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VIEWPOINT

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The fourth world war

Subcommandante Marcos
and Daniel Bensaïd

India
the Hindu right
takes power

France: the new political map

France's political elite is in crisis. Only 58% of voters participated in regional elections in March. And only 2/3 of those voting supported the parties of the current government (Socialist, Communist and Green) or the two conservative opposition parties (UDF and RPR).

In other words, only one in three registered voters is somehow represented by the "mainstream" parties – including the Communists and the Greens.

Christian Picquet*

Of course, there was enormous variety in the motivations of those who didn't vote, or who supported one of the minor parties. But there clearly a suspicion – even an open defiance – of the political system. Twenty years of crisis and unemployment have converged with the lack of popular interest in the identical policies which left and right have applied in government.

At each election, the challenge is clearer: either the left responds to the urgent social situation, and gives the victims of neoliberalism new hope in politics, or there will be a further decline in civic participation, mixed with rejection of the existing political parties. All to the benefit of the extreme right, of course.

Little victories for the government

Taken together, the left and far-left parties scored 40.7% – rather higher than in the 1992 regional elections. But the parties of the governing coalition (Socialist, Communist and Green) did worse than they expected (36.5%).

This shows not only working people's critical attitude towards Prime Minister Jospin, but also a growing distrust of the "Plural left" government, as a result of its refusal to listen to the demands of the unemployed movement, and its other unkept promises.

Leonel Jospin's Communist and Green allies in government are starting to pay for their inconsistency. In many areas, the increased vote for radical candidates to the left of the Communist Party was the result of a significant decline in the Communist Party's stable electorate, which is increasingly disoriented by their leaders' manoeuvres.

On 17 March the Communist Party newspaper *L'Humanité*, commented that, "the far left clearly benefited from the protest votes of a section of the left, i.e.



Fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. His *Front National* scored 15.3% in regional elections in March. Possibly enough to force the other conservative parties to form a tactical alliance – breaking the far-right's isolation, and enabling it to win new layers of support, and credibility with the moderate right, media, and businessmen.

communist, electorate: people who feel that the Jospin government is not going fast enough and far enough in its reforms in favour of the most disadvantaged groups of the population."

In these elections, the Greens benefited from the collapse of ecological rivals and splinter groups. But, wherever they stood separately from the Socialist Party, some Green voters preferred to vote for their party's national ally.

How to be a Communist and govern?

During the last nine months of participation in government, Party leaders have tried to force their members to accept privatisation, workfare schemes for young people, and another reactionary reform of immigration and citizenship legislation. Each time, Party leader Robert Hue has invoked the party's importance, its responsibilities, and its mission as "a bridge between the social movements and the government."

In the past, elections were one of the key opportunities for Party leaders to reaffirm the party's communist identity. Except that, for the first time, the Communist Party presented joint lists with its partners in government. Many militants refused to accept this, particularly where the common candidate was a prominent member of the Socialist Party. A majority of Communist Party members in Lille, and 40%

of Nord-Pas-de-Calais members voted against "their" candidates.

Not surprisingly, this also meant a lacklustre election campaign, with most of the work done by mid-level cadres rather than the rank-and-file.

Paradoxically, Robert Hue has emerged from these elections stronger than before – thanks to a ruthless selection of candidates. But he is under pressure from the rank-and-file to make some verbal concessions towards the far left. Not that this will worry Prime Minister Leonel Jospin – who is relying on the Communist Party to absorb any stray voices on the left.

Growing tension on the right

The conservative RPR-UDF opposition will look back on these elections as the beginning of the end. In last year's parliamentary elections, they won 34.2% of the vote. In these regional elections, they won only 28.1%. Key personalities like Edouard Balladur and Charles Pasqua did badly, and in many regions the right's only chance for government will be some kind of agreement with either the extreme right or the socialist party.

The far-right National Front is now as large as each of the two conservative parties, as well as being more ideologically coherent and well organised. Fascist leaders Jean-Marie Le Pen and his deputy

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Bruno Mégret are gracefully imposing themselves. The "classic" conservative parties must now either merge into a single liberal-conservative-republican party (which would mean sacrificing part of the leadership and the parliamentary superstructure), or negotiate some kind of re-composition of the right as a whole. Many local conservative politicians resent their leaders' refusal to co-operate with the National Front. But, in any kind of recomposition across the "Republican line" which separates the "democratic" right parties from the fascists, Le Pen's party will be the dominant component.

The National Front maintained its share of the vote (15.3%) – the same score as during the 1997 parliamentary elections. In greater Paris and some other regions the fascist vote is stagnant, but in the industrially depressed north, east and south-east, the party reached new levels of voter support. In the large south-eastern region of Provence-Alps-Cote d'Azur, the National Front won as many votes as the conservative parties combined. In Bouches-du-Rhone, Vaucluse and Var it did even better.

This is enabling the National Front to impose itself as arbiter in those 13 of the country's 21 mainland regions where the left coalition didn't win a relative majority of votes. Although the leadership of the RPR and UDF were determined to refuse co-operation with the National Front, even if this kept them out of power, the fascist strategy of offering alliances is progressively weakening the cohesion of the conservative parties. Any local split in the RPR UDF would be a step forward for the National Front in its march to power.

The radical left

Radical and far-left candidates won almost one million votes (4.2%), and imposed themselves as a new fundamental element on the political map. This is partly the result of the popular re-mobilisation which started in winter 1995, and partly a reflection of growing rejection of the right and of neo-liberal policies, whoever implements them. This "social radicalism" has existed in France for some time. What is perhaps new is the reduced capacity of the Communist and Green parties to capture these votes, now that they are locked into the "pluralist parliamentary majority."

The Trotskyist group *Lutte ouvrière* (Workers Struggle – LO), was the main benefactor of this political radicalisation, winning 4.8% of the vote in those regions where the group presented candidates. This impressive score is partly the result of the group's tradition of electoral participation, and the considerable portion of its energies which it devotes to elections. *Lutte ouvrière* also has, in Arlette Laguiller, a well-known and popular representative.

Unusually, this latest *Lutte ouvrière* campaign was less crude in its characterisation of the Socialist and conservative parties as two sides of the same coin.

With 19 elected members of the new

regional assemblies, LO has made a significant step forward in electoral support. While their support is nation-wide, it is particularly strong in the declining industrial areas of northern France. Clear proof that there is nothing automatic in the far-right's ability to win over working class voters in these areas.

To stabilise this vote – unique in Europe for a Trotskyist group – LO needs to build links with those militants who are leading social struggles at a local level. Can LO work in and with a milieu increasingly used to pluralist practice and unity? Or will its elected representatives see themselves only as public spokespeople for their own group?

The LCR's new challenge

And, for the first time, the *Ligue communiste révolutionnaire* (Revolutionary Communist League – LCR) also benefited from the leftward shift of some sections of the electorate. The LCR vote included a significant number of former Communist Party sympathisers and voters, and, to a lesser extent, frustrated Socialist Party and Green voters, looking for a genuine left alternative.

Unlike *Lutte ouvrière*, the LCR managed to build broader electoral coalitions in 12 regions. These lists received an average score of 2.7%, a considerable improvement on the 1.26% of votes in the 1997 parliamentary elections. And this average excludes the result in Nord region, where the LCR supported a Green list which won 8.76% of the vote.

Despite this success, which included the election of two LCR members to the Breton regional assembly, the group has recognised a number of shortcomings in its campaign.

Unlike LO's stable voter base, the potential LCR electorate is clearly more tempted to cast a "useful" vote for a larger party.

Another problem is the LCR's inconsistent participation in electoral politics, and the bewildering range of names under which LCR candidates present themselves: 19 in these latest elections.

Of course, this reflects the atomisation and division of the left forces and social movements in which the LCR is active and influential. And, despite the variations of name, the growing convergence of forces which, alongside the LCR, are striving for a change in left politics, is recognisable as a national force. Years of LCR work in building and rebuilding authentic alternative politics are starting to bear their first real fruit.

In the months to come, those who voted for the radical and far left may find their way into the various social movements.

In any case, the growing menace on the right, and the advance of the radical and far left, send a clear message to the French government: move to the left, or else! ★

Source: *Rouge*, 19 March. *Jean-Louis Michel, Arnaldo Castelleras and Georges Villetta also contributed material to this article

Europe's Kurdish problem



In 1848, Karl Marx called Communism "the spectre haunting Europe." In 1998, European governments seem more terrified by an army of scarecrows: Kurdish refugees from Turkey and Iraq

Albert Rochal

The arrival of several hundred Kurdish asylum-seekers on the southern coast of Italy in February sparked off a vast anti-refugee campaign across the European Union.

Governmental discourse revolves around the age-old clichés: Iraqi and Turkish Kurds seeking asylum are linked

to the Mafia, suspected of terrorism or dismissed as mere pawns of the Turkish government. This type of accusation is always launched against unwanted refugees.

Italian authorities have tightened legislation considerably to fall into line with the demands of the EU's Schengen Agreement. But they are being accused of laxity and irresponsibility because they dare to consider an individual and collective examination of Kurds' asylum requests (as required by the United Nations Convention on Refugees) rather than follow the lead of other EU countries – particularly France – and reject applications from these countries automatically.

The presence on the Italian coast of asylum-seekers from nearby or more distant lands is nothing new. Hundreds, if not thousands, of asylum-seekers or undocumented immigrants fleeing dictatorships and poverty have already died in the Mediterranean: in Italian waters, along the Greek coast and in the Straits of Gibraltar which separate Spain from Morocco.

On several occasions in recent history, Italy has accepted tens of thousands of Albanian refugees. But on this occasion, we have witnessed outright hysteria, and a broad-based scenario of repression. A police summit was held in Rome on January 8th in efforts to cement over the cracks that had appeared in the southern flank of Fortress Europe. During this repressive meeting, the police forces of the eight states involved in Kurdish migration (Italy, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland, France, Turkey and Greece) decided to strengthen co-operative efforts to combat "clandestine immigration" even more fiercely. The aim was to intensify surveillance at the borders of the European Union and, above all, to step up the

exchange of secret information among the different police forces, largely via the inter-mediation of Europol. This is also one of the most important aspects of the Schengen convention, which led to the establishment of a vast computer database located in Strasbourg.

A number of factors explain why, within the general framework created by the establishment of Fortress Europe, this episode has been blown so far out of proportion.

- Italy has finally joined the Schengen convention, three years after its creation. This obliged the Italian government to considerably tighten its anti-immigration policy, which had traditionally been less repressive than that of the northern nations. But this turn of the screw did not satisfy the upper echelons of the European police system, which additionally want Italy to extend more brutal treatment to asylum-seekers. Italy's neighbour, France, has one of the most stringent anti-immigrant regimes in Europe.

- According to EU police chiefs, Italy's long coastline and many islands make it easy for boats to dock; it is close to the countries of origin of refugees; and the population, familiar itself with the notion of migrating toward northern Europe, has a tradition of welcoming refugees. Austria's recent entry into the Schengen convention was preceded by a similar pressure campaign waged by the German authorities and particularly by the government of Bavaria.

The French and German governments have brought most pressure to bear: Germany faces a parliamentary election later this year. Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the right are in a tight corner and have focused strongly on xenophobia and security concerns in order to regain ground. Minister of the Interior, M. Kanther, presented a battery of measures stepping up control over foreigners and restricting their access to social services. According to Social-Democrat legislator and leader, G. Verheugen, "The Kurdish problem is nothing new. An international problem is being exploited for the purposes of internal politics. Fears are manipulated to create the belief that suspect foreigners are undermining the well being of Germans. This type of psychosis lays the foundations for the far-right." His statement makes it all the more regrettable that the Social Democrats should have allied themselves to the right-wing Christian Democrats in 1993 by voting to restrict asylum rights and that certain SPD leaders should have joined in the xenophobic campaign.

Meanwhile, France's Socialist-Communist-Green government is taking a strong line with asylum-seekers and has drastically restricted their admission in

Algeria: PST Congress

The Socialist Workers Party (*Parti socialiste des travailleurs* – PST) brought together more than 600 delegates for an extraordinary congress on 5 March.

The only Algerian party to send a high-level delegation was the Berber Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD). Representatives of the Association for Women's Emancipation (AEF) and the trade union federation's National Federation of Retired Workers (FNTR-UGTA) also received a warm welcome.

France's Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) sent a representative, and there were written messages from a number of organisations in Europe and the Americas.

The PST was obliged to hold this congress, in order to register as a legal party, under discriminatory new legislation which requires parties to prove that they have at least 100 members in at least 25 of Algeria's 48 *willayas* (administrative regions).

The PST finally submitted to the authorities proof of over 4,000 membership requests from 44 *willayas*.

In Algeria's current situation, with the impoverishment of the population, this has been a major challenge for the PST, a small organisation, which has no source of funding apart from its members and sympathisers.

Source: Rouge

recent years. Minister of the Interior, J.P. Chevènement, who represents a particularly jingoistic faction, has explained that unless the borders are hermetically sealed, France will be flooded by Iraqi Kurds and Algerian refugees.

The French government has deployed special repressive units along the border with Italy. Two years ago, police here conducting a night-time "inspection" on a mountain road killed a Bosnian child travelling with a group of refugees.

European governments are using the Kurdish refugee "crisis" to accelerate the standardisation of immigration policies within the European Community. The treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, numerous conventions and accords shrouded in varying degrees of secrecy and the Schengen accords themselves all point in this direction; the new "pillar" of the European edifice is intended to shift decisions about the entry of immigrants and asylum-seekers onto the shoulders of ultra-centralised bureaucratic bodies and police forces. The most repressive norms will surely be applied to the European borders in the name of freedom of movement within Europe itself. This is one of the essential reasons why such pressure is being brought to bear on the Italian government.

There is a striking parallel with the issue of the single European currency. Here too, Italy has been assigned the role of the bad student who is admitted into the next grade only grudgingly, and subject to considerable pressures.

Another vital factor is the crisis of relations between the European bloc and Turkey. As the French newspaper *Le Monde* commented in a January 5 editorial: "Can we shut Turkey out of Europe on the pretext that she mistreats her Kurdish community and simultaneously close Europe to Kurds attempting to land on the Calabrian Coast?"

A variety of sensationalist hypotheses has been launched by both media and governments: the asylum-seekers are undercover envoys of the Turkish government which is seeking to avenge the European decision and threatening Germany with an "invasion"; or else the refugees themselves are being manipulated by the guerrilla Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) to aggravate the differences between the Turkish government and the European Union. Those who have been obliged to use the services of "smugglers" in their flight have been called bandits.

What is clear is that despite the tensions, the Turkish government participated in the police summit in Rome, committed itself to preventing departures to community nations and proceeded to carry out raids in Istanbul. French foreign minister,

Hubert Vedrine played a central role in finalising negotiations with Turkey, thus re-securing Europe's link with dictatorial regimes – so highly appreciated when they guarantee both order and the surveillance of potential immigrants.

In defence of the right to asylum

Human rights organisations are denouncing the many violations of rules for the right to asylum already being committed by the different EU countries. Amnesty International has pointed the finger at governments negotiating "re-admission" agreements with the Turkish regime; agreements which involve the forcible repatriation of refugees and even

contemplate their return to Northern Iraq regardless of the threats faced by the population there.

The EU governments are collaborating to turn back asylum-seekers without even examining their requests, an approach that contravenes all international conventions. Underpinning these events is Europe's vast apparatus of control and repression; the Schengen accords and the treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam have laid the foundations for a centralised system to deal with the entry of immigrants and refugees. Now governments are pressuring one another to toughen related legislation and are staging identical xenophobic campaigns. ★

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Dutch voters move left...

Local election results show a shift away from the governing parties, and growing support for parties to the left of Labour. The far right lost almost all its local council seats. But will the left be able to maintain this momentum in the 6 May parliamentary elections?

Barend de Voogd

The Socialist Party (populist, ex-Maoists) and the Green Left, a regroupment of the old CP, ex-Maoists, pacifist social democrats and Christian radicals, gained considerable ground. Local parties also did well. The right-wing liberal governing party VVD did less well than expected.

As in local elections elsewhere, turnout was low (61%). Many supporters of the governing Labour Party and their right-liberal coalition partners the VVD stayed at home – though they will probably turn out to vote in May.

The feeling that “however you vote, the politicians do as they like” dominated these local elections. Nonetheless, disgust with the political establishment was exp-

Amsterdam differently – and democratically

A new left-green coalition has won three seats on Amsterdam's municipal council

Herman Pieterse and Barend de Voogd

The *Amsterdam Anders/De Groenen* [Different Amsterdam/the Greens] list has won three seats on the municipal council of Holland's capital city. The 5.7% score (14,800 votes) is a better-than-expected score for the “rainbow alliance” founded in October 1997, as a Socialist Workers Party (SAP) initiative to form a broad electoral list for these municipal elections.

The Amsterdam Greens are known in the city for their uncompromising opposition to big infrastructure projects like the construction of a new subway line and the building of a new neighbourhood (IJburg) in the ecologically valuable body of water called the IJmeer. In three consecutive referenda, on the subway line, IJburg and the transformation of the city into an undemocratic ‘city province’, the majority of the citizens voted – like the Amsterdam Greens and SAP – against the city's proposals.

SAP candidate, now Councillor Ernst van Lohuizen, was the main spokesman for the committee against the new subway line.

Democracy

The creation of Amsterdam Anders was motivated by discontent over the refusal of the city council to respect any of these referenda decisions. In fact, the rules for referenda have been changed to make winning virtually impossible. The new list also attracted support from a layer of militants frustrated with the general lack of opposition by GreenLeft, a very ‘constructive’ regroupment of ex-CPers, ex-Maoists, Christian leftists and pacifist social democrats.

The list of *Amsterdam Anders* candidates included militants from all walks of life: activists for the protection of the Ruijgoord ecological area, a trade unionist active in the recent strike at Amsterdam

Port, organisers of the Amsterdam European Counter-summit, youth, immigrants and artists.

A new dynamic

Amsterdam Anders is a rainbow coalition, in which party members and non-party-members work together on an equal basis. No special rights are given to the Amsterdam Greens or SAP, although they remain existent as independent organisations.

Amsterdam Anders participated in the elections on a program against the big infrastructure projects, against privatisation of public transportation, and in favour of reduction of the working week without loss of pay, an increase in the minimum wage and a restoration of the original rules for referenda. In the campaign the coalition presented daring plans to build new houses above the freeway, tax the Amsterdam Stock Exchange to pay for social policies, and experiment with free public transport.

The success of *Amsterdam Anders* was overwhelming, and can be seen in a broader context. The fact that only 45.7% of the Amsterdam electorate actually voted, points to the fact that – more than elsewhere in Holland – voters have lost confidence in the political elite.

Another positive note is that the extreme right lost all four of their seats, and that the electoral gains of Amsterdam Anders coincided with a strengthening of the broader left. The GreenLeft got 7 seats (up from 6), and the left-populist Socialist Party (SP) got 3 (up from 1).

The composition of the new city council has shifted to the left: a broad majority is in favour of a left coalition. The social-democratic party PvdA (currently governing the city and country together with the liberal VVD and D66) won 16 seats. With the GreenLeft (7 seats), Socialist Party and *Amsterdam Anders*, there is a potential majority of 28 seats to

vote through progressive policies. That is, if the PvdA wants to do so, and if the GreenLeft can resist the temptation to become part of the “respectable” city government.

In any case, the Amsterdam city council now has a broad left (to the left of social democracy) with 13 of the 45 seats. That should be enough to make a difference, by making city politics greener, more social and more democratic. One important step will be to reverse the undemocratic changes to the referendum rules.

The basis for a different policy can be broadened in years to come. The coalition's new council members are Roel van Duijn of the Amsterdam Greens, Ernst van Lohuizen (Socialist Workers Party (SAP), Dutch section of the Fourth International) and Hansje Kalt (independent).

The three new Councillors face the big challenge of bringing opposition back to the Amsterdam city council. They will draw strength from a permanent dialogue with the city's activists, put forward the demands of the broad range of ecological, democratic and social movements, and fight to introduce experiments from abroad like the experiment with free public transport in Hasselt (Belgium) and the participatory budget policies of Porto Alegre (Brazil).

Already during this election it was apparent that an even larger potential exists for a critical green-red coalition. In particular, *Amsterdam Anders* did badly in some neighbourhoods with a high number of immigrants, who voted less than in previous years: the image of the Amsterdam city council is still white, middle-class, academic, and male. For *Amsterdam Anders* this is a chance and an obligation. The social and multi-coloured face of Amsterdam has to become visible in the neighbourhoods. ★

ressed, not only in abstentions but also in votes for local and far-left parties. The left-liberal D66, the smallest of the three governing parties, paid the highest price: its share of the vote was halved. Among the winners was *Amsterdam Anders* (A Different Amsterdam), a local coalition of Greens, independent activists and the far-left Socialist Workers Party (SAP-4th International). The coalition elected three city council members by appealing to voters' anger that the city's elite has ignored the results of three local referenda.

The gains for almost all opposition parties was striking. Besides anti-establishment sentiment, social justice has suddenly become *the* popular campaign theme. The far left, Christian Democrats and smaller Christian parties all fought on this terrain and profited from it. This must be alarming for the ruling social-democratic Labour Party.

Prime Minister Wim Kok thought he was playing a trump card by saying that if left voters desert Labour for the far left, the VVD will become the biggest party and its leader Frits Bolkestein will be the next prime minister. The tactic didn't work. And why should it? Differences on social policy between Labour and the VVD in government have become negligible.

The question is of course whether Kok's tactic will work better in the national elections. In the meantime, he is doing everything he can to smear the "unrealistic" Green Left, the "Maoist" SP and the "extreme left" in general.

Fascist defeat

In this context, why was the far right virtually wiped out, losing all but two of its dozens of local councillors? Probably because there is more optimism about the

economy. The general mood seems to be: 'The lean years of cutbacks are behind us, the deficit is no longer an issue, Holland will soon be in the European Monetary Union anyway, so now is the time to tackle growing social inequality.'

Fascist leader Hans Janmaat said –disappointedly– on election night that immigrants no longer seem to be a hot item. Let's hope he's right.

In fact, many of Janmaat's demands have become government policy. The hunt for 'illegals' has intensified, the right of asylum has been cut back, bilingual education is under fire. But, at the same time, with a tightening labour market, Holland seems to need its 'illegal' workers after all.

Leftward shift

The parliamentary elections on 6 May may be exciting. On the basis of the local election results, the Green Left, which now has five seats in parliament, and the Socialist Party (SP), which now has two, would each gain seven additional seats. Though we shouldn't forget that before the last elections, in 1994, many voters told pollsters they would back the far left, only to change their minds on election day.

So far, unfortunately, the unrest about growing social inequality is almost exclusively electoral. The relationship of forces in society has not essentially changed; there is no large-scale social mobilisation on which the Green Left and SP could base their parliamentary activity.

Not that either party sees this as much of a problem. In fact, the desire to 'deliver the goods' could pull them both towards the political centre.

The Green Left has already gone far down this road. It no longer questions the market economy at all, and in local government often sits in coalition with Labour, D66 and even the VVD.

The SP, despite its hard-leftist rhetoric, risks heading the same way. It also has very little idea of what political pluralism means, or self-organisation, or joint work with others on the left.

Nevertheless, the local elections show that the ruling coalition is by no means sure of a return to office. There are more possibilities for a strong left opposition. This means not just doing our best in elections, but also hitting the street, together! ★



Transformation 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, taking account of the recomposition of the workers' movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

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 4th 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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Spying on the far left

In 1982 the Danish intelligence service infiltrated the Socialist Workers Party (SAP). The scandal was only exposed last month.

Åge Skovrind + Bodil Rasmussen

The agent collected membership details, and reports about political debates within the *Socialistiese Arbeiderspartij* SAP – Danish section of the Fourth International. It seems that he was particularly interested in the party's international links.

Television exposure of this and other intelligence activity came suddenly, in the midst of the election campaign, and provoked a national debate about intelligence work and political control.

The exposure was made in a two-part programme by one of the two national TV channels. The former SAP agent explained how he was ordered to apply for membership in order to infiltrate the party and get information about its members and party activities. When the mission was concluded, in 1984, he copied the keys to the SAP national office and gave them to the intelligence service.

In 1981 and 1984, SAP ran for the first time in parliamentary elections. The intelligence service copied and recorded most of the 20,000 signatures gathered to enable the party to present a national slate. This contravenes a 1968 government ruling forbidding the registration of legal political activities.

"No real damage"

Long-standing SAP member Søren Søndergaard, currently a Member of Parliament for the Red-Green Alliance, told television journalists that he "was not taken by surprise, given that this was a confirmation of the SAP's analysis of the role played by the intelligence practice to protect the capitalist system even by illegal methods." He added that, "since SAP has always worked inside a legal

framework, there is no reason to fear any damage to the party." Nevertheless, Søndergaard and other SAP members are "worried about possible intelligence information about SAP relations to organisations in countries where the political struggle, and communist commitment is a question of life and death."

According to Søndergaard, the risks of infiltration do not, in a country like Denmark, justify secret organisation of anti-capitalist parties. Work in the mass movement can best be carried out by genuinely non-secret organisations – like SAP, he said.

The intelligence service agent assigned to SAP also spied against legal activity by militant trade unionists. His targets included striking bus drivers, union activity during the Easter 1985 general strike, and solidarity actions related to boycott campaigns against the South African apartheid regime.

Since the television programmes the press have uncovered further cases of intelligence service spying against the trade unions. The telephones of the National Union of Unskilled Workers (SiD) were tapped during the 1994 bus drivers' strike, and there was close monitoring of the striking Ri-bus drivers in 1995.

Assassination

Another agent has admitted recorded a 1996 meeting about the Kurdish question, sponsored by the national union confederation and featuring a Social Democratic leader as speaker. The same agent told one newspaper that he supplied the intelligence service with a tape recording containing threats by a far-right leader to implement an assassination plan against the revolutionary organisation International Socialists. The intelligence service never informed the organisation itself about this warning. Two months later, on March 16, 1992, the secretary of IS was killed by a bomb attack which remains unsolved.

The TV and press debate has focused on the way government and parliament are informed – or not – of the activities of the intelligence service. The Social Democrat ex-Minister of Justice told television journalists that he had never authorised the infiltration of SAP. A few days after that programme was aired, the press revealed that the chief of the intelligence service, Birgitte Stampe, had misinformed another Social Democratic Minister of Justice about the supervision of the Kurdish solidarity meeting.

In response, SAP member and Red Green Alliance MP Søren Søndergaard demanded Stampe's resignation. It seems increasingly clear that successive Social Democratic governments have been misin-

formed more than informed about intelligence service activities. A right-wing ex-Minister of Justice admitted and still defends the intelligence operation against the trade unions in the early 80s. "They stopped the society by their strikes and pickets lines and were throwing bottles at the police. It was surely a task for the intelligence service", he said.

The initial revelations were televised on March 1st, just after Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen unexpectedly called a general election for March 11th. So all political parties were forced to comment on the question of intelligence practice.

The Red-Green Alliance - and SAP - proposed the appointment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the activities of the intelligence services since the start in the forties. The results of the commission should - according to SAP - be public and form the basis of a discussion about the future of the intelligence services in Denmark.

This proposal was supported by the Social Liberal Party, a small party in the government coalition, and, more surprisingly, by a leading member of the conservative party, who argued that an independent commission was necessary to rebuild public trust in the intelligence services. Several leading member of the trade union movement have supported the idea of an independent commission, and the chairman of the National trade union confederation (LO) has asked the minister of justice to take immediate steps to make a new and more strict law ensuring parliamentary control of the intelligence services. Several political parties have also demanded more parliamentary control of and information about the intelligence services.

So far, however, the absence of public knowledge, political regulations and budget limits for parliamentary work enables the Danish intelligence service to operate as an even stronger "state inside the state" than their Norwegian and German counterparts.

Despite the anger and demands from trade unions and other social democratic victims of intelligence activities, the current Social Democratic Minister of Justice has merely asked the intelligence service to make an internal review of its activities since the late seventies. And even this request came only after a week of debates in which more and more social democrats and others began to ask for a closer control over the intelligence services.

Allegations, slurs and prejudices

From the beginning of this scandal, the main right wing opposition party, the Liberals, have defended the intelligence

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service and justified the infiltration of SAP. Like some of the editorials in the big bourgeois newspapers, the chairman of the Liberals has argued that it was necessary to survey the far left, "not because of the activities of SAP or others, but because you never know what people who talk about revolution will do!"

Like a number of journalists, he suggested that the SAP may have had similar plans to the "Blekingegade group" which robbed a bank in the late 80s, planning to give the money to guerrilla groups in the third world.

Other journalists have tried to justify the infiltration of SAP by throwing suspicion on the party's international solidarity work. Their difficulty has been that, during the period of deep infiltration, SAP's main solidarity activities were solidarity with the Sandinista revolution in

Nicaragua, and support for political prisoners in Czecho-Slovakia. As a result, there have been some quite absurd articles in the press, trying to link SAP to the bomb attack against Eden Pastora in Nicaragua in 1984. One – anonymous – former member of SAP, was quoted as saying "there have always been open doors between SAP and terrorism", without any examples or evidence.

Nevertheless, accusations of this kind have not been the general picture in the press, and the SAP has been able to explain its open style of work, particularly during the period in question, as well as publicising the general views of the party about how to fight for social and democratic rights through mass-organisation.

Though the attempts to represent SAP as some kind of international terrorist organisation have failed, it is likely that

exactly the international work of SAP, particularly its membership of the Fourth International, were one of the real reasons for the infiltration. On the 15th of March a leading newspaper wrote that "according to our information, NATO decided in the eighties to keep an eye on the Fourth International." The reason, apparently, was that "The Fourth International had contacts to guerrilla movements in Latin America and Africa".

Though there has been wide debate about the nature and context of intelligence service work, there has not yet been much political activity and organising around the issue. This may change now that the elections are over. Frede Jakobsen, former editor of the SAP weekly *Klassekampen* (*Class Struggle*) is only one of the people now demanding to see their intelligence service files. ★

More of the same from Rasmussen?

Denmark's social democratic government has been re-elected

On March 11th Danes re-elected Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's centre-left government of Social Democrats and Social Liberals. To maintain his majority, Rasmussen needs the support of the Socialist Peoples Party and the Red-Green Alliance.

Thomas Eisler

The mass media focused on the choice between the two candidates for prime-minister: Uffe Ellemann Jensen from the Liberal Party and Poul Nyrup Rasmussen from the Social Democrats.

Opinion polls and "political commentators" wrongly predicted a victory for the Liberals, who promised large tax cuts.

The total vote for the four parties backing the government rose 0.6 % to 50.1%. For technical reasons this didn't result in more representatives. The two centre parties outside the government both gained votes, with Christian democrats passing the 2 % limit to be represented in parliament again. The big loser was the more traditional right wing with

the Conservatives losing 11 seats and the Liberals stopping their progress.

In defence of social rights

There was a 6% swing to the Social Democrats during the last days before the election, according to the polls. The government and the left opposition parties successfully confronted the right's promises of massive tax reductions by focusing on the defence of social rights.

This might seem strange, since the outgoing Social Democratic government had removed taxes on capital and reduced unemployment benefit for youth. Nevertheless, voter behaviour shows that the liberals' "free choice" policies – in reality austerity politics – no longer have growing support. The Social Democrats are still seen as the basic defenders of the welfare state.

The Far Right, represented by the Progress Party and especially the younger Danish Peoples Party won 9.8%, up from 6.4% in 1994. Their success was the result of a xenophobic debate last autumn on immigrants and refugees. But since then they haven't received any new support. What is more frightening is the acceptance of xenophobic propaganda by the mainstream parties. The Liberals put forward some of the same proposals as the far right, and before the election the Minister of Interior proposed a programme including giving immigrants less social rights than Danish citizens.

Red-Green Alliance

The Red-Green Alliance vote fell by 0.4%, giving the party only five deputies, down from six in the last parliament. Of the five, three are members or former members of the Left

Socialists, one is a member of the Communist Party and Søren Søndergaard is a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SAP-Fourth International) Some voters presumably switched to the Socialist Peoples Party or the Social Democrats, concerned that otherwise the conservative and liberal parties could replace the social democrats in government.

Nevertheless, this election proves that the Red-Green Alliance, formed before the 1994 elections, has a stable base of support. The election campaign was a success, with more people active than ever before – including many young people. During the 2 1/2 week election campaign the Alliance signed up about 200 new members, bringing the total to over 1,800.

Over the last four years, the Alliance has been able to put forward and defend left-wing positions inside and outside parliament. Unlike the Socialist People's Party, which has no clear position on the European Union, the Alliance has been able to oppose tighter European Union integration on a left-wing, rather than nationalist basis.

Through specific cases, the Alliance has been able to question the more general lines of politics in Denmark. As well as the defence of refugees, unemployed, and the environment, Alliance MPs played a decisive part in exposing massive tax evasion by private corporations, and a banking scandal in the Faeroe Islands.

There has been some success in using parliamentary positions to reinforce struggles outside parliament, notably in solidarity with striking bus-drivers in Ejsberg. Reinforcing and developing this dual strategy will be a central part of the Alliance's work in the new parliament. ★

Votes and seats	1998		1994	
	seats	(%)	seats	(%)
Red-Green Alliance	5	(2.7)	6	(3.1)
Socialist Peoples Party	13	(7.5)	13	(7.3)
Social Democrats	63	(36.0)	62	(32.4)
Social Liberals	7	(3.9)	8	(4.6)
Centre Democrats	8	(4.3)	5	(2.8)
Christian Democrats	4	(2.5)	0	(1.9)
Liberals	42	(24.0)	42	(23.3)
Conservatives	16	(8.9)	27	(15.0)
Progress Party	4	(2.4)	11	(6.4)
Danish Peoples Party	13	(7.4)	-	-
Others	0	(0.3)	1	(1.0)
Participation:	86%		n.a.	

The 15th International Socialist Youth Camp will take place in the north-west of Denmark on 25th - 31st of July. Preparations are well under way. We have found an almost perfect site with a lot of different facilities - for instance there is an indoor swimming pool, and a video-cinema with 50 seats. The site is not far from the ocean.

The theme of the camp is "Reclaim Freedom". We have chosen this theme, because we think that it summarises and links our struggles for a socialist world. For sure it applies to all the different themes we have in this camp. We have also chosen "Reclaim Freedom" because the right-wing has enjoyed a monopoly on the concept of freedom for far too long.

They even use "freedom" to differentiate themselves from us. They say that what the left wants looks like the former Soviet Union. As a result, not many people associate socialism with freedom at all - in fact, the opposite.

We know that the right-wing are talking about a false freedom - a freedom for the few within the capitalist system. We can see the results of their freedom - exploitation, unemployment, social injustice, and environmental pollution, to name but a few. It is a freedom that legalise the exploitation of people for one's own benefit.

The right wing monopoly on the concept of freedom affects the words we use. "Free market" "free and equal citizens" "freedom of speech" "free press" and so on and so on. It all sounds very nice. Who wouldn't like to believe that they are free? But the freedom they are talking about is a freedom for the rich.

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Our kind of freedom is a freedom for all people. Freedom for people to live as they want to - to be able to participate in the community, to be equal and to have - in reality, not in theory - the same opportunities. To be able to live in harmony with nature. To be able to develop interests that the capitalist system doesn't make possible. And so on.

The right-wing monopoly on the concept of freedom is illogical and illegitimate! Socialism and freedom are part of the same thing. Our struggle for socialism has everything to do with freedom. That is why we have to reclaim freedom, and show the world what it really is. We have to show people that they can't be free in a capitalist world. We have to show the need of reclaiming freedom.

New ideas

People have a lot of exciting ideas, and if we are able to realise just some of them, the camp is sure to be a success.

The International Socialist Youth Camp is a good place to start reclaiming freedom. Of course, it is not possible to create a week in Denmark where everybody is really free. But we can come together to try to put our ideas into practise, and try to make as good an attempt at creating a socialist society as possible, in just one week. We can learn from and be inspired by each other, and bring back new ideas to our home struggles.

To make the 15th International Socialist Youth Camp a real success, we need to get as many young socialist as possible to come to Denmark. We guarantee that you will not be disappointed! There is no excuse for staying at home!

Ditte Løjborg

[To register for the 15th International Socialist Youth Camp contact your local International Viewpoint representative]

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Liverpool Dockers end strike

After 2 years and 4 months the Liverpool Dockworkers have decided to end their dispute. According to strike co-ordinator Jimmy Nolan, "in certain key areas, the campaign had started to falter and, in order not to see good men and women lose everything or risk a collapse from within, we decided to conclude a collective agreement on the best possible terms achievable.

Following the last secret ballot in October 1997 in which we gained a 70% rejection of the employers offer, greater support actions should have been launched. The new Labour government could have used their 14% shareholding [in the Port], the leadership of our own union, the TGWU, could have played a far more positive role.

This didn't happen. In fact, both Labour and the TGWU supported our employer's claim that the dispute was over.

The terms of the settlement were based on up to £28,000 redundancy payment for [the 2/3 of the strikers] previously employed by Mersey Docks. These payments will be subject not only to debt repayment but also be reclaimed by the social security benefits office. [...]

We have to recognise that work in Liverpool is a rare commodity and we expect that all our comrades will experience great difficulty over the next few years. It is with a great sadness in our hearts that we write to all our magnificent supporters and express our deepest gratitude. We have to build upon our internationalism, upon the experiences of all our struggles.

Let the words of the great Irish trade unionist James Larkin capture our thoughts; 'Who is it speaks of defeat? I tell you a cause like ours is greater than defeat can know. It is the power of powers.!!'

Fascists march in Vukovar

On March 12th, the Croatian government prohibited public gatherings in Eastern Slavonia (Vukovar region), following demonstrations organised by the neo-nazi Croatian Party of Rights (HSP).

According to the Croatian Helsinki Committee, at one recent event "700 people dressed in black, using Nazi salutes and iconography, marched through the streets of Vukovar, with the blessing of the police who watched indifferently from the sidelines." In many parts of Croatia, the fascistic Croatian Party of Rights participates in local government coalitions with the ruling HDZ party of President Franjo Tudjman.

"Rather than use Article 174 of the Criminal Code to charge the initiators of the gathering with disseminating national and ethnic hatred... the government instead, as a smoke screen, laid a few misdemeanour charges," complains the Helsinki Committee. "This is common practice for the Ministry of the Interior in cases concerning any kind of excesses against minorities, even physical violence." In fact, abundant legislation forbidding ethnic, racial and religious hatred has almost never been used to protect the country's large Serbian minority.

According to Helsinki Committee spokesperson Cedo Prodanovic, "for pragmatic reasons, the 'international community' might be inclined to 'look the other way' at this type of behaviour from the Croatian government. But the fact is that the Croatian authorities are using their own ineffectiveness to offer tacit approval to a meeting of neo-nazis in Vukovar! What is really at issue here is an intentionally staged incident, used as an excuse for the introduction of restrictions which retard the complete development of human freedoms, democracy and civil society in the Republic of Croatia.

Source: Croatian Helsinki Committee Statement #69

Union left co-ordination

Left trade union currents from several of Western Europe's largest trade unions met in Rome at the end of May. The meeting was called by the *Alternativa Sindical* current in Italy's CGIL confederation. Other participants came from the *Sector Critico* in Spain's CC.OO federation, Germany's IG Metal, and France's CGT.

The aim of the meeting was to co-ordinate left currents within the major trade unions, in the face of a neo-liberal offensive across Western Europe.

Participants discussed the political and trade union situation. All agreed in the necessity to struggle for the reduction of the working week to 35 hours, with a final objective of 30 hours/week. They agreed to continue co-ordination efforts in an open spirit, taking into account the different situation of left wing currents — some of which dominate a particular union, others holding a minority position.

No current should be excluded from this co-ordination, which will focus on debate, and will not develop either structure or responsibilities at this time.

The next meeting will take place in Paris, France, on May 30. The central theme will be the 35 hour week and reduction of labour time. There is an ongoing discussion about the possibilities of organising a subsequent meeting on the 35 hour week in Frankfurt, Germany.

Militants active in left currents in the major European trade unions are invited to make contact as soon as possible, if they wish to be invited to the Paris and subsequent meetings. [JA]

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Border unemployment demonstrations

French and German unemployment associations and organisations have agreed decided on joint initiatives for the following objectives:

- an immediate improvement in the material living conditions of the unemployed and the right to a liveable income,
- the right to a stable and fixed employment and for a massive reduction in working hours.

May 8 will be a day of joint action in France and Germany. Demonstrations are planned on bridges in frontier towns, including the European Bridge between Kehl and Strasbourg, home of the Council of Europe and one of the European Parliament buildings.

The French unemployment associations will also be sending a large delegation to join the Berlin demonstration of German unemployed, planned for September 11.

Paris, March 7, 1998. Signed: ALV (Arbeitslosenverbandes Deutschland), KOS Bielefeld (Koordinierungsstelle Gewerkschaftlicher Arbeitslosengruppen), BAG-SHI (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Sozialhilfeinitiativen), ACI (Agir ensemble contre le Chômage), MNCP (Mouvement National des Chômeurs et des Précaires), APEIS (Association pour l'Entraide, l'Information et la Solidarité)



The fourth world war has started

From the sheltering greenery of the Lacandona Forest, Zapatista *Sub-commandante* Marcos sends this original geostrategic analysis of the new world situation.

“War is a matter of vital importance for the state; it is the province of life and death, the road which leads to survival or elimination. It is essential to study it in depth”.

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

As a world system, neoliberalism is a new war for the conquest of territory. The ending of the third world war – meaning the cold war – in no sense means that the world has gone beyond the bipolar and found stability under the domination of a single victor. Because, while there was

certainly a defeat (of the socialist camp), it is hard to say who won. The United States? The European Union? Japan? Or perhaps all three of them.

The defeat of the “evil empire” has opened up new markets, and the struggle over them is leading to a new world war – the fourth.

Like all major conflicts, this war is forcing national states to redefine their identity. The world order seems to have reverted to the earlier epochs of the conquests of America, Africa and Oceania – a strange modernity, this, which progresses by going backwards. The twilight years of the 20th century bear more of a resemblance to the previous centuries of barbarism than to the rational futures described in science fiction novels.

Vast territories, wealth and, above all, a huge and available workforce lie waiting for the world’s new master but, while

there is only one position as master or offer, there are many aspiring candidates. And that explains the new war between those who see themselves as part of the “empire of good”.

Unlike the third world war, in which the conflict between capitalism and socialism took place over a variety of terrains and with varying degrees of intensity, the fourth world war is being conducted between major financial centres in theatres of war that are global in scale and with a level of intensity that is fierce and constant.

The ineptly-named cold war actually reached very high temperatures: from underground workings of international espionage to the interstellar space of Ronald Reagan’s famous “Star Wars”; from the sands of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba to the Mekong Delta in Vietnam; from the frenzy of the nuclear arms race to the vicious *coups d’état* in Latin America; from the menacing manoeuvres of NATO armies to the machinations of the CIA agents in Bolivia, where Che Guevara was murdered. The combination of all this led to the socialist camp being undermined as a world system, and to its dissolution as a social alternative.

The third world war showed the benefits of “total war” for its victor, which was capitalism. In the post-cold war period we see the emergence of a new planetary scenario in which the principal conflictual elements are the growing importance of no-man’s-lands (arising out of the collapse of the Eastern bloc countries), the expansion of a number of major powers (the United States, the European Union and Japan), a world economic crisis and a new technical revolution based on information technology.

Goodbye nation-state

Thanks to computers and the technological revolution, the financial markets, operating from their offices and answerable to nobody but themselves, have been imposing their laws and world-view on the planet as a whole. Globalisation is merely the totalitarian extension of the logic of the finance markets to all aspects of life. Where they were once in command of their economies, the nation states (and their governments) are controlled - or rather remote-controlled - by the same basic logic of financial power, commercial free trade. And in addition, this logic has profited from a new permeability created by the development of telecommunications to appropriate all aspects of social activity. At last, a world war which is totally total!

One of its first victims has been the national market. Rather like a bullet fired inside a concrete room, the war unleashed by neoliberalism ricochets and ends by wounding the person who fired it. One of the fundamental bases of the power of the modern capitalist state, the national market, is wiped out by the heavy artillery of the global finance economy. The new international capitalism renders national

capitalism obsolete and effectively starves their public powers into extinction. The blow has been so brutal that sovereign states have lost the strength to defend their citizens' interests.

The fine showcase inherited from the ending of the cold war – the new world order – has shattered into fragments as a result of the neoliberal explosion. It takes no more than a few minutes for companies and states to be sunk – but they are sunk not by winds of proletarian revolution, but by the violence of the hurricanes of world finance.

The son (neoliberalism) is devouring the father (national capital) and, in the process, is destroying the lies of capitalist ideology: in the new world order there is neither democracy nor freedom, neither equality nor fraternity. The planetary stage is transformed into a new battlefield, in which chaos reigns.

Towards the end of the cold war, capitalism created a new military horror: the neutron bomb, a weapon which destroys life while sparing buildings. But a new wonder has been discovered as the fourth world war unfolds: the finance bomb. Unlike the bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this new bomb does not simply destroy the *polis* (in this case, the nation) and bring death, terror and misery to those who live there; it also transforms its target into a piece in the jigsaw puzzle of the process of economic globalisation. The result of the explosion is not a pile of smoking ruins, or thousands of dead bodies, but a neighbourhood added to one of the commercial megalopolis of the new planetary hypermarket, and a labour force which is reshaped to fit in with the new planetary job market.

Goodbye civilisation

The European Union is a result of this fourth world war. In Europe globalisation has succeeded in eliminating the frontiers between rival states that had been enemies for centuries, and has forced them to converge towards political union. On the way from the nation state to the European Federation the road will be paved with destruction and ruin, and one of these ruins will be that of European civilisation.

Megalopolises are reproducing themselves right across the planet. Their favourite spawning ground is in the world's free trade areas. In North America, the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico is a prelude to the accomplishment of an old dream of US conquest: "America for the Americans".

Are megalopolises replacing nations? No, or rather not merely that. They are assigning them new functions, new limits and new perspectives. Entire countries are becoming departments of the neoliberal mega-enterprise. Neoliberalism thus produces, on the one hand, destruction and depopulation, and, on the other, the reconstruction and reorganisation of regions and nations.

Unlike nuclear bombs, which had a

dissuasive, intimidating and coercive character in the third world war, the financial hyperbombs of the fourth world war are different in nature. They serve to attack territories (national states) by the destruction of the material bases of their sovereignty and by producing a qualitative depopulation of those territories. This depopulation involves the exclusion of all persons who are of no use to the new economy (indigenous peoples, for instance). But at the same time the financial centres are working on a reconstruction of nation states and are reorganising them within a new logic: the economic has the upper hand over the social.

The indigenous world is full of examples illustrating this strategy: Ian Chambers, director of the Central America section of the International Labour Organisation, has stated that the worldwide populations of indigenous peoples (300 million people) lives in zones which house 60% of the planet's natural resources. It is therefore "not surprising that there are multiple conflicts over the use and future of their lands in relation to the interests of business and governments [...]. The exploitation of natural resources (oil and minerals) and tourism are the principal industries threatening indigenous territories in America." ¹ And then come pollution, prostitution and drugs.

Goodbye politics

In this new war, politics, as the organiser of the nation state, no longer exists. Now politics serves solely in order to manage the economy, and politicians are now merely company managers.

The world's new masters have no need to govern directly. National governments take on the role of running things on their behalf. This is what the new order means - unification of the world into one single market. States are simply enterprises with managers in the guise of governments, and the new regional alliances bear more of a resemblance to shopping malls than political federations. The unification produced by neoliberalism is economic: in the giant planetary hypermarket it is only commodities that circulate freely, not people.

This economic globalisation is also accompanied by a general way of thinking. The "American way of life" which followed American troops into Europe during the second world war, then to Vietnam in the 1960s, and more recently into the Gulf war, is now extending itself to the planet as a whole, via computers. What we have here is a destruction of the material bases of nation states, but we also have a destruction of history and culture.

All the cultures which nations have forged – the noble past of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the brilliance of European civilisation, the cultured history of the Asian nations and the ancestral wealth of Africa and Oceania – all these are under attack from the American way of life. Neoliberalism thus imposes the destruction of nations and of groups of nations in order to fuse them into one

single model. The war which neoliberalism is conducting against humanity is thus a planetary war, and is the worst and most cruel ever seen.

What we have here is a puzzle. When we attempt to put its pieces together in order to arrive at an understanding of today's world, we find that a lot of the pieces are missing. Still, we can make a start with seven of them, in the hope that this conflict will not end with the destruction of humanity. Seven pieces to draw, colour in, cut out and put together with others, in order to try to solve this global puzzle.

The first of these pieces is the two-fold accumulation of wealth and of poverty at the two poles of planetary society. The second is the total exploitation of the totality of the world. The third is the nightmare of that part of humanity condemned to a life of wandering. The fourth is the sickening relationship between crime and state power. The fifth is state violence. The sixth is the mystery of megapolitics. The seventh is the multiple forms of resistance which humanity is deploying against neoliberalism.

1: The concentration of wealth and the distribution of poverty

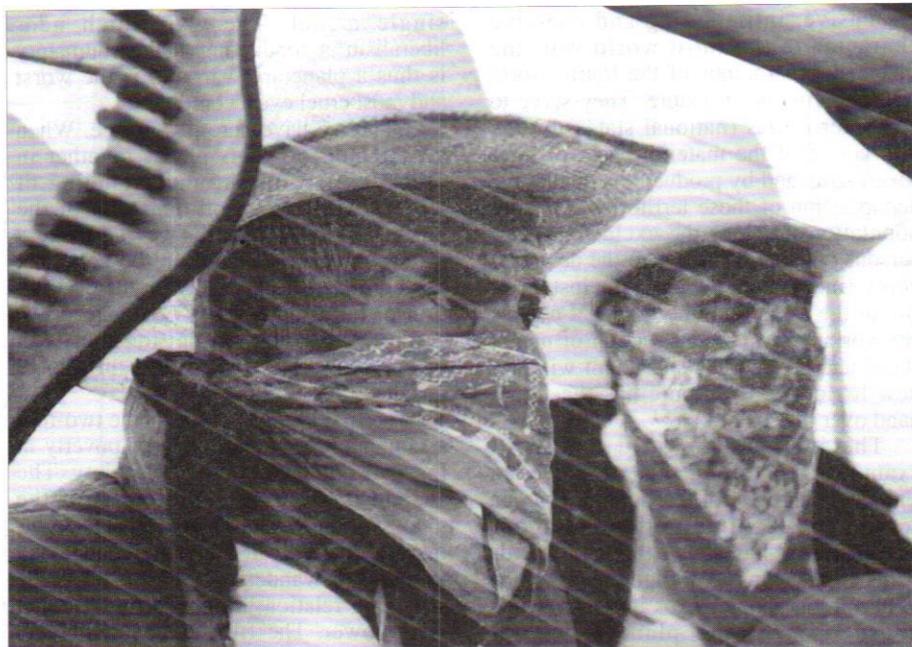
In the history of humanity, a variety of models have fought it out over the erection of absurdities as the distinguishing features of world order. Neoliberalism will have pride of place when it comes to the prize-giving, because in its "distribution" of wealth all it achieves is a two-fold absurdity of accumulation: an accumulation of wealth for the few, and an accumulation of poverty for millions of others. Injustice and inequality are the distinguishing traits of today's world. The earth has five billion human inhabitants: of these, only 500 million live comfortably; the remaining 4.5 billion endure lives of poverty. The rich make up for their numerical minority by their ownership of billions of dollars. The total wealth owned by the 358 richest people in the world, the dollar billionaires, is greater than the annual income of almost half the world's poorest inhabitants, in other words about 2.6 billion people.

The progress of the major transnational companies does not necessarily involve the advance of the countries of the developed world. On the contrary, the richer these giant companies become, the more poverty there is in the so-called "wealthy" countries. The gap between rich and poor is enormous: far from decreasing, social inequalities are growing.

This monetary sign that you have drawn represents the symbol of world economic power. Now colour it dollar-green. Ignore the sickening stench; this smell of dung, mire and blood are the smells of its birthing...

#2 The globalisation of exploitation

One of the lies of neoliberalism is that the economic growth of companies produces employment and a better distribution of wealth. This is untrue. In the same way that



the increasing power of a king does not lead to an increase in the power of his subjects (far from it), the absolutism of finance capital does not improve the distribution of wealth, and does not create jobs. In fact its structural consequences are poverty, unemployment and precariousness.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the number of poor people in the world (defined by the World Bank as having an income of less than one dollar per day) rose to some 200 million. By the start of the 1990s, their numbers stood at two billion.

Hence, increasing numbers of people who are poor or have been made poor. Fewer and fewer people who are rich or have become rich. These are the lessons of Piece 1 of our puzzle. In order to obtain this absurd result, the world capitalist system is "modernising" the production, circulation and consumption of commodities. The new technological revolution (information technology) and the new revolution in politics (the megalopolises emerging from the ruins of the nation state) produce a new social "revolution". This social revolution consists of a rearrangement, a reorganisation of social forces and, principally, of the workforce.

The world's economically active population (EAP) went from 1.38 billion in 1960 to 2.37 billion in 1990. A large increase in the number of human beings capable of working and generating wealth. But the new world order arranges this workforce within specific geographical and productive areas, and reassigns their functions (or non-functions, in the case of unemployed and precarious workers) within the plan of world globalisation. The world's economically active population by sector (EAPS) has undergone radical changes during the past 20 years. Agriculture and fishing fell from 22% in 1970 to 12% in 1990; manufacture from 25% to 22%; but the tertiary sector (commercial, transport, banking and services) has risen from 42% to 56%. In developing coun-

tries, the tertiary sector has grown from 40% in 1970 to 57% in 1990, while agriculture and fishing have fallen from 30% to 15%.² This means that increasing numbers of workers are channelled into the kind of activities necessary for increasing productivity or speeding up the creation of commodities. The neoliberal system thus functions as a kind of megaboss for whom the world market is viewed as a single, unified enterprise, to be managed by "modernising" criteria.

But neoliberalism's "modernity" seems closer to the bestial birth of capitalism as a world system than to utopian "rationality", because this "modern" capitalist production continues to rely on child labour. Out of 1.15 billion children in the world, at least 100 million live on the streets and 200 million work – and according to forecasts this figure will rise to 400 million by the year 2000. In Asia alone, 146 million children work in manufacturing. And in the North too, hundreds of thousands of children have to work in order to supplement family incomes, or merely to survive. There are also many children employed in the "pleasure industries" – according to the United Nations, every year one million children are driven into the sex trade.

The unemployment and precarious labour of millions of workers throughout the world is a reality which does not look set to disappear. In the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), unemployment went from 3.8% in 1966 to 6.3% in 1990; in Europe it went from 2.2% to 6.4%.

The globalised market is also destroying small and medium-sized companies. With the disappearance of local and regional markets, small and medium producers have no protection and are unable to compete with the giant transnationals. Millions of workers thus find themselves unemployed. One of the absurdities of neoliberalism is that far from creating

jobs, the growth of production actually destroys them. The UN speaks of "growth without jobs".

But the nightmare does not end there. Workers are also being forced to accept precarious conditions. Less job security, longer working hours and lower wages: these are the consequences of globalisation in general and the explosion in the service sector in particular.

All this combines to create a specific surplus: an excess of human beings who are useless in terms of the new world order because they do not produce, do not consume, and do not borrow from banks. In short, human beings who are disposable. Each day the big finance centres impose their laws on countries and groups of countries all around the world. They rearrange and re-order the inhabitants of those countries. And at the end of the operation they find there is still an "excess" of people.

3: Migration, a nightmare of wandering

We have already spoken of the existence, at the end of the third world war, of new territories waiting to be conquered (the former socialist countries) and others to be re-conquered for the "new world order". This situation involves the financial centres in a threefold strategy: there is a proliferation of "regional wars" and "internal conflicts"; capital follows paths of atypical accumulation; and large masses of workers are mobilised.

The result: a huge rolling wheel of millions of migrants moving across the planet. As "foreigners" in that "world without frontiers" which had been promised by the victors of the cold war, they are forced to endure racist persecution, precarious employment, the loss of their cultural identity, police repression, hunger, imprisonment and murder.

The nightmare of emigration, whatever its cause, continues to grow. The number of those coming within the ambit of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has grown disproportionately from 2 million in 1975 to more than 27 million in 1995.

The objective of neoliberalism's migration policy is more to destabilise the world labour market than to put a brake on immigration. The fourth world war, with its mechanisms of destruction/depopulation and reconstruction/reorganisation, involves the displacement of millions of people. Their destiny is to wander the world, carrying the burden of their nightmare with them, so as to constitute a threat to workers who have a job, a scapegoat designed to make people forget their bosses, and to provide a basis for the racism that neoliberalism provokes.

4: Financial globalisation and the generalisation of crime

If you think that the world of crime has to be shady and underhand, you are

wrong. In the period of the so-called cold war, organised crime acquired a more respectable image. Not only did it begin to function in the same way as any other modern enterprise, but it also penetrated deeply into the political and economic systems of nation states.

With the beginning of the fourth world war, organised crime has globalised its activities. The criminal organisations of five continents have taken on board the "spirit of world co-operation" and have joined together in order to participate in the conquest of new markets. They are investing in legal businesses, not only in order to launder dirty money, but in order to acquire capital for illegal operations. Their preferred activities are luxury property investment, the leisure industry, the media – and banking.

Ali Baba and the Forty Bankers? Worse than that. Commercial banks are using the dirty money of organised crime for their legal activities. According to one UN report, the involvement of crime syndicates has been facilitated by the programmes of structural adjustment which debtor countries have been forced to accept in order to gain access to International Monetary Fund loans.³

Organised crime also relies on the existence of tax havens: there are some 55 of these. One of them, the Cayman Islands, ranks fifth in the world as a banking centre, and has more banks and registered companies than inhabitants. As well as laundering money, these tax paradises make it possible to escape taxation. They are places for contact between governments, businessmen and Mafia bosses.

So here we have the rectangular mirror within which legality and illegality exchange reflections. On which side of the mirror is the criminal? And on which side is the person who pursues him?

5: Legitimate violence of illegitimate powers

In the cabaret of globalisation, the state performs a striptease, at the end of which it is left wearing the minimum necessary: its powers of repression. With its material base destroyed, its sovereignty and independence abolished, and its political class eradicated, the nation state increasingly becomes a mere security apparatus in the service of the mega-enterprises which neoliberalism is constructing. Instead of orienting public investment towards social spending, it prefers to improve the equipment which enables it to control society more effectively.

What is to be done when the violence derives from the laws of the market? Where is legitimate violence then? And where the illegitimate? What monopoly of violence can the hapless nation states demand when the free interplay of supply and demand defies any such monopoly? Have we not shown, in Piece #4, that organised crime, government and finance centres are intimately inter-linked? Is it

not obvious that organised crime has veritable armies on which it can count? The monopoly of violence no longer belongs to nation states: the market has put it up for auction.

However, when the monopoly of violence is contested not on the basis of the laws of the market, but in the interests of "those from below", then world power sees it as "aggression". This is one of the (least studied and most condemned) aspects of the challenges launched by the indigenous peoples in arms and in rebellion of the Zapatista National Liberation Army against neoliberalism and for humanity.

The symbol of American military power is the pentagon. The new world police wants national armies and police to be simple security bodies guaranteeing order and progress within the megalopolises of neoliberalism.

6: Megapolitics and its dwarfs

We said earlier that nation states are attacked by the finance markets and forced to dissolve themselves within megalopolises. But neoliberalism does not conduct its war solely by "unifying" nations and regions. Its strategy of destruction/depopulation and reconstruction/reorganisation also produces a fracture or fractures within the nation state. This is the paradox of this fourth world war: while ostensibly working to eliminate frontiers and "unite" nations, it actually leads to a multiplication of frontiers and the smashing apart of nations.

If anyone still doubts that this globalisation is a world war, let them look at the conflicts that arose out of the collapse of the USSR, of Czecho-Slovakia and of Yugoslavia, and the deep crises which have shattered not only the political and economic foundations of nation states, but also their social cohesion.

Both the construction of megalopolises and the fragmentation of states are founded on the destruction of the nation state. Are these two independent and parallel events? Are they symptoms of a mega-crisis about to occur? Or are they simply separate and isolated facts?

We think that they represent a contradiction inherent in the process of globalisation, and one of the core realities of the neoliberal model. The elimination of trade frontiers, the explosion of telecommunications, information superhighways, the omnipresence of financial markets, international free trade agreements – all this contributes to destroying nation states and internal markets. Paradoxically, globalisation produces a fragmented world of isolated pieces, a world full of watertight compartments which may at best be linked by fragile economic gangways. A world of broken mirrors which reflect the useless world unity of the neoliberal puzzle.

But neoliberalism does not merely fragment the world which it claims to be unifying; it also produces the political and economic centre which directs this war. It is urgent that we embark on a discussion of this mega-politics. Mega-politics globalises national politics – in other

words it ties them to a centre which has world interests and which operates on the logic of the market. It is in the name of the market that wars, credits, buying and selling of commodities, diplomatic recognition, trade blocs, political support, laws on immigration, breakdowns of relationships between countries and investment – in short, the survival of entire nations – are decided.

The world-wide power of the financial markets is such that they are not concerned about the political complexion of the leaders of individual countries: what counts in their eyes is a country's respect for the economic programme. Financial disciplines are imposed on all alike. These masters of the world can even tolerate the existence of left-wing governments, on condition that they adopt no measure likely to harm the interests of the market. However, they will never accept policies that tend to break with the dominant model.

In the eyes of mega-politics, national politics are conducted by dwarfs who are expected to comply with the dictates of the financial giant. And this is the way it will always be – until the dwarfs revolt.

Here, then, you have the figure which represents mega-politics. Impossible to find the slightest rationality in it.

7: Pockets of resistance

"To begin with, I ask you not to confuse resistance with political opposition. Opposition does not oppose itself to power but to a government, and its fully-formed shape is that of an opposition party; resistance, on the other hand, cannot be a party, by definition: it is not made in order to govern but... to resist."

Tomás Segovia, *Alegatorio*

The apparent infallibility of globalisation comes up hard against the stubborn disobedience of reality. While neoliberalism is pursuing its war, groups of protesters, kernels of rebels, are forming throughout the planet. The empire of financiers with full pockets confronts the rebellion of pockets of resistance. Yes, pockets. Of all sizes, of different colours, of varying shapes. Their sole common point is a desire to resist the "new world order" and the crime against humanity that is represented by this fourth world war.

Neoliberalism attempts to subjugate millions of beings, and seeks to rid itself of all those who have no place in its new ordering of the world. But these "disposable" people are in revolt. Women, children, old people, young people, indigenous peoples, ecological militants, homosexuals, lesbians, HIV activists, workers, and all those who upset the ordered progress of the new world system and who organise and are in struggle. Resistance is being woven by those who are excluded from "modernity".

In Mexico, for example, the so-called "Programme for Integral Development of the Tehuantepec Isthmus" is conceived as constructing a large industrial zone. This

zone would consist of industrial factories, a refinery to process one third of Mexico's crude oil, and plant to make petrochemical products. Transit routes between the two oceans would be built: roads, a canal, and a trans-isthmus railway. Two million peasants would become workers in these industrial and transportation sectors. In the same way, in the south-east of Mexico, in the Lacandona Forest, a long-term regional development programme is being set up with the object of making available to capital indigenous lands that are rich not only in dignity and history, but also in oil and uranium.

These projects would end up by fragmenting Mexico, separating the south-east from the rest of the country. They are also framed within a strategy of counter-insurgency, like a pincer movement attempting to encircle the rebellion against neoliberalism that was born in 1994. At the centre are to be found the indigenous rebels of the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

While we are on the subject of rebellious indigenous peoples, a parenthesis would be in order: the Zapatistas believe that in Mexico recovery and defence of national sovereignty are part of the anti-liberal revolution. Paradoxically, the EZLN finds itself accused of attempting to fragment the Mexican nation.

The reality is that the only forces that have spoken for separatism are the businessmen of the oil-rich state of Tabasco, and the Institutional Revolutionary Party members of parliament from Chiapas. The Zapatistas, for their part, think that it is necessary to defend the nation state in the face of globalisation, and that the attempts to break Mexico into fragments are being made by the government, and not by the just demands of the Indian peoples for autonomy. The EZLN and the majority of the national indigenous movement want the Indian peoples not to separate from Mexico but to be recognised as an integral part of the country, with their own specificities. They also aspire to a Mexico which espouses democracy, freedom and justice. Whereas the EZLN fights to defend national sovereignty, the Mexican Federal Army functions to protect a government which has destroyed the material bases of sovereignty and which has offered the country not only to large-scale foreign capital, but also to drug trafficking.

It is not only in the mountains of south-east Mexico that neoliberalism is being resisted. In other regions of Mexico, in Latin America, in the United States and Canada, in the Europe of the Maastricht Treaty, in Africa, in Asia and in Oceania, pockets of resistance are multiplying. Each has its own history, its specificities, its similarities, its demands, its struggles and its successes. If humanity hopes to survive, and to improve itself, its only hope lies in these pockets which are created by the excluded, the marginalised and those who are considered "disposable".

So what we have here is a drawing of a pocket of resistance. But don't attach too much importance to it. The possible

shapes are as numerous as the forms of resistance themselves, as numerous as all the worlds existing in this world. So draw whatever shape you like. In this matter of pockets, as in that of resistance, diversity is a wealth.

Having now drawn, coloured and cut out these seven pieces, you will notice that it is impossible to fit them together. This is the problem. Globalisation has been seeking to put together pieces which don't fit. For this reason, and for others which I

cannot develop in this article, it is necessary to build a new world. A world in which there is room for many worlds. A world able to contain all the worlds. ★

Notes

1. Interview with Martha García, *La Jornada*, 28 May 1997.
2. Ochoa Chi and Juanita del Pilar, *Mercado mundial de fuerza de trabajo en el capitalismo contemporáneo*. UNAM, Economía, Mexico City, 1997.
3. *The Globalisation of Crime*, United Nations, New York, 1995.

Translation: *Le Monde diplomatique*

The other Americas

Zapatista Front

The civil wing of the Zapatista movement, the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN), held its first National Delegate Assembly on March 15th. This was the first systematic discussion of the movement's orientation, objectives, alliance policy and international work.

Delegates condemned the Mexican government's refusal to respect the San Andres accords signed with the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), and called on all progressive forces to oppose the regime's low-intensity war against the Indians of Chiapas state. "Today, more than ever, our future as Mexicans is linked to the future of our indigenous brothers and sisters. A Mexico without a place for them, is a Mexico where none of us has a place."

Source: FZLN International Commission

Food redistribution

Police have charged seven leading activists involved in the anti-hunger protest at Montreal's Queen Elizabeth Hotel last December. The charges range from assault to conspiracy and making death threats. Quebec's police are

taking the redistribution of food from the luxury hotel buffet to anti-hunger activists in the street outside very seriously. "It is obvious that they are trying to break the movement," says protest organiser Julie Le Blanc. [ER]

Contact: Comité des sans-emplois Tel. +1-514-596-7904

Martinique meeting

Fourth International supporters in this French Caribbean colony recently marked the 25th anniversary of the *Groupe Socialiste Révolutionnaire* (GRS) with public meetings on the unemployed movement in France, and the national struggle on the neighbouring island of Puerto Rico.

Some of the 500 participants at the GRS meeting on Che Guevara also participated at the mass demonstration which forced French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen to leave the island in haste. He flew to Guadeloupe, France's other "Overseas *Département*," where a similar reception led him to follow police advice... and take the first flight back to Paris. [R/JD] ★

Chiapas: Foreigners out!

Mexican media and government have demanded the expulsion of foreign observers from Chiapas state.

One television program claimed that foreigners were present in areas held by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and participated directly in the rebel leadership. The popular weekly political magazine *Proceso* says the programme was produced in collaboration with the Interior Ministry.

In January the International Red Cross was told to leave Chiapas, though Representative Philippe Gaillard protested that "providing humanitarian aid to displaced refugees is not interference in Mexican domestic political affairs." Danielle Mitterand, widow of the deceased French president, has also been warned by Immigration officials.

In the past year more than 200 foreigners have been deported for alleged political activities in Chiapas. And, in

recent weeks, Mexican immigration agents have begun stopping tourists in the street and interrogating them at length. Some restaurants in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas are reportedly refusing service to foreign tourists who look like observers of the conflict.

President of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador called the government's approach "hypocritical." "They go to Washington and hand over the nation's wealth, they accept recommendations from the International Monetary Fund on economic policy, but when it comes to Chiapas, then they want to look very nationalistic."

Others charge the campaign is both xenophobic and racist for presuming that Chiapas Indians would not be fighting for their rights, were it not for the prodding of foreigners. ★

Source: MLNA/PG

Neoliberalism's broken mirror

– comments on “The fourth world war has begun”

Daniel Bensaid

Sub-commandante Marcos's communiqué assembles a collage of the undeniable miseries inflicted by neoliberalism on the planet. The New World Order announced with triumphant fanfare following the fall of the Berlin Wall is as unjust, violent, irrational, and chaotic as the old. The logic of inequality inherent in market globalisation gives rise to identity crises and introversions: people and societies are turning their back on any future for humanity that is really universal. It consumes any social gains, dismantles all institutions, destroys all regulatory mechanisms, without replacing them with better institutions at either the regional or the global level.

The result is a world fractured into shining, reflective fragments.

A puzzle made of pieces that don't fit together, Marcos would say.

This is the age of networks. But, like those literal networks of railroad tracks in the beginning of the century, these financial and electronic networks, these information superhighways, are knit together in a loose stitch, that links the powers of commerce, of banking, and of industry and connects world capitals, but lets much fall through the gaping holes in the net: grey zones, suburbs, and waste grounds that are, in this case, sometimes countries or whole continents, abandoned along the side of the road. Here, a fertile concentration of wealth and power, there, an expanding desert: development is as lopsided as it ever was. This is the implacable law of the global market and of the unremitting competition of all against all.

The resulting crisis is deeper and longer lasting than classical economic crises. It ushers in a true crisis of civilisation, that is, a crisis of everything that humanity holds in common, or that links people together. The spread of unemployment and exclusion from productive work on a planet-wide scale shows that work itself, increasingly complex and socialised, can no longer be reduced to “mere” abstract labour power measured in discrete units of time.

The increase in ecological disasters shows that it is becoming impossible to reduce the long-term implications for energy resources and for the ecosystem in the same short-term calculus of the market. The productive forces set in motion by the new technological revolution are no longer held in check by the straight-jacket of the profit motive.

The world is shrinking. But in the wealthy countries, those that – even yesterday – dreamed of perpetual progress, of an ever-ascending spiral of growth, now fear tomorrow will be worse,



for themselves and for their children.

“Neoliberalism is a new war for the conquest of territory,” writes Marcos. “The ending of the Third World War – meaning the Cold War – in no sense means that the world has gone beyond bipolar divisions and found stability under the domination of a single victor.”

Marcos goes further: “a Fourth World War has begun.” A “world war that is totally total”. That this system is critically unstable is incontestable: from the Balkans to northern India stretches a convulsive wave of endemic conflicts. But, as for a “Fourth World War...?” Well, that all depends on what you mean by war.

The forms of war themselves have always changed according to the social relations they reflected, according to the structure of the state, and according to the orga-

nisation of the world as a whole. The French revolution and the rise of the nation state marked the shift from dynastic to national wars, which were fought no longer by armies but by whole peoples. The modern age of imperialism has also been marked by an escalation towards total war, shown in the two world wars and by the ever more powerful and indiscriminate weapons of destruction. The neutron bomb, meant to destroy people while preserving property, is the ultimate symbol of the summit of this logic. It perfectly captures the spirit of capitalism.

After the uneasy balance of the Cold War and nuclear terror (a cold war that certainly did not prevent the local proliferation of vicious “hot” wars or of exhausting, bloody civil wars), the collapse of the Soviet Union inaugurates a new geostra-

tegic situation, revealed in a new level of intensity in various conflicts dreamed up by the Pentagon, in the Gulf War, and in various neo-colonial "humanitarian" missions.

Lucien Poirier, one of the theorists of the French nuclear "deterrent" frankly admits it: "The fact of nuclear arms and the Cold War had created a unique type of world system." But now we are "engaged in a transformation of the political and strategic universe," and we are "as yet unable to accurately describe this phenomenon." This forces us to "recognise the limited rationality of any strategic act." (Lucien Poirier, *Le chantier stratégique*, Hachette, Poche Pluriel, 1997).

The strategy vacuum

Napoleon once defined strategy as the art of being the stronger in a given place and at a given time. But today, what is the place, since there are now multiple centres of power, and power is so diffuse? And what is the time, since conflict stretches out over time, without coming to a conclusion? The field and the outcome of battle become unclear, because the "new order" yet unborn is, for now, as Marcos says, an order "in a thousand pieces" or "a broken mirror". The new redistribution of territories and new power structures are barely sketched out.

Never in the past have such head-over-heels changes been accomplished with ease. It took the European upheavals of 1848, the bloody partitioning of colonies, wars of independence, and two world wars. Today we seem to have fast-forwarded into a kind of constant war, already begun and without sign of ending, a war whose front is fractured into a series of local conflicts with global implications.

Reversing the Clauswitzian relationship, diplomacy today is the pursuit of war by peaceful means.

When Marcos speaks of this "Fourth World War", perhaps he hopes to seize and identify this moment of reversal.⁸ Are we now all condemned to live on a war footing, in the chaos of a foreseen and unavoidable catastrophe?

He also writes: "the result of the explosion is not a pile of smoking ruins, or thousands of dead bodies, but a neighbourhood added to one of the commercial megalopolis of the new planetary hypermarket, and a labour force reshaped to fit

in with the new planetary job market."

For the moment, the result of this conflict's expansion in space and in time is not an apocalypse but the daily devastation of a planet handed over to the mercy of market deregulation and the displacement of whole populations; displacement in the double sense that they are thrown not only into the whirlwind of refugee flows, but also into places where they have no space, no place, no city in which they are acknowledged citizens.

The instant mobility of capital, the globalisation of production, the unceasing migration of financial speculation, the increasing multinationalisation of companies all eat away at the sovereignty of nations. The power of nation states dissipates in two directions, towards the bottom with the increasing privatisation of public space, gang warfare, and organised mafias; and towards the top with the creation of supranational financial, juridical, and military powers.

National reorganisation

So far, this is only a tendency, and one whose final success we would be mistaken to presume. Capital, even in its globalised form, remains dependent on the nation state's apparatus, on its military and financial might, to support its conquests and guarantee its profits. The United States proved this in a spectacular fashion with the Gulf War. The plan for European Unity is explicitly one of a strong Europe that can achieve the critical mass of a modern empire. If world leadership is multipolar, imperialism nonetheless remains, founded on an unprecedented concentration of wealth, technology, and patents.

Nation states have thus not been simply effaced by globalisation. Rather, they are, as Marcos says carefully, "forced to redefine their identity" But are "megalopolises replacing nations?" No, not just that. New functions, new limits, and new perspectives are being assigned. "Entire countries are becoming departments of the neoliberal mega-enterprise. Neoliberalism thus produces, on the one hand, destruction and depopulation, and, on the other, the reconstruction and reorganisation of regions and nations".

This statement is pertinent. It leads, in the case of Mexico, to facing its local imperial neighbour and the effects of the free trade agreement, to the defence of

national sovereignty as the right of a people to choose their own future and way of life. Although they accuse the Zapatistas of fomenting Mexico's fragmentation, it is the businessmen of Tabasco or Chiapas who dream of secession in order to profit from the oil resources: "The Zapatistas, for their part, feel it is necessary to defend the nation state in the face of globalisation, and that the attempts to break Mexico into fragments are being made by the government, and not by the just demands of the Indian peoples for autonomy."

Against the new forms of subjection and dependence, and against the temptations of separatism or dislocation, this project of "reconstructing the nation", allied with the twin legitimacy of the struggle for independence and the Mexican Revolution of 1911, seems absolutely just.

The problem for those of us who live in the exclusive club of wealthy nations is different. Here in France, our rulers are engaged in the construction of a new imperial power. We must imagine demands, rights, and goals that bridge the gap between the national tradition and the creation of a new continental space.

Vive la république

In France, we must renew the dynamic of the universal republican ideal (that of the universal – not national – declaration of the rights of man); in other words, we must break the connection between the Republic and the nation.

Republicanism is still a vast, unrealised project. A true republic is a political community of citizens, it is not attached to the nation like a snail is to its shell. It is a spirit, a future, an envisioned or imagined republic that is never attained. The republican aspiration carries echos of permanent revolution.

At the moment when, battered by globalisation, the links between a territory, a market, and a state unravel, a moment when political, social, legal, ecological spaces no longer coincide, the republican principle allows us to imagine a sliding scale of sovereignty, with a new distribution of powers and responsibilities and many levels of decision making.

"In this new war, politics, as the organiser of the nation state, no longer exists. Now politics solely serve to manage the economy, and politicians are now merely company managers."

Globalisation's rhetoric is, in fact, a rhetoric of resignation, a process of depoliticisation where the part of our future that is not the result of fate disappears between the fatal impact of economic "laws" and the consolations of humanitarian moralism.

Any submission to "constraints" has an impact on the will to change the world. The current interest shown by young people in Che Guevara derives in part from this general idea that he embodies the absolute antithesis of this resignation, of these abdications, and of any abandonment of all that is truly human in humankind.

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The economy and money are not self-willed fetishes, but the expression of social relations we ourselves invent. Their supposed “laws” are revealed today in all their absurdity. Why, when we are able to produce more in less time, does misery and poverty flourish all around us? Why does the New York Stock Market fall when employment rises? Why does technology produce unemployment instead of increasing leisure time for all? Why do some claim work is disappearing when there are so many needs to be met, to be transformed, and even to be invented? These questions are not economic. They’re political. And there is nothing more urgent than rehabilitating politics – not that of the politicians, with their doubled characteristics in more than one domain; with dual languages, double lives, as duplicitous as the commodities they serve – but the profane politics of collective self-determination in a world without gods and fetishes.

They say we have no model. But the future is never made according to plans. It invents itself as it transpires. A real utopia is growing irresistibly in the very soil of resistance and daily struggles all over the world. The crumbling of the bureaucratic regimes, far from leaving us orphaned *vis à vis* any “model”, clears the pathways to the future.

They say we’ve broken down. They assure us the class struggle is over. “But they keep struggling”, we mutter in an aside. They tell us that the working class has become invisible, but no one can dare to pretend that the haves, the bourgeoisie, the rich, the fat cats, the powerful – whatever you call them – have disappeared. The working class, today, comprises not only the exploited, but all the oppressed and humiliated, all the “disposable” and those “excluded from modernism”, all the “withouts”, those without jobs, those without land, those without homes, those without papers, those without anything. That’s a lot of humanity.

They object that we have no clear strategy. Changing an unacceptable world may be more necessary than ever, but it’s impossible. The road to social transformation is now a dead end.

Marcos asks those on the left a serious question.

“To begin with, I ask you not to confuse resistance with political opposition. Opposition does not oppose itself to power but to a government, and its fully-formed shape is that of an opposition party; resistance, on the other hand, cannot be a party, by definition: it is not made in order to govern but to resist.”

Marcos highlights these words of Tomas Segovia. They echo the founding texts of the Zapatista Front, articulating a politics of resistance “without aspiring to take power”, aiming at the creation of “a political force that doesn’t fight to take power but to create, to bring together, and to develop mass movements and civil society”.

Struggle for... power?

An anti-power, then. But the development of this anti-power ends -if the powerful allow it to- in a duality of power, in this situation of unstable equilibrium that cannot endure. Because, between two forces, two rights, or two opposing principles, might is right – the strongest prevails. This is the very history of all revolutions, whatever their form.

To be a “political force that does not fight to take power” can therefore be interpreted many different ways.

The first way is as plain wisdom. That is, the statement means that one says one doesn’t power because one can’t achieve it for the time being, given the relationship of national and international forces. But, since power exists and cannot be ignored, we need to gain some time, modify the relationship of forces, build alliances, and enter, one way or another, the domain of institutional politics. Which is what the Zapatista Army did, in its own way, with its declaration on the results of the July 6 election, when it hailed the victory of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas in Mexico City and stated that the creation of a “electoral choice for the left “was necessary.

The second, more ambitious interpretation, involves underlining that it is not only a question of taking over an already existing instrument of power, but of utterly transforming the relations of power and the relation between power and society.

The repeated emphasis on “*mandar-obedeciendo*” (leading while obeying), rather than the usual military principle of “*mando-obediencia*” (obeying orders) expresses such a goal: giving orders and leadership are only legitimate if they faithfully represent the will from below, of the majority, and if the leaders themselves “obey”. The commanders are responsible for their commands.

This is logical because such a struggle can be partial, mobilising around this or that demand, with this or that group of people, while the creation of a whole new society is the work of the broad masses, beginning with a molecular process, necessarily larger, of greater scope, more complicated than any decree from a minority, however enlightened.

Here we can see faint traces of the few moments where majority democracy has emerged, briefly embodied in the Paris Commune, in the Soviets of 1905 and 1917, and in all emancipatory experiences of workers’ self-management, of popular control, and of participatory democracy.

Pockets... of power

The third and final interpretation points to a strategic difficulty. Revolutionaries have something in common with soldiers. It is often said of the latter that they are always behind in war because they try to fight the present war with the tactics of the past war.

Revolutionaries are in a similar situation, for the same reason: you can formulate hypotheses and prepare simula-

tions, but you can’t do lab experiments with wars or revolutions, and reality is always more complicated than fiction. The diffusion and inconstant nature of goals, the fluidity and elasticity of fronts have all caused problems for today’s militaries. No wonder they provoke a similar perplexity for us as revolutionaries.

Thus the metaphoric insistence Marcos places on a strategy of pockets of resistance over outright winning: “Yes, pockets. Of all sizes, of different colours, of varying shapes. Their sole common point is a desire to resist the ‘new world order’.”

Nonetheless, this multicoloured and many-faceted resistance would be wrong to ignore power. Power won’t ignore them. It acts, manoeuvres, transforms itself, and takes initiatives. The war of attrition certainly wins out over the war of position, as does the patient construction of hegemony with respect to the impatient temptation towards a decisive attack. But resistance necessarily feeds on the hope of a counter-offensive and the overthrow of the established order.

“It is urgent that we embark on a discussion of this mega-politics,” writes Marcos. “Mega-politics globalises national politics – in other words it ties them to a centre that has world interests and which operates on the logic of the market.”

This mega-politics, in which a ventriloquist’s market monologue is the only voice heard, is the negation of real politics, politics as a space of liberty, of deliberation, of controversy, where the fragile links of difference are forged, where diversity joins together, where the many unite. Instead, mega-politics exercise an impersonal power over people and things alike.

Only intergalactic politics could be large enough to take on this challenge. Intergalactic in the sense of a new alias for the old internationalism that must always reinvent itself, still too new to have served us well or poorly.

In the days when they sang the Internationale, the oppressed were a century ahead of the game. But since then, we have had “socialism in one country”, “really existing socialism”, and the “socialist internationalist” invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. As a result, the first have become the last. The oppressed are a century (at least) behind capital and commodities.

All the more reason to pick up the pace in the march towards a new internationalism.

To make haste slowly!

To spur on our slow impatience! ★

“to all struggling Indonesian patriots...”

The outlawed People's Democratic Party (PRD) issued the following statement in late February



To all struggling Indonesian patriots

The Suharto regime, which represents the capitalist interests of the Suharto family and relatives, is the cause of the destruction of the people's economy. Since taking power, Suharto has succeeded in exploiting the wealth of the people for the interests of his family and relatives. The destruction of the Indonesian economy has also been caused by the contradictions of the economic and political interests of imperialism in Indonesia.

The Suharto government which is corrupt and ridden with manipulation, has given birth to a capitalist system which is decayed and inefficient. The private debt (owed by the Suharto family) can no longer be tolerated by the interests of international capitalism (imperialism), which in this instance is represented by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

But while the solution offered by the IMF and the World Bank is in the interests of imperialism (the US and Europe), Suharto's alternative, the Currency Board System,¹ only represents the interests of the Suharto family, relatives and domestic capitalists. Both of these solutions are far from the economic interests of the people.

International capitalism (imperialism), represented by the IMF and the World Bank, certainly want economic and political change in Indonesia. Imperialism wants a new regime which can guarantee the efficient running of international capitalism in Indonesia and which can fully control the Indonesian economy. Thus the wishes of imperialism, in this case the IMF and the World Bank, are inconsistent, because there is no opposition which is truly able to replace Suharto and safeguard imperialism's interests in Indonesia.

A Currency Board, which is still being considered by the Suharto regime, is in the interests of restoring the economic power of Suharto's family and relatives. It is clear that Suharto's family and relatives want to be able to rebuild their private economic power through overseas loans. But the payment of the debt will be left to the people, to the state. This is the same kind of greed which has been going on for more than 30 years and which has milked the people and the country.

The People's Consultative Assembly² is a puppet of Suharto, paid to ensure that he stays in power. But this Assembly will prove to be a grave dug by Suharto for himself and the political system of the New Order which he created, because the people will continue to rise up to resist the dictatorship until the final bloody moment.

The worsening economic and political situation will result in total bankruptcy. Indonesia is not a safe place to invest capital as long as Suharto is in power. There is no other choice for the international community other than supporting the people's struggle to overthrow Suharto and helping the people to build a more democratic economic and political system.

Opposition figure such as Megawati Sukarnoputri, Amien Rais, Emil Salim, Sri

Bintang Pamungkas and Budiman Sudjatmiko, have become more self-confident because there is an increasingly strong peoples movement to overthrow Suharto. However, these opposition figures will only get the support of the people if they are consistent and ready [to fight alongside] the people's struggle for the people's sovereignty, and if they have the courage to face the risks, to unite and be together with the people in overthrowing the Suharto dictatorship.

In the course of the emerging mass-people's struggle, the people have paid little attention to the opposition figures which have emerged. Although there are many opposition figures, there are also many who are not ready [to do this] because they are afraid of Suharto's threats. Meanwhile the people's suffering worsens. They are getting hungrier, prices are rising and human rights are being trampled upon. The people do not only want to replace the Suharto dictatorship, but they also want to reorganise the economic and political system and replace it with a system which is pro-people and is better able to guarantee the people's sovereignty, social justice and democracy.

The people now believe that the only solution for the Indonesian nation is to overthrow the Suharto dictatorship. If a constitutional path cannot be followed because it has been corrupted and become anti-people, the people will move with the law of revolution. That is a people's uprising to replace the Suharto dictatorship, the government and all of the institutions which are vile and decayed, with a sovereign people's government which is just and democratic. Only in this way can political and economic democracy be built by the people.

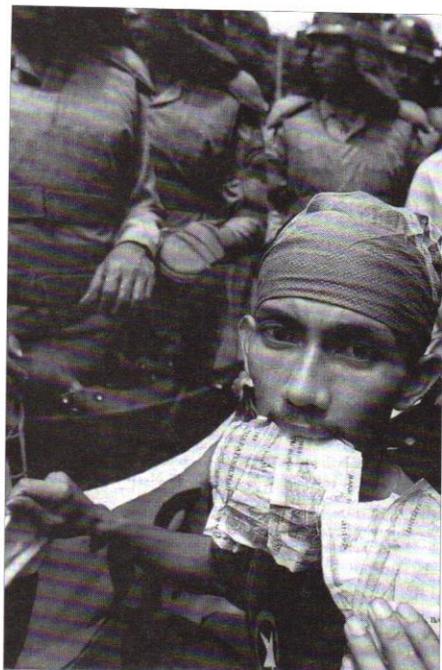
The puppet parliament³ which has been bribed by Suharto must be replaced by the people. An independent and sovereign People's Council must be established to replace the function of the puppet parliament. It must be established at all levels: the hamlet, village, sub-district, city, regency, province and nationally. People's councils must also be established on campuses, schools, factories and offices.

II. The most urgent tasks

1. Establish an Independent People's Council (IPC) in all regions, places of work and study.

All of those people struggling for democracy must build the IPC. Those who will sit on the council should be all of the local representatives and representatives of the functional groups, representatives of all of the [economic] sectors and professions, [political] parties and independent mass organisations which wish to struggle with the people for democracy.

This council will be the highest instrument of the people's struggle, because it will be established on the people's initiative. The first task of the council is to select the leaders of the people which are virtuous, courageous and ready [to struggle for the people]



2. Continue to take the people's demands to those in power!

Use all means to struggle to carry the central demands [of the people] on the government. The central demands of the people are:

- Reject the results of the 1997 general election and abolish the puppet parliament
- Reject the 1998 session of parliament and the appointment of Suharto as president
- Reduce prices
- Arrest and try Suharto, his family and relatives as the cause of the people's suffering
- Withdraw the five repressive political laws⁴
- Nationalise all of the economic assets of Suharto and his family and relatives
- Establish an independent people's council.

3. Launch protests and strikes!

The people must continue to resist with strikes everywhere: on campus, in factories, offices and schools. To seize, occupy and control all of these places. End all productive work, transportation and education which is anti-people. Launch general strikes at the city, provisional and national level, and in all [economic] sectors. The demands of all sectors, professions and regions must be taken up together with the central demands of the people.

4. End conflicts between the people and unite to overthrow Suharto!

End conflicts and hatred between religious groups, ethnic groups and non-Chinese and Chinese. These conflicts are politically engineered by the Suharto regime to play one side off against the other. The aim of this manipulation is to cover up the fact that Suharto is the cause of the problems and the suffering of the people, and to save Suharto himself.

The people must unite to resist Suharto because he is the cause of all of the people's suffering. The people must understand that Suharto's wealth is as much as \$US 40 billion. Suharto is the

third richest person [in the world] after Bill Gates (US) and the Sultan of Brunei. All of this wealth is owned by the people and must be returned to the hungry people.

Instructions to PRD cadres

Our task at the moment is to • Help the people to build a genuine people's council at all regional levels and places of work and study • Help the people in demanding their rights to fulfil their economic needs (stomachs), that is in retaking the productive sectors with the benefits of production to be used by the people in a just manner • Help the people to launch a mass struggle through strikes, protest actions and so on as the tool of the people's struggle.

Continue to be firm and ready to join with the people's struggle until the people win and are fully in power.

All that we have suffered, the deaths, jailings, abuse and insults, are not as great as the suffering the people. Our blood and tears will increase and broaden the flames of the people's struggle to bring down the Suharto dictatorship and establish a genuine democracy. ★

Notes

1. In January/February, the government proposed setting up a currency board to peg the Rupiah at 5,000 to the US dollar. The plan has been widely criticised by the IMF, the World Bank and the US.

2. MPR: Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, People's Consultative Assembly. The highest legislative body in the country with 1,000 members, 425 of whom are elected with the remainder being appointed by the president. It meets once every five years (usually around a year after the general elections) to hear an outgoing report from the president, enact the Broad Outlines of State Policy (Garis Besar Haluan Negara, GBHN) and to vote on nominations for the president and vice-president.

3. DPR: Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, Peoples Representative Assembly (Parliament). Consisting of 500 members, 425 elected from the three officially recognised political parties during the general elections: Golkar (the state party), the United Development Party and the Indonesian Democratic Party. The remaining 75 non-voting members are appointed by the president from the military.

4. The five repressive political laws were passed in 1985. They allow only three recognised political parties; ban party activity from villages and small towns; allow for the government appointment of 575 non-elected members (75 representing the military) to the MPR; impose a single state-defined ideology on all social, political and cultural organisations; and gives the state the right to intervene in the internal affairs of organisations.

Translation: James Balowski (ASIET)

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Hindu right takes power

The far-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is to lead India's new government. **Raghu Krishnan** and **B. Skanthakumar** outline the causes and consequences.

The BJP is associated with the politics of *Hindutva*, the political mobilisation of the Hindu majority on a communal and anti-Muslim platform. Most of the Indian left characterises the BJP as a fascist party.¹

Prior to the elections, the BJP cemented a shaky alliance with a heterodox group of smaller parties, in the expectation that it would not be able to win an absolute majority in the *Lok Sabha* (Lower House) on its own steam.

The BJP itself captured 25% of votes cast and, with its allies and independents, has 264 of 545 seats, leaving it just short of a majority.

The party has a three point agenda. First, the "reclamation" of disputed religious sites where mosques now stand in Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura and the building of *mandirs* (Hindu temples) in their place. Second, the abrogation of Article 370 in the Constitution, which gives a special status to Jammu and Kashmir – India's only Muslim-majority state. Finally, the BJP wants a Uniform Civil Code for all Indians, regardless of religious affiliation. At present each community observes its own personal laws in the areas of matrimony, divorce, maintenance and succession.²

However, in this campaign the BJP had to downplay its traditional preoccupations in exchange for electoral alliances with regional parties which do not share its *Hindutva* agenda and in a transparent bid for greater respectability among the influential non-*Hindutva* sections of the middle and upper classes.

The refrain from the BJP was the dual slogan of "stability and good government". It was well received across the country by a population fed up with the instability associated with coalition governments at the Centre and the financial scandals that are associated with all parties excepting the BJP and the Left.

Not-so-United Front

The incumbent United Front, an alliance of the bourgeois centrist *Janata Dal* (JD), regional parties and the Left Front, survived in office for nineteen months,³ implementing the economic programme of its Congress (I) predecessor. Its parliamentary strength was halved from 180 to 98 seats and splits in the JD, the core of the alliance, have reduced it to a rump and insignificant force.

The United Front had been floated as a

centre-left alliance of "secular and democratic" parties to keep out of government both the corrupt Congress (I) and the communal BJP after the 1996 election. Its largest constituent is now the Communist Party of India (M) with 32 seats, while the other Left Front partners have 16 seats between them, mainly in West Bengal and Kerala.

When it became clear that the BJP would be the only beneficiary of an unnecessary and unpopular election, the CPI (M) leadership, which had resisted tremendous pressure to formally join the United Front government but instead "supported from outside", dropped clear hints that it would rather support Congress than let the BJP into office. This represented a change in the previous CPI (M) policy of equal treatment for the BJP and Congress.

At the same time, Jyoti Basu, Communist Chief Minister of West Bengal, was touting himself as the future Prime Minister of a United Front coalition government. He had narrowly missed that opportunity in 1996 when the CPI (M) Politburo rejected by a single vote his nomination for that post. Basu himself has described that decision as a "historic blunder". After twenty unbroken years at the helm of a state government, he clearly yearns to end his political career as the country's prime minister.

Congress in crisis

The Congress will be pleased that it has lost only one seat in the new parliament though its share of the vote remains on a downward trend falling to 25.4%. This is a much better than expected result for a party whose factions are openly hostile to each other and which has split into smaller parties on several occasions in the 1990s. Prior to the election campaign, pundits were predicting its imminent demise as there was a steady flow of defections from all levels of the party, primarily in the direction of the BJP.

This haemorrhaging was stopped and party morale improved when Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, entered the electoral fray as the Congress Party's star campaigner. While she drew huge crowds of the curious, her impact seems to have been greater on Congress itself than on the Indian people. She also became the object of the most intense and tedious debates in a lack-lustre election campaign – on whether a 'foreigner' should be allowed to become Prime Minister in the event of a Congress victory.

Meanwhile, CPI (M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet, appealed to Congress supporters not to desert their party and welcomed Sonia Gandhi's involvement to salvage its sinking fortunes, in



an attempt to reduce the steady erosion of the traditional Congress electorate into the BJP fold and to prevent the *Hindutva* party from winning an outright victory.

The desperation of the Congress to cash in on what remains of the inherited lustre of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty led it to withdraw support for the minority United Front government unless it threw out one of its key partners the DMK (which currently also heads the government in the southern state of Tamil Nadu). The UF refused and Congress, whose previous threats had forced the UF to change prime ministers, was backed into a corner with no face-saving exit but to carry out its ultimatum.

This was a foolish and clumsy attempt to confirm its fealty to the Gandhi family, when the report of the Jain Commission (to investigate the security lapses that allowed Rajiv Gandhi to be killed in 1991) blamed the DMK for sheltering and supporting his assassins, the Sri Lankan Tamil LTTE. Considering that it was the policy of both Central and Tamil Nadu state governments to shelter, train, arm and finance the LTTE and other militant groups, this was an easy evasion of broader issues involving India's entanglement in Sri Lanka.

BJP's unstable alliances

The BJP's most important regional ally is the main opposition party in Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK, with its coterie of smaller parties. In return for its support at the centre to the BJP, the AIADMK leader and former film star J. Jayalalitha demanded and received the Law and Justice cabinet portfolio for her partyman. This demand is not unrelated to the 48 separate charges of corruption pending against her from her time as Tamil Nadu chief minister.

Jayalalitha had become notorious for her egotistical and regal manner of government, symbolised by the building-sized cardboard cut-outs of her that towered over her subjects as she lavishly spent their money on her cronies. She has also demanded that the BJP invoke Article 356 of the Indian Constitution, to dismiss the incumbent DMK led government.

There are several ironies to this episode. One of the key historic grievances of regional governments, particularly in south India, has been the manipulation of this Constitutional provision to interfere with opposition-led state governments. Moreover the BJP stood on an anti-corrup-

and stability platform and is deeply compromised by its present association with Jayalalitha, a fickle partner who may desert the alliance when it has outlived its usefulness to her, bringing down the government with her departure.

Hindutva Lite

In general, it remains to be seen whether the BJP's alliances with and concessions to various regional formations are part of a short-term tactical adaptation of the party's traditionally centralist, hard nationalist BJP-take-all strategy. Or if, rather, we are seeing the emergence of a longer-term ruling alliance in which a "Hindutva Lite" BJP-led government at the centre consistently wins the support of non-Hindutva regional forces in exchange for accelerated deregulation and decentralisation of the economy and ruling structures.

As it stands, in recent years the gap between rich and poor regions has grown considerably. Mumbai (Bombay) and the surrounding area, Ahmadabad (central Gujarat) and "India's Silicon Valley" in Bangalore (the capital of the southern state of Karnataka), for example, have all been booming over the last decade and attracted a large share of domestic and foreign private investment. Regional elites here and elsewhere in the country have been in a scramble to cash in on the deregulation-globalisation bonanza, pulling the traditionally highly centralised country in every which way.

In any event, in the arena of economic policy there may be a change of emphasis but there will be no change of direction. On the campaign trail the slogan of *swadeshi* (nationalism) with its clear implication of favouring Indian over foreign capital was the main distinguishing feature between the BJP and the other parties. However, the BJP is unlikely to alter the general thrust of the neo-liberal policies which ended the Nehruvian centralised-dirigiste model.

Capitalists not threatened

The fraction of the Indian capitalist class which supports the BJP favours greater deregulation of the internal economy through the scrapping of the "license-permit-quota empire" of state controls where it can gain entry into those sectors and opposes transnational investment in those sectors where a foreign presence could pose a competitive threat. The BJP has long been in favour of "liberalisation" (of the domestic economy) while opposing "globalisation" (the opening up of the country to the world market).

However, the new Finance Minister has insisted that transnationals have nothing to fear from the BJP. Senior party leader Murli Manohar Joshi claimed after the election that his party was not against globalisation. Rather, he said, it supported greater Indian integration into the world market, provided it was on more equal terms and preceded, first, by liberalisation

of the domestic economy and, second, by modernisation of the agricultural and small scale sector.⁴

The ideologues of neo-liberalism and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank will exert pressure on the new government to dispense with the populist schemes that it must retain in however diluted a form to ensure its return at the next election. It will be particularly difficult for the BJP to swallow this policy turn and win acceptance for it, given that the new government may not last a full term.

The pro-business magazine *India Today* was categorical on what the BJP's economic priorities ought to be. In addition to whole-scale privatisation beginning with public utilities like water, it also recommended, "getting rid of the fertiliser subsidy; [to] reduce and re-orient food subsidies, [and] open up the insurance sector [to foreign companies]."⁵

A spate of 200 suicides among cotton farmers in Andhra Pradesh – who took their own lives rather than face the consequences of bankruptcy from rising fertiliser prices and disappointing harvests – are grim portents of the impact on the poor of such prescriptions.

The legacy of economic liberalisation bequeathed by Congress in the 1980s to its successors is an enormous external debt which quadrupled from under US\$20 billion in 1980 to \$82 billion ten years

later, and a gross imbalance in the nature of foreign investment flows. According to the Reserve Bank of India, short-term portfolio investment outstrips productive investment by a ratio of three to one.⁶

This affair with speculative capital, its obvious seductions aside, is a fragile relationship, as East and South-East Asian economies found out to their continuing cost last year. ★

Notes:

1 Sumit Sarkar, "The Fascism of the Sangh Parivar", *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai) January 30 1993, pp. 163 - 167; Aijaz Ahmad, "On the Ruins of Ayodhya" in *Lineages of the Present* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1996). For an alternative view see Achin Vanaik, "Situating Threat of Hindu Nationalism: Problems with the Fascist Paradigm", *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 9 1994, pp. 1729 - 1748. This is reprinted as chapter five in Vanaik's important new book, *The Furies of Indian Communalism* (London: Verso, 1997).

2 While a Uniform Civil Code would be a step forward for gender justice, it is necessary to separate the BJP's agenda from the slogan. The BJP is not noted for its pro-feminist politics and is using this issue as another stick to beat the Muslim community with, as their laws are less favourable to Muslim women than the Hindu Code is to Hindu women. In view of the communally-charged context of this demand, the precise strategy to achieve legal equality for all women irrespective of religious affiliation has been a source of debate in the Indian feminist movement. See A. R. Desai (ed.) *Women's Liberation and Politics of Religious Personal Laws in India*, (Bombay, C. G. Shah Memorial Trust Publication, 1990).

3 Kunal Chattopadhyay and R. Prajapati, "Elections intensify India's instability", *International Viewpoint* #279 July 1996 pp. 25 - 28.

4 "Liberalise, modernise and then globalise, says BJP", *The Asian Age* (Delhi), 10 March 1998, p. 1.

5 "An Agenda for Change", *India Today* (New Delhi), March 16 1998, p. 22.

6 Cited in C. T. Kurien, *Economic Reforms and The People*, (Delhi: Madhyam Books, 1996), p. 25.

The resistable rise of the BJP

B. Skanthakumar and Raghu Krishnan

Given the size and diversity of India, it is remarkable that the Congress Party should have been able to remain solidly entrenched as the natural party of government in India (in conditions of universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy) for as long as it did: from Independence in 1947 until the late 1970s, and off and on through the 1980s and 1990s.

Equally remarkable has been the meteoric rise in the fortunes of the Hindu right wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from its humble beginnings in the late 1970s until now.

The rise of the BJP is a significant break with the Congress tradition associated with Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. Though in general Congress has left a rather contradictory legacy. Sadly, the progressive part of this legacy – emerging from the mass, multi-class and national anti-colonial movement that it led from the 1920s through the heyday of Third Worldism and non-alignment in the 1950s and 60s – has largely disappeared from mainstream political life.

The BJP has taken the worst surviving parts of the Congress legacy and radicalised them within the framework of an aggressive Hindu communalism, rooting it-



self in the aspirations of the increasingly self-confident, aggressive and "modern" Hindu intermediate and upper castes.¹

The BJP was founded in 1980 from a fragment in the non-Congress government that held office between 1977 and 1980. In 1984 it had only two seats in the *Lok Sabha* and was regarded as a fringe party and a political appendage of the rabidly Hindu communalist militia-type organisation, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), and latterly the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP).² Yet by 1991 it was the main parliamentary opposition party.

A distinguishing feature of the BJP is its combination of parliamentary politics with extra-parliamentary mobilisation.

★ India

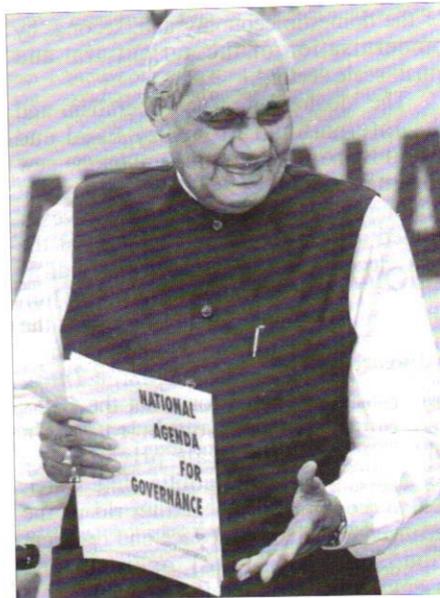
This is also a source of tension within that party and between it and its non-electoral allies like the RSS and VHP who lately feel that it is soft-peddalling its ideological positions for political pragmatism.

Its political campaigns are suffused with Hindu iconography, references to religious mythology and the invocation of a mythical glorious past which ended with the Muslim "invasions" and the consolidation of their rule over India.³

However it is false to describe the BJP as "Hindu fundamentalist" or "Hindu revivalist" as some commentators do, as if it were some throwback to an obscurantist past. Its project of a Hindu *rashtra* (nation) in which Hindu is equated with India is a "radically modern" enterprise, "the nation, in India as much as in Italy, is a thing without a past... It can only look for subterfuges of antiquity... As a proposal for modern living, on a scale quite unprecedented..., in a society still knowing only one legitimising criterion – tradition – it must seek to find past disguises for these wholly modern proposals."⁴

A narrow social base

The social base of the BJP had historically been quite narrow. Its core support was overwhelmingly North Indian, particularly from the Hindi-speaking states. They comprise rural upper caste Hindus who had shifted from Congress antagoni-



BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee is expected to become Prime Minister in a communalist-led government.

sed by the changes in the agrarian economy which undermined their dominance; and the urban petty bourgeoisie who resented the privileged relations of patronage and protection between Congress and the big industrial houses, impeding their own progress.

Recognising the electoral imperative of broadening its constituency to the lower castes, *dalits* ("untouchables") and *adivasis* ("tribals") who comprise the majority of Indians, the BJP began to portray itself as the party of and for all Hindus, irrespective of caste origin.

The discriminatory treatment of lower castes, their impoverished existence and the social taboos which remain rife were rejected as recent corruptions of Hinduism. In its place a homogenised Hindu identity was articulated, albeit in the image of the patriarchal upper caste Hindu and his rituals and life-style.

Winning acceptance for such an homogenised identity is no simple task. The divisions of caste, class, language and region and the loyalties that these engender – often cutting across religious differences – are an ever present obstacle to the consolidation of a national "Hindu" identity.

Indeed, one of the positive legacies of the Congress golden era (until the early 1970s) is the real upward social mobility and heightened political consciousness of significant layers of the country's lower and intermediate castes, and tribal peoples. Similarly, regional languages have often flourished.

In 1989 and 1990, there was a tide of resentment from the upper castes spilling over into violence and self-immolation when the newly elected centre-left government announced it would implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations, and reserve 40,000 jobs in national and state government and public sector institutions for "other backward castes".

The BJP was the only mainstream party to openly oppose this policy of affirmative action. Not surprisingly, it made further inroads among the Hindu upper castes. However, in order to deflect attention from its upper caste bias, it sought to close Hindu ranks under its leadership through an aggressive campaign against the perceived favouritism of the State towards the Muslim minority.

The Muslim "Other"

The BJP has sought to forge unity among Hindus by demonising the Muslim "Other". It followed its anti-Mandal campaign with a nation-wide effort in late 1990 to collect bricks for the building of a Hindu temple at Ayodhya, birthplace of the mythical god-king Ram, in the place of a 16th century mosque. The campaign brought down the centre-left government of V. P. Singh – which probably represented the last chance for the semblance of a left-leaning, secular outcome to the collapse of Congress rule.

The Muslim community in India accounts for 12% of the population (115 million people). It is disproportionately made up of urban poor, owners and workers in small and medium-sized craft enterprises, and landless labourers. This often places Muslim in direct class conflict and competition with certain intermediate and upper layers of the Hindu community.

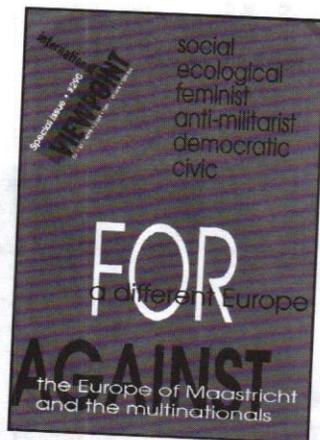
In the face of *Hindutva* anti-Muslim hatred, captivated by the enrichment of Indian Muslim migrant workers in the Gulf, haunted by the lost grandeur of the Mughal period in pre-colonial times – and influenced by developments elsewhere in the Islamic world – Indian Muslims have seen a symmetrical rise of communalist tendencies within their ranks.

What are the immediate dangers of a BJP government? First, tensions are sure to increase with neighbouring Pakistan as the BJP flexes India's diplomatic muscles over such sensitive questions as Kashmir and India's nuclear weapons capacity. On the nuclear question, the BJP merely occupies the right-wing of an overall national consensus around Indian refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It would be very wrong to underestimate the dangers of renewed tension between India and Pakistan, following a period of relative détente ushered in by the United Front government from 1996 onward.

Second, the formation of a sturdy BJP government will be seen as a major victory by the mobilised, violently communalist sections of the *Hindutva* family; and as a defeat by the minority communities and anti-communalist sectors.

Expect more violence

Due to the complicated and contradictory nature of the alliances the BJP has made to form the new government, its ability to introduce extreme and controversial parts of its programme will clearly be



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Sooner or later...



The longer Korea's IMF-imposed "reform process" goes on, the greater the chances of a worker revolt .

Terry Lawless

During the late 1970s, the economy of South Korea grew rapidly. Particularly in comparison with the G-7 countries, which had been experiencing low rates of growth since the world recession of 1974-75. At about this time, the economies of non-capitalist countries like the Soviet Union, East Germany and North Korea were also beginning to experience long-term difficulties.

For the first time since the Russian Revolution, it appeared that there was a capitalist alternative to socialist revolution for the people of the so-called Third World. American publications like *Newsweek* and *Time* began to publish articles lauding the "Miracle on the Han River", extolling the virtues of a non-unionised hard working pro-family people who chose to put up with dictatorship because of their Confucian values, their desire for money over freedom and their strong company spirit. The general tone of the commentary implied that it was the disappearance of similar virtues, rather than the long term tendency of the rate of profit to fall, which had caused the economic slowdown in the West. The terms, "Newly Industrialised Country" and "Asian Tigers" spread rapidly.

This "miracle", was in reality the extension of the third wave of technological growth to regions previously unaffected by it. From the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s, Japan, North America and Western Europe had witnessed an unprecedented level of economic expansion: the growth of the service sector; the mass

production of cars and electronic goods for the home such as televisions, refrigerators, telephones, washing machines and stereo systems; the appearance of transatlantic and later global air travel; the advent of vast container ships to move commodities rapidly around the world and so on.

With the inevitable slowdown in production attendant upon the realisation of this new infrastructure, large amounts of capital, in the form of money seeking high interest, were suddenly released for use elsewhere. It was this finance capital, whose size and influence in the world economy has since grown exponentially, that was used to fuel the economic growth of selected regions in Southeast Asia that were seen as basically immune to communism. Places like South Korea.

As the long economic boom continued into the 1980s, however, South Korea began to experience problems common to the leading capitalist countries: an increasingly restless student movement; the emergence of worker protest and union organisation, including that of low-waged women workers; the questioning of an authoritarian and inhuman work ethic; and the sudden interest of students and workers in dissident and socialist literature.

The "Great Struggle"

During the 1980s, many dissident Korean intellectuals, inspired by revolutionary socialist theory, left their middle class jobs as teachers, professors and journalists in order to enter the main industrial workplaces of the newly industrialised Korea. They were convinced that the working class had to be mobilised if the pressure brought to bear upon the dictatorship by Korea's militant student movement was to be successful.

This proved to be a correct assessment of the political situation. An unprecedented wave of worker protest in 1987 was enough to convince even the wavering middle class that the days of bourgeois dictatorship were numbered.

The presence of large numbers of office workers and "salary men" on the streets of Seoul during the course of the 1987 Great Struggle to remove the military dictator, Chun Doo-hwan, confused many historians into thinking that it was the middle class who were responsible for the change.

But the "Necktie Revolution" actually confirmed Leon Trotsky's observation that, in moments of crisis, the middle classes can follow either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, whichever shows the most courage, intelligence and vision. The "salarymen" could see that the workers and students, rather than the military and the *chaebol* owners, were the best

dered. Pressure "from below", however, might well combine with tacit support "from above" to unleash a new wave of anti-Muslim violence on the ground.

In December 1992 when the mosque at Ayodhya was destroyed by the thugs of the BJP, RSS and VHP, India was plunged into the worst communal violence since partition in 1947 – Muslims were killed and their homes destroyed.⁵

The events in Ayodhya, and the riots in Mumbai (Bombay), provide a flavour of what could well occur in the near future. Yet it was only these most visible actions of the *Hindutva* forces that scandalised a middle class that identified with the BJP and financed and supported it. But there has been no such reaction from the middle class to the daily toll that is wreaked by their vicious propaganda and thuggery.

"Innocents can be arrested and victimised for being Bangladeshi immigrants in the eyes of the BJP but this is acceptable as long as it remains confined to the borders of Bihar.

"Hundreds can be arrested under TADA [anti-terrorism legislation] under false cases but this is fine so long as it is confined to the ghettos of Mumbai.

"Villages can be terrorised with able bodied men locked away under the [National Security Act], but who cares so long as this happens in the remote villages of Uttar Pradesh.

"Women can be gang raped in Surat [Gujarat] but this is fun for the middle class which entertains itself with video films of the horrific scenes.

"As for the [BJP's] statements and anti-minority assertions, well that is all part of the game. After all statements do not hurt. They only create an environment that hurts, but then that is beyond middle class comprehension."⁶

When combined with the storm clouds gathering over India's economy, another such wave of violence and communalist mobilisation (of the kind that brought down the centre-left V. P. Singh government in 1990) could pave the way for further regime crises and a new round of electoral gains for the BJP. This is the scenario described by an important section of the *Hindutva* family itself, who see the latest election as just another forward step on the long march to unencumbered BJP-Hindutva rule. ★

Notes:

1 The continuities and discontinuities with Congress are examined in Ananya Mukherjee-Reed, "The State as Charade: Political Mobilisation in Today's India", L. Panitch (ed.) *Socialist Register 1997* (London: Merlin 1997).

2 Tapan Basu, P. Datta et al., *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993).

3 Praful Bidwai, H. Mukhia and A. Vanaik (eds.), *Religion, Religiosity and Communalism* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996).

4 Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Imaginary Institution of India", P. Chatterjee and G. Pandey (eds.) *Subaltern Studies VII* (Delhi: OUP, 1992), p. 13.

5 Raghu Krishnan, "The Tragedy at Ayodhya", *International Viewpoint* #241 December 21 1992 p. 4.

6 Seema Mustafa, "How long before the mask is off, Mr. Vajpayee?" *The Asian Age* (Delhi), 21 March 1998, p. 8.

★ South Korea

possibility for Korea's future political development — and so they joined with them.

The dramatic political changes in Korea over the last ten years represent the working out at the political level of the new balance of class forces established during the Great Struggle of 1987. The system of one-party military rule has been replaced by an unstable system of bourgeois election machines, typically centred on a prominent politician, usually drawing their electoral power from one particular region in Korea. Direct presidential elections led first to the election of Chun Doo-hwan's classmate, Rho Tae-woo, in 1987, and then in 1992 to the compromised bourgeois dissident candidate, Kim Young-sam.

Since the Great Struggle, there has also been a steady and increasingly coherent attempt to organise a labour party based on the unions. Though the movement for a labour party is still a very small force on the Korean political scene. Union membership has stabilised at about 12%, concentrated in heavy and large-scale industry such as ship building, car manufacturing, steel and semiconductor production.

In 1995, a mass split in the state-sanctioned and Cold War-initiated Korean Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) led to the formation of the militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Total membership in the two organisations is about one million workers, just over half organised by the KFTU.

The core leadership of the KCTU traces its origins to the beginnings of the Great Struggle, when dissident middle class intellectuals began to lend workers their support in helping to organise independent union activity. KCTU leader Kwon Young-gil, a presidential candidate for the People's Victory 21 Party in 1997, is a former journalist and a graduate of the prestigious Seoul National University, who threw in his lot with the workers during the course of the 1980s.

Globalisation and its discontents

In 1992, Kim Young-sam became President; and announced a campaign of "globalisation" which culminated in South Korea's admission to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in December 1996.

Membership in the OECD was deemed necessary in order to help with the financing of the increasingly money-hungry *chaebols*, South Korean corporations like Hyundai, Samsung, Daewoo and Lucky Goldstar (LG), which had grown rapidly over the last twenty-five years. They had done so by taking huge short-term loans to finance massive investments. Thanks to the long economic boom across Southeast Asia, they were able to expand productivity and profitability quickly enough to pay back these loans, and take out ever larger ones. Major banks of Europe, North America and Japan could not resist.

The limits to this success should have been clear, at least to anyone familiar with Ernest Mandel's theory of long waves of capitalist development. As the region began to reach comparable levels of technological infrastructure with the G-7 countries, the profit margins of the *chaebols* began to decline significantly.

Kim Young-sam's globalisation strategy was a short-term attempt to compensate for a saturated home market and falling profit margins. By opening the economy, he hoped to launch the *chaebols* on



a course of international investment and production where they would be free to take advantage of cheaper labour costs and investment incentives in other countries.

But the problem was that overproduction on a global scale eventually forced down the prices of key commodities. Korea's general crisis of overproduction did not simply endanger, but actually short-circuited the whole economic strategy of the *chaebols*.

Why the Unions fought back...

In the early 1990s, some economists began to argue that major economic restructuring was necessary if Korea was to continue competing for a slice of the global economic pie. They called for the dismantling of large parts of former president Park Chung-hee's Japanese-style Yushin system — government support to key corporations, fixed exchange rates, market protectionism and lifetime employment. The Yushin system had enabled Korea to benefit disproportionately from Southeast Asia's long economic boom — but it seemed outdated.

Part of the reason for this shift in government opinion was the result of the recruitment of a generation of younger economists educated at US institutes like the neoliberal Harvard Business School in contrast with the immediate post-Korean War bureaucrats of the military dictatorship, who had received their education in Japan.

But the main reason was surely that there are virtually no credible bourgeois voices arguing against the ideology of neoliberalism. The world-view of financial investors and the international corporations completely dominates the boardrooms of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and the annual meetings of the G-7 club — not to mention the mass

media and many people's political consciousness.

Despite its new-found enthusiasm for neoliberal solutions to economic questions, the Kim Young-sam regime took a leaf out of the pages of Park Chung-hee's decidedly non-neoliberal book when it decided to pass a whole series of controversial legislation in a secret twelve minute session of the National Assembly in late December 1996.

The following day, the unions launched the biggest General Strike in Korean history. Between five hundred thousand and one million workers were involved in the dispute at some point or other. Their primary objective was to prevent the passage of legislation which would allow for mass layoffs, to facilitate corporate restructuring. The strike was the result of the first ever joint strike call of the Korean Federation of Trade Unions and the still-outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

This General Strike was only partially successful. Though the government of Kim Young-sam permanently shelved its plans for mass lay-offs, the actual strength of the final mobilisation was far less than the union organisations had hoped for. It was this realisation which made the unions return to negotiate with the government.

The unions won some concessions, including the legalisation of the KCTU, effectively bringing Korea into line with the guidelines of the International Labour Organisation and the practices of the G-7 countries.

From a bourgeois point of view, this failure to force through the bill for mass layoffs was a disaster. The economic crisis, foreshadowed in the dramatic fall in the price of semiconductors and the global slowdown in steel demand in 1996, was growing more serious from month to month. In January, Hanbo Steel declared bankruptcy; in August, Kia Motors did the same; in November, it was the turn of the Halla Corporation. Each of the failed *chaebols* went under with absolutely massive amounts of debt, regularly between sixteen and twenty times their net assets.

...but then gave in

The two main trade union organisations had continually threatened a second general strike if the National Assembly tried to re-introduce the lay-off bill. But in January 1998, both organisations agreed to participate in three-way talks involving the unions, business and government. One of the stated purposes of these talks was to finalise the lay-off bill.

This climb-down reflects the collapse of self-confidence of most ordinary Koreans. The political situation had been transformed by the traumatising effects of the IMF bailout itself. Before their very eyes, Koreans saw their economic miracle evaporate. Average income was cut in half in a couple of months, as the US\$ exchange rate slid from 880 to 2,000 won. In August 1997, average income was about

US\$10,000; by December it was closer to \$5,000 — a level most workers thought had been surpassed, forever, ten years previously.

The presidential election in December 1997 could not have come at a worst time for the working class. Tragically, all of the simmering anger that had been building up against the Kim Young-sam regime was channelled into the defeat of the ruling party. The dissident past of the successful opposition candidate, Kim Dae-jung, gave him much greater credibility than the vacillating incumbent. And support for Kim Dae-jung was particularly strong in those regions in Korea which had most strenuously carried the banner of democracy against the successive military dictatorships. What better candidate to stabilise the situation?

The poor showing of the KCTU-supported People's Victory 21 candidate, Kwon Young-gil, who took around 1% of the popular vote, was a clear indication of the real level of political class consciousness among Korean workers. Only in Ulsan, South Kyongsang Province, one of the biggest company towns in the world, where the KCTU is very strong, did Kwon Young-gil do even moderately well, taking 6% of the vote.

Even here, a majority of the workers voted for the ruling party candidate, Lee Hoi-chang. Because of regional prejudices, they preferred the local supporters of the traditional party of military dictatorship over the Cholla-born Kim Dae-jung.

In Kwangju, Cholla, an astonishing 97% of the voters gave their support to Kim Dae-jung; and a huge crowd gathered in the streets to celebrate the victory of "their boy."

A majority of students also voted for Kim Dae-jung. Hanchongryon, the Korean Federation of Students, which is dominated by a pro-North Korean tendency, supported the bourgeois dissident as part of their two-stage theory for socialist revolution in South Korea.

National sense of shame

Kim Dae-jung quickly agreed to respect the \$57 million IMF loan agreement worked out in early December. This marked the beginnings of a massive campaign for frugality and economic recovery, drawing on the Korean traditions of anti-imperialism and bourgeois nationalism and even the memory of the Seoul Olympics.

This campaign has achieved widespread popularity. There is a genuine sense of national shame in Korea. The sense of pride at national achievement, which had begun to overcome the lack of confidence induced by years of Japanese colonialism, and national division since the Korean war, has been badly damaged. There is even an undertone of fear that what is happening today amounts to the imposition of a new colonialism, orchestrated by the US and Japan.

For now, the Korean bourgeoisie is able to exploit these feelings, by urging self-restraint, hard work and a willingness

to follow leaders blindly. These feelings cannot and will not last, but for now they place immense obstacles in the way of independent working class political action.

On February 7 1998, the tripartite negotiations ended with the union representatives supporting the introduction of lay-offs. In return, the unions won a number of concessions. Under the revised agreement, companies can only lay off workers when they face "emergency situations" such as financial trouble or in the event of mergers or acquisitions. The agreement also calls for management to give workers 60 days' notice and notify the Labour Ministry before dismissing workers. Employers are also requested to try to re-hire dismissed workers if business improves. Trade unions will now have the right to engage in political activities. Teachers will be allowed to form unions from July 1999, a concession which gives de facto recognition to the formerly outlawed National Teachers and Educational Workers Union, Chongyojo. Public officials will also be allowed to form a "consultative body" in 1999. And the unemployment insurance fund will be set at 5 billion won, (US\$1 = 1,570 won) covering about 23% of the endangered workforce.

The panel decided to put off discussions on whether employers should pay the wages of employees employed on union business on a full-time basis. The tripartite panel is to become a permanent body, chaired by the President.

KCTU crisis

The biggest problem with this agreement, from the point of view of KCTU militants, was not so much the exact terms as the fact that the union leadership had signed up without first seeking the guidance of the wider KCTU membership. The following day, 67% of the 272 KCTU representatives voted to nullify the confederation's approval. They dissolved the leadership, and replaced it with a special emergency committee, headed by Tan Byong-ho, the leader of the Korean Federation of Metal Workers' Union.

Plans were made for a general strike beginning February 13. Not surprisingly, the IMF issued a warning that labour unrest would undermine investor confidence, leading to another round of currency flight and further bankruptcies. The KCTU then held an extraordinary eight hour meeting, and decided to call off the strike.

The union was not influenced by the threat of severe government reprisals, but rather by the feeling that the strike itself might not be widely supported. KCTU spokesperson, Chong Song-hi, said: "In consideration of the public's concern that the labour action would worsen the financial crisis, we have decided to cancel the strike."

To make matter worse, the KCTU continued to state that it would strike if the bill was actually passed by the National Assembly. But when that happened, on February 16th, the union did nothing.

The unions have suffered a major

defeat, in a context in which defeat was always the likelier outcome.

There is certainly the possibility of wild cat strikes, particularly on the part of workers who find themselves confronted by actual lay-offs or by management which fails to live up to the terms of the agreement. Resistance may well be effective, since the government is not so neoliberal as to stand by without intervening as companies go bankrupt. The Labour Ministry has already warned that unjustified mass lay-offs will be punished. The Kia corporation, for example, is now under government protection while a new owner is being sought.

Militancy or moderation?

Nevertheless, the prospects for militant action are limited. Until a new mood of resentment and bitterness sets in among the workers and small business people against what is actually happening in Korea, rather than what neoliberal ideologists insist ought to be happening, militant unionists will find only a small audience for their ideas. One outlet, however, will be the chance to run labour candidates in the June 4th municipal and city mayoral elections in labour towns like Ulsan and Taejon.

When militancy among Korean workers re-emerges, it will have to confront the typical problems faced by the union movement in the most industrialised countries: a high unemployment rate, particularly among youth and students; the shattering effects of job loss and dislocation, particularly on older workers; and a reduced capacity for long-term fight-back among layers of less class-conscious workers.

But there will also be greater freedom for political action, including, for the first time, among teachers and possibly the lower ranks of government workers.

There has been a further decline in the credibility and power of the Agency for National Security and Planning (the Korean CIA), as revelations about its blatantly anti-democratic practices become more widely diffused among the population.

There is also greater disaffection among youth and students about capitalism and bourgeois progress.

All this even raises the possibility of a split between those progressive Koreans who continue to support Kim Dae-jung and those who break with him.

This could lead to the emergence of a mass-based labour party; and perhaps even the ending of the monopoly of the co-opted Stalinist leadership in the student movement: one manifestation of the political compromise that President Kim represents.

There is a faint chance that labour struggles could erupt in the coming weeks, with the traditional spring negotiation of new contracts. But it is more likely that the re-commencement of class struggle will take place toward the end of the one year grace period requested by President Kim Dae-jung after his election victory last December. ★

Squatters? Urban pioneers!

Up to 1/4 of Asia's urban population are squatters. They occupy the worst land, and often lack even basic amenities like water, sewage and public transport.

But rather than seeing squatters as powerless, Malaysia's Urban Pioneers Support Committee helps them fight back against government and private developers.

Syed Husin Ali*

In Malaysia, some squatter settlements are as old as the cities themselves. In Kuala Lumpur, the capital, many squatter sites have existed for more than a hundred years.

When Kuala Lumpur grew after becoming the country's administrative capital and commercial centre, it attracted migrants from country areas, and also from Indonesia, India and China. Some of the earliest squatter settlements were created by Indonesian migrants.

After World War II, and particularly after Independence in 1957, administrative, commercial and industrial development attracted more people from the outlying areas to the capital, and other fast growing cities like Penang, Ipoh, Johor Bahru, Kuantan and Kota Bharu.

And following the bloody inter-ethnic conflicts in Kuala Lumpur in 1969, the government began encouraging rural Malays to migrate to urban areas, to achieve ethnic balance in the population of the big cities at that time dominated mainly by Chinese and Indians.

Distribution of squatters

The majority of these rural-urban migrants were encouraged to settle in existing squatter settlements or to open new ones. Most of the land they occupied belonged to government, but there were also those that were owned by private individuals or companies.

The squatters formed local branches of the ruling parties, were protected by these parties, and provided with facilities like water, electricity, health and education. In other words, they were recognised, with almost legal status.

Owing to this and the major role that they have played in developing the cities, they are now often being referred to as "urban pioneers". This term has been popularised by social activists concerned with squatter issues and the squatters themselves since 1990, and is preferred to the term "squatters", which carries illegal connotations. We see urban pioneers as



licensees, with an equity stake and right of possession on the land they occupy.

There are no reliable statistics regarding the squatter population and its distribution in the country. Estimates have varied from one to two million, i.e. 5-10% of Malaysia's 20 million inhabitants. As in other countries, squatters are concentrated in the capital (which has about 1.5 million residents) and other major towns.

Roots of Eviction

The process of house demolition and squatter eviction has been taking place for a long time. Following the inter-ethnic carnage in 1969 the government used emergency powers, evicted thousands of squatters – mostly of Chinese origin – from the centre of Kuala Lumpur. This enabled them to widen one of the main roads, and construct a modern commercial and administrative centre. Some of the squatters were relocated to low cost flats provided by City Hall, while others built or rented houses elsewhere, including in some old or new squatter settlements.

In 1974, following the national election, a squatter community in Tasik Utara (Johor Bahru state), which was a stronghold of the ruling party, was evicted to make way for the construction of a golf course. The squatters were relocated to a temporary housing scheme in Tampoi, where they are still living. This area is now going to be cleared for a new housing development scheme, and there is an ongoing court case to settle the demand of these people for terrace houses. This eviction created history because the squatters received good support from students of the University of Malaya, who carried out a series of demonstrations culminating in the take-over of the campus.

When Prime Minister Mahathir

Mohamad came to power in 1981, the focus of development shifted from rural to urban areas. Infrastructure, office, housing and industrial developments have led to a land shortage, and a dramatic increase in land prices. Some government land occupied by squatters was sold to private developers. As soon as these new owners were ready to build, they were determined to evict the squatters.

In the 1990s, moves to clear squatter areas became more active. The Kuala Lumpur City Hall and the Selangor state government have committed themselves to clearing existing squatter settlements by the year 2002, something they realise is not possible to achieve. Further, in anticipation of the Commonwealth Games later this year, the Federal and Selangor state governments have been feverishly carrying out projects to beautify and upgrade the capital. New hotels and luxury apartments have been built, to say nothing of the Petronas twin towers, the tallest building in the world. Roads have been widened, and new tracks have been constructed for commuter trains.

Kuala Lumpur will have a new International Airport, and the Putrajaya project will create a new administrative capital. These, together with the Cyber City office project form part of Mahathir's ambitious Multi-media Super Corridor, which it is hoped will enable Malaysia to shift its economy towards high-tech sectors.

These projects will cost more than 80 billion ringgit (US\$21bn.) Yet there is not enough money for low cost housing, especially for the lower income groups. Indeed, all these costly projects have resulted in eviction of increasing numbers of "squatters", many of whom face great difficulty in finding alternative land or houses.

No-one is saying that development as such is undesirable and objectionable to the squatters. The question is: development for what and for whom? Monumental physical development driven by the profit motive tends to ignore and neglect the interests and welfare of that section of the population who are often adversely affected by it. Including the squatters.

Eviction

The government can evict squatters from land it owns by resorting to the 1965 Land Code or Clearance of Squatters Regulation of 1969. It can also evict squatters from land that is acquired through the 1961 Land Acquisition Act. Private owners can obtain a court order for the eviction of squatters on their land, after which relevant government departments and the police can be mobilised to enforce the decision.

But actual, physical eviction is only the last stage in the process. It is important to recognise, and intervene, in the early stages.

Persuasion

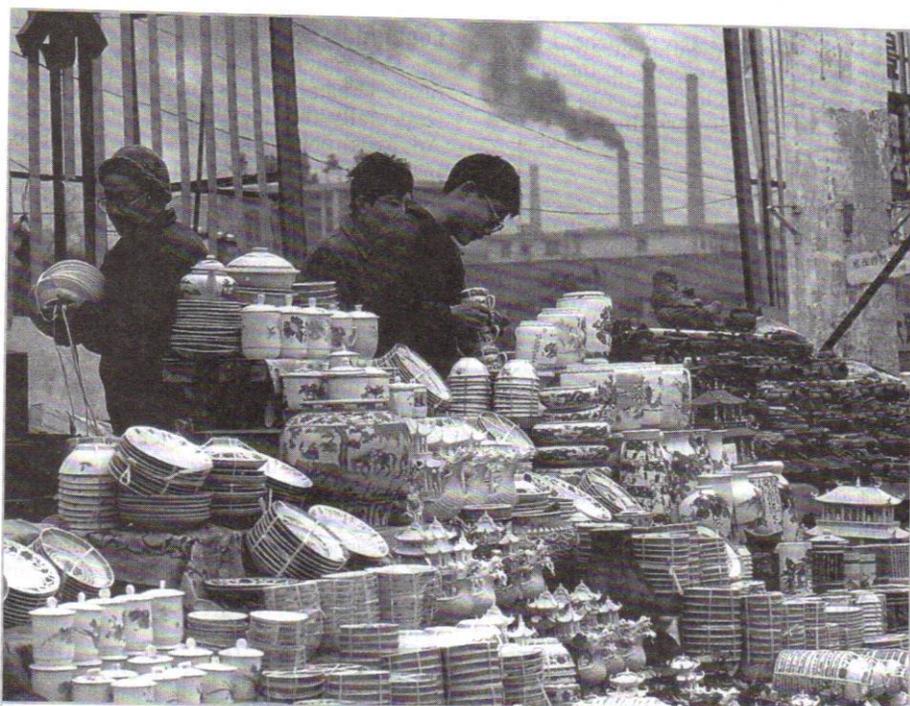
Community leaders, politicians and representatives of developers initially try to persuade squatters to leave by saying that they should be grateful for being allowed to occupy the land without payment for so many years. In some instances squatters have also been known to be persuaded that, being supporters of the ruling party and the Prime Minister, they should help the PM to realise his dream to develop the country;

Threats

Squatters are often threatened that if they do not move out of their free will, then all their property would be destroyed and that they would not be considered for compensation or for selection to purchase low cost houses. In addition there might be some local politicians or even special branch operatives who would come with threats that stubborn squatters could be arrested and detained without trial under the draconian Internal Security Act. In many known cases bouncers or gangsters have also been sent, not only to threaten but occasionally to inflict physical injuries on some squatters presumably "as a warning to stubborn ones";

Payment

Representatives from the developers often come to offer payment especially to recognised leaders in the squatter communities, to set the example by leaving on their own accord. The amount is often not disclosed to others. At the same time, some of these community leaders and also some local political leaders are paid to persuade the squatters to leave. In many cases they are known to be paid about RM1,000 for every household they manage to persuade to demolish their own houses and then leave; or sometimes they are awarded with free houses after successfully persuading squatters to leave. Some



Not so Green Times

China Green Times is an ambitious publication. Since January 1998, it has been campaigning to raise awareness of the country's terrifying ecological problems.

The destruction and pollution of China's environment has long been an acute problem. In July 1996, the *People's Daily* admitted that "environmental pollution is still expanding, from urban centres to the countryside. The scope of ecological destruction is also expanding, becoming a constraining factor affecting overall economic and social development."

A recent *World Bank Environmental Report* was more concrete. China's urban pollution is the worst in the world. Ten of the 20 most air-polluted cities in the world are in China.

Most cadres pay only lip service to the implementation of environmental legislation. The driving force behind economic reform is pursuit of immediate profits, at the expense of other concerns. One *People's Daily* reporter commented that, "as a result, more losses are incurred, and grave consequences are irreversible."

Water shortages

China faces three major water problems, according to Chen Zhongde of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The biggest problem is the lack of water in vast areas, especially in North and North-west China. Over half of China's cities lack water, and lost industrial output due to lack of water costs 100 billion renminbi (US\$12bn.) every year.

The second problem is flooding, which is increasingly frequent. Four major floods had occurred between 1991 and 1996, each incurring more

damages than the previous one. Direct economic loss in 1996 was RMB 200 billion, almost double the damage caused by the 1991 flood.

The third problem is the pollution of water. A growing part of China's limited water supplies are now undrinkable. An estimated 60% of water in the Yellow River basin has declined to the lowest categories 4 and 5. The amount of water in the river has declined almost every year since 1972. The level of undrinkable water in the Yangtze and Pearl River systems is lower (22-24%) but growing.

Reporter Chen Guidi toured 48 cities along the Huai River for 108 days, and reported that, of the 191 larger tributaries of the Huai River, 80% of the water had turned black and stinky; two-thirds of the river had totally lost any use value. The Water Works Bureau admits that the pollution of China's water resources is "very serious," with no appropriate control of sewage.

Most water pollution comes from factory wastes dumped into the river untreated. By the end of 1996, 50,000 factories had been closed down for this reason. But the damage was done.

Another serious ecological problem is the logging industry. Abusive wood-cutting destroys forests and causes soil erosion. This contributes to the siltation of rivers, which contributes to floods and droughts.

According to the Civil Affairs Ministry, in 1996 almost 300 million people were affected by floods and droughts, in 24 different provinces. [ZK] ★

Source: *October Review* Vol.25 Issue 1, 28 February 1998. PO Box 10144, Hong Kong <or@earthling.net>

★ Malaysia

police officers are also suspected to be under the pay of developers to threaten or coerce the squatters to leave or to stand on the side of developers during forced eviction;

Forced eviction

By adopting one or more of the above methods, many developers have succeeded in getting large number of squatters to leave. But some refuse to do so. When this happens, the developers obtain a court order. Armed with such an order, officers from the Land Office and other enforcement officers, with the support of big police contingents, arrive to evict these squatters. They use tractors to bring down the houses. On many occasions other property belonging to the squatters have been destroyed.

If there is any resistance from squatters by refusing to move out of their homes or trying to stop the demolition work, then the police personnel step in. They use water cannons and sometimes dogs to disperse the squatters. In a few cases, squatter areas, especially those which have been identified for clearance, have suddenly caught fire. Arson has been suspected. Force can easily be brought to bear on the squatters because they cannot resort to any law to protect them, simply because such laws do not exist.

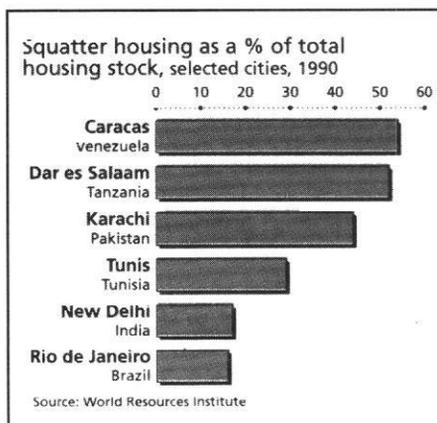
For most people, only these last actions are perceived as forced eviction. But they are only the culmination of the process. The earlier stages must be recognised as part and parcel of the forced eviction, and treated as such.

Resistance by squatters

Different squatter communities respond in different ways to attempts to evict them:

Action Committee

On receipt of notice to clear their settlement, affected squatters often form an Action Committee, and co-ordinate with the Urban Pioneers Support Committee (JSPB), which has been organised in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru by social activists and squatters themselves. The action committee arranges meetings of the squatters to discuss their strategies and to collect funds for contingencies.



Legal Aid

The Action Committee, with the help of the Urban Pioneers Support Committee (especially the lawyer who is one of its Advisors) obtains services of a lawyer to institute court action to stop any attempt to demolish the squatter homes. He/she or they will be retained for all legal purposes inside and outside court.

Resisting Demolition

When the enforcement team arrives to carry out demolition work, some squatters try to stop them, by forming barricades, while others (particularly women and children) remain in their houses to resist. During the confrontation between the squatters and the enforcement team, angry exchanges and intense discussions are often carried out to postpone demolition of the houses. Sometimes this succeeds, but most of the time the appeals of the squatters fall on deaf ears.

Meanwhile, through the Urban Pioneers Support Committee, other squatter communities and supportive NGOs are informed, and some of them come to join in the resistance. Members of opposition parties sometimes also come to give support.

The media are often informed by the Action Committee, Urban Pioneers Support Committee or other NGOs about any demolition attempt or arrests and trials of squatters. Sometimes, depending on what happens, media coverage is quite extensive.

Demonstrations

Particularly after demolition of their houses, many affected squatters, together with supporters from other communities or organisations, have held demonstrations, either in front of the developer's office, the Local Council and even the *Menteri Besar's* (Chief Minister) office, to protest against demolition and also to demand just treatment.

In connection with most of the demonstrations, the squatters movement has prepared written memorandums to be submitted to the authorities concerned. A 1995 Memorandum to the Prime Minister elaborated the main demands of the plantation workers and urban pioneers.

In November 1997, a second squatters' Memorandum registered protest against a government decision to quicken eviction procedures by asking the relevant department to cut water and electricity supply, and using the police and even military personnel. It reiterated the demands of squatters that forced eviction should be abolished, and that alternative land and houses, as well as adequate compensation, should be provided before any eviction takes place. It insisted that all conflicts should be settled by negotiation.

Another memorandum, submitted to the Minister of Housing, described in detail the problems of squatters, forced eviction, the poor conditions of the long houses and low cost houses, and the squatters' fundamental demands.

Not much lobby work has been carried out by the squatters through Parliament. Occasionally, they approach their members of Parliament to help them, although this has never proven to be useful. On two occasions, two separate communities went to Parliament during its sitting, in order to put forward their demands to its members, both in government and the opposition. But their efforts did not result in anything substantial.

Reports

After every demolition, reports have been made to the police regarding destruction of property, injury inflicted on squatters, unfair or one-sided police actions, etc. In cases of injury, the victims are often sent for medical examination. Reports have also been submitted by different communities to the Public Complaints Bureau and other government departments, regarding unjust actions by government servants whenever they occurred, before or during demolition, or any breach of the law, especially regarding public safety.

Squatters and their NGO supporters have also initiated a large number of court cases: There have been many court cases taken up by the squatters relating to stay orders, rights of possession and compensation. Some of these cases have been partially settled while others have dragged on almost endlessly. At the same time there have also been cases instituted by a small number of squatters against the police for allegedly injuring them.

And, obviously, squatters have had to defend themselves in cases instituted by developers against squatters for illegal occupation of land, and by the police for allegedly obstructing them from carrying out their duties, or even for allegedly causing injury.

Negotiations

The various ways by which squatters have resisted forced eviction have led to some developers negotiating. This is especially true wherever the squatters' resistance has shown itself to be prolonged and determined: refusing to move out, erecting and re-erecting sheds or tents after every demolition. Developers know that court cases are usually slow, and take a long time to arrive at conclusions. Delays in starting their development work cause heavy financial burdens on the developers, and so they often try to reach earlier settlement through negotiations.

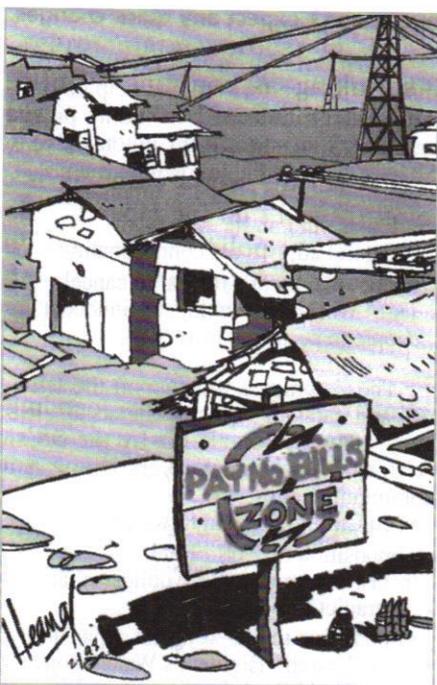
After eviction

During the last three years the Urban Pioneers Support Committee has been involved directly or indirectly with about 27 squatter areas, of which 21 which have been fully or partially demolished, and six have received notice and are awaiting demolition. They involve over 5,000 households, with about 40,000 people. This is probably less than ten percent of those who have been affected by these actions all over the country. Unfortunately,

are no statistics on the total number of families or people countrywide who either left on their own accord or were forcibly evicted.

Free housing

Only a very small proportion of the squatters have been given free houses or flats. The best example are those from Bumi Hijau. Originally, about 600 people were encouraged to open this area about 30 years ago, after the inter-ethnic conflict in 1969, and also in pursuant of the government "green earth" policy, which was to encourage people to plant vegetables around their homes. About 15 years ago the land was sold to a Government Officers Co-operative for housing



Squatters demands

- Forced eviction should be illegal.
- Squatters should be relocated only after agreement is reached through direct negotiations between them and the developers.
- In the meantime, the municipal authorities must recognise the existence of urban pioneers, and provide them with basic facilities.
- Whatever happens, individual and property rights of urban squatters must be respected.
- Squatters must be protected from cruelty and injustice.
- All unjust regulations that can be used to evict, threaten or arbitrarily arrest urban squatters must be abolished.
- New legislation should be instituted in order to guarantee that squatters are provided with alternative land and housing and/or adequate compensation before they are moved out of their settlements. ★

Source: Urban Pioneers Support Committee, Malaysia

development, consisting mainly of flats. Most of these people left the area after being offered up to RM12,000 in compensation.

Seventeen families refused to budge. Several attempts were made to forcibly evict them. The leader of the Action Committee was arrested, detained and brought to court more than 12 times, but he was acquitted almost every time. His wife and children experienced similar treatment.

These families resisted for nearly 12 years. Their perseverance finally paid off. A new company that bought this housing project agreed to compensate each of the 13 families with a plot of land (about 550 square metres) and a three room house. Besides, the company also agreed to build a community hall, a prayer place, a road and a bridge leading to the area.

Many squatters, after receiving notices, have been persuaded to move to *rumah panjang* ('long houses'). These congested terrace houses, usually built with poor quality wood, have two small rooms, each about 3x3 square metres. Facilities are very poor. In most cases, compensation ranges from RM300 (US\$75) to RM5,000 (\$1,300). In some cases squatters have been able to use these funds as down payment for low cost flats.

Squatters are often told that they will be in the long house for only up to two years, after which they could buy flats in nearby low-cost developments. But some families have spent more than 10 years in long houses, either because they were not selected or because they could not afford to buy a flat.

Some of the long houses have even been demolished to make way for new development projects: their unlucky residents have to move to other areas, becoming squatters all over again.

Most housing development in areas once occupied by squatters is high or medium cost, because this is more profitable to the developers. Only a small amount of the new housing is low cost: mostly two or two 1/2 room flats in badly-built 18-22 storey towers, built too close together. Usually there is no playground, and garbage collection is irregular and inefficient. And so, soon the environment becomes polluted. These low cost housing areas often become new - legal - slums.

These cheap flats cost about 25,000 ringgit (\$6,500). Developers complain that this is too little to cover the building costs, but even so, many evicted squatters cannot afford to buy such apartments. Even where the developers arrange for 15-20 year mortgages, squatters' income is often too low for them to make the regular payments. And people over 40 are not eligible for these mortgages anyway.

In order to pay the rent, many ex-squatters take a second job, at night, and this affects their health. Not surprisingly, there have been many cases where squatters are unable to repay their loans and so are forced to sell or give up their flats. Some of them go back to squatter areas.

The number of low cost houses actually built falls short of the target. Which was already much lower than the actual number of low cost houses really necessary to solve the housing problem of the poor. Meanwhile, the number of medium and especially high cost houses actually built exceeds government targets.

Recently, at the insistence of housing developers, the government removed the levy of RM100,000 (\$26,250) imposed last year on foreigners who want to buy houses costing over 250,000 ringgit (\$65,500). Under a new quota, foreigners can now buy up to 50% of housing in each new development. This has increased house prices to levels which the average Malaysian cannot afford.

Compensation

There is no accepted method or amount for payment of compensation. Sometimes evicted squatters receive nothing. Those relocated to long houses often receive some compensation, while, as described earlier, some particularly persistent squatters receive free land and houses. The highest compensation payments have been in the handful of cases where courts award squatters with compensation and legal costs, or land to build their own houses.

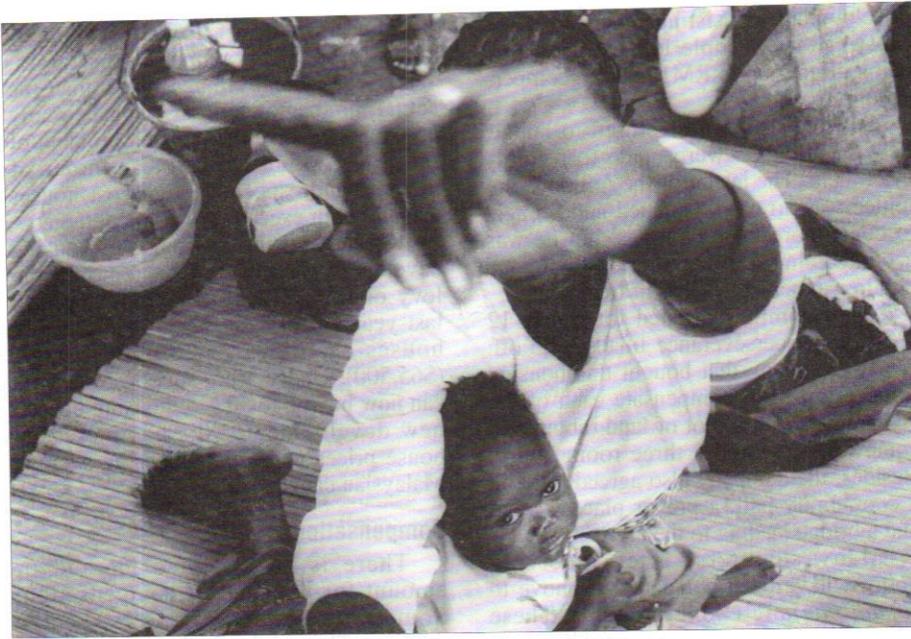
Future strategies

Among many lessons drawn from experiences is that squatters have to be united, resolute and strong in order to succeed in their struggle. The danger is that they are often easily weakened by different political interests, ethnic prejudices, and consideration of personal gains, as well as being easily threatened by fear of the powers that be, and easily deceived by leaders who may not have the interests of squatters at heart. Further, most of the squatters who have their cases resolved or their demands met, seldom continue their struggle. So the most important thing is to devise strategies on how to build up and retain the organisational strength of the squatters so that they can be more effective.

Squatters who leave early without a fight often get a very raw deal. Experiences show that only those willing and able to put up a fight, resisting hard to stop their houses from being demolished, repeatedly erecting a new shed or tent every time the authorities come to destroy them, and are ready to take their oppressors to court when necessary finally manage to get good compensation.

In other words, the developers and the authorities are indirectly training the squatters to toughen themselves up, and to struggle hard in order to finally obtain compensation. ★

*The author is President of Parti Rakyat Malaysia (Peoples Party). Formerly Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Malaya, he was detained without trial under the Internal Security Act from 1974 to 1980. He has written several books, including most recently *Two Faces: Detention Without Trial* (Kuala Lumpur: Insan, 1996).



conference notes

South Africa confronts globalisation

Twenty-nine organisations representing workers, women, students, youth, urban and rural communities, disabled people, the churches, health, environmental, culture and media interests, came together to plan this conference. More than 150 people attended the conference, in Edenvale, 12-15 March, coming from eight of South Africa's nine provinces.

The aims of the conference were to: contribute towards a growing understanding and critique of economic issues, to consider a variety of alternatives and to stimulate the building of alliances across organisations of civil society around key issues and campaigns.

The Conference elaborated a declaration of "principled positions" which participants will take back to their organisations and communities to broaden discussion, debate and support for activities and campaigns.

Conference facilitation was largely co-ordinated by the Campaign Against Neoliberalism in South Africa (Cansa), an alliance of individuals formed to protest the October 1996 visit of the International Monetary Fund's managing director.

Main Conference observations

The Conference analysed and criticised the host of conservative economic policies that are weakening progressive governments' ability to address social ills, and are wreaking havoc on workers and communities internationally, and that in South Africa are embodied both in the "Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)" macroeconomic strategy, and in

various specific policies (especially housing, municipal infrastructure, land, and education).

The Conference considered the recent budget and rejected it on grounds that: a) no progress has been made in addressing the huge apartheid-era debt burden (which takes 20% of state spending); b) vast, unjustifiable amounts still are spent on defence and on policing (which addresses the effects not the causes of crime); and c) not enough has been done to restructure social spending and to reduce hidden forms of benefits to the rich in the budget.

The Conference concluded that what is really at stake is the problem of unbalanced political power between contending social forces. Business and financial interests — amplified through the World Bank, IMF, World Trade Organisation, US government, European Union and the like, with collaboration from Third World elites — exert an overwhelming influence. Their preferred economic policies are, we are witnessing, ineffective on their own terms and are socially unjust. Worse, they have convinced a large section of our society that there is no alternative to orthodox economic policies and globalisation.

The Conference confirmed our rejection of these policies and the attempt to impose helplessness on our society. A variety of alternatives have been presented since 1993 by organisations such as the Macroeconomic Research Group (Making Democracy Work), the Mass Democratic Movement (the Reconstruction and Development Programme), Cosatu (Social Equity and Job Creation), the Community Constituency of Nedlac (Return to the RDP) and the like. Conference confirms that "there must be an alternative"!

The negative impact of globalisation

on South Africa has been manifested, through the fiscal squeeze and through market-oriented policies that have stifled economic growth and redistribution, in job losses, crisis in education, closure of hospitals, widening loopholes in the social security net, water cut-offs, the worsening housing shortage, and persistent malnutrition and poverty, in a context of deepening inequality in what is already the second most unequal country in the world.

The Conference agreed on the need to confront these social ills, but also to address the root cause, which Conference concluded lies in large part in economic policies designed in Washington and implemented in Pretoria through the often unthinking actions of — and lack of consultation by — our own government.

The way forward

A Globalisation Campaigns Committee will take forward and help co-ordinate several initiatives, including protest against US President Bill Clinton's visit to South Africa, on the following grounds:

- his proposed Africa Trade Bill will re-colonise our continent through structural adjustment conditionality;
- his government's refusal to cancel Third World debt subjugates innocent people to perpetual misery

The Committee will support the activities and campaigns for public sector delivery of water for all led by the South African Municipal Workers Union and community civics.

- a constitutional right to water!
- opposition to World Bank infrastructure and water policies that contradict this right
- opposition to the proposed expansion of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (with World Bank funding);

The Committee will participate in the upcoming Poverty Hearings — which are jointly co-ordinated by the SA NGO Coalition — showing the links between globalisation, GEAR and poverty;

Support for the "Cancellation of the Apartheid Debt," initiated by the Alternative Information and Development Centre, the SA NGO Coalition and others;

Support for activities around labour rights, trade and investment, co-ordinated by trade unions, the International Labour Research and Information Group and other conference participants;

The Committee will assist in several specific efforts that challenge the World Bank (especially the activities of its South Africa office), Third World debt payments, the forthcoming Multilateral Agreement on Investment, and South Africa-based multinational corporations;

The Globalisation Campaigns Committee includes people from the trade union movement, the women's movement, the health sector, the progressive religious sector, the student movement, research and academic institutions, and the international solidarity movement.

gn Against Neoliberalism in South Africa 60
Street, Bellevue East 2198, Johannesburg, South
Contact: George Dor/David Letsie (011) 648 7000
5958, fax (011) 331 5957 Email:
@wn.apc.org, george@planact.org.za

Five Centuries After Vasco da Gama

Over 90 participants from 26 countries in Africa and Asia came together in New Delhi in February, to mark the fifth centenary of the beginning of colonialism in Asia, symbolised by the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Calicut in May 1498, and the beginning of its end, symbolised by the 50th year of independence of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka from Britain.

Among the participants were Dr Samir Amin, Dr Gamani Corea (former Secretary General of UNCTAD), Prof. Fatima Meer, and Prof. Xabier Gorostiaga (President of the Nicaraguan Planning Commission under the Sandinista regime and a negotiator on the Panamanian side in the Panama Canal Treaty, and till recently Rector of Central American University).

Identifying globalisation as "the present form of colonialism though qualitatively different from that of the last 500 years," the participants noted that "the economic policies of most of the South are determined by a few countries of the North known as G-7 and by the international organisations like the IMF, the World Bank and WTO that they control," and that "closely linked to the international forces is the local elite that gets most benefits and ignores the powerless classes... Hence, far from being a uniting factor, globalisation results in polarisation both between rich and poor nations and within each country.

Foreign debt stood out as a major source of marginalisation and impoverishment. The discussion on the intellectual property rights and the World Bank forestry programme showed the damage done to the environment by these schemes. Food security is another major issue. Religion has played a role in legitimising colonialism in the past and continues to divert attention from impoverishment through a fundamentalist revival today.

To be meaningful to the powerless, reforms in the international bodies have to be accompanied by changes in the internal policies of our countries in order to remove economic disparities and reverse impoverishment. Alternatives to globalisation have to be found within each country and region, not merely at the global level."

Delegates resolved continue sharing information, but to direct most networking energies towards existing regional networks.

For financial reasons, conference papers cannot be sent out, though a 120 page summary will be published in May, and selected contributions will be professionally published later in the year.
For more information contact Walter Fernandes at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. Email <WALTER@isid.unv.ernet.in>

coming soon

Alternative Asia-Pacific relations

London, Britain, April 4th

On 3-4 April heads of government and senior ministers from Asia and Europe will meet in London for a trade and investment summit.

A coalition of campaigning groups including the Burma Action Group, British Coalition for East Timor, Free Tibet Campaign, Philippine Resource Centre, Tapol - The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, West Papua Forum, World Development Movement, and Campaign Against the Arms Trade are calling for a demonstration to advance an alternative vision of Asia-Europe relations that has a place for self-determination, peace and human rights and is economically and socially just as well as ecologically sustainable.

Meet 11 am Jubilee Gardens, Belvedere Road, London SE1 (near Waterloo station). The march begins at 12.00 and will pass the QEII Conference centre where the summit is taking place and proceed to Trafalgar Square by 1.30 pm for the rally. Speakers include Glenys Kinnock MEP and journalist and campaigner John Pilger.

Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference

Sydney, Australia, 10-13 April

Contact: Dr Helen Jarvis, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies, (SILAS) University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052 Australia. Or Email to: apiaustralia@peg.apc.org. Or fax to: 02-96901381

EuroMarch against Unemployment

Brussels, Belgium, 18-19 April

"Hearings" on European institutions, reduction in the working week, debates on minimum revenue, and links between civic groups and associations and trade unions in building the European unemployment movement.

Registration: through your national EuroMarch network, or at Rue Potagère 103, 1210 Brussels, Belgium. Tel. +32.2.223 3533. Fax 223 3982

Socialist Action (Canada)

May Day celebration, Saturday 2 May, 7 p.m. 58 Cecil Street, Toronto

Tickets: advance \$15 waged, \$8 non-waged; at door \$20 waged, \$12 non-waged Info: 416-535-8779

150 Years of the Communist Manifesto

Glasgow, Britain, 22-23 May

Organised by the Centre for Study of Socialist Theory and Movements, University of Glasgow. Speakers include Istvan Meszaros, Suzi Weissman, Hillel Tickin and Mikhail Voeikov.

Cost: £12 one day, £20 both days. Half price for students and unemployed. For information on accommodation and other matters, contact Centre for Study of Socialist Theory and Movements, 29 Bute Gardens, University of Glasgow, G12 8RS, Britain. e-mail: <9011731o@student.gla.ac.uk>

Finnish young communists

Solidarity meeting in Helsinki on June 5-6. And a summer camp, to be held at the end of June.

PL 288, 00171 Helsinki, Finland. <komnuor@dlc.fi>
Internet: www.dlc.fi/~komnuor/

LCR Festival

Paris, France, June 13-14

Contact: LCR, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France. Tel. +33.1.48 70 42 20.
Email <redaction@lcr-rouge.org>

Black Radical Congress

Chicago, USA, June 19-21

For full details contact Black Radical Congress, PO Box 5766, Chicago IL 60680-5766

Violence against Women

Amsterdam, Netherlands, 21-25 June
(in French and Castilian only)

Part of an ongoing project of co-operation between NGOs active on the question, is co-organized by the Committee for Cancellation of the Third World Debt (Belgium) and the International Institute for Research and Education.

IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 RG Amsterdam, Netherlands
Tel: 31 20 6717263, Fax: 31 20 6732106,
<IIRE@Antenna.nl>

International socialist youth camp

Jutland, Denmark. 25-31 July

The 15th European camp of youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth International. Details on page 2.

For more information contact your *International Viewpoint* distributor or write to SAP, Box 547, Nørre Allé 11 A, DK-2200, Copenhagen N. fax +45-35373217.
E-mail <socinf@inet.uni2.dk>

Trade Unions, homosexuality & work

Amsterdam, 29-31 July 1998

A forum for lesbian and gay trade unionists to exchange information, policies and strategies. For full details see last month's *International Viewpoint* or contact the organisers.

PO Box 732, NL 2700 AL, Zoetermeer, Netherlands. Tel: +31-30- 273 2627. fax: 271 0512. E-mail: <modijk@knoware.nl> utopia.knoware.nl/users/modijk

Solidarity Summer School

Chicago, USA. 3-6 August

The US socialist and feminist group will hold its annual summer school at the usual venue. The group's convention will run from 7-9 August.

LCR Summer School

Grenoble, France, August 26-30

Cost: 959FF including accomodation and all meals. Youth/unemployed discount available. Contact: LCR, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93100 Montreuil, France. Tel. +33.1.48 70 42 20. Email <redaction@lcr-rouge.org>.

Ernest Mandel Seminar on Europe

Amsterdam, Holland, 25-27 September
(in English and French)

Definite dates and themes will be confirmed nearer the date.

IIRE, Postbus 53290, 1007 RG Amsterdam, Netherlands
Tel: 31 20 6717263, Fax: 31 20 6732106,
<IIRE@Antenna.nl>

Latin American Marxist Magazines

Buenos Aires, 25-27 September

This year's focus is "the Communist Manifesto in Latin America Today." The deadline for submitting papers is 17 July. The Argentinian organisers include *Cuadernos del Sur*, *Cuadernos Marxistas*, *Debate Marxista*, *Doxa*, *En Defensa del Marxismo*, *Herramienta*, *Luxemburg*, *Periferías*, and *Razón y Revolución*. Participants from Brazil include *Brasil Revolucionario*, *Praxis*, *Teoria & Praxis* and *Critica Marxista de Brasil*. Other participants include *Alfaguara*, (Uruguay).

For more information contact Alberto Teszkiewicz at <marxlat@dia.edu.ar>



booknotes

Western aid to Russia's 'Kleptocratura'.

Marino Savayo reviews the internal evaluation report for the European Union's technical assistance programme for the former USSR.

TACIS Interim Evaluation is the first attempt by the Commission of the European Union to evaluate five years of the Technical Assistance to the Confederation of Independent States (CIS) programme. TACIS is by far the largest aid programme for the former Soviet Union countries: Ecu 2.8 billion in 1991-96.

TACIS Interim Evaluation was delivered to the European Parliament in mid-1997. It is written in the usual administrative "style," with due precautions and deference towards European decision makers, European civil servants and beneficiary governments of the former Soviet Union. But the facts behind the wooden language give major cause for concern.

The TACIS programme was set up in 1991, with its main objective defined as supporting "the transition to a market economy." (1991 TACIS Regulations). The 1993 Regulations added "and thereby reinforcing democracy". In other words, democracy was initially ignored, and then only seen as a by-product of a market economy.

"In recognition of the fact that ugly forms of capitalism were developing," states the report, "the 1996 Regulations put equal weight on both objectives now formulated as transition to a market economy and reinforcing democracy." However, this last objective is only pursued by an insignificant "Democracy sub-programme", whose budget is not even

indicated in the *Evaluation*. This "Democracy sub-programme" is one of 22 small programs that received only 4% of the total funds allocated to TACIS.

"Democracy appears as a residual allocation in programming" according to the evaluators, who add, without any explanation, that by the end of 1996, the "Democracy sub-programme" was even taken out of the TACIS programme. Reinforcing democracy in the former Soviet Union is obviously not one of the priorities of the European Union.

The authors conclude that "the TACIS programme has not reflected the fact that reinforcing democracy is one of the two principal TACIS programme objectives... A comprehensive strategy for dealing with democracy issues is conspicuously absent".

Another area of concern for Europeans and citizens of the former USSR alike is the protection of the environment. Here again, "TACIS impact in promoting environment awareness among its project partners is found to be virtually non-existent".

What about the market-led economic reforms supposed to increase the well-being in the NIS (New Independent States)? The evaluation indicates that the TACIS Regulations "give little guidance on the policy goals which the Programme wishes to pursue", a situation described as "the blind leading the blind". The European taxpayers will appreciate this. But no-one is really leading TACIS, given the "lack of a sustained high level policy dialogue between the Commission and the NIS governments".

According to the evaluation report: "the investment climate in the NIS countries has not improved significantly... Other societal conditions, including those of health, social security, education and poverty, have deteriorated". But the report goes as far as to admit: "These are factors which assistance programs, among them TACIS, can do little to influence".

What about the transition to a market economy, even under the form of "ugly

forms of capitalism"? According to the authors of this report, "a comprehensive policy on the use of TACIS as an instrument for promoting market-oriented reforms has not emerged".

How are specific projects selected? "In many cases," states the report, "it is not clear what criteria are being applied within what guidelines." How are they managed from Brussels? "The majority of staff in the operational units... have virtually no relevant previous experience with project management and no practical experience in project implementation."

Despite all this, the governments of the ex USSR received ECU 2.8 billions of TACIS funds in 1991-96, and are supposed to receive a similar amount in 1997-2000.

For what purpose? Well, "geopolitical influences have also played a role," explains the report. "When the EU will be enlarged, it will share borders with Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. The EU's economic interests in oil reserves in the Caspian Sea area are also an important consideration".

One of the geopolitical aims of TACIS, and the United States' USAID program, has been to support the governments of the new independent states, no matter how corrupt and incompetent, in order to secure the break up of the Soviet Union and the failure of the CIS.

The report has the merit of frankness: "The majority of the work force employed (in the NIS) have no faith in the benefits of reform, nor might they be expected to. More especially, over the past five years, they have seen their standard of living decline. In addition, their salaries are paid infrequently and they see many people enriching themselves on the strength of widespread corruption."

Technical assistance is supposed to transfer know-how for the sake of economic and human development. In fact, the main beneficiaries are the western consulting firms making millions out of hot air, the government officials benefiting from bribes and smaller advantages, architects of what the Russian population calls the "transition from *nomenklatura* to *kleptocratura*."

Why are Western governments playing along, and paying for this? Simply because of the massive advantage to the West of the dismantling of the ex-Soviet Union, and the economic advantage of free access to ex-USSR markets, and a chance to control the region's natural and human resources. ★

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Third Women's School breaks records

The one-month Women's School in July 1997 was the best-attended session IIRE ever. In fact we have never had to turn so many candidates away, not only for lack of money but simply for lack of room.

After a gap of four years the success of this seminar, both in attendance and in its development, makes clear the need to continue with a specific programme on feminism and women's struggles.

The seminar was attended by 28 women from 16 countries. The group of seven Latin Americans represented Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Puerto Rico. There were two women from the USA and one from Quebec. The ten Europeans came from Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, Portugal, the Basque country and Spain. Other participants came from South Africa, the Philippines, India and Jordan. Nearly half the participants were under 30.

The programme of the seminar included debates on a broad range of themes on the social, economic and political situation of women, and some of the most current theoretical discussions of feminism from a Marxist point of view.

The discussion on the new trends in the international economy showed the need to develop studies on the role of women's work today, the effects of neo-liberalism on women in the labour market, and also how cuts in the budget allocated to social services put a heavy

Pluto Press amplifies IIRE's voice

The Amsterdam-based International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE) has reached an agreement with Pluto Press in London to launch a series of books that will at least partly incorporate the IIRE Notebooks for Study and Research.

Pluto has not yet confirmed which Notebook will be the first in its new series. But we have reserved the right to issue as an ordinary Notebook any title they decline.

According to IIRE co-director Peter Drucker, "we have been looking for a while for this kind of relationship with a publisher. Pluto is probably the best match for the IIRE among existing English-language houses. It also has a good reputation of its own in the English-language international left, for example through its relationship with the Transnational Institute (also here in Amsterdam).

Notebooks published by Pluto will give the IIRE a bigger audience for our ideas, including in many native-English-speaking regions that we now reach barely or not at all."

burden on women's shoulders, particularly restricting their job perspectives. That was a general framework for discussions on the situation of women and the women's movement in different countries.

A rich aspect of this international seminar was how it brought together women activists from different parts of the world engaged in the feminist movement, trade-union work, political parties as well as NGOs, for all of whom the struggle against women's oppression is not just an intellectual commitment but their everyday political engagement.

In this atmosphere the section on "Marxism and feminism", followed by lectures on contemporary polemics about "modernity", was an important moment of reflection on the new challenges the left has to face today. The seminar provided a unique opportunity for participants to share their experiences in their concrete work along with an open and rich possibility of deepening theoretical debate.

The number of participants and the range of countries are a clear demonstration of the demand for and usefulness of this seminar. Preparations are already underway for a three-week version of the school —with simultaneous translation in English and Castilian — later this year.

Tatau Godinho

Pluto has agreed that every book issued in their NSR series will include a page about the IIRE, including contact details. So Notebooks published by Pluto will give the Institute a more impressive "calling card".

NSR subscribers will benefit from this arrangement through receiving high-quality, lasting books. Unfortunately, Notebooks published as Pluto books will cost more than Notebooks now do: at least US\$16.50/£10, as opposed to US\$6/£4 for a typical Notebook now.

For subscribers every Pluto book will count as a double issue of the Notebooks for Study and Research, and the cost of new or renewed subscriptions (two books) will rise to \$25/£15. We are counting on our subscribers' loyalty, hoping that most if not all will choose to renew.

The agreement should save IIRE staff considerable time that is now spent on layout, proof-reading, negotiating with printers and arranging transport. The IIRE should also benefit financially. [PD]

Labour Left Briefing, March 98

In "Don't bomb Iraq," Will McMahon argues that key motives for the latest US attack on Iraq are to send a message to other world powers and test new technologies. And Alan Simpson MP says we will soon regret the British Parliament's unconditional backing for a war against Iraq.

Other contents include Tony Benn MP's parliamentary speech against the war in the Gulf • Brian Campbell, editor of Sinn Fein's *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, looks at Sinn Fein's expulsion from the peace talks • Terry Heath, secretary of the South West Trade Union Congress (TUC) Pensioners Forum, argues that Labour must link pensions to earnings • John Lister looks at the crisis in Britain's National Health Service • Tony Dale criticises Labour councils' headlong rush to embrace local housing companies.

Ken Coates MEP replies to criticism in last month's LLB, and John Nicholson, convenor of the Network of Socialist Alliances in England, disagrees with the LLB analysis of developments in the Labour Party.

John Hendy QC examines Britain's repressive anti-union laws and reports on new initiatives to campaign for changes, and Steve Battlemuch reports on how the courts have stopped a union merger that the left in both unions opposed. Jon Rogers reports on the attacks on left-wingers in UNISON.

Mike Phipps reviews Inside Cowley, Alan Thornett's important new book about labour struggles in Britain's car industry. James Smart reviews *Sovereignty For What? Why stopping European Monetary Union is just the start* by Will Podmore and Phil Katz.

Articles can be consulted at www.llb.labournet.org.uk/

For more information contact LLB, PO Box 2378, London, E5 9QU, E-mail llb@labournet.org.uk

Science and Society

The Institute for Critical Research is proud to announce the publication of *Friedrich Engels-A Critical Centenary Appreciation*, edited by Joost Kirz and Michael Löwy, as a special issue of the US journal *Science & Society*.

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Net Working

Democratic Action

The Organization for Democratic Action (ODA), is a revolutionary democratic party working inside Israel to achieve "a just peace in the Middle East, based on the total retreat of Israel to the 1967 borders and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its Capital."

ODA's main emphasis in its practical work is to defend the rights and organize the fight of the one million Palestinians inside Israel against racist laws and practices. As well as a Workers' Advice Center (WAC), the group has a bi-weekly Arabic newspaper *Al Sabar*, and a bi-monthly English magazine, *Challenge*.

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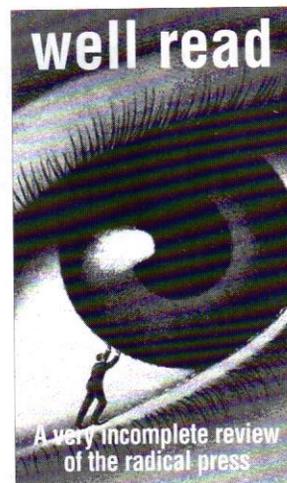
www.nodo50.ix.apc.org/viento_sur/

Le Marxisme Aujourd'hui

In French. Editor Pierre Broué. Contributors include Karol Modzelewski on "Polish perspectives," Ricardo Napuri on "Che, 30 years later," Rade Pavlovic on "Serbia: a decisive year," and Anibal Ramos on "Izquierda Unida and the crisis of the left in Catalonia."

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Into a new and better century!

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