section of the Fourth International, and a regular contributor to *Socialist Outlook* newspaper.

1. MORI Opinion Poll, carried out in April -June 1995

# The women's movement was overtaken by the Zapatistas!

Julieta Hernandez is a member of *Democracia Radical* (Mexican section of the Fourth International). She participated in the recent discussions with the government as a representative of the 'civic Zapatista' movement.

● What brought you to Chiapas?

Ten years ago, student and feminist militants like me did not know how to insert ourselves in the society. We wanted to leave the university milieu, and 'do something' as a feminist movement, but we never knew what exactly. It was through contacts with the organisations of indigenous people ('Indians') that we were able to make our dream real. A handful of us who left the university with a burning desire to do work 'at the base' were able to break out from the university elites and their discourse, and build something. On a class basis, not just as feminists!

I spent three years working with an indigenous women's organisation. They were working in the villages. And they were involved in the Zapatista movement. This experience showed me that we were mistaken in the feminist movement, thinking that you could not talk to indigenous women about abortion and contraception, because their cultural milieu restricted the possibilities. When we began to talk to these women, they told us about their use of medicinal plants to provoke abortion. Many were interested in finding out about contraception (though some refused to discuss it, considering that it was women's role to give life and protect life, and particularly to protect their culture and ethnic group). We also realised that, if these women had ten children, it was because they knew they would lose three or four of them.

● So how did women end up in the Zapatista army?

It took ten years to establish the Zapatista army. During this time, we did not just build a military organisation in the forest. There was intense discussion on a range of questions, including the role of women in the common struggle. If women now form one third of the Zapatista army, this shows that they have already integrated one of their rights: the right to participate in politics, and if necessary, in a war.

There were other factors too. For example, a number of Christian 'base

communities' and nuns have been working for years to increase the self-consciousness of indigenous women.

After the uprising (1 January 1994), women were massively present in the demonstrations for a ceasefire. In the towns and the EZLN base communities, it is overwhelmingly women who manage day-to-day life.

It is important to continue building the feminist struggle. Women are present in other revolutions and social movements. But without a programme, without their own demands. In Chiapas, we integrated this specific dimension from the very beginning.

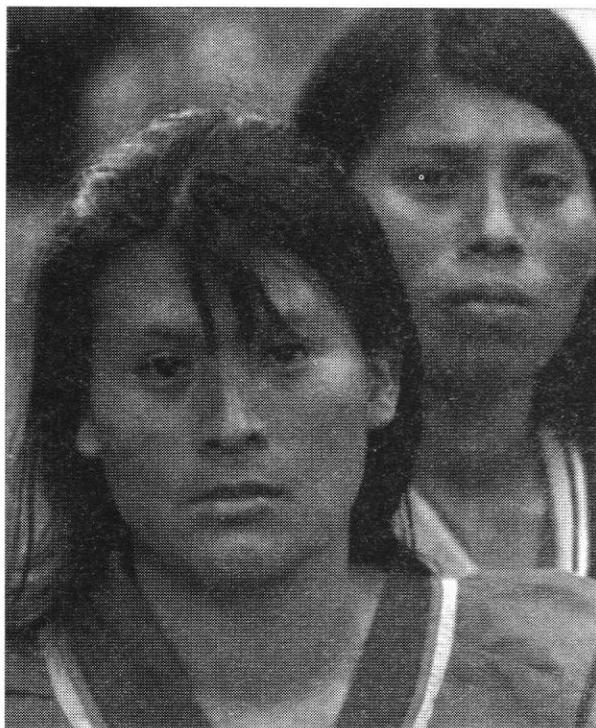
Discussions among women in the EZLN from March 1993 onwards led to the development of the "Revolutionary Law on Women", which was diffused at the end of January 1994. This mobilised us women from the towns. It was a real contribution to our way of looking at things, our expectations and our struggle. The feminist movement was overtaken by the initiatives of Zapatista women! Just like the rest of the left.

Their demands seem simple. But they are fundamental. Declaring that a woman has the right to choose the man she will marry, and the age at which she will marry, decide how many children she will have, in politics, join the army, are themes which mobilise in the rural communities and have a real impact in the towns.

For example, in San Cristobal, there are many women's groups which are against violence. Others work with indigenous women, who are frightened of violence, but reluctant to talk about the problem. The adoption of the "Revolutionary Law on Women" provoked a convergence of all the

women's groups, and all the individual feminists, in order to get hold of the law, to discuss it and to diffuse it. A very stimulating period. A dynamic developed whereby we began to seek real consensus, in order to give force to the movement, and generate new initiatives.

This was what led us to propose amendments to Article Four of the Constitution, which mentions the rights of



the Indian peoples, and guarantees "respect for communal customs." We said we agreed with respect for those customs which did not affect our rights as women! And we began asking women which customs they wanted to maintain and 'have respected,' and which they would rather see fade away. This was a very interesting period of reflection, and a process which should continue.

● Has the Zapatista movement really had an influence on the life of indigenous women?

## ★ Women and political organisations

The Zapatista movement has enabled women to put forward a series of questions...

● Traditionally, women have not been able to inherit the right to work the land which they cultivate. They work alongside the men, but are excluded from the division of land. Zapatista women have done a lot of work promoting the right of women to work on and inherit the land.



● Traditionally, women who left their husbands (or were thrown out) were obliged to return to their parents' house. The conjugal home was automatically conferred on the husband.

● Zapatista women also decreed a total ban on alcoholism in the base communities and the liberated zones. They justify this as a measure to

protect themselves against the violence of drunken men.

● As regards women's right to control their own fertility, the women of the EZLN have ensured that condoms are made available. Men in the EZLN have become accustomed to their use. We recommend women soldiers to avoid having children. Those who wish to do so usually leave the army, and return to their village. Once the children are old enough, their mothers return to their posts in the army.

The Women's Commission [in San Andres after October 1994] was the most radical part of our negotiations with the government. Women did not just insist on the people's right to the land they live and work on. They expanded the land question to include notions of territorial autonomy, and control over processes which threaten the environment. Women in the region are clearly the most conscious about the environment we live in, and ecological questions in general.

Of course, reality is far from perfect. Most of our male comrades were silent when a member of the Zapatista Commission was killed by her husband, a member of our Civil Assembly. But the new values we are promoting are being integrated into the movement. They are challenging the day-to-day practice of the men, the leaders, the peasants and the *mestizos* (non-Indians, mainly town dwellers).

The Zapatistas really put a lot of emphasis on women's struggle. They recognise women's strength. And women's ability not just to struggle for their specific demands, but for our global demands. This is why they give women's struggle such

priority. In the sense, we can talk of a female avant-garde in the EZLN. These women comrades do not just challenge the Zapatista leadership over issues of macho militancy. The essence of their work is their appeal to all the women of Mexico.

● And the institutional framework for this work?

For the moment, neither of the [Zapatista-inspired] women's structures [Women's Assembly, National Convention of Women] actually meets. This is partly

## Women unionists in Brazil

Penny Duggan speaks to Rosa Molina of the Union of Education Workers in Rio Grande do Sul.

● You are an organiser for an education workers' union. To what extent are feminist demands integrated into your general work?

In a union like ours, the cultural and professional level of the members is obviously rather high. Nevertheless, the majority of education workers are not very politicised. Despite the exploitation which they face, this category of workers do not consider themselves as 'workers'. This obviously makes our work difficult.

But it is obviously essential to develop political activity in this privileged area, the education system. If only because we have the opportunity to come into contact with the children, young people, and the parents. Mothers, in particular, are very present in the nursery and primary schools. This contact with the mothers enables us to understand the need to develop women's consciousness about their specific condition as women, because of the way that women can reproduce and perpetuate their own domination.

Thirteen women in the union are responsible for this work for the whole state of Rio Grande Do Sul, which covers an area about the same size as France! Four of us are members of the leadership of the union. The work is very difficult, because of the sheer quantity of tasks.

The trade union has a wide range of activities. We can't spend all our time on 'eminist questions, even if neo-liberal pressures on education [and their negative effect on women] are enormous. For example, the government recently approved a plan for privatising large parts

because some women follow their personal ambitions, rather than seeking consensus. And partly because the government's low intensity war has attacked all our structures and social 'spaces'. This has somewhat shaken our unity, particularly among the women.

What we must do now is rebuild these structures, and reclaim the 'spaces' we have created. This is one of the things those of us in Democracia Radical will be trying to do in the coming months. ★

of the education system. We are engaged in a very difficult struggle. We have to integrate the specific demands of women with the demands of the profession as a whole.

● Women are underrepresented in the leadership of Brazil's trade unions and in the leadership of the Workers Party (PT). Is there much support for the implementation of quotas for women in union and party elections?

The 1994 congress of the CUT trade union federation (Central Única dos Trabalhadores - Unitary Workers' Centre) approved the principle of a quota for women in the decision-making bodies of the organisation. In our own union, in Rio Grande do Sul, quotas are not the problem. Seven of

13 members of the union's leadership are women.

In the PT, there are a range of opinions about quotas. The majority sees it as a positive process, but many members, and many women members, express real reservations about quotas.

Any evolution of PT policy on this question will be the fruit of a long process. The quota debate is, of course, to some extent an artificial problem. But it does make it possible for many women to take positions with responsibilities. And it obliges the men to think about their behaviour. You can't uproot deeply macho behaviour patterns just like that! At the last PT National Meeting, almost all the forums were chaired by men. The women on the platforms were "auxiliaries" rather than central players. PT Women should fight for their own space, quotas or no quotas! ★



The author is a full-timer for the Union of Education Workers in Rio Grande do Sul. This state, the size of France, has 130,000 education workers. About 87,000 are members of trade unions, including over 60,000 women. She is also a member of the state leadership of the PT, and of the Democracia Socialista current (Brazilian section of the Fourth International) within the PT.

The Union of Education Workers in Rio Grande do Sul can be reached at tel. 051/2215822, fax 2218642.

## Document: The International of hope

Mexico's Zapatista rebels have convened continental conventions "Against Neoliberalism and For Humanity" for April in Berlin, Tokyo, Sydney, Africa and the Americas. These meetings will prepare an intercontinental meeting in the Zapatista base of Aguascalientes, in South-East Mexico, in June. We reprint the declaration establishing the initiative.

During the last years, the power of money has presented a new mask over its criminal face. Disregarding borders, with no importance given to races or colors, the Power of money humiliates dignities, insults honesties and assassinates hopes. The historic crime in the concentration of privileges, wealth and impunities is re-named "Neoliberalism". It democratizes misery and hopelessness.

A new world war is being fought, against humanity. As in all world wars, what is being sought is a new distribution of the world.

They call this modern war which assassinates and forgets "globalization". The new organisation of the world consists in concentrating power in power and misery in misery.

The new organisation of the world excludes "minorities". The indigenous, youth, women, homosexuals, lesbians, people of color, immigrants, workers, peasants; the majority who make up the basements of the world are disposable, as far as those in power are concerned. The new organisation of the world excludes the majorities.

The modern army of financial capital and corrupt governments advances: conquering in the only way it is capable of. By destroying. The new organisation of the world destroys humanity.

The new organisation of the world has only one place for money and its servants. Men, women and machines become equal in servitude and in being disposable. The lie governs and it multiplies itself in means and methods.

A new lie is sold to us as history. The lie about the defeat of hope, the lie about the defeat of dignity, the lie about the defeat of humanity. The mirror of power offers us an equilibrium in the balance scale: the lie about the victory of cynicism, the lie about the victory of servitude, the lie about the victory of neoliberalism.

Instead of humanity, it offers us stock market value indexes, instead of dignity it offers us globalization of misery, instead of hope it offers us an emptiness, instead of life it offers us the international of terror.

Against the international of terror representing neoliberalism, we must raise the international of hope. Hope, above borders, languages, colors, cultures,

sexes, strategies, and thoughts, of all those who prefer humanity alive.

The international of hope. Not the bureaucracy of hope, not the opposite image and, thus, the same as that which annihilates us. Not the power with a new sign or new clothing. A breath like this, the breath of dignity. The flower of hope. The song of life.

Dignity is the nation without nationality, the rainbow that is also a bridge, the murmur of the heart no matter what blood pumps through it, the rebel irreverence that mocks borders, customs and wars.

Hope is the rejection of conformity and defeat.

Life is what they owe us: the right to govern and to govern ourselves, to think and act with a freedom that is not exercised through the slavery of others; the right to give and receive what is just.

For all this, along with those who, beyond borders, races and colors, share the song of life, the struggle against death, the flower of hope and the breath of dignity, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation speaks...

To all who struggle for human values of democracy, liberty and justice. To all who force themselves to resist the world crime known as "Neoliberalism" [...]

To all individuals, groups, collectives, movements, social, civic and political organizations, neighborhood associations, cooperatives, all the lefts known and to be known; non-governmental organizations, groups in solidarity with struggles of the world people, bands, tribes, intellectuals, indigenous people, students, musicians, workers, artists, teachers, peasants, cultural groups, youth movements, alternative communication media, ecologists, tenants, lesbians, homosexuals, feminists, pacifists. [...]

We call you together to the First Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. To be celebrated between the months of April and August of 1996 in all five continents.

Continental preparation assemblies will be held in April 1996 in Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas. The Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism will take place from July 27th to August 3rd of 1996, in

the Zapatista "Aguascalientes", Chiapas, Mexico.

The agenda will cover the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of life under neoliberalism, resistance, struggle and proposals for struggle against neoliberalism and for humanity.

The preparation meetings in Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania will be organized by the Committees in Solidarity with the Zapatista Rebellion, related organisms, and citizenship groups interested in the struggle against neoliberalism and for humanity. We call upon groups of all countries to work united in the organization and achievement of the preparation assemblies.

The intercontinental gathering for humanity and against neoliberalism, to be celebrated from July 27th to August 3rd of 1996 in Chiapas, Mexico, will be organized by the EZLN and by citizens and Mexican non-governmental organizations that will be made known in opportune time.

Accreditation for the preparation assemblies in the five continents will be made by the organizing committees formed in Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and America, respectively. Accreditation for the gathering in Chiapas, Mexico, will be done by the committees in solidarity with the Zapatista rebellion, with the people of Chiapas, and with the people of Mexico, in their respective countries; and in Mexico, by the organizing commission, which will be made known in opportune time.

All details not fixed in this convocation will be resolved by the respective organizing committees, regarding the continental preparation assemblies, and by the intercontinental organizing committees regarding the gathering in Chiapas, Mexico.

Brothers and Sisters: Humanity lives in our chests and, like the heart, it prefers to be on the left side! We must find it, we must find ourselves. It is not necessary to conquer the world. It is sufficient to make it new. Us. Today. ★

Democracy! Liberty! Justice!

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee, General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Source: First La Realidad Declaration Against Neoliberalism and For Humanity, *La Jornada*, January 30, 1996. This (and many more Zapatista texts) are made available in English by <moonlight@igc.apc.org>

# “The trade unions must learn to fight”

Leaders of the Miners trade union in Tuzla talk to Danish **International Workers Aid** representative Vagn Rasmussen

● What do you think about the “peace accords” and the deployment of NATO troops in Bosnia?

**Marinko:** It is good that the killing will stop. But we expect a lot of trouble. We are not prepared for the arrival of 20,000 troops. They will bring the problems which armies of occupation always bring: drugs, alcoholism, prostitution and other forms of criminality, AIDS and so on. We are trying to prepare ourselves, but there is not much we can do.

**Muhammed:** Peace came at the right time. This is absolutely not a just peace. But it is good that the weapons will be quiet now.

Many of our members joined the army. Many were killed, even more wounded. At the beginning they had to fight with insufficient weaponry. It will be very difficult to continue the struggle.

● What is the prospect for real peace?

**Muhammed:** The war has destroyed all normal economic relations across Bosnia, and in most of former Yugoslavia. Much depends on whether we can make things run normally again. Tuzla coal is very clean. Before the war we sold much of it to the territory now occupied by the Tchetniks (Bosnian Serb militia). But people there still need coal. And we need to sell coal.

If economic ties are re-established, many of the problems will more-or-less solve themselves. People will realise

## Miners to miners

The miners' union in Tuzla had 18,000 members before the war. Today it has 11,500, of which only 3,800 are in (almost) regular work. About 5,200 are in the army, and 2,500 are “on the waiting list” for reintegration in the mine. In other words, unemployed.

British mine workers, remembering the solidarity of Tuzla miners during their year long strike in 1994-5, launched an initiative which developed in to Workers Aid and International Workers Aid (IWA). In November 1993 an IWA convoy broke the six month blockade of Tuzla. Since then, the organisation has delivered more than 300 tonnes of foodstuffs, which have been distributed through the miners' union ★

how dependent we are on each other. We will start a dynamic which will be important for peace.

**Marinko:** We will have big problems with the people who are now serving in the army, once they are no longer needed there. They will receive about 400 DEM per month: not in money but in coupons which will entitle them to tools, which will help them start producing.

**Omer:** Real peace means carrying the peace agreements through to the end. For instance, by punishment of all war criminals. We must put names and addresses on all the terrible crimes which have been committed. If we do not do this, there is the risk that some people will put the blame on whole nationalities, instead of concrete individuals. Refugees must all be guaranteed a safe return to their own homes. And there must be free, democratic elections.

● And the role of the trade unions?

**Omer:** The trade unions must learn to fight for their real role in society. We must be independent of all political parties. This does not mean that unions should not have an opinion about what is going on in society as a whole. And our members should, of course, be allowed to be organised politically. But the union as such must be independent.

Things may change for the worse if peace comes. We will see an influx of foreign capital, which will try to buy some of our industry and close the rest.

In Croatia we can already see the

results of privatisation. Many people end up in the street. To work in an industry owned by all society is better than to work in a private factory. You feel more sure that you have a job.

We have no great experience of dealing with private capital. We have a lot of things to learn in this respect from the workers' movement in Western Europe.

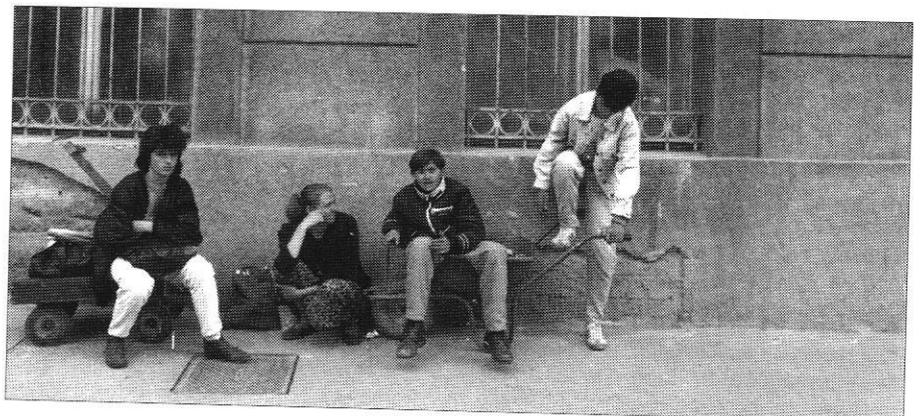


Omer Kamperovic, President of the Miners Union in the Tuzla region (left), Fikret Suljic, Marinko Jakovac mining engineer, who also served as translator, and Muhammed Gutic, President of the union at the Kreka mine.

We have recently visited Denmark and Sweden, and talk to trade union leaders, and to the Kiruna coal miners in Sweden. These miners were convinced that industries like mining should be owned by the state. We should fight for that here too.

In Britain, we learned from miners there about how the National Coal Board [a public sector monopoly] bought cheap coal from Poland during the 1994 strike. We can learn a lot from west European miners.

We hope to organise an international trade union conference here in Tuzla. We also want to establish a trade union school, to educate our members. ★



# Bosnia Herzegovina under Pax Americana

The cease-fire has a reactionary and contradictory basis. But we should seize it, in order to increase the space for resistance to reactionary policies.

Resolution adopted by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International in February 1996

## 1 THE CEASE-FIRE HAS A REACTIONARY AND CONTRADICTIONARY BASIS

### 1.1. INTERNATIONALLY: PAX AMERICANA AND NATO RE-DEPLOYMENT

The Dayton-Paris accords confirm the double failure of the UN and the European Union in the “management” of the first major “post-Communist” crisis. The NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) is taking the place of the discredited United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). US leadership has imposed itself in a spectacular fashion through this development. Despite the demarcation of US, French and British spheres of operations, the US plan signed in Paris adopts the basic philosophy of the European negotiators — division of Bosnia on an ethnic basis. But it also reflects the new equilibrium between the politico-military balance of forces on the ground. The consolidation of the Croatian Army has enabled it to carry out (since summer 1995) attacks on Serbian secessionists [in Krajina] and operations in Bosnia. At the same time, the position of [Serbian President Slobodan] Milosevic has strengthened at the expense of the Bosnian Serb leaders in Pale. The third politico-military pre-condition of these accords was the dependence of the Sarajevo government on its Croat and American “allies”. This is no US engagement in a war to defend “the Bosnian cause”. This is realpolitik, designed to “contain” the war.

Clinton is still not ready to commit the US to a war in Bosnia. Because US imperialism does not have sufficient direct interests there to justify the risk of losing its boys, and making a commitment in the face of public opinion.

For a certain period, this justified the distancing of US leaders from the Yugoslav, later Bosnian crisis. But in a second period, this led them to make a ‘moral’ denunciation of the European negotiators, who accepted, de facto, the logic of ethnic cleansing. The US began to demand the lifting of the embargo on arms sales to the Bosnian Army. This was a way of looking good in the Muslim world, and a section of public opinion disgusted by pictures of the conflict. All without getting involved in the war.

While the Republican opposition adopted the demand for the lifting of the



embargo on arms sales to the Bosnian forces, the domestic crisis in the United States and a number of international factors — the relationship with Russia, European pressure against American isolationism — were pushing Clinton towards a new policy. These pressures culminated in summer 1995, by which time the US President now needed a diplomatic success at any price, in order to consolidate his power on the home front, and confirm the international leadership position of the US, through the NATO re-deployment. But Clinton still faces a Republican majority [in the US parliament] which will only support a US troop presence in Bosnia to the extent that the “peace” accords are credible. Clinton is also faced with volatile public opinion: potentially proud of “America’s international role” if that involvement seems to bring peace, but marked by the Somalia syndrome.

The Paris accords provide for a progressive lifting of the arms embargo. The US goal is to be able to withdraw their troops about twelve months from now. But since the consolidation of the Croatian Army, there is also the question of aid to the Bosnian army, to try to establish some equilibrium between the armed forces on the ground. There is still a significant

difference of opinion between the US and its European Union and Russian “partners” on this question. Behind the establishment of IFOR, there are a number of conflicts of influence. Resistance to American hegemony is still present, particularly in the European desire to affirm a European pole (though Europe is finding it as difficult to unify its foreign policy as to adopt a single currency).

In the meanwhile, the application of the accords is based on a massive deployment of NATO troops. NATO now has the legitimacy of its new role of “pacification force”, under direct US command. At the same time, the alliance has begun a process of redefinition of its “partnership” relationship with Russia and the east European countries, and articulation of its own structures with those of the crystallising European armed forces. The reintegration of France into NATO institutions — without any public debate — is part of this process.

**The international left must denounce the new forms which American diktats are taking, and the re-deployment of NATO militarism, even after the Warsaw Pact has been dissolved. Recognition of the bankruptcy of the UN is translating into a new concentration of**

## ★ Bosnia-Herzegovina

imperialist powers. This impregnates the overall reactionary conditions of the conclusion of the Dayton accords. And the resulting, necessarily fragile peace.

This general denunciation should be accompanied by vigilance and exposure of the effects of a massive, lasting imperialist presence on the ground, which could lead to a campaign for the withdrawal of these troops. But we must also seize the cease-fire accords, with the contradictory dynamic they express, in order to widen the space for resistance to the reactionary policies which dominate [the region].



### 1.2. INTERNALLY

#### 1.2.1. REACTIONARY ALLIANCES

The accords were approved without the defeat of the various exclusivist nationalist policies. Quite the opposite. The plan rests on the "balance" of reactionary regimes and alliances.

- an anti-Serb Croato-Muslim alliance.
- an anti-Muslim Croato-Serbian alliance.
- the consolidation of a 'Great Croatian' policy and armed forces.
- the affirmation of Milosevic's power, at the expense of his former far-right allies, and the populations which had believed in "Greater Serbia".
- a Bosnian government dependent on the US and NATO for maintaining the frontiers of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It is [Croatian President Franjo] Tudjman's double language since the start of the war (recognising Bosnia, combined with a Serbo-Croatian alliance for its dismemberment) which has made possible

this state of affairs, of which he is the major benefactor. Tudjman's deep disdain for his Muslim pseudo-allies (who he says he wants to "civilise") is the product of a narrow nationalism: notoriously anti-Semitic and anti-Serb. Inside Croatia, this nationalism is in conflict with political and cultural pluralism, and in particular the regional specificities of Dalmatia and Istria.

The reinforcement of Tudjman's army, mainly with German and US support, was the pivotal element in the new balance of forces. Defence Minister Gojko Susak, a "Herzegovian" émigré who incarnates the



extreme-right wing of Tudjman's HDZ party, is directly responsible for the ethnic dismemberment of Bosnia since 1992, and this summer's military "ethnic cleansing" of Krajina, formerly controlled by Serb secessionists. The absence of any denunciation of these policies gave

Tudjman all the confidence he needed. Enough to suppress the constitutional measures favourable to [Croatia's Serbian minority] (introduced in 1991 under international pressure. Enough to give the vote, and seats in the Zagreb parliament, to Croats living outside Croatia. Enough to promote Tihomir Blaskic, chief of the Croatian HVO militia which "ethnically cleansed" Herceg-Bosna and destroyed the Muslim part of Mostar, within the Croatian Army, just after he and five of his companions were accused of war crimes by the Hague Tribunal. The Croato-Bosnian alliance is far from being an "anti-fascist" alliance. It is essentially military, and anti-Serb. It weakens the Croato-Muslim Federation in Bosnia and reinforces Serbian nationalism and all the fears of the Serbian population.

Milosevic also comes out of the war as a winner. He had encouraged the war in order to consolidate his power, and he stopped it for the same reasons. After benefiting from the sanctions (which were perceived as the cause of the economic disaster) he will benefit from their lifting. He wants to find some international political recognition, and take a key place in the diplomatic games of the Balkans. This is why he will probably switch his economic policies (he has until now been hostile to neo-liberal policies), which will certainly accentuate the social polarisation of Serbia, just like all the other societies subjected to the restoration of capitalism. But Milosevic is also confronted with the difficulty of controlling his former extreme-right allies over the issues of the "solution" to the Serbian question in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and over the frozen question of Kosovo, which must sooner or later come back to the foreground. For the moment, Milosevic can find a social base in the population of Serbia itself. People are fed up with war, and not motivated by the pursuit of the goals of Greater Serbia. But this same social base may dissolve if socio-economic questions

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come to the fore again, no longer associated with the sanctions. Karadzic and Mladic are playing for their power, their privileges, maybe even their lives. They are finding a popular base among the miserable masses of Serbian refugees: the losers of the policy of Greater Serbia in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina. The marginalisation of these two men implies an alternative leadership, enjoying sufficient confidence from the population concerned. Milosevic has only limited possibilities to solve this major problem. Any real stabilisation also depends on a political orientation which is capable of re-establishing confidence.

Contradictory aspects of the plan, like the Greater Croat menace, or the recognition of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia despite the relative weakening of the power of Karadzic, will deepen the political and ethno-national polarisation in the Croato-Muslim federation, and in the SDA party of Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic.

In general, nationalist extremists on all sides are playing with the "natural" dynamic of "ethnic cleansing", the goal of which was to build homogeneous territories. The function of the violence was to spread hate and fear, so as to ensure "spontaneous" departures, and non-return. The cohabitation and neighbourly relations between the communities has been destroyed by massive displacement of populations. This has modified the ethnic composition and political climate in the towns. This is generally the case in the "Serbian" districts of Sarajevo, where many people are rootless, but currently occupying apartments which do not belong to them. Most Sarajevans [in the part of the town under Bosnian control] complain about the massive arrival of Muslims from Sandjak (a rural region between Montenegro and Serbia) who have in part changed the character of the town. Tuzla is more and more suffocated by its refugees from the countryside. Serbian refugees are used to pressure Croats and Hungarians to flee from Vojvodina. Only the massively Albanian province of Kosovo seems to have escaped the goal of "Serbianisation", as a result of the refusal of Serbian refugees to move there to live.

### 1.2.2. CONTRADICTION SIGNATURES,

#### CONTRADICTION READINGS OF THE ACCORD

● Bosnian sovereignty is affirmed, but anything that could lead in that direction is, for the moment, non-existent. There is neither common currency (except the German Mark, official currency across Bosnia), nor a common army, nor a common foreign policy.

● On the contrary, the division of the country on an ethnic basis is consolidated by important points in the accords. The Republika Srpska is recognised. Relations with the neighbouring states are more within the competence of the separate "entities" rather than the unified state. There is a conflict over the "corridors" (the Posavina corridor in the north joining the two Serbian blocs, and a corridor to link Gorazde with Sarajevo). If the country is to be reunified, what is the sense of all these debates?

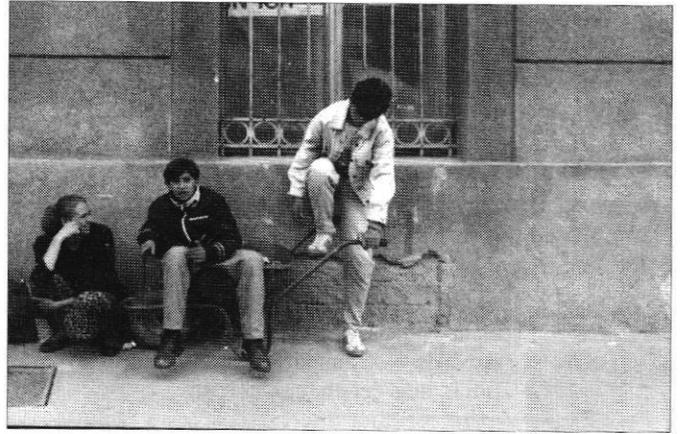
Nevertheless, the multi-ethnic reality of the Federation (where more than 150,000 Serbs live) has made it the site of anti-nationalist resistance. In particular, there are the Serbian "civic councils" which oppose both the policy of a Greater Serbia and discrimination against Serbs inside the Federation.

Despite the authoritarian tendencies within the SDA (Izetbegovic's party), similar to those in the other nationalist parties, the Bosnian "Muslim question" has a very different dynamic from that of the Great Serb and Great Croat nationalist projects. Tuzla and Sarajevo, "mainly Muslim", are host to international, pluralist and multi-ethnic meetings which are for the moment unimaginable in Croatian Herzeg Bosna and [its capital city] Mostar, where a terrible apartheid reigns, or in the Republika Srpska.

The Milosevic-Karadzic conflict is allowing the first contacts with the fragile Serbian opposition in Karadzic's Republic. This shows that another dynamic is possible.

All the non-nationalist organisations of the Federation came together in September, behind a common declaration of "Principles for establishing a durable peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina". This text sets out the conditions for a "non-confessional, multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic" state, with "decentralised federal units" but not "mono-national" component parts. These groups demand a referendum, as a real consultation of the population.

The reinforcement of the alliance of the anti-nationalist forces in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia is the only way to have a positive effect on the accords, at least in the sense of a defence of political pluralism and the right of minorities (and, therefore, the right of return of the refugees).



## Remember this?

- Russian left demonstrates against Chechnya war
- International Women's Day 1995 in Algeria
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## 2. WIDENING THE SPACE FOR RESISTANCE TO REACTIONARY POLICIES

### 2.1. SEIZING THE CONTRADICTION ASPECTS OF THE ACCORDS.

We can do this by setting ourselves a double task

- making the means of implementation of the accords transparent (including denunciation of imperialist interests and the reactionary policies of the regimes in place.)

- extending the possibilities for plurality of expression and organisation: a pre-condition for the emergence of progressive political alternatives.

2.1.1. The organisation of elections is anticipated within a very short period — six to nine months. This period reflects the preoccupations of American domestic politics rather than a desire to create the means to reverse the logic set in place by the war. Without circulation of persons and alternative projects across the whole territory, elections can only confirm fears and revanchism, and favour the most extreme nationalist parties, rather than serving as a factor of cohesion. Support for the deployment of pluralist and media independent of the regimes, expressing themselves over the whole territory is a major necessity. So is the circulation of alternative constitutional projects. We must be ready to support any demand by the democratic opposition to delay the elections until these pre-conditions are present (the Dayton accords are supposed to guarantee these conditions). We will use all examples which demonstrate the function of IFOR — imposing ethnic division, not helping rebuild the country — in order to develop a campaign for the withdrawal of these troops.

### 2.1.2. AID FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC TISSUE AND LINKS

Peace also requires a reconstruction plan which pushes for association and solidarity between communities (at the scale of the Balkans). Not an aid conditional on the carrying out of privatisations which will destroy the socio-economic tissue even more than the war did... if they don't incite a new outbreak of hostilities. Campaigns for "positive discrimination" in the attribution of aid can widen the links already established through town-twinning, and

actions directed at the European parliament and the various governments. Aid should favour projects jointly managed by the different "entities". It should support those communes which make practical steps to organise the return of refugees. There should also be vigilance over and transparency in the direction proposed by the International Monetary Fund (which has the right to name the governor of the Central Bank of Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to the accords).

### 2.1.3. THE QUESTION OF THE RIGHT TO RETURN OF THE REFUGEES.

This is only credible if it is global (covering the entire ex-Yugoslavia) and systematic, with collective guarantees. For the moment, this is a completely formal "right". It is expressed as an individual right which, in the current climate, is a smoke-screen. The domination of the states concerned by reactionary regimes, with a common interest in managing the refugee question in a framework of "ethnic" consolidation of their state, makes the hope of a "choice" of return largely utopian. Nevertheless, the preference for return is still massive. Particularly since the refugees are feel uneasy unwelcome everywhere. They are either "immigrants" or poor cousins, unpopular even within their ethnico-national community. The right of return is an essential axis of resistance, because it is organically linked to the rights of minority communities in each state or territorial entity. In practice, this right can only be realised if the extremist nationalist leaders and their bands are marginalised. In this framework, we will denounce any policies of the governments which would try to paralyse the activity of the Hague Tribunal against war criminals.

There must be vigilance against any forced return, and against any discriminatory or humiliating treatment wherever it happens. In particular, the governments of the European Union will use the Dayton "peace" accords and the provisions for organising the participation of refugees in the forthcoming elections in order to expel refugee (now that there is peace...) The central axis in this area should be controlling the conditions of implementation of the right to return, or a right to compensation and a decent life, in the framework of the free choice of those concerned.

Organisations of the "SOS Refugees" type may multiply in and outside Bosnia, collecting refugees' requests and informing them of their rights. This activity can be combined with the preceding ones — organising elections which would enable

refugees to re-establish contact with their commune of origin, or management of aid.

We should develop a "logic of control" on these four points: elections, aid for the rebuilding of Bosnia, activity of the international tribunal against war criminals, and refugee rights — alongside those organisations which support the project of reconstruction of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. Links between trade unions and between organisations which defend individual and collective rights could form the basis for ad hoc bodies for control "from below" of the accords hatched at the summit, in a logic of denouncing imperialist policies. Monitoring and publicity about the behaviour of IFOR troops in each of the countries involved is part of this logic. Since Tuzla remains the main site of internationalist meetings which support the resistance to reactionary policies, International Workers' Aid can find its place in this new context, redefining its means of intervention.

### 2.2. DESPITE THE DAYTON ACCORDS, THE CEASE-FIRE DOES NOT MEAN PEACE.

The intermingled national questions of the Balkans are still there, particularly in Kosovo and Macedonia. There cannot be peace without a systematic and equal treatment of all national questions, at the Balkan level and in a Balkan framework, in opposition to the construction of nation-states built on an exclusive basis. This means, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as in the whole Balkan space, the recognition of all national identities, the defence of collective rights for all the communities (under different forms, which exclude ethnic cleansing) in the framework of states based on citizenship and on the defence of all democratic freedoms.

- The major challenges and socio-economic choices of a democracy which respects individual and collective rights will return to the foreground. Peace will not be built in a race to privatise, or in the deepening of the differences between regions, or in a deepening poverty. In such a context, we must extend international trade union links, established through actions in solidarity either against the war and ethnic cleansing, or in defence of workers' rights and in resistance to the politics of privatisation.

These are the challenges for Europe — for that "other Europe" of the peoples, of the workers. ★

#### Notes

1. Opinion polls suggest that 27% of voters are sympathetic to the idea of a possible secession of the (relatively prosperous) north eastern part of Italy.

# Discipline or Dignity?

Gerard Greenfield

Strikes (*dinh cong*) are beginning to replace go-slows (*lan cong*) as the predominant form of protest exercised by Vietnamese workers. This radicalisation is the result of savage 'marketisation' of the economy, and the bankruptcy of state-run trade unions.

UNDER THE "STATE SOCIALIST" SYSTEM go-slows were pervasive, and as a result workers were accused of indiscipline and laziness by labour managers. Under economic liberalisation go-slows are no longer a viable means of labour protest since managers have unlimited power over individual wages and are free to hire and fire workers. Piece-rate wages and shift-work are used to enforce capitalist time-discipline, thereby reducing the effectiveness of go-slows. In response to the new capitalist regime of production, and a more authoritarian structure of management, workers are resorting to open confrontation with managers and state officials.

The main reason for strikes both before and after the new Labour Code was introduced are:

- i) the failure to pay minimum wages and long delays in the payment of wages;
- ii) the extension of the working day to 12-15 hours without compensation, as well as forced unpaid night and weekend shifts;
- iii) the mistreatment of workers and authoritarian management practices.

In nearly all strikes the "lack of democracy" has been a significant issue. Particularly in state enterprises the issue has not been wages, but the changes in the factory regime which have seen increased managerial control and the introduction of a hierarchy of work, time-discipline and surveillance which are characteristic of the capitalist labour process. A 13-day strike by 200 workers in a state-run rubber factory in 1990 was precipitated by what workers saw as the abuse of power by the manager and an authoritarian management regime. The workers formed a strike committee and dismissed the manager. Similar action was taken by 170 women workers at the Hung Yen Sewing Enterprise No.2, who protested against the "lack of democracy."

Another critical issue has been the way workers are treated by employers and their failure to respect workers' dignity. Workers have been subject to humiliation and beatings, particularly in foreign joint venture factories. In one Taiwanese joint venture factory women workers were subject to harassment and forced to do menial tasks for the director such as tying his shoe laces. A trade union cadre

described this as being typical of "their failure to respect workers' dignity." When 650 workers went on strike at the Ree Young clothing factory in February 1993, one of the issues raised was that the Korean supervisors were beating them. More recently, in February 1995, 250 workers stopped work at Thien Phu Co Ltd in Ho Chi Minh City to protest against the brutal treatment of workers by the Korean manager. The manager responded by increasing the working day to 12 hours and threatened to sack those that refused.

The outbreak spontaneous strikes over the past five years has not only threatened the government's attempts to attract foreign capital to a cheap, disciplined labour force, but strikes in state enterprises in particular posed serious problems for the legitimacy of the Communist Party and its mass organisations.

A number of Vietnamese journalists and trade union cadres have publicly criticised the government for failing to respond to these violations of workers rights because of the risk of scaring off foreign investors. In the Ministry of Labour's own newspaper, *Lao Dong va Xa Hoi* (Labour and Society) it was argued that for the groups involved in drafting the law on strikes, workers' rights and interests were subordinate to concerns for social stability and the impact on the interests of foreign capital. At the time the laws were drafted the Prime Minister, Vo Van Kiet, argued that the Labour Code must be determined by the need for the "liberalisation and development of the country's labour force" and must "create favourable conditions for every labourer to have a job and to work freely." Kiet then addressed the rights of capital, adding that, the law "should protect workers' rights and the rights of employers as well." According to the trade union journalist, Tran Thi Sanh, no employer has been charged for violation of the Labour Code, despite the fact that only 17% have signed collective bargaining agreements, provided social insurance or overtime pay, and only 15% of foreign companies and joint ventures have allowed workers to organise trade unions. Among those trade unions which have been formed, most are controlled by management and the trade union representative paid as much as ten times the average worker's wage.

While the recognition of the right to strike under the new Labour Code was first thought to be a breakthrough for Vietnamese workers, it is clear that strikes have been effectively criminalised. None of the twenty or more strikes which occurred since the introduction of the new labour laws have been legal. According to Hoang Minh Chuc, Vice President of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), while employers have failed to adhere to government labour regulations, workers have failed to follow the "Petition-Reconciliation-Arbitration-Court" procedure, and as such have broken the law by going on strike. Under the law on strikes and government and Party decrees, a 'legal' strike requires nearly two months of arbitration and negotiations with employers or state enterprise managers before any action by workers is possible. A directive issued by the Ministry of Labour in January 1994 ordered that workers must give employers 10 days' notice before going on strike. The directive also instructed local labour offices to establish a 'Board of Conciliation' at all major state enterprises under their jurisdiction. Before workers are allowed to approach labour officials with a 10 day warning of industrial action they must observe a number of arbitration procedures conducted through the Board. Workers must first present a petition to the city or provincial arbitration committee and notify the Ministry of Labour and the city or provincial trade union officials of their grievances. Only if the dispute is not resolved within 20 days will the matter be passed on to the state committee of labour arbitrators. If the dispute is not settled by the state arbitration committee after 30 days a strike is permitted if it is supported by two-thirds of workers. Once a strike has commenced a list of strike organisers, the content of demands and the intended length of the strike must be provided to state officials on each day of the strike. Any strike can be stopped by order of the Prime Minister, and strikes are not permitted in strategic industries.

This prolonged system of arbitration is not only weighted in favour of 'national

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## ★ Vietnam

interests' (political stability and economic growth), but is based on the assumption that workers and employers are able to negotiate on a free and equal basis, despite the fact that workers can be sacked at any time during this process. The requirement that a list of names of strike leaders be presented on each day of the strike simply helps the employers and managers in targeting workers' representatives for dismissal during or after a dispute. In 1994 workers in the Song Be Garment Export Company stopped work for two hours to protest against a new regime of fixed quotas which forced them to undertake unpaid overtime. Although the Board of Directors agreed to reduce the quotas, the Director later rescinded the agreement and ordered workers who could not meet the original quotas to resign. Two days after the strike, three of the workers who were the first to stop work were sacked.

Intimidation by managers and officials, and direct confrontation with the Party-state bureaucracy, has also tended to undermine workers' ability to put forward their claims. The time constraints imposed by the law and the pressure by authorities to simplify their demands or restrict their demands to wage-related issues has forced more 'abstract' demands (such as greater factory-floor democracy) lower on the agenda. The law on strikes explicitly states that "strikes are illegal if they do not concern issues relating to workers in the enterprise", thereby undercutting the right to stop work in support of workers in other factories.

Recent 'illegal' strikes have not only focused attention on the attempts by the government to effectively criminalise strikes by imposing a complex system of arbitration designed to control the expression of grievances and erode workers' solidarity. It also highlights the failure of the official trade union movement to act independently of the Party and State. Bound by the interests of the Party and state, official trade unions have failed to respond to workers' demands for genuine representation of their interests in the face of foreign capital and powerful state enterprise managers. In the private sector workers employers continue to exploit job insecurity and growing unemployment, withholding wages and sacking workers who attempt to organise unions.

The trade union clearly faces the dilemma of being unable to represent workers against the Party-state. As the trade unionist and writer, Xuan Cang, has argued, "There is a paradox in the trade union's activities: the popular movements which take place without the trade union's participation are more active than the movements organised by the union." In

some sectors workers have formed 'labour associations'. In their criticism of the failure of trade union officials to respond to the crisis faced by workers in the transition to a market economy, Hoang Chi Bao and Nguyen Thanh Tuan have argued that workers are responding to trade union passivity and the negligence and corruption of trade union cadres in the workplace by forming 'labour associations' (*hoi lao dong*). These grassroots workers' organisations have been created in the absence of assistance by official trade union organisations or in direct confrontation with them.

Labour associations were first formed in Hanoi, Haiphong, Ho Chi Minh City and the provinces of Song Be and Khanh Hoa. By mid-1993 some 700 labour associations with 100 000 members had been formed independently by workers in the non-state sector. Labour associations have been organised by cyclo drivers, cooks, and market porters, as well as factory workers. To some extent the trade union leadership views this self-organisation by workers outside of official trade unions as a threat. The President of the VGCL, Nguyen Van Tu, has asserted that workers' committees in the private sector are only "temporary" and will be replaced by trade unions.

It is not clear whether this will form the basis of an autonomous trade union movement or a radical restructuring of the existing trade unions. What is clear is that strikes will continue despite attempts to impose discipline and order from above in the name of national unity and 'socialism.' The claims of the political elite to a 'socialist' agenda is revealed as nothing more than an attempt to subordinate workers to the dictates of the capitalist labour market while claiming to be the legitimate representatives of the national working class. In the transition to capitalism Vietnamese workers are expected to forfeit the aims of the Revolution and surrender their rights in the face of global capital. But as these strikes have shown, the political elite and an emerging capitalist class have

been unable to make Vietnamese workers forget their radical past. And as Vietnamese workers face the violent and repressive labour conditions of a new 'Asian Tiger', they are once again in need of the international solidarity expressed by workers' movements throughout the world over thirty years ago. ★

## Beaten and cheated no longer!

Wildcat strikes are a response to inhuman exploitation and trade union complicity with the state and employers

Three weeks after the new Labour Code came into effect on January 1, 1995, over 1000 workers went on strike at the Dong Nai Industrial Sewing Company, in Dong Nai Province, marking the beginning of a new wave of wild-cat strikes in southern Vietnam. The company director had failed to provide a Tet (Lunar New Year) bonus to compensate workers for unpaid overtime and low wages. Instead the management continued to

deduct food expenses and other charges from wages which were already below the legal minimum. Low pay and poor health and safety conditions had already forced 600 workers (25% of the workforce) to leave the factory without pay. Those who remained were forced to work 4-8 hours of daily, unpaid overtime. While the new Labour Code requires 150% overtime pay and 200% on holidays and Sundays, workers continued to be unpaid in the lead-up to the Lunar New Year (January 31). The director also refused to sign a collective bargaining agreement which is required under the new labour law. Despite this clear violation of laws on wages and working conditions by the company management, the striking workers were immediately condemned by government and trade union officials for violating the Labour Code. The 'problem' at the Dong Nai Industrial Sewing Company was that "workers had failed to understand the new labour laws and did not act accordingly."

A similar argument was used to discredit the industrial action taken by 800 women workers in a factory under 100% foreign ownership earlier this year. Despite the official claim that the workers were ignorant of the Labour Code, they clearly demonstrated their awareness of the provisions of the Code by demanding that the employer provide social insurance and maternity leave according to the new labour regulations. [GG] ★



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# Mihalis Raptis (Pablo)

## 1911-1996

by Livio Maitan

**MIHALIS RAPTIS BECAME INVOLVED IN THE** struggles of the Greek workers' movement at a young age. From the early thirties on he played a key role in the construction of anti-capitalist and anti-Stalinist organisations, in collaboration with Pantelis Piliopoulos, that lucid and courageous revolutionary Marxist leader, shot by the Italian fascists in 1943.

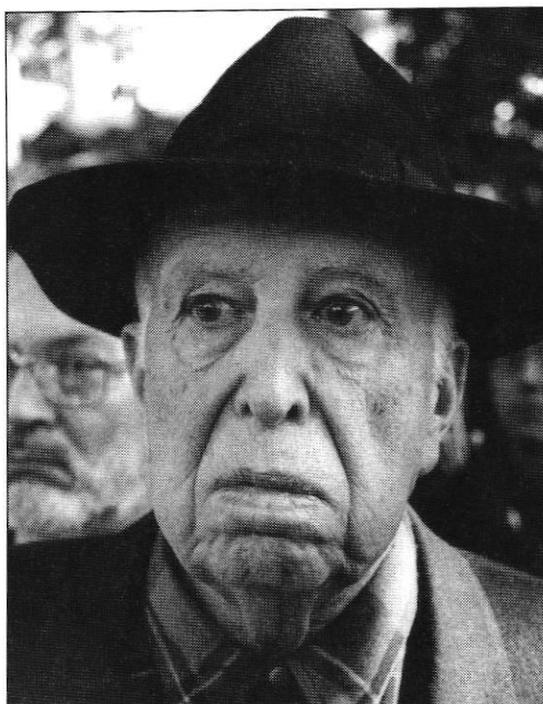
Raptis found himself in his country's prisons on several occasions, and was obliged to spend a large part of his life in exile, mainly in France. It was in France, in September 1938, using the pseudonym Speros, that he participated in the founding conference of the Fourth International. He stayed in France during the Nazi occupation, dedicating himself to an extremely dangerous underground struggle to reorganise the Trotskyist movement in Europe, after it had been ravaged by repression. It was in these war years that he began to play a major role in the International. A role that would be his for another two decades.

From 1948-1960, as a member of the International Secretariat, I had the chance to become familiar with the activities and development of 'Michel Pablo.' In our fraternal relations, I came to appreciate all his qualities. Each of us has a number of friends and comrades who have contributed to our development, to the key choices we make in our lives. For me, looking back after 30 years, I can only conclude that I learned a lot from Michel Raptis. I consider that his qualities were best in evidence in the 1950s. Particularly his capacity to understand quickly the essence of a changing situation. To know when we should re-direct our aim, and when we should redirect our strategy. And to put into practice, without hesitation, the result of new analysis and new generalisations.

For example, Michel was certainly one of the first to stress the full importance of the rupture between Stalin and the Yugoslav leader Tito. One of the first to adapt when the Korean war started, rejecting any 'equidistance' between the two parties. One of the first to help revolutionary Marxists understand the importance of the populist movements in

Latin America, such as Peronism in Argentina.

It was Raptis who stressed, after 1951-52, the need for revolutionary militants, particularly in capitalist Europe, to avoid



any 'propagandist' deviation. He argued for an entryist orientation towards the Communist Parties, which were profoundly Stalinist at that time. In other words, he argued for such policies as would permit us to avoid separating ourselves from the actually existing workers' movement, and make it possible to seize and exploit, from inside, and contradictions which began to ripen.

And it was Michel's contribution which enabled the Fourth International to rapidly sketch an analysis of changes in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin (see his editorial in the April 1953 issue of *Quatrième Internationale*.)

It was Michel's articles and reports, in the later 1950s, which most clearly stressed the capital importance of the new rise in the colonial revolution. Even at the price, in my opinion, of underestimating the potential of

the workers' movement in some European countries.

Michel's best writing also dates from this period. Take his numerous articles in the press of the International, above all those, (sometimes signed Jean-Paul Martin). Or his contribution to the history of the first 20 years of the Fourth International. Or his reports to our World Congresses and the sessions of the International Executive Committee. And his books, such as the 1980 collection of essays published in English by Allison and Busby as *Socialism, Democracy and Self-management*

We should not forget either his May 1960 text on women's liberation. Many readers may judge now, more than a quarter century of reflections and feminist initiatives later, that this work is partly obsolete, and criticisable in a number of respects. But it had the merit of being the first text to bring a series of crucial problems to the attention of revolutionary Marxists.

Michel was directly involved, from the beginning, in a multi-faceted solidarity with the Algerian revolution. He was arrested in June 1960 in Amsterdam, together with another International Secretariat member, Sal Santen, and accused of having prepared false papers and forged banknotes. A wide solidarity movement developed around the world during his detention, and during his trial in 1961. The appeal launched by Jean-Paul Sartre and signed, among others, by Simone Beauvoir and the Brazilian writer Jorge Amado was a central part of this campaign.

Michel was finally sentenced to 15 months imprisonment, and liberated at the end of his trial. He took refuge in Morocco. After the victory of the revolution he moved

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## ★ Mihalis Raptis "Pablo", 1911-1996

to Algiers, where he collaborated with Ahmed Ben Bella's government.



He rejoined the leading bodies of the International after his release from prison. His report on the Algerian revolution was one of the most moving moments of the 1963 world congress. But nevertheless, something was broken

between us. Michel began a minority struggle, which led to a rupture in 1964-5. Following this split, he led a revolutionary Marxist current outside the Fourth International.

A few years ago, he wanted to rejoin the International, the historical importance of which he had never disputed, along with his current. We came to an agreement but, for various reasons, including the situation of the revolutionary Marxist movement in

Greece, and important differences of opinion on the approach one should take to the war in former Yugoslavia, the agreement was not applied in his personal case.

It is for historians of the international workers' movement to judge Michel Raptis' activities and publications, alongside all the others who have participated in our common purpose. Me, I will never forget his tireless contribution to the revolutionary struggle. ★

## Memories of Mihalis

Mihalis Raptis, better known as Michel Pablo, died suddenly and peacefully while sipping a cup of coffee with friends at a street-side cafe in Athens. He was buried at the expense of the Greek Republic. Tassos Anastassiadis explores the contrast between Pablo's quiet death, and his turbulent life in a turbulent century.

Raptis said recently that he felt that the end was close. But, he told me, "the long voyage has been worth it."

His intellectual and militant stature, and his strong character, made him an imposing man. A man who never ceased struggling for the emancipation of all the oppressed, and against all forms of injustice. He was a major figure in our international movement: he made a decisive contribution above all in the dark years of the Nazi occupation of Europe, and in the immediate post-war period. Flowers and messages from movements, parties and individuals all over the world accumulated at his funeral in Athens. A testimony to the stature of this sincere revolutionary, cosmopolitan humanist, man of action and analyst.

Pablo's had no real special relationship with his country of origin. He was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1911. Like the poet Kavafis, who, praised the search for the Ithacca which would give sense to a man's life. Raptis dedicated his life to concentrating the universal on world-wide social emancipation.

Mihalis Raptis joined the workers' movement while studying engineering at the Athens Polytechnic School. After a period with the anarcho-Marxists, he gravitated towards the Trotskyists.

Greece was in political, economic and social turmoil. The millions of Greek-speaking refugees from Asia Minor (Western Turkey) were becoming the raw material of a transformation of the workers' movement. Raptis left the country to represent the Greek section at the Founding Congress of the Fourth International. Greece fell into dictatorship. Raptis was unable to return. During this period, particularly during the imperialist war which soon broke out, he threw all his efforts into the International's solidarity movements with the Arab, Latin American, East European and European countries. He became Secretary of the

Fourth International, a post he would hold for twenty years.

He returned to Greece secretly in 1946, in the middle of the civil war, for the Congress of re-unification of the Greek section of the International. He next saw Athens in the 1960s, when he returned for a few days just before the Dictatorship of the Colonels was installed. He only returned more-or-less definitively to Athens in the 1970s, after the Colonels fell. He had maintained contacts with Greek comrades, and tried to contribute to the struggle of the Greek people, particularly under the Colonels' dictatorship. During this period he established a relationship with each of the "resistance" movements, including the PAK, which was to become the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Party, (PASOK), currently in government.

Greece in the 1970s was no 'sublime Ithacca' for the man who had spent forty years in exile. The country was well engaged in a long period of capitalist reorganisation. And Raptis returned during the 20 year long wave of depression. The Greece of his youth, with its misery, its humanity and its youthful workers' movement, was gone forever.

He never forgave this 'modern barbarism'. I remember seeing him infuriated by diverse aspects of the degradation of political and social life, which accompanied each step of Greece's capitalist, liberal modernisation. And I suspect that his unhappiness with the nakedness of the concealed aggressivity of this mythical Ithacca was, at least partly the reason behind the divergences which separated us in recent years.

Well aware of our differences, we nevertheless began working together in the 1980s, long before he indicated his desire for a rapprochement with the International he had taken his distance from in the 1960s. But, just as he decided to rejoin the international, we were

confronted with the most burning question of our Balkan Ithacca: Greek nationalism. This was the source of the other, important but, especially in Greece, rather accessory disputes, such as our evaluation of the war in Bosnia, Turkey's role in the region, and so on. These differences of analysis made the regroupment project more and more complicated, and finally resulted in the rupture of our common effort to build a new left in Greece: socialist, revolutionary, feminist and ecologist.

The great analyst sensed the coming danger, but was unable to protect himself completely in the climate of nationalist hysteria orchestrated by the most reactionary circles, who dreamed of an "orthodox" axis against the supposedly "eternal" enemies: Islamic fundamentalists and Papists. Any ambiguity could have dangerous repercussions.

Ithacca took its revenge on our cosmopolitan humanist and revolutionary. They transformed him, posthumously, into a "national" hero. His funeral had a painful (for us) but very real duality: a bunch of ministers and ambassadors, and a bunch of Trotskyists, anarchists and others. Not the first time in history that a great man has been the victim of such a media and political operation. The easiest and surest way to neutralise a man like Raptis.

But for us, no message of [Bosnian Serb] General Mladic or any of the Greek hypocrites stops us from paying our own homage to our Pablo. To the Pablo who fought, from his youth until the day of his death, against oppression. Including, or particularly the various forms of national oppression. His commitment to the Algerian cause is ample testimony. We will preserve our best memories of this gentle revolutionary, this active theoretician, and this researcher in social emancipation. ★

# Book notes

## The itinerary of a dispossessed Palestinian

Salah Jaber discusses two books by Edward W. Said:

- **The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994**, Vintage, London 1995, £9.99 (first published by Chatto & Windus, London 1994).
- **Peace & its Discontents: Gaza-Jericho 1993-1995**, with a Foreword by Christopher Hitchens, Vintage, London 1995, £6.99.

Edward W. Said, the prestigious Palestinian-American Professor at Columbia University, is the author of such famous books as *Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism*. He is best known for his thorough treatment of the particularly biased relationship that the Western intelligentsia maintained with the Orient, the Middle East in the first place. The reader will find echoes of this major aspect of Said's already classic contribution in some of the articles collected in *The Politics of Dispossession*, the first of the two collections under review. On the other hand, this first book could serve as an introduction to issues of Middle Eastern politics and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although it will not bring much to any reader with a basic knowledge of the literature dealing with the Arab world from a standpoint critical of Zionism and imperialism.

The fact is that most of the articles collected in *The Politics of Dispossession*, ranging from 1969 to 1993, only convey in a more brilliant and incisive style what is common to many recriminations formulated by Arab intellectuals against the Western view of their part of the world: that highly disturbing and irritating experience whereby they notice powerlessly that the dominant world culture refuses to apply its own standards of justice and democracy to the Arabs, wherever and whenever they are confronting Zionism, whether directly or indirectly. For modern ('westernized') Arab

intellectuals, this leads to a feeling bordering on schizophrenia: since the double standard is applied by the Western world to the Arab world, to both of which they belong culturally, they are torn between their participation in a set of values originating in the West and their rejection of the very specific way in which that same West commonly uses these values in relation to the Arabs. And the same 'disease' is shared, in an even more acute way, by those very few Israelis who dare to

against this basically escapist alternative, while nevertheless defending its adepts against the outrages of double standard hypocrisy. Such a two-edged approach of the Fundamentalists—who, had they not existed, would have been invented by their western loathers—can be found in Said's articles. The defensive edge gained in strength after he met some of them in Palestine, in 1992, and became even more determined after 1993, when Said found himself for the first time in opposition to the

official leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), joining a broad 'rejectionist' camp whose most prominent (or mediatized) component are the Fundamentalists. This experience proved crucial for him to understand that, above all, this section of the Palestinian masses and youth expresses a reaction, distorted and misleading as it is, to the sentiment of rank injustice that the 'dispossessed' and oppressed feel so deeply.<sup>1</sup>

Said's view of the Palestinian scene as a whole got sharply more radical after the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement signed in Washington, with Clinton's blessing, in September 1993. It is after that date that his articles start belonging to a much rarer species than those collected in *The Politics of Dispossession*. Whereas the former belonged to the general

category of official 'Palestinianism' as Said called it himself,<sup>2</sup> the subsequent articles collected in *Peace & its Discontents* definitely belong to the radical school of anti-Zionist struggle, critical of the PLO leadership. And whereas Said was irritated, in 1975, by Noam Chomsky's 'reservations about the PLO',<sup>3</sup> he ended up finding himself in the company of the most famous of all radical mavericks, fustigating Arafat



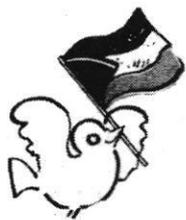
challenge the Zionist consensus from within, the likes of Professor Israel Shahak to whom Edward Said dedicated the second volume here reviewed.

One way for an Arab to avoid that disturbing feeling without betraying their sentiment of justice is to reject wholesale 'Western values' in the name of some brand of Arabic or Islamic fundamentalism. Rationally minded Arab intellectuals like Edward Said have consistently fought

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and the Pax Zionista on which he has embarked.<sup>4</sup>

That is why the second volume, *Peace & its Discontents*, is more important and original than the first. There one finds the brilliant analytical and polemical talent of



the author of *Orientalism* devoted to a task utterly in tune with the most specific aspect of Julien Benda's model of the intellectual as an uncompromising truth teller, which Said likes very much to quote and which he follows here for the first time against his

fellow Palestinian intellectuals.<sup>5</sup> There will the reader find an analysis all the more precious that it is quite rare indeed nowadays. Not hesitating to disturb the very large chorus singing the praise of the Washington Israeli-Palestinian accords, Said plays a sour note, calling things by their rightful name. He does so, galvanised by his deep distaste for the shameless spectacle of the Palestinian sycophants joining their traditional Israeli and American haters, now congratulating them with the contempt of slaveholders praising the servility of their slaves.

It is impossible within the space limitation of this book review even to summarize adequately all the arguments that Edward Said developed with the sharpness of a scimitar's edge. He has no lack of formulas or analogies to describe Arafat's 'autonomous' enclaves in the West Bank and Gaza: a Bantustan, a 'Vichy government', a 'municipal self-rule under foreign tutelage', an 'Israeli protectorate', etc. All point to what Said considers to be the true nature of Arafat's Palestinian Authority: essentially, a continuation of the Israeli occupation by other means, 'with the PLO's much-vaunted and ridiculously overblown police force doing Israel's enforcement'.<sup>6</sup>

Said submits both the text of the September 1993 Washington agreement and its ongoing implementation to his critical appraisal. Of the former, he asserts that it amounts to a legitimization of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, as embodied in the Zionist settlements and the presence of the Israeli army, which the agreement does not even put into question. He stresses that, seen from the angle of Palestinian national interests which the PLO was supposed to uphold, the agreement is a sellout, betraying the cause of the majority of the Palestinian people driven out of their ancestral land to the status of 'refugees' in other territories. Above all, the agreement consecrates a relationship wherewith the Israeli occupier

remains in full control of the fate, means of living (water included) and access to the territories put under PLO governorship.

The implementation of the 1993 agreement, as defined by subsequent agreements and achieved on the ground, amounts to a carve-up of the West Bank into several zones of Palestinian density separated by areas of Zionist settlement and roads designed to connect between these areas and link them to the pre-1967 Israeli border. The end result will be a patchwork resembling anything but the 'independent state' that the Palestinians aspire to. In so doing, Israel will have killed two birds with one stone: getting rid of the embarrassing task of exerting direct control on an increasingly unmanageable population, and removing the main impediment to the establishment of 'normal' relations between the Zionist state and its Arab environment. *Normal* designates here an obvious drive to open the Arab hinterland to Israeli economic exploitation.

The initial joyful reaction of the population in the areas from where the Israeli army has withdrawn did not puzzle Edward Said. 'True, residents of the West Bank and Gaza are rightfully glad to see that some Israeli troops will withdraw, and that large amounts of money might start to come in. But it is rank dishonesty not to be alert to what the agreement entails in further occupation, economic control and profound insecurity.'<sup>7</sup> He even expected that the scheduled Palestinian elections would take place according to Arafat's wishes, helping the reader to understand the unfolding events. 'Thus an unfortunately resilient political system is taking shape in the autonomous zones under Arafat and his men. (There are disappointingly few women in government.) Tired out by years of resistance, especially during the intifada, most Palestinians seem to accept what is before them as inevitable, although most are disgusted with what is going on.'<sup>8</sup>

There lies the most powerful part of Said's analyses: in his assessment of what he calls Arafat's 'Vichy government'. Knowing intimately the man, his collaborators and their ways of operating, he submits their Palestinian Authority to a devastating portrayal. He thus gives the

reader a clue to Arafat's social base: 'He has now established a formidable network of hangers-on, sycophants, commission agents, spies and informers through Fateh, his non-ideological and tribal organization.'... 'his employees plus their dependents give him an impressive network of about 350,000 dependents throughout the territories. If you add to that the number of prospective seekers of employment, businessmen and unscrupulous speculators who must go through Arafat to get projects approved, the number almost doubles'.<sup>9</sup>

The overall picture of Arafat's government that comes out of Said's virtuosic criticism stands somewhere between an operetta dictatorship and a ruthless megalomaniac tyranny in Saddam Hussein's fashion.

At times, Edward Said sounds even as if he were settling personal accounts with the autocratic leader of the PLO, putting much of the blame on his personality and his backward authoritarianism. Having been reproached for that, the distinguished Palestinian-American Professor justified himself by pointing to the most traditional pattern of 'Third World' dictatorships to which Arafat's rule belong. There is no 'constituted process of accountability' in the

Palestinian movement. 'What we do have instead is an all-powerful ruler who survives despite a seemingly unending record of failure.'<sup>10</sup> If the only problem were indeed the fact of pouring contempt on Arafat himself, it could have been perfectly legitimate, in the same vein as the devastating irony that the tragi-farical character of Louis Bonaparte inspired a pamphleteer like Karl Marx.

However, there is another problem with Said's criticism of Arafat's autocracy, and the comparison with Marx's historical masterpiece is revealing in that respect. Marx described the 'uncle's nephew' as the right man in the right place at the helm of the huge French bureaucracy and army, explaining Louis Bonaparte by history instead of the reverse, Said seems at times to stick to a very crude explanation of such a major historic process as the collusion between Arafat and the Zionist colonial project. It is as if the crux of the matter were Arafat's 'technical incompetence' and poor command of the English language, his 'misreadings and miscalculations', 'ignorance', 'poor education', 'flawed linguistic and political understanding', etc. *Peace & its Discontents* is riddled with such analytical short cuts.



Whereupon, when Said laments time and again that 'the Palestinian side had no legal consultants to help it conclude a binding international agreement',<sup>11</sup> that they did not seek 'any expert legal opinions', nor did they 'seek advice about the language', and that although 'the Palestinian people have talented human resources, Arafat and his aides never used these resources during the Oslo negotiations',<sup>12</sup> one cannot help getting the unpleasant feeling that the distinguished Professor experienced a further dimension of the 'dispossession' he described so well. It is as if he felt personally dispossessed of his legitimate role as a learned adviser to the Palestinian leader. It is as if he were insinuating that had he been consulted, the Oslo-Washington deal would not have been struck!

Since we are not discussing here some conceited shallow author, but an intellectual of the highest calibre, we ought then to presume that there is an interesting clue to that explanatory inhibition, which prevented Edward Said from describing the unfolding events properly as a natural outcome of the long degenerative and backtracking trajectory of the PLO's bureaucracy under Arafat's 'chairmanship'. The very fact that Said was so surprised and disappointed by the deal concluded between Arafat and the Israeli rulers reveals that his perception of the PLO's bureaucracy was affected by some blind spots. In that respect, Said's *The Politics of Dispossession* is most useful: for studying the evolution of his own attitude towards the PLO, this collection of articles written over 25 years is a key instrument.

It is well known that Edward Said was, between 1977 and 1991, one of the most prestigious members of the Palestine National Council (PNC), often described as the PLO's 'Parliament'.<sup>13</sup> During that period, however, he was not entirely illusioned about the PLO and its leadership: it turns out from what he wrote since then, that he deliberately hid his own true feelings and thoughts, conforming more thus with the self-restraint of a public servant or a 'disciplined militant' than with his own model of the intellectual. So that when Said wonders in his introduction to *Peace & its Discontents* 'Why do PLO representatives say one thing in private (for example, that

Arafat is a megalomaniac) and its exact opposite on television?',<sup>14</sup> one cannot help thinking that he himself did the same for quite a long time.

One very telling article in that regard is the one Said devoted in 1994 to the memory of Hanna Mikhail, a Palestinian friend of his who disappeared tragically in 1976.<sup>15</sup> There Said confesses that as early as 1970, he felt that Arafat was 'a great actor and a supreme political animal with only a provisional relationship to the truth' (he listened to a speech by the 'Chairman' where the truth was obviously twisted). As a matter of fact, any person with the slightest critical mind, having ever dealt with the PLO's bureaucracy, knows for sure that the dictatorial method of government and the deep bureaucratic corruption prevailing under the new Palestinian Authority, that Said describes so well, could perfectly be seen and foreseen since 1970. They existed already and got worse over the years up to the present rump police state, which is but the terminal stage of a protracted degenerative process.

This is the only explanation of the state of affairs that Said correctly, and surprisingly, summarizes today as follows: 'What we have now on the Palestinian side is a situation that can best be described as 'business as usual', with the same faces, the same slogans, the same ideas that produced the débâcles of Jordan (1970-1) and Beirut (1982). There has been no change in the cast of characters who with no record of anything but failure and defeat continue to command Palestinian political destiny.'<sup>16</sup>

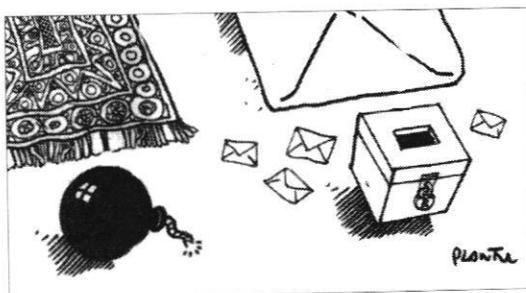
One obvious task of critical and independent intellectuals dedicated to the Palestinian struggle should have been to denounce uncompromisingly that situation from the start, and to fight for a thorough democratisation of the movement. Instead, Edward Said covered for years Arafat's behaviour with his high moral authority, to the point of sounding laudatory at times. This was most blatantly (and regrettably) the case when, in the aftermath of the PLO's departure from Beirut besieged by Israeli troops in 1982, Arafat chose to get rid of his own hard-line followers and to sever his links with the Syrian regime, in order to throw himself in the arms of the 'Arab right wing',<sup>17</sup> i.e. Mubarak's Egypt and Hussein's Jordan. The Fateh dissidents, backed by Damascus, rebelled

against Arafat's dictatorial leadership, his corruptive methods and his obvious inclination towards a reconciliation with the pro-US Arab governments, having already decided since his last weeks in Beirut to stake his all on Washington.<sup>18</sup>

It is at this point that Edward Said wrote for *The New York Times* a piece entitled 'Solidly behind Arafat' which is included in *The Politics of Dispossession*.<sup>19</sup> Acknowledging that 'Arafat's leadership was endlessly problematic', he added nevertheless that 'he was always open and personally incorruptible' and that 'his commitment to his people and cause had no limits', thus fostering the myth of the great leader embodying the will of his people. Later, in 1984, Said took part in the PNC meeting convened by Arafat, in the most undemocratic fashion, in Amman (to make it impossible for the left-wing PLO

groups to attend),<sup>20</sup> a meeting which was designed to cover Arafat's next move: his agreement with the King of Jordan, in February 1985, for joint participation in negotiations with Israel. Another blatant failure of Arafat's: Hussein discarded single-handedly the agreement, one year later, to try his own way with his Zionist Labourite cronies who were back in government, led by Shimon Peres.

The subsequent 'reunification' of the PLO in 1987 did not save it from reaching the lowest ebb in its existence. It was rescued by the sudden outburst of the intifada by the end of the same year, a powerful movement stemming from the depths of Palestinian society under Israeli occupation. The PLO leadership in exile did it utmost, however, to impose its control over the movement, nipping in the bud the dynamics of autonomous self-organisation that the intifada had unleashed.<sup>21</sup> It channeled the full steam of the mass struggle into its politics of subservience to the US government. Betraying the positions proclaimed by the early expressions of the intifada, it convened a PNC meeting in the fall of 1988 in order to prove 'its readiness to abide by Washington's conditions, recognizing Israel's right to exist within secure borders (UN Security Council resolution 242/1967) without any quid pro quo.



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Edward Said nevertheless commended this 1988 PNC meeting highly, stressing in particular the fact that its resolutions 'clearly intend willingness to negotiate directly', since they 'flatly contradicted' the Palestinian National Charter of 1964.<sup>22</sup> How could he oppose Arafat's statement, shortly after, that the same Charter had become obsolete ('*caduque*'), one wonders.<sup>23</sup> The evolution of the subsequent US-PLO dealings disappointed Said (he complained already about the lack of 'expertise' of the Palestinian negotiators). And there upon he was deeply inspired by



Nelson Mandela's compelling example: the comparison with Arafat and his men was unavoidable, and very much to their disadvantage. One does not need to read between the lines to see that Said's article on Mandela, in 1990, is a critique of the PLO leadership, confirming what Christopher Hitchens reports.<sup>24</sup>

In 1991, Said now reveals, he 'was alarmed at how anxious the PLO seemed to be about accepting American (and, in effect, Shamir's Likud) terms', shortly after the US onslaught in the Gulf and before the US-sponsored Madrid conference for 'peace' in the Middle East. The prestigious Professor then resigned from the PNC. 'I said only that I was leaving for reasons of health. I said not one word more, and because (against hope) I wanted our efforts to succeed I didn't criticize what I felt was a tragically mistaken policy.'<sup>25</sup> Whoever reads this statement will note the very peculiar logic by which a sharp-minded intellectual could delude himself into believing that by refraining from criticising a 'tragically mistaken policy', he might help it succeed!



In a sense, the story of Edward Said is hardly original. It bears an obvious resemblance to the self-deceptive relationship that so many brilliant intellectuals fostered with stalinism in its heyday.

Like only a minority of them however, the author of *Orientalism* did not betray his own principles of justice when he finally decided to get rid of an unwarranted conception of loyalty.

His commitment to his people prevailed against his commitment to the PLO's bureaucratic institution. He thus contributed the weight of his own prestigious example to the further confirmation of one of the crucial lessons of this century: no just cause can be adequately served by disguising the truth.★

### Notes

- 1 'No matter how much secular people like myself lament their methods and their vision (such as it is), there is no doubting the truth that for many Palestinians these people express a courageous protest against the humiliations and demeaning denials of identity imposed on all Palestinians as a people.' *Peace & its Discontents*, p. 159.
- 2 Except for the Introduction and Epilogue written in 1994, using articles reproduced in *Peace & its Discontents*.
- 3 *The Politics of Dispossession*, p. 328.
- 4 'All of a sudden the major Palestinian leader, Yasir Arafat, signed an agreement with Israel (under US sponsorship) and I found myself criticizing the so-called peace, as well as the PLO and its titular head.' (*Peace & its Discontents*, pp. xx-xxi).
- 5 'Most of the Palestinian intellectuals who are capable of understanding the reality have been, I believe, too anxious to bolster their self-esteem by actively seeking to cooperate with Arafat, Israel, and the US, with results for their compatriots in the Occupied Territories that are deeply dispiriting. In this they too closely follow Arafat and his lieutenants, who have abandoned their principles and history just to be recognized by the White Man, to be invited to Brookings, and to appear on US TV.' (*Ibid.*, p. 172).
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 171.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 168-171.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. xxv.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 182.
- 13 Actually, the PNC was not elected through any democratic process. The majority of its members were appointed by Arafat's group who used it and convened it when it suited their convenience, to confer some kind of legitimacy to their political moves. After the 1993 deal, Arafat, knowing that a sizeable portion of the PNC members did not agree with his capitulatory course, decided to let it sink into oblivion.
- 14 On p. xxvi.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 73-83. The following quotation is from p. 79.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 71-72.

17 See 'The Arab Right Wing' (1979) in *The Politics of Dispossession*, pp. 224-230.

18 The fact that the Fateh dissidents turned into Syrian stooges does not in the least disprove their assessment of Arafat and his men. When leaving Beirut, Arafat had praised US president Reagan's so-called plan for a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He has since then built all his moves on winning Washington's favour (except his stand during the Gulf crisis and war where he bet on Saddam Hussein, after having been dropped inconsiderately by the US administration). Said's two collections contain a strong criticism of this strategy. At one point in one of his recent articles, he recognizes 'the underlying capitulation of the PLO, which after 1982 gradually came to see itself not as a liberation movement but as an independence party willing in the end to settle for municipal, as opposed to national, authority.' (*Peace & its Discontents*, p. 36, my emphasis).

19 On pp. 101-103.

20 See *ibid.*, pp. xxv-xxvi.

21 The left-wing fractions of the PLO helped in that process, confirming a long self-defeating tradition of tail-ending Arafat while barking at him. Their historic failure can be measured by the growth of the Fundamentalists' influence.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 150.

23 This is what Edward Said told an Egyptian journalist in early 1995, after the latter pointed to the contradiction between his past and present positions. He declared honestly however: 'Perhaps I should have abstained from voting on the decisions of the 1988 PNC in Algiers'. (*Peace & its Discontents*, p. 187).

24 *Ibid.*, Foreword, p. xv. Said's article is in *The Politics of Dispossession*, pp. 366-371. He laments about PLO representatives visiting the US and 'desperately seeking meetings with the State Department', while stating 'that they would be willing to discuss modifications of boundaries with Israel, that the 1967 lines are negotiable, that even the principle of a Palestinian state is negotiable' (p. 370).

25 *Ibid.*, p. xxxi-xxxii.

## Mutation and regroupment

The collapse of Stalinism and the continuing capitalist crisis has contradictory effects. Myths and illusions connected to the restoration of capitalism in the post-Stalinist societies have dissipated, faced with the actually existing market economy. But reactions to the socio-economic crisis all too often take the form of reactionary tendencies of an ethnic, nationalist, racial or religious character. Hence the urgent need to rebuild a world-wide movement of anti-capitalist struggle, within the socialist perspective, taking account of the recomposition of the workers' movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.



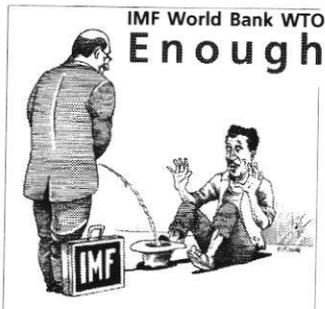
The political disorder in the ranks of the anti-capitalist left has resulted in many political, even ideological capitulations. But it has also led to a spectacular overcoming of the sectarian traditions generated by the existence of Stalinism which have taken root in the anti-capitalist left over the decades. Regroupments of forces determined to learn the lessons of the historical abomination that was Stalinism and to continue, against the winds and the tides, to fight against capitalism are being realised in a number of countries.

In all the countries where such possibilities exist, the organisations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the re-groupment process. We consider this as an important step towards the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left on a world scale. At the international level, the Fourth International is an active participant in re-groupment, bringing with it the advantages of a long tradition of combat against capitalism and Stalinism. ★

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# Resist

*International Campaign news*



Preparations for the G7 counter-summit were discussed in Paris on 16-18 February. Over 200 people attended the Friday night session, which was followed by two days of workshops defining the content and the organisation of events planned to coincide with the meeting of representatives of the seven leading imperialist powers in Lyon, France on 21-23 June 1996.

Time pressure increased tension in a number of workshops, but there is no real decline in the common desire to organise another successful "Other voices of the planet" gathering. As well as events organised by anti-debt and third-world organisations, this Counter-Summit will welcome the convergence of marches for jobs organised by the AC! group

A dress rehearsal for the counter-summit will be held in Lille, France on 30-31 March, when G7 employment and finance ministers meet to finalise the agenda for their June meeting. As our Paris meeting agreed, the absolute cynicism of the G7 necessitates an absolutely resolute response. Their preparatory documents admit that Lille is a massive public relations exercise: "The 'Lille Conference' is another event in the long-term project to re-inject confidence and hope into a public opinion which has progressively succumbed to discouragement, and fears for their futures. We must reinforce their capacity to adapt to change [!!]. The conference must seek to re-establish the credibility of policies aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty, by demonstrating that the improvement of the employment situation is at the heart of G7 strategy today." Rather than

attacking structural unemployment, the Lille meeting will seek to boost the image of the policies and politicians who have made Lille and the surrounding 'post-industrial' zones of northern France and southern Belgium into the disaster they are.

A four-page fortnightly bulletin has been established to circulate information in the run up to the Counter-Summit in Lyon.

For your copy contact COCAD, Plantinstraat 29, B-1070 Brussels, Belgium.

© +32.2/523 4023, fax 522 6127

## *Resistant Strains*

This is a year-long project organized by a group of artists and activists working with Vermont Chiapas Action Network and the Vermont **50 Years Is Enough** Coalition

A series of 10 posters will be commissioned, focusing on the Zapatista response to ongoing economic oppression, political exclusion, and genocide in Mexico. Design proposals should be submitted by 1 April 1996.

The posters will examine the implications and inspirations of the Zapatista rebellion, and stress the necessity of such resistance in light of economic globalization, conservative political climates, and bogus notions of democratic participation. Once printed, the posters will be distributed through activist organizations, community groups, and independent bookstores and galleries, in time for the May 5th celebrations.

For artists' guidelines and any other information, contact: David Thorne, Box 153b, Glover, VT 05839 USA, (802) 525-8853, e-mail: baseline@igc.apc.org

## **Fight the Right**

In response to attacks on affirmative action, particularly in California, the National Organization for Women (N.O.W.) has initiated a call for a national

demonstration in San Francisco on April 14. The "Fight the Right" March will demand that there is no retreat on affirmative action, and address a broad range of feminist and progressive issues. Demands for economic justice include an end for the "war on poor women"; opposition to proposed funding cuts and restrictions on welfare for single mothers; support for abortion rights and reproductive freedom; opposition to racism; support for lesbian, gay and bisexual rights; and support for efforts to end violence against women.

This is an unprecedented opportunity to build strong alliances for affirmative action, for women's rights, and against racism between the (predominantly white) women's movement and the Civil Rights movements of African-Americans and other peoples of color. The March should help cement the alliance between N.O.W. (the country's largest women's rights organization), organized labor, and the lesbian/gay rights movement.

The demonstration has already received broad endorsement from groups including the Rainbow Coalition, American Indian Movement (AIM), and the National Welfare Rights Union. The march is backed by the California wing of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and trade unions in several states affiliated to the country's AFL-CIO confederation, numerous feminist, abortion rights and lesbian/gay rights groups.

Large, multi-racial organizing meetings have been held in San Francisco, where representatives of labor, student groups and people of color organizations have met with N.O.W. representatives to discuss plans for the March.

"This March will make clear that the feminist agenda is really about a return to community values", N.O.W. President Patricia Ireland recently wrote in a letter asking hundreds of organizations to endorse the March. "[A return to] the policies and politics that favor the needs of people over the profits of the corporations and the comforts of a few. People will understand that the right-wing politics of division and diversion serve only to short-change our country and our future".

For more information call San Francisco (415) 436-9390

## Cuba Si!

Every major union central in Quebec and English Canada and a number of large NGOs have sponsored the March 15-16 International Conference in Solidarity with Cuba which Alternatives and the Centre international de solidarite ouvriere (CISO) is organizing in Montreal, Quebec.

Speakers will include Pedro Ross, general secretary of the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, Xavier Gorostiaga, director of Envio (Nicaragua), Francois Houtart, director of the Tricontinental Centre and Louise Harel, Quebec Minister of Cultural Communities and Immigration.

Contact: Alternatives, 3680, rue Jeanne-Mance, bur. 440, Montreal, Quebec, H2X 2K5, tel (514) 982-6606, fax: (514) 982 6122, e-mail: alternat@web.apc.org

Sponsors include CTC-CLC, FTQ, CSN, CEQ, FIQ, SFPQ, the Cuban CTC trade union, and the United Church of Canada.



The anti-unemployment movement AC! (Together against Unemployment) held a weekend conference on "the 32 hour week: a step towards ending unemployment" in Paris on 20-21 January. Discussion centred on the mass public sector mobilisation at the end of last year, particularly the impact of unemployment and job insecurity on the thinking and organising of the workers' movement. Many participants in the discussion believe that there is a new trend of organising among workers with precarious contractual status, and among those on workfare, 'reinsertion' and 'training' schemes. This will prove increasingly important, since a growing number of public sector and governmental entities are trying to replace full-time workers with these cheap, disposable substitute contracts.

AC! militants, who are evenly divided between the unemployed and workers, will organise 'caravans against unemployment', which will leave localities around France after local May 1st demonstrations, and converge on Lyon during the counter summit organised to protest the G7 summit organised there on 21-23 June. [JB] ★

## Left wins Volvo union elections

The broad left Union Opposition (UO) has won an overwhelming majority of votes in trade union elections at the Volvo car plant in Gothenburg. "The Social Democrats have never suffered a defeat this large in a local union election" commented Göte Kildén, a leading member of the coalition. "Members are not just dissatisfied not only with the local union bureaucrats [which UO has been challenging for 20 years now]. They are also clearly dissatisfied with the austerity policies of the country's social democratic government."

Kildén, a member of Sweden's Socialist Party (Fourth International), was re-elected unopposed as chairman of Volvo Union Group (local) #34.

UO candidates won 85% of votes in local #34 (three out of four workers participated in the election) and 71% in local #31, where participation in the ballot was virtually total (almost all workers in the plant are union members). Three locals have elected members of the revolutionary Socialist Party (FI) as chairmen.

Peter Lindgren, Stockholm. ★

## Stop the War in Chechnya!

The European left should support opponents of the Chechen war, and demand that their governments freeze loans to Russia until it withdraws its troops from the rebel territory. This is the central conclusion of a recent appeal by Denmark's Socialist Workers' Party (SAP). "The end of the [Chechen] war cannot wait for negotiations between the Russian government, who is responsible for the war, and the dubious regime of [Chechen President] Dudaev", the appeal argues. "The only way forward... is an immediate and un-conditional withdrawal of all Russian troops from Chechnya." The appeal calls for a halt to all IMF and other international loans to the Russian government, until Russian troops withdraw from Chechnia.

The appeal also stresses the importance of building a Russian and international peace movement. The development of the Russian left-wing can be judged "by whether it promotes the war resistance, or not." According to SAP member Søren Søndergaard, a member of the Danish Parliament for the Red Green Alliance, the Western peace movement should also help Russian and Chechen opponents of the war express their views and mobilise against the war inside the Russian Federation. "Ending the war is the only way Russia can send a message of peace to her neighbours, and start the peaceful reconstruction of her economy, for the benefit of the people," says Søndergaard. ★

## Watch out for the anti-terrorists

France's "Vigipirate" special policing plan, introduced last autumn (fall) was not established on the basis of any published law, Henri Leclerc writes in the February issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Leclerc, President of France's influential *League des droits de l'homme* (Human Rights League) points out that "It was never stated what 'vigilance' was involved, or which 'pirates' were targeted. The government said that the plan was based on internal memoranda, virtually unknown, vaguely identifiable, and covered by secrecy legislation. We thought they meant memoranda from 1978. We were wrong. It has just emerged that the regulations in question are based on non-published 1995 instructions of the Prime Minister and the General Secretariat for National Defence.

"The vast measures undertaken on the basis of these regulations have been a direct intervention in the daily life of

citizens. Some 13,800 soldiers were mobilised, and three million people stopped by police or army patrols. This in a country where the freedom of movement is founded on the freedom to pass anonymously. Some 21,450 people were interrogated, 19,972 were refused entry to France, and 2,324 people were expelled. In short, a generalised surveillance operation of those sectors of the population judged dangerous. A "cleaning" campaign, aimed above all at the foreign-born population, suspicious by definition.

"Anti-terrorist" judge Alain Marsaud, now Member of Parliament, has seen his dream come true. A judicial "Task Force" has been created. The military language is no harmless coincidence. Judges hidden out of sight, cocooned in security measures, in a strict hierarchical system, ruled by a Chief Judge; a section of the state prosecution service virtually cut off from the traditional structures, but with a direct relationship with the Minister of the Interior..." ★

## One hernia one vote?

UPS is the world's largest package-delivery service (1994 sales: \$19.5 bn.). "Big Brown" is also the largest corporate giver to congressional races in the USA. (\$2.6 million in 1993-4). According to *Time* magazine, UPS "is leading a corporate charge to gut enforcement programs at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, created by Congress in 1970 to protect workers from injuries on the job. UPS is lobbying hard for bills... that would curb OSHA's power to issue citations and fines for infractions of hundreds of rules and regulations. The sweeping change would transform the agency from a watchdog on safety matters to a toothless 'adviser' to industry."

The 1995 on-the-job injury rate among UPS's 350,000 workers was 11.5 cases for every hundred workers. The national average for transportation companies is about nine cases per hundred employees. A growing number of injuries are the direct result of UPS's February 1994 decision to increase the weight limit on delivery parcels from 70 lbs (32 kg) to 150 lbs (68 kg).

No wonder that "No employer has been a more in-your-face foe of OSHA than UPS", comments *Time*. In December 1995 the company created a coalition of 250 business and trade groups which has already stifled OSHA's attempts to develop a standard aimed at reducing the incidence of inflammatory wrist ailments triggered by repetitive motion..."

According to *Citizen Action*, top benefactors from the UPS-led anti-OSHA coalition are all Republicans. The list is headed by Tom Delay (TX), Newt Gingrich (GA) and Bob Livingston (LA). At least \$3.6 million has been paid to members of the House of Representatives, to encourage them to make further cuts in occupational health and safety legislation. Every cent is legal, under America's electoral legislation.

UPS's massive political contributions "make perfect sense", admits Kenneth Holland, Political Scientist at the University of Memphis. "If you are in an industry like this one that is heavily affected by federal regulation, obviously you have a tremendous incentive to contribute as much as you can." ★

Source: *Time*, 26 Jan 1996, *Citizen Action*

## Left regroupment in Australia

Schisms are more frequent than mergers on the revolutionary left. So it makes a refreshing change to see three far left organisations moving towards unity. Since late 1995, Solidarity (Australian sympathising organisation of the Fourth International), has been engaged in joint work and discussions with supporters of Communist Intervention (part of the international LIT regroupment) and the Australian Militant group. Whilst the final outcome of this process is not certain, we hope it will culminate in regroupment in a disciplined, yet multi-tendency Marxist organisation. Whilst there may be

important differences on some theoretical matters, there is a real convergence of views on matters of Australian politics.

The new joint commission of the three groups has recommended that representatives of CI and Solidarity be elected to the Militant Melbourne branch committee (supporters of the other tendencies already attend Militant's branch meetings) and to the editorial board of Militant magazine. We will also relaunch the former CI magazine *Red* as a quarterly news and analysis/theoretical journal of the three tendencies.

Comrades in each organisation are convinced that a fused organisation would be a powerful pole of attraction on the left. It could attract hitherto unattached activists, and lead to further mergers with other left organisations. It may then be possible to form a revolutionary workers' party. ★

**John Tully, Red editorial board (Solidarity rep.)**

Contact: Solidarity, PO Box 1638, Collingwood, Victoria 3065

## Ernest Mandel Seminar

An international seminar on Ernest Mandel's contribution to Marxist Theory will be held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on 4-6 July. For further details contact *International Viewpoint*, or the International Institute for Research and Education, tel. +31 20/6717263, fax 6732106, e-mail <iire@antenna.nl>

## FI Solidarity with Zapatistas

The International Executive Committee (IEC) of the Fourth International, in continuity with its solidarity activities with the EZLN and the struggle of the Mexican people, calls on the members, groups, sections and sympathisers of our international current everywhere to redouble their efforts in the strengthening and best possible co-ordination of this work. The IEC proposes the following orientation points for our work:

- Participation in those national groups and initiatives which are already working in solidarity with the EZLN, in the widest and most unitary manner possible.
- Discuss the Mexican situation, the significance of the Zapatista struggle, and their proposals, in the leadership bodies of our groups and sections. In these discussions, we should prioritise questions of our participation in solidarity.
- Through our press, to spread information about the situation in Mexico, as well as the various solidarity initiatives that have been undertaken in the various countries.

Concerning the EZLN proposal to organise an "Intercontinental meeting for humanity and against neo-liberalism" [page 19] in Mexico, from 27 July to 3 August, the IEC resolves to:

- Ratify the decision of the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International which welcomes the Zapatista initiative, and requests our participation in this event as an international current.
- Distribute, within our organisations, the EZLN appeal. Recommend that our organisations try to send delegations to the meeting.
- Distribute the EZLN appeal in the social, trade union, political and cultural organisations where we are active. Try to persuade these organisations to support and participate in the organisation of the intercontinental meeting.
- Call on our European organisations to involve themselves in the preparation and realisation of the continental preparatory meeting, which will take place in Berlin in April (as agreed by the 5th European meeting of solidarity committees, in response to the EZLN proposal). ★

## Networking

A personal selection of Internet services, from the editors of *International Viewpoint* and our German sister magazine *Inprekorr*



### Absolutely, positively 'NON'!

On Bastille Day 1995, a non-profit progressive Internet provider, called PlaNet NZ placed computers in public places all round New Zealand, and enabled the public to transmit their thoughts about French nuclear tests to two lesser-known E-mail addresses: Albert Roussel (Director of the French Atomic Energy Commission) and French President Jacques Chirac. A special E-mail address <chirac@wtgn.planet.co.nz> was also set up to collect a "hard copy" of protest messages, so that they could be delivered to the French Embassy in the traditional way.

Alliance Party leader Jim Anderton was among those who signed the initial message ("Absolutely, positively 'NON'!") which spread rapidly across the Internet. "The response was absolutely overwhelming", says PlaNet NZ National Secretary Peter Hall-Jones. "Within seconds the first messages had started rolling in, and they're still coming. In all, about 3,000 messages have been received, many of them with several signatures."

Local activists and progressive internet providers admit that the real significance of this electronic mobilisation is still dawning on them. No placards, no leaflets, no posters, no megaphones. Not even a rhyming chant. People sat down at public terminals in a state of sheer delight: "They had a direct link to Chirac, and an opportunity to put their case in full, as best they could," reports *NZ Monthly Review*. "They treated this with respect. The messages were well considered, and people often conferred in groups in advance, working out the best lines of argument, the wittiest ways of putting their case, or how to say it all in French. And once they clicked the 'SEND' button they could walk away (in the case of the on-line terminals) knowing that their message was in France before they got out the door".

Source: NZ Monthly Review No. 353, PlaNet NZ.

Contacts: NZ Monthly Review, PO Box 13, 483, Armagh, Christchurch, New Zealand. PlaNet NZ Wgtn, PO Box 6218, Wellington, New Zealand

### Web addresses

**Solidarity:** <http://www.labornet.org/solidarity/solid.html>

(multi-tendency revolutionary socialist feminist regroupment in the US working for socialism from below)

**Red Pepper:** <http://tigerden.com/~berios/redpepper.html>

(British magazine for the 'non-aligned' left)

**The European counter network:** <http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/ecn/>

For light relief, you could always try the revolutionary art on <<http://burn.ucsd.edu/>> Our reviewer judged the page "seriously wierd, but with some interesting stuff from black organisations."

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**Send your contributions and questions about this column to <100666.1443@compuserve.com>**

# Defending abortion rights



Over 600 women and men gathered in downtown Boston recently to commemorate the first anniversary of the 30 December 1994 attack on the Planned Parenthood Health Center and Preterm Clinic in Brookline, Mass. which killed two and injured five workers. The event, which was organized by the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Massachusetts, renewed demands for safe, legal abortion available to all women.

Ellen Convisser, recent president of Massachusetts NOW, admitted that there was "some increase" in police protection of clinics after the shootings. But she also noted that (avowedly pro-choice) Massachusetts Governor William Weld's main attempt to address the issue has been to meet with Boston's Cardinal Bernard Law, an outspoken opponent of abortion rights. The Cardinal called for a moratorium on anti-choice protesting outside clinics following the murders, but rescinded the ban some six months later.

The protests continue unabated, while Cardinal Law proclaims that both sides of the abortion debate must come together to "find common ground." "Where is the common ground?" Convisser asked, "when one out of five women in this country have no access to abortion?"

According to Convisser, legislative action over the past year will further restrict abortion access. Bills that have already been approved by Congress and are under review by the Senate include:

- A ban on a rarely used late-term abortion procedure.
- A measure that restores funding and accreditation to medical-training programs that do not teach abortion procedures.
- The so-called International Gag Rule, which blocks aid to international programs that provide abortion information and services.
- A ban on abortions for women at overseas military bases, even if they pay for the services themselves.
- A law denying insurance coverage for abortions for federal employees.

"There are tremendous attacks on us from all sides," said Convisser, but she stressed the sense of renewed purpose in the pro-choice movement over the past year. She reminded the audience that "not one progressive measure has occurred in a vacuum - it has always been pushed forward by a social movement."

Planned Parenthood clinic worker Susan Webber also emphasized the strengthened solidarity among the prochoice community since the Brookline attacks. She urged the demonstrators to maintain a visible presence outside clinics.

Local 26 of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union has long been active in the pro-choice movement in Boston, providing facilities, phonebanks, and transportation for activists. Its president, Dominic Bozzotto, reiterated Local 26's support. "We're a pro-choice union since 1981." Bozzotto said. "Women can never be free... if the most important part of that freedom - choice - cannot be exercised every day. We're not scared; we're not going to hide; we're in this fight until we win freedom of choice!"

A message of solidarity was also delivered by Diane Dujon, an activist for welfare rights in the Boston area. Dujon characterized welfare reform as "violence against women and children" and asserted that "this is not an attack on welfare recipients - it's an attack on the whole labor force. We must resist!"

Following the rally, an evening memorial service was held, as well as a candlelight vigil in which over 300 people lined Beacon Street between the two clinics.

The "One Year After" event was extremely successful in drawing participants together to commemorate those who have been killed or injured for their dedication to defending women's right to abortion. Even more important, the event succeeded in conveying a sense of hope, courage, and determination that will be sure to inspire further pro-choice action. As Marge Piercy concluded in her poem, "To Two Women Shot to Death in Brookline, Mass.," which she read at the rally: "We will make each other strong./ We will make each other safe./ There is no other monument."

By Jacqueline Boyle