INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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NEWS AND ANALYSIS FROM SOCIALISTS WORLDWIDE

European Social Forum

Brazil

China

INTRODUCTION

The European Social Forum (ESF) held in Paris in November, which was extensively previewed in last month's IV, proved a great success, with over 50,000 people in attendance. The breadth of this initiative, the reaffirmation of radical, anti-capitalist pluralist character when there are big question at stake in the discussions preparing for the European elections and the adoption of the European constitution explain the importance we gave to this event. In this issue we carry an initial appreciation of the event by Michel Rousseau, and a report by Anne Leclerc on the women's assembly that preceded the Forum. Also, we print here the declaration adopted by organizations of the European Anti-Capitalist Left meeting in Paris at the time of the ESF.

IV has devoted extensive coverage to developments in Brazil in recent issues and this month we reprint a resolution adopted by the Socialist Democracy Tendency of the ruling Workers' Party, opposing sanctions taken and threatened against parliamentarians who have defended the party's historic legacy.

Turkey has been the source of many stories in the international press in recent months, with its quest for membership of the European Union and the difficulties encountered by its recently elected Islamic government in assisting the US invasion and occupation of Iraq providing central themes. Ergun Aydinoglu looks at the continuities lying behind the apparently new developments. This article was written before the series of Islamist-inspired bomb explosions that further destabilized the Turkish political scene in November.

In the early 1990s, the end of the Cold War and a collapse in the legitimacy of the traditional neocolonial regimes allowed a relative "democratic opening" in sub-Saharan Africa; as Jean Nanga shows here, this has not however generated a real democratic alternative or prevented the continuing marginalization of the sub-Saharan zone.

Thirty years ago in Chile, Salvador Allende's elected social democratic regime was overthrown and replaced by a brutal dictatorship committed to transforming the country into a laboratory for neoliberalism. James Cockroft, returning to Chile for the first time in three decades, examines what remains of Allende's legacy.

2003 saw the disappearance of the last symbols of a centrally planned economy in China and the definitive installation of the market as regulatory mechanism. Here, G Buster considers the question of when and how China became capitalist and foresees crises ahead for what can now be considered a weak link of capitalism.

Finally, the work of the Mexican-based sociologist John Holloway has attracted much attention within the global justice movement. The recent publication of a major book by Holloway prompts Phil Hearse, in our review section, to consider whether the idea of revolutionizing social relations without conquering power is a coherent one.

This will be the last issue in 2003. We know that our readers have been tolerant of the difficulties and irregularities in International Viewpoint production over this last year, such as the fact that we were not able to produce an issue in October. If you follow our back page sales drive column you know how parlous our financial state is. We will back in the new year and we hope you will help us to put IV on a more stable and regular footing for the future.

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Europe: ESF 2003

MICHEL ROUSSEAU*

After the immense success of the first European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence last year, the 2003 ESF in Paris-St-Denis-Ivry-Bobigny represented an unprecedented advance in the construction of a European social movement at two levels.

FIRST IN TERMS OF NUMBERS: more than 50,000 people registered for attendance and there were more than 100,000 at the demonstration; certainly a lot less than in Florence, but very much more than organizations could usually turn out today in France, outside of periods of struggles like that in the Spring over pensions. That shows that the global justice movement is still exerting a broad appeal in the struggle against neoliberal capitalism; that it is an unavoidable social and political force in Europe, which has to be dealt with. That has had the effect of a breath of fresh air in an epoch when times are hard for the unemployed and their organizations.

Also, "European questions" were at the centre of numerous debates. From this point of view, there was a qualitative leap forward. A "European" Social Forum cannot be a simple reflection of all the different Social Forums in Europe. Building on the achievements of these latter, it should be able to clarify the continental situation so as to allow activists and the social movements to draw practical consequences. The resolution of the "Assembly of Social Movements" bears witness to this in its evaluation of the draft European Constitution. Certainly this Assembly should not be confused with the ESF itself but it is the most significant concrete product of it.

To understand this phenomenon we need to look at the heritage of the last century. The fall of the Berlin wall is the symbol of the ruined landscape left by the forces identified with Communism or social democracy on a planetary scale and particularly in Europe. The fall of Stalinism and the passivity of social democracy allowed an unprecedented neoliberal capitalist offensive. This was concretized in the European Union by an offensive on every front against the social rights that had been won over a century of struggle. What some called the "European social model" is collapsing under the blows of globalized capitalism.

How to rebuild on the ruins, first to reestablish the relationship of forces and blunt the offensive, but also reverse the tendency? That is the problem that a number of organizations have faced in recent years.

The example of mass long-term unemployment typifies this situation. Two decades after the post war boom ended, nearly 20 million unemployed and their organizations are in a quasi-total impasse. What is to be done? Pragmatically, a handful of activists from different political backgrounds met in Florence in 1996 with the idea of taking an initiative at the European level, an initiative open to all the social, trade union or political forces who wanted to join in and unite their forces in the struggle against unemployment. Thus the European Marches were born; in 1997, after two months of marches throughout Europe at their initiative, 50,000 demonstrators assembled in Amsterdam. They were the first to be surprised at their success. Sections of the German DGB alongside the anarchist CGT from the Spanish state, the unemployed of the Irish INOU, AC! from France or ALI-Thüringen from Erfurt. This was the first experience of a convergence going beyond national political divisions and operating on a European scale; a coming together not as a result of organizational agreements at the top but of a joint march.

This tendency has been confirmed from Seattle to today through the mobilizations at key summits of the IMF, G8, EU and so on. These mobilizations reached a crescendo despite the lack of medium or long-term perspectives.

And there also came a time for reflection and debate: Porto Alegre is the symbol of it!

The founders of the WSF defined the place of debate that they set up at Porto Alegre as a "world village square". And it was a good definition even if the current world does not really resemble a peaceful village. From this viewpoint, the success of the Social Forums that occur today at every level, world, continental and local is impressive. As nobody has a magic solution to the current situation, we meet to exchange views. The ESF 2003 involved more than 1,500 European associative, trade union and also political (although it could not be stated openly!) structures converging on the same "square". All this will leave a legacy for building what is an increasingly necessary European social movement.

Because this is not just about "organizations". The Forum also involved countries from the whole continent, well beyond the European Union. Although insufficient, there were large delegations from Poland, Hungary and Russia. There was a more limited enlargement of the social base of the Forum that needs to be built on.

The Euromarches look to meetings like this for analysis and debate but also to find partners, create links, work out alternatives and common demands and initiate campaigns to change the living conditions of tens of millions of unemployed and casualized workers living below the poverty level on the richest continent of the planet. The "Women's Assembly" at the beginning of the ESF was part of this dynamic. It was also the function of the "Assembly of social movements and activists" at the end.

This takes time. The method of "majority consensus" which allows the broadest organization of such events is more complicated to implement when it

comes to acting together. The ESF as such took no decisions on this front but the synergies it has generated will initiate campaigns and mobilizations that can take on a global dimension, as was the case in the past year in the movement against the war.

We thought that it would be possible this year to come together around the generalized attack on social rights in the European Union. The principle of a day of action at the European level has been kept but remains dependent on the involvement of the ETUC. This is nonetheless urgent. As we have seen on the pensions question, every country has experienced big mobilizations but nothing has been coordinated at the European level and we have lost everywhere. It is increasingly necessary to work out common European demands, notably concerning the right to work and incomes (wages, social minima, unemployment benefits, pensions), to avoid social dumping in the context of enlargement.

However, there was a broad consensus on the question of the draft European Constitution. The position that a bad draft is better than nothing at all was very much in the minority in most of the plenaries and seminars. May 9, 2004 the day of the proclamation of this constitution will be the focus for initiatives for another, democratic Europe, based on citizenship, rights, peace and equality.

The other Europe is already there. Contrary to what the neoliberals say, alternatives already exist and a number of seminars made very concrete proposals in every area. The Europe that we want is on the march. This "European consciousness" has found a first expression at this Forum 2003. Some tens of thousands of activists think and act today at the European level. That will change things in the associative, trade union and political worlds. The European level allows us to transcend national blockages in the process of recomposition that is underway.

It is also the responsibility of the political parties to draw the lessons of what happens in these forums to develop political strategies and forms of organization necessary to the emergence of this other Europe, inspired in particular by the method of "broad majority consensus" around common initiatives. That has little to do with the heritage of the so-called democratic centralism of the past century, of the "alternation" between neoliberals of left and right, but it will be the only way to do politics differently and to win the current generations to unifying political projects at the European level and for another world.

And good luck to our friends from Britain in making a new leap forward for the movement in London in 2004! ■

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Success of Assembly for Women's Rights

ANNE LECLERC

More than 3,000 women and about 150 men took part in the European Assembly for Women's Rights that took place on November 12, 2003 in Bobigny on the outskirts of Paris. This was an undeniable success for an event that constitutes very much a "first" as a feminist initiative in Europe. Let's look at where it came from...

The idea first emerged in Florence during a seminar organized by the European coordination of the World March of Women Against Poverty and Violence. The idea was put forward of a specific women's initiative during the 2nd European Social Forum which was going to be held in Paris Saint Denis in 2003. Why such an initiative? The participants at this seminar felt the need to create an event around the next ESF that would mark a feminist presence in the ESF and reflect the fact that the movement for global justice could not claim to construct another world if it did not integrate the struggle against male domination.

So the idea was to hold a women's assembly for one day at the opening of the ESF. A fight was needed on the French organizing committee for this day to be considered as an integral part of the ESF. Some organizations argued that every movement would then demand the same treatment. This was, once again, a failure to understand that the question of women's rights transcends all movements.

In the end the following compromise was made: the women's assembly would be part of the ESF process in the same way as the general assembly of social movements. This proposal was then adopted in February 2003 at the European preparatory assembly in Brussels. A preparatory committee in France involving approximately 50 organizations began planning the contents of this day. A genuinely collective and European preparation was sought, while it was acknowledged that the host country had a particular responsibility.

At the time of the various European preparatory assemblies (Berlin in April, Genoa in July and Bobigny in September), we ensured that the agenda included time for the preparation of this assembly. That made it possible to discuss the contents with women from various European countries. Very quickly four working themes appeared and were adopted in Berlin: Violence against women; Women and migration; Employment, insecure work and poverty; the right to choose. In Genoa two additional themes were added: Women and war; Women and power.

Several countries, Greece and Italy in particular, organized national meetings to prepare for this day and to make proposals as to the various axes of reflection. In Italy a group, Parigi Diverse, was created for the occasion, while in Greece the World March network was responsible. In other countries it was often groups linked to the World March who took part in this preparation. As was the case with the ESF, there was a special effort to involve women from Eastern Europe.

On all the subjects proposed, it was necessary first to share reports at a European level, then develop analyses and consider perspectives for common campaigns. This was the general approach in our preparatory work. Two discussion lists, one French and the

other European, were set up in order to allow exchange of ideas on the preparation. Reports on the workshops were regularly posted on these discussion lists to get reactions and proposals, in particular from women in other countries.

The idea of a manifesto was also put forward in the last month of preparation so that we could come out of this assembly with a strong text that could be used to question political leaders at the European level and in every country.

In addition while taking part regularly in the preparation of the ESF, we argued for more plenaries and seminars integrating women's questions than had been the case in Florence. In particular, five plenaries were held on women's rights, rather than one as initially planned.

Which networks supported us at the European level? The World March of Women, the European Network of Family Planning on the question of the right to choose, the gender and globalization group of ATTAC, the "Femmes solidaires" association, lesbian networks, the European Women's Lobby contributed to the European construction of this day. There is no properly constituted feminist network at the European level, but there are some networks that often have different spheres of intervention. One of the issues at stake from the European Women's Assembly is to constitute a European feminist network, making it possible to improve the relationship of forces so as to impose a real equality between women and men.

In the morning, after an opening text, read by women from various countries, which clarified the meaning of this day, the participants split up into six workshops. Within each workshop, we tried to bring out the themes of common campaigns for the months to come.

In the workshop on employment, precarious work and poverty the goal was to discuss the effects of neoliberalism on women's employment in Europe and to begin the collective construction of a European response to this situation. In Europe, women had largely made their entry into the workforce when the new economic order was durably installed. Women have resisted the offensives of neoliberalism. Over the last 25 years, mass unemployment, part-time work imposed on hiring and flexibility have become essential characteristics of female work.

After the reading of a letter from women fired by the Lewis company, several interventions, in particular that of an unemployed Belgian woman, a Spanish peasant from the European Peasants' Confederation, a Basque trade unionist, and women's employment specialist Helena Hirata, evoked the situation of women in Europe in the area of jobs, casualized work and poverty and the impact of neoliberal policies on the latter. Everywhere in Europe, the effects of neoliberalism are particularly harsh for women. To pose the principles of a real equality between men and the women, to arrive at a true autonomy, is also to fight for the individualization of all social rights

Some themes for campaigns were defined: real equality in rights at work, struggles against all professional discrimination; increase in the social minima, attribution of the social security benefits to the individuals and not according to marital status; development of collective child care.

In the workshop on immigrant women, the view was strongly expressed that immigrant women contribute actively to the socio-cultural life of the host country, in spite of the phenomenon of double discrimination related to their condition as women and immigrant. Europe is closing its borders to immigrants and the laws of European countries place obstacles to the entry and right to stay of foreigners, forcing them into precarious status and leaving them without rights, subject to arbitrary and violent behaviour. Women, increasingly numerous among immigrants, are confronted directly with these policies which oppress them doubly, as women and as foreigners.

Even if laws are not sexually discriminatory, they have sexually discriminatory effects, because they consolidate, indeed worsen the situation of inequality between men and women, institutionalize the dependence of women within the family framework (in particular by the application of personal status codes from the countries of origin, the non-renewal of residence permits in the event of rupture in cohabitation and so on) and maintain situations of violence (traffic of women, arranged or forced marriages) and of exploitation (professional and/or sexual). The following axes of mobilization were adopted: the application of individual personal status in order to support autonomy and individual rights and to fight against marital dependence and double violence (familial and official); the application of the law of the host country as regards labour legislation; freedom of movement for all; recognition of the qualifications of immigrant women.

Workshop on violence: According to various estimates collected by European institutions, 20-50% of women in Europe have been victims of male violence. Much remains much to be done to bring things out into the open and give an account of the breadth of the phenomenon. For the past 30 years or more, feminist associations have worked on this issue, often alone. Now it is important to involve the social movements to allow a real mobilization, because women can no longer tolerate being alone in these struggles. Three main questions were tackled in this workshop: violence within relationships, and violence towards women in a more widespread sense; the question of prostitution; the resistance of young women and prevention of sexist behaviour in relations between boys and girls.

The struggle against violence against women must become a completely specific public policy. The axes of mobilization adopted were: harmonization of national legislations on the struggle against violence against women on the basis of the most advanced situation, through the implementation of European directives; recognition of the responsibility of states if laws are not applied.

To popularize this campaign, it was proposed that the international day against violence against women, November 25, 2004, be promoted in each European country by the social movements.

It was also decided to organize a European

campaign for a world without prostitution or slavery during the Olympic Games in Athens in June 2004.

Workshop on sexual and reproductive rights: against levelling down! The disparity of women's rights in relation to control over their bodies in European countries constitutes an indicator of progress or regression. The right to abortion and contraception is the keystone of women's autonomy. The situation in three countries where abortion is prohibited and penalized was described by women from Portugal, Poland and Ireland. Another issue is the growing importance of medical techniques of reproduction. Whether we are talking about medically assisted procreation or therapeutic cloning, the eggs used are taken from the bodies of women. From the sale of eggs to the sale of organs and the forced sterilization of Roma in Slovakia, a process of commodification and accentuation of relations of domination is underway.

The right to control one's body is called increasingly into question in European countries by religious institutions, both within society and at the level of the political institutions. At the same time there is a certain downplaying of sexual and reproductive rights in feminist struggles. It was decided to mobilize clearly for the basic right for the women to control their bodies and for free access to abortion and contraception in every European country. This demand must be an integral part of the project of global justice. To this end, theworkshop proposed the construction of a permanent network of struggle, information, debate, solidarity and vigilance for common mobilizations, like that initiated by the women of Portugal for abortion rights.

The workshop on women and war chose to emphasise resistance struggles through the testimony of Chechen, Palestinian, Russian, Israeli and Kurdish women, to show the specificity of the opposition of women to war, her political specificity and its overlap with feminism; relations of solidarity between women and their difficulties. The principal proposals for action are as follows: sponsoring of Palestinian prisoners and detainees; participation in the caravan of peace, which will leave Europe for Palestine and Iraq; a specific campaign so that Europe imposes peace in Chechnya; to build an international table in Turkey for September 2004 to support Turkish women peace activists; to make March 8, 2004 a day of mobilization against war.

The workshop on women and power proposed a shared analysis based on the fact that the feminine as a category is a historical construct whose consequence is the exclusion of women from the public sphere. Patriarchal domination persists in all types of society and the question of power runs through all spheres of social organization. That is why the presence of women in places where decisions are made

RESOLUTION OF ASSEMBLY

Europe: a different Europe is possible!

For the first time in 20 years, a counter-offensive has been launched to stop the disasters that are threatening us: war, neoliberal policies, and ecological catastrophe.

Millions of workers, men and women, young and old, organised in a multitude of grassroots movements, trade unions and parties or simply unorganized people, have, by the hundreds of thousands or even millions, occupied the streets and launched massive strikes, sometimes paralysing the state machinery. In the space of three years, the atmosphere has changed. A different world is possible.

In Genoa in July 2001, they tried to crush our movement with fierce repression; but the movement survived and bounced back. In November 2002, 60,000 young and not-so-young people from the whole of Europe converged on Florence to lay the foundation stones of a new European social movement. The next day a million demonstrators launched a warning to our rulers: No war! Hands off our rights! Three months later, on February 15, 2003, there were tens of millions of us around the world fighting to stop the barbarism of war. Last year in Florence and this year in Paris/St.Denis, the European Social Forum is providing an organized form, social cohesion and a political direction to this extraordinary explosion of energy and creativity.

This planetary uprising for universal peace took on the character in Europe of a continent-wide plebiscite: facing the EU, people voted for a different Europe, from below, founded on a revolt of the exploited and oppressed in all the member countries.

European big capital has made no mistake about it: its attacks have redoubled in all the member countries and on every front, despite this strong, increasingly coherent opposition.

No to the multinationals' constitution! Yes to a different Europe – a peoples' Europe, democratic, social and peaceful!

Fifteen governments are about to impose a constitution from behind closed doors on 450 million people. The so-called Convention – a select club operating behind closed doors – has taken the place of a constituent process, based on a mandate coming out of the sovereignty of the peoples of Europe. This is a break with the entire parliamentary tradition that had grown up since the democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries!

Instead of the Social Europe they promised us, they are imposing a European Power on us, founded on wars (the 1991 war on Iraq, the Balkan wars throughout the 1990s, the new US war) and economic conquest (the fall of the USSR and then Eastern Europe).

We say no to this EU constitution and no to this neoliberal EU. This constitution is dangerous.

First, it consecrates the absolute primacy of the market; it legally forbids any infringement of private property or market relations. It refuses to give legal status to social gains that have been won on the national level through a century and a half of workers' struggles: basic social rights, laws on working conditions, labour contracts, trade-union presence and intervention within workplaces, the right to strike, freedom of association.... While it centrally supports and institutionalises the functioning of capital, it leaves labour standards decentralized on the national level and makes them obsolete at the European level. This will lead to systematic, no-holds-barred competition among the wage earners of the different member countries and within each country.

Second, budgetary constraints (institutionalised in the Maastricht criteria) will drastically reduce social benefits and hamstring public economic policy. With this as the starting point, systematic privatization of public services and social security will become "inevitable", because public services will be "unaffordable". Industrial and financial capital will thus gain a vast, very lucrative playing field. The super-rich will get richer. Working people — workers, youth, the unemployed and casualized, women, immigrants, etc. — will pay the price. In the

is a major democratic issue. This workshop worked around proposals for mobilizations: to ensure that texts on equality between men and women become legally enforceable at the European level; for the effective exercise of parity in countries which have a law and parity in all European and national bodies whose members are nominated and elected, whether these structures are advisory or decision-making.

A springboard for the future

In the afternoon, in the plenary session, reports from the workshops made it possible to develop an outline of the debates on each topic and take on the action proposals. A proclamation which had been drawn up beforehand by the various preparatory groups was presented during the plenary, a meeting of synthesis of the various workshops having allowed the integration of the campaigning proposals. One of the constants of the workshops was also opposition to the contents of the constitutional treaty and a stress on the need for European struggles, to build common campaigns on the basis of the existing feminist networks like the World March of Women, the lesbian networks and those concerning reproductive rights, pacifist networks, or by creating other ad hoc bodies. The Assembly then demonstrated in the streets of Bobigny, heading, symbolically, for the courtroom where a key legal case on abortion had been decided in 1972. There were more than 6,000 of us in the streets. Over and above the day's success, the potential for mobilizing the movements and feminist networks of various countries and the need to build a broad feminist network at the European level were obvious. The debates of this day also informed the debates of the ESF. Many women attended the ESF and felt much more legitimate in contributing a feminist analysis to the debates.

This meeting made it possible to dynamize or redynamize the various women's groups, in particular because it showed that a feminist relationship of force could be built at the European level. The challenge is important: building another Europe which is feminist and anti-capitalist requires all our energies. As was clearly shown by this assembly, the backward moves contained in the constitutional treaty and the impact of neoliberal policies affect women particularly. This is a dimension that the global justice movement must take into account. If it does not integrate the struggle against male domination as a political dimension in the fight against neoliberal policies, it will be difficult to build another world. This is the message that the women's assembly tried to bring to the general assembly of social movements on November 16. ■

OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A different European Left is necessary!

past 50 years, social inequality has never been as great as now.

Third, the constitution confirms the EU's semi-despotic, undemocratic character. The real political power remains in the hands of the governments (the European Council) and to a lesser extent the Commission. The European Central Bank is totally independent, functions in total opacity, and is accountable to no one. The European Parliament is not comparable to national parliaments: it does not legislate, adopt the budget, or choose the executive. The constitution does not recognise the multinational character of the member states that deny the right to self-determination of the "nations without states", in the name of the territorial integrity principle. Admittedly, the EU is a complex structure. But one thing is clear: power in the EU does not emanate from the citizens or peoples, but from governments. That's the world upside down!

Fourth, the constitution does not recognise citizenship rights, including the right to vote, for citizens of a third country residing in a member state.

Finally, the constitution legally obliges the EU and its member countries from now on to reinforce their military capabilities and act in close cooperation with NATO. This legal obligation will be a bonanza for the military-industrial complex. This is the road to European-style militarism. The "European defence" that France, Britain and Germany are pushing for confirms their political will and shows the space they want to occupy: inside the imperialist system, alongside the USA.

We say no to this Europe; we struggle for a different Europe: social and democratic, ecological and feminist, peaceful and in solidarity.

Nobody and no organization that claims to be on the left can agree with the contents of this constitution. Yet European social democracy and the Green parties have already taken sides: their response will be "yes". True, they say, it is all far from perfect, but it is the lesser evil and we can improve it.

The responsibility of the European social-democratic parties

They put forward three justifications to make us swallow this bitter pill: the EU is an advance over the past, so therefore undermining it means falling into nationalism, European wars, etc.; the EU and particularly the European Commission are defending the "communitarian" dimension of Europe, "therefore" they are helping the European trade-union movement; and the EU must become an economic and political and therefore military force in the world so as to provide a "counterweight" to the United States. This "lesser evil" is eating away at politics like a cancer.

In its name, the social democratic parties have swallowed the European bosses' neoliberal programme and the EU's steady backwards march. Applying this program on the governmental level has led to the deep demoralization of the world of labour and the trade union movement. The social democratic parties are profoundly discredited because of the loss of the popular layers in society. This leads us to reject entry into a government with social democracy on the basis of their neoliberal programme.

The social democratic parties have not even tried to stop this infernal machine, prevent the neoliberal counter-reform and block this undemocratic European apparatus. They have not even tried to achieve unity in action with the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation) and mobilise on a European scale. It would have been easy for them, especially since at the decisive moment for the EU in the late 1990s social-democratic parties were running 12 out of the 15 governments and dominated the main EU institutions (the Commission and Council).

Today, in opposition, the social-democratic parties are trying to erase their recent balance sheet. But the world of labour, women, young people, immigrants and the rest of us have not forgotten the pain that the social democrats have inflicted on us. Blair and Schröder, still in power today, are around to remind us what their true social democratic policies are. The largest Green parties →

→ have chosen that road. Joschka Fischer, German Minister of Foreign Affairs and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a key player in the European Parliament, struggle to align all the Green parties behind the neoliberal constitution and the European superpower.

Rebirth of social and labour movements

The "global justice" movement has broken this 20-year-old impasse, creating a left alternative and a perspective for liberation. A new political generation is mounting the barricades. In the last few years in countries including Italy, France, Britain, Greece and Spain, millions of workers and young people have marched shoulder to shoulder in antiwar mobilizations and workers' struggles. This movement, international from the beginning, has quickly become a reference point in society and a rallying point for a multitude of social forces and organizations. It has given birth to a worldwide antiwar movement on a scale never seen before. At the same time, in Florence, it laid the foundations of a new European social movement. Today the ESF is on the threshold of a convergence with the world of labour in the "rich" countries by taking up two fundamental social issues: the exploitation of labour and the oppression of women.

Compared with the EU, bosses and ruling classes, most of the leadership of the traditional trade-union movement is lagging worryingly behind, in particular the European Trade Union Confederation. Where are the European gatherings, the European responses, the European action programmes, the European actions and strikes and the European strategy that we need to resist the transnational, internationally organised bosses? Why was there no European strike against the war when all the peoples of Europe were taking to the streets of London, Rome, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Amsterdam and Madrid on February 15? How can we fight to win this "different" Europe?

We will need a new mass social movement, a profound renewal of the trade-union movement and a new citizens' movement to fight the key upcoming battles.

The 2004 European elections

The EU constitution is an issue concerning us all. But the EU is doing everything to avoid the only true test: letting the peoples of Europe decide about Europe! Some governments are even too scared to hold a referendum!

In reality the EU is staking everything on the June 2004 European elections so as to smuggle its project through. We say: what petty grafters!

We will transform the June 2004 European elections into a huge mobilizing campaign against the EU's reactionary and regressive constitution and for a different Europe; against neoliberal policies and for an anti-capitalist programme; against imperialist war and European militarism and for peace and general disarmament, starting out in our own countries. Country by country, we aim to provide a strong anti-capitalist alternative which is broad and pluralistic, in order to fight for the European social movement's demands and perspectives.

Yes, we can have a different Europe — if all the social forces that have mobilized these last four years fight for their demands and programmes in the streets and at the ballot box, through mobilisations and elections.

For the first time in 25 years a huge oppositional, internationalist, anti-capitalist milieu is emerging on a world scale, to different extents in different countries. Nobody and no political party is capable of co-opting or manipulating this proud, conscious force. Yet the fear of being co-opted and manipulated is there. The best way to ward off the danger is to seize political space, and make a collective intervention in the battle during these elections based on the social movement's central demands, which have already been brought to life in the European Social Forum. Otherwise we risk an absurd outcome: while the social movement fights on the ground, the traditional parties of the neoliberal left walk off with the political "conclusion".

We need a different European Left!

We need a new political force: anti-capitalist and European

Faced with the traditional Right, which is increasingly aggressive and reactionary, faced with a far Right that is racist and a threat to democratic freedoms, and faced with a social-liberal Left that is totally devoted to the policies of the ruling classes, we need a political alternative that takes up the aspirations of the social, anti-capitalist left. It is up to the tens of thousands of men and women, young people and old, workers and citizens engaged in the movement and mobilizations to build this new anti-capitalist force for the radical transformation of society. Nobody else can do it in their place. Giving up on the job out of inertia, suspicion, hesitance or incomprehension would mean giving a green light to endless reruns of social-liberalism — which would be a disaster. We have to work together on a radical, unitary and pluralist basis.

The European Anti-Capitalist Left wants, without arrogance, to make a contribution to this project. We are not something different from the social left; we are an integral part of the social left. We have been in the social movement and "global justice" movement from the start, building it and strengthening it.

Our project reflects the different motivating forces inspiring the social movement: anti-capitalist and ecologist, anti-imperialist and antiwar, feminist and grassroots, anti-racist and internationalist. As an alternative to capitalism, we seek a socialist, democratic society, self-managed from below, without exploitation at work or oppression of women, founded on sustainable development as opposed to a "growth model" that threatens the planet. As a strategy, we have a social orientation, very concerned with working people's daily lives: we demand a stable, fulltime job, a living wage, a liveable social benefit in case of unemployment, sickness, disabling conditions or retirement, the right to housing, education and professional training and quality health care, for everyone. This requires undoing neoliberal policies and breaking with capitalism: (re)developing public services, recasting government budgets and redistributing wealth from capital to labour. In short, in order to reach our social objectives we propose to take all necessary anti-capitalist measures, including replacing private property with social property.

Only a new political and social force on a massive scale across the European continent will be able to impose our social demands and realise our hopes for a better world. A "different Europe" is possible, but a different European Left is necessary.

The following organisations signed this Declaration in Paris, on November 10-11, 2003:

Scottish Socialist Party (SSP, Scotland)

Red Green Alliance (RGA, Denmark)

Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR, France)

Left Bloc (BdE, Portugal)

Socialist Alliance (SA, England)

Socialist Workers Party (SWP, England)

Socialist Party (SP, Ireland)

Socialist Party (SP, England)

The Left (LG/DL, Luxemburg)

Alternative Space (EA, Spain)

Zutik (Basque Country)

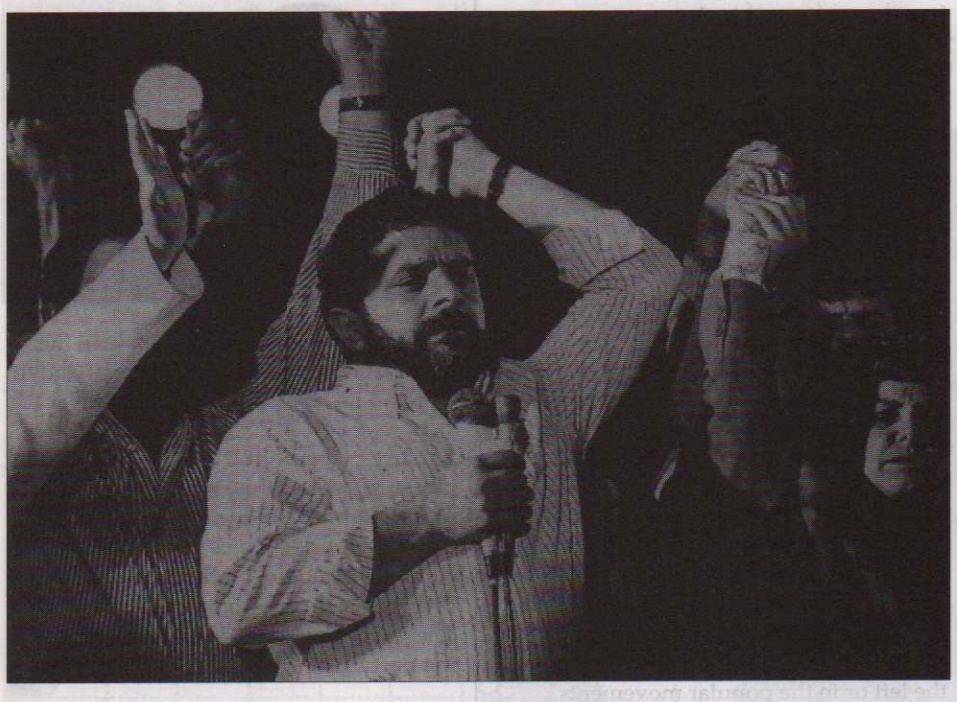
United and Alternative Left (EUiA, Catalonia)

Solidarities (S-S, Switzerland)

Party of Liberty and Solidarity (ÖDP, Turkey)

Brazil: in defence of democracy – against the expulsions of PT parliamentarians

The resolution that follows was adopted by the seventh National Conference of the Socialist Democracy Tendency of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT).



Parliamentarian comrades of the PT have been suspended from their group and some, moreover, are threatened with expulsion. The main reason is that they have expressed divergences in relation to pension reform, as well as the fact that they have voted or announced their intention to vote in a different way from the orientation approved by the majority leadership of the party.

We completely disagree with all these sanctions, and especially with the threats of expulsion. It should be taken into account when considering this question that the parliamentarians punished or threatened with sanctions have voted in accordance with positions long defended by the entire PT, including in the electoral campaign of 2002 - positions that had been only recently changed by the majority of the party leadership, following decisions taken by the government.

Moreover, the positions assumed by these parliamentarians are in accordance with the [trade union confederation] CUT (which recommended a vote against the proposed pensions reform) and with bodies in the civil service, besides being defended equally by other sectors of the social movement, and innumerable specialists in the pensions question linked to the PT. Indeed, the PT has always sought to represent the legitimate aspirations of the social movements; this is one of the characteristics that form part of the basic identity of the party. Moreover, 24 representatives of the PT who voted in favour of the government proposal had expressed disagreement with its content in a public statement.

Those parliamentarians who abstained or voted against the proposal had acted, therefore, in accordance with the traditions of the PT (and with broad sectors of the party still today), as well as with the position of fundamental sectors of the working class. If the suspensions are upheld and, worse still, expulsions are carried out, the PT leadership will be

attacking not only those parliamentarians directly punished and diverse sectors of the party that agree with their position, but also fundamental sectors of the working class. In particular, the expulsion of these parliamentarians would also amount to an aggression against the CUT.

It is also necessary to take into account that the change of position that resulted in the proposals included in the pensions reform was carried through by the government and the majority of the party leadership without a satisfactory discussion. There was no proper debate in the leadership of the PT, not even in the parliamentary group. Moreover, in the seminar promoted by the PT and the Perseu Abramo Foundation in May, the broad majority of the positions expressed were against the proposals put forward by the federal government in alliance with the state governments. However, the content of this seminar was completely ignored by the federal government and the majority of the PT leadership.

The unity in action of the parliamentary group has always been defended by the PT. However, the party always took into account the possibility that, in certain votes where questions of conscience were at stake, parliamentarians would be able to vote in different ways from the majority position.

However, the situation in the PT during the debate on pensions was characterized by a very special situation, for these reasons: the position upheld by the majority of the party leadership, following the position of the federal government, resulted from very recent changes, carried through without broad debate, and in conflict with positions long defended by the entire PT. They also conflicted with the positions of fundamental sectors of the working class.

There are more reasons than one, then, for parliamentarians to invoke objections of conscience to diverge from the majority position. To aggravate things, the final decision on pensions reform was made at a meeting of the national leadership before it had been exactly defined what proposal would be submitted to the vote - a procedure that robs it of any authority.

In these conditions, to impose a majority discipline, and make threats of expulsion, is a procedural nonsense. It has no democratic legitimacy. It would have the serious consequence of moving the PT away from fundamental sectors of the working class. It would clash with the tradition of democracy and pluralism in the PT.

At the moment, a great debate is underway on the treatment of the question of genetically modified foods, which divides the federal government and the PT. In this case, the position adopted by the party leadership with relation to the existing divergences was much more correct than that adopted on the pensions reform.

It is important to point out that there are many similarities between the two debates. The government adopted a provisional measure allowing the plantation of genetically modified soya in the next harvest, in opposition to positions upheld by the PT, including in the recent electoral campaign; this measure has met opposition from many parliamentarians in the party, as well as from important social movements (the environmental movement, agricultural workers, the CUT). The change in position was not properly debated. Many parliamentarians had expressed opposition to the measures taken by the government.

To try to prevent the comrade Fernando Gabeira from leaving the PT, the national president of the party has already announced that each parliamentarian could vote in accordance with their convictions. This attitude is exactly what one would expect from the president of the PT. The same attitude should have been adopted in the discussion on pensions reform. In place of threats of expulsion of parliamentarians, it would have been better to take into account their positions (and those of all the sectors of the PT and the social movement who agree with them).

The PT has always been proud of being a democratic and pluralist party, and having deep links with the working class. It cannot, now that it has very much bigger responsibilities, move radically and start to behave as a transmission belt of the government, breaking in this with fundamental sectors of its social base.

The expulsion threat is still more absurd when we take into account that there has been an increasing number of affiliations, or announced filiations, to the PT of parliamentarians elected for other parties, with no tradition of struggle on the left or in the popular movements. If the PT is open to parliamentarians and other personalities who do not have a left history, and at the same time it is clashing with legitimate social movements and very importantly, with fundamental sectors of the working class, and if moreover it is still banishing parliamentarians with a long tradition from popular struggles and defence of the positions of the party, it will be taking a step on the road to a serious loss of some of its more basic qualities.

The most absurd and unacceptable expulsion threat is that of comrade Helo sa Helena. This comrade began her political activism in the PT; she has always had a decisive role in the fight against the powerful oligarchies of the State of Alagoas and the whole northeast. She has been a leader of the PT in the Senate of the Republic, with a shining and militant record. She is part of the National Leadership of the party and its National Executive Commission. She is, without doubt, one of the most prestigious PT leaders in the country. The positions that this comrade has defended, including in the debate over pensions reform, are the same positions that she defended when she was leader of the PT in the Senate.

The threatened expulsion of comrade Helo sa Helena at the next meeting of the National Leadership would besmirch the history of the PT. It would be a step in the direction of a serious erosion of the PT's character as a socialist and workers' party. It would represent an enormous blow to the relationship of the party with fundamental sectors of the Brazilian working class and the popular movements of the country. It would be, therefore, completely unacceptable, and it would

compel us to appeal immediately to the next National Meeting of the party, and to demand its reversal.

In place of an arbitrary and authoritarian measure such as this, what the situation of the country and the PT demands is respect, along the lines suggested by comrade Genoino, on the question of the divergence on environmental questions. The government needs to listen more to the party.

It is necessary to add that the serious divergences inside the government, which have become public on the question of genetically modified foods as on the question of the FTAA, must be debated by the PT, and the position of the party and the social movements must be taken into account.

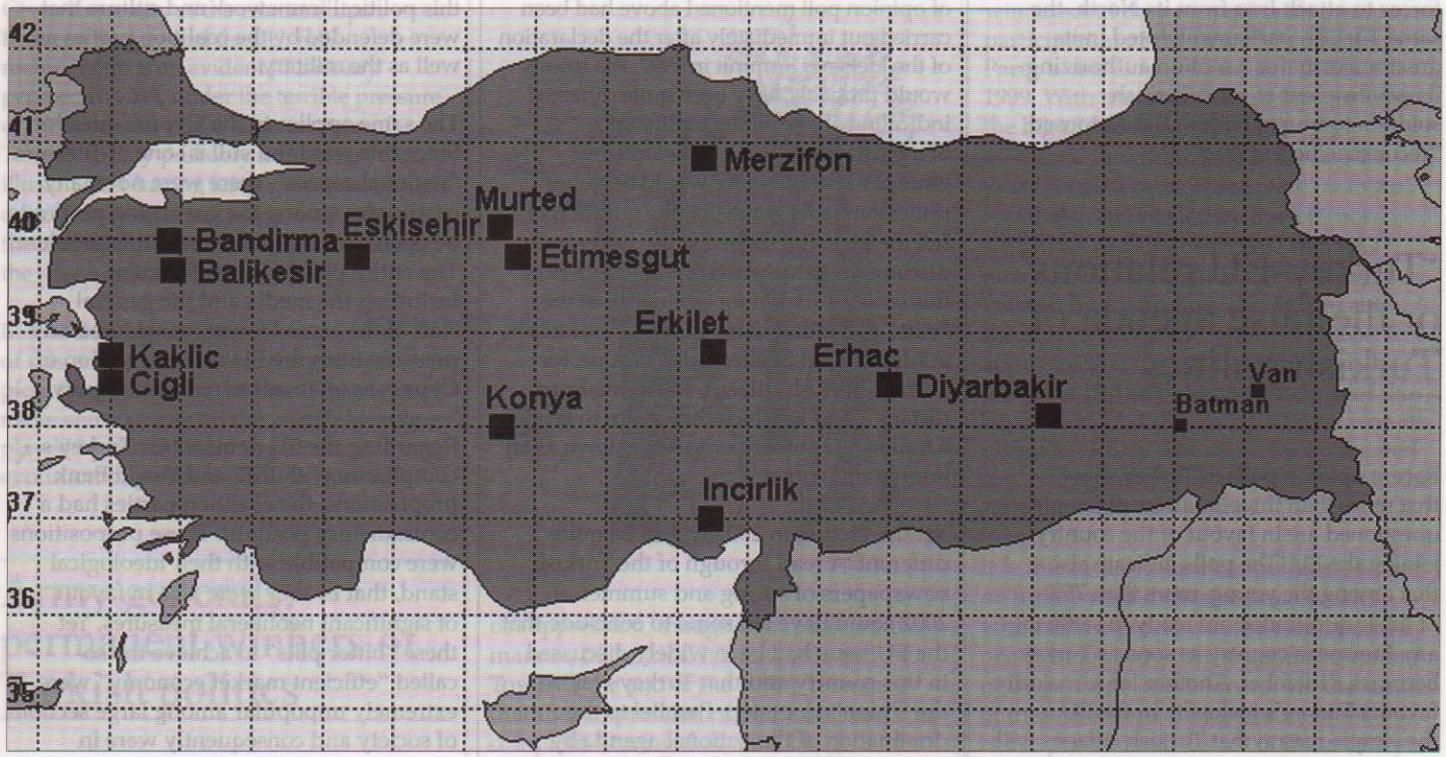
For these reasons, we will from today lead a public campaign against the threats of expulsion, and in particular in defence of comrade Helo sa Helena. ■

São Paulo, November 22, 2003

Turkey: surprises and continuity

ERGUN AYDINOGLU

Until recently the international press, when covering Turkey, always had some standard topics such as violations of human rights, the Kurdish problem, or the Cyprus question. There was nothing peculiar in this since this country has almost never played a role as regional power – except perhaps with the military intervention in Cyprus in 1974. However, in the last twelve months, Turkey has been the source of many stories in the international press related to international strategic questions.



Turkey's air bases

Turkey's membership of the EU was one of the most discussed questions before and during the Copenhagen Summit of December 2002 despite the fact that this country was not among those whose full membership would be decided upon at this summit. However, Turkey's membership was being so vividly discussed during the preparation period of the summit that Mr. Verhogen, the EU Commission member responsible for enlargement, had to declare that they would not allow the Copenhagen Summit to become a "Summit for Turkey". Yet nobody could deny that one of the summit's main headaches was the necessity of giving a proper response to the Turks without humiliating them and also to remind the overall community of the urgency of defining the Union's ultimate boundaries.

The outcome of the Turkish general elections held in December 2002 also

received extensive coverage in the international press. A "neo-Islamist" party took power in a Muslim country, a NATO member and a long-time US ally, whose role would be vital in the US-UK military assault against Iraq.

A few months later, on March 1, 2003, yet another surprise came as the Turkish Parliament rejected a motion that would allow US forces to attack Iraq from Turkish soil. This was a bitter surprise not only for the US-UK Alliance but also for the Turkish political establishment, who ardently supported Turkey's participation in the invasion and had given their assurances that the motion would pass with an overwhelming majority vote.

As is well known, the US quickly changed its military plans and did what they had planned to do without the direct contribution of Turkey. This was not the end of strategic cooperation between two countries. As US and UK forces experience more and more difficulties in newly "liberated" Iraq, the question of sending Turkish soldiers to the country has been put on the agenda. Seven months after its rejection of a motion allowing the US forces to attack Iraq from its North, the same Turkish parliament voted in its great majority for a motion authorizing its government to send Turkish soldiers to Iraq to help in the supposed "reconstruction of Iraq".

'Turkey-EU relations' or the false agenda of Turkish politics

Recent opinion polls in Turkey show that more than three-quarters of people questioned are in favour of the country joining the EU. The polls indicate also that among the young, more than 75% of those questioned are ready to settle in any European country as soon as Turkey becomes a member. Another large majority favours Turkey's inclusion in the EU for the simple reason that Turkish citizens will benefit from the right of free circulation of labour within the community[1].

As a matter of fact, these polls indicate more the particularity of the period during which EU membership became a significant topic on the Turkish political agenda than the average citizen's opinion on the EU. To understand this particularity, it is necessary to dwell briefly on the last three years' developments.

Turkey has supposedly been part of the project of EU construction ever since the signing of the Rome Convention in 1963[2]. Nevertheless, many European leaders have expressed, and continue to express, their views over the impossibility of Turkey's full membership of the community[3].

In spite of this, conscious of its privileged relations with the Union stemming from its historical political and economic links as well as its geo-strategic position, Turkey applied for full membership in 1987. Some time later, in 1995, Turkey and the EU signed the Customs Unions Agreement, which could be considered as the culmination point in this relationship. It should be recalled that Turkey is the only candidate country that signed such a Customs Union agreement without being guaranteed full membership[4]. A few years later, during the EU Helsinki Summit held in December 1999, Turkey was granted the status of a candidate for accession to the EU[5].

It is difficult to claim that the decision of the EU Helsinki Summit stimulated an enthusiasm among ordinary citizens of Turkey towards the Union. It would not be an exaggeration to say that if the same type of opinion poll mentioned above had been carried out immediately after the declaration of the Helsinki Summit in 1997, the results would probably have been quite different, indicating above all the indifference of the citizens of Turkey towards the issue. Such indifference would be quite understandable given that the question of full membership in the EU has never been discussed seriously in the public sphere of this country. Except for a minority of the "elite" (a handful of bureaucrats, journalists, academics and intellectuals), Europe, for average Turkish citizens, is nothing but a distant world to which they yearn to go as a tourist or a student or to settle down as an immigrant worker.

Yet the picture in 2002 would be quite different. A read through of the Turkish newspapers of spring and summer of 2002 could have led some to conclude that the EU issue had been widely discussed in this country and that Turkey was on the Union's doorstep. Parallel to the domination of the national agenda by this question, a considerable shift in the public opinion has been witnessed, with a large majority of the country's population beginning to rally behind the prospect of EU membership.

It was quite clear that this was neither an outcome of a serious public debate nor the result of an evolution in perspectives. There was no serious public debate and what happened could be qualified as a sudden dramatic change rather than an "evolution". It should be recalled that, just a few years ago, in February 1999, when the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) leader Öcalan sought asylum in Italy, a chauvinistic wave swept over Turkey with the expression of public hatred towards, not only Italy, but also other European countries for supposedly "sheltering" Turkey's most wanted man. Moreover, the results of the general elections that were held a few months later in April 1999 were significant in this respect. The two biggest winners of the elections, the MHP and the DSP, had positions on the EU that were far from sympathetic[6].

Besides, the three party coalition government formed after these elections had positions, at least until the financial crisis of February 2002, which were quite uncooperative on issues related to the EU – apart from, of course, the imposed economic criteria[7]. The coalition parties were very half-hearted over the application of the "Copenhagen political criteria" and the solution of the question of Cyprus, which had already become a EU problem. The political criteria imposed by the EU necessitated significant transformations in the framework of Turkish politics and in its conservative political culture; and it was this political framework and culture that were defended by the coalition parties as well as the military.

The same applies to the Cyprus question. Since this was (and still is) one of Turkey's "national causes", there were not many candidates among the governing parties to be open for a real solution to this problem. The entire political establishment, including the media and the general staff of the armed forces, considered any pressure from the EU on the question of Cyprus as an insult to national dignity.

Regarding the EU demand for Turkey's compliance with IMF and World Bank propositions, the coalition parties had a contradictory position. These propositions were compatible with their ideological stand, that is, they were also in favour of significant neoliberal measures. Yet these "bitter pills" to achieve the so-called "efficient market economy" were extremely unpopular among large sections of society and consequently were in open contradiction with these parties' clientelist traditions. It was this reality that pushed the coalition parties to apply these solutions in an opportunistic manner that sometimes annoyed IMF representatives.

Nonetheless, a short time later, not only public opinion, but also the governing parties –particularly the ANAP[8] and DSP- changed dramatically their positions towards the EU. During the summer of 2002, the Turkish Parliament passed a number of bills ("convergence packets")

meeting the demands of the so-called "Copenhagen criteria". Among these, there was significant legislation that signified – though merely on paper - important democratic progress, including the abolition of capital punishment. One should not forget that these liberal bills were passed by a Parliament whose composition was probably one of the most reactionary in history of the modern Turkish Republic.

On the other hand, under the supervision of Kemal Dervis, economy minister, who had been appointed by Prime Minister Ecevit, in other words, transferred from the World Bank after the shock of the February 2002 financial crisis, the IMF "prescriptions" were put into practice with much greater care.

As for the Cyprus situation, it gradually became possible to discuss one of the 'untouchables' of Turkish politics. All these developments went hand in hand with an almost surreal coverage of the question of EU membership by the press, radio and television as if it was a matter of months away[9].

Given the reality of the relationships between Turkey and the EU, full membership is an evident illusionary perspective. Yet, under the terrible pressure of the economic crisis, large sections of Turkish society probably needed such an illusion after having lost a great deal of their optimistic visions and hopes on future. At the centre of this turn, there was obviously the severe crisis of February 2001.

Before dealing with the consequences of this crisis, to complete the political picture of Turkey in the late 1990s, let me make some points on the particular role played by the military in politics and the evolution of political Islam in Turkey.

Army generals: permanent winners of Turkish politics

With their victory over the Islamist movement in 1996[10], the generals of the Turkish army probably thought that they had won their second victory within two decades; the first had been the suppression of the left and the trade union movement in the early 1980s following the September 12, 1980 coup. The Turkish left and trade union movement of the 1970s was very significant in many senses though it suffered from a terrible weakness, namely its disunity. The generals won their war against the left relatively easily, not having to resort to mass murder campaigns as had been typical in similar cases such as Indonesia in 1965, Chile post-September 1973 or Argentine in the late seventies. In Turkey in the early 1980s, mass arrests were sufficient. Yet, regardless of the degree of the severity of the repression or the methods used by the generals, the overall picture after the repression period was that, having lost its left 'wing' and its tradition of social movement, Turkish politics would never be the same.

Then, from the late 1980s onwards, came the ascendancy of political Islam that was in a way the reflection of the current developments of the region as a whole. However, it was also the product of the general's repression that utilised religion against "subversive leftist ideologies". The ascendancy of political Islam in Turkey reached its peak with the formation, in 1996, of the coalition government led by Erbakan, a veteran of the Islamist movement in Turkey. Yet, after ten months in power, this Islamist-led government was forced to resign by the military and with that the operation

of suppression, though in a rather mild manner, of political Islam was launched. Towards the end of the 1990s, it seemed that the suppression of political Islam was complete. During that time, the generals probably began to look to a third victory, in their fight against Kurdish rebels. Given the developments of the low intensity war, all indicators showed that the generals would win in a few years' time. A short time later, this expectation turned out to be fairly realistic.

On February 16, 1999, Bulent Ecevit, the then Turkish prime minister, declared in front of a huge gathering of journalists that the leader of the insurgent Kurdish movement the PKK was in the hands of the Turkish security forces, was being kept in an undisclosed place and would be taken to Turkey very soon. Later it became known that the Kurdish leader had been arrested or captured by "unknown" people in Kenya and handed over to the members of Turkish Special Forces waiting for him in an aeroplane at Nairobi airport[11]. Whatever the real circumstances of this capture, it was the inevitable outcome of the partial failure of the long armed struggle that lasted about 15 years, causing the death of more than 25,000 people (most of them armed militants) and the displacement of millions of people of Kurdish origin.

The developments that followed this capture were striking. The PKK leader made a call from his prison cell for an end to the armed struggle, renouncing in the meantime the corner stone of his movement's political program, that is the formation of an independent Kurdish state.

The April 1999 election results were almost a direct consequence of these developments. The two fiercest nationalist parties (the MHP from the right and the DSP from the "left") were the big winners and they formed, with the participation of the ANAP/Motherland Party, a coalition government in May 1999. With the formation of this coalition, the big upheavals that had deeply disturbed the country over the last 40 years seemed over. There were no more social movements led by the left, nor a Kurdish or Islamist threat. This was now a stability of political life that was marked by corruption, clientelism and the army's authoritarian surveillance. It appeared that the political framework designed by the putschist generals of the September 12, 1980 coup had now won its ultimate victory. The society they wanted to atomise and depoliticise was now in the state they had dreamed of.

It is this rather colourless political picture of Turkey would change dramatically within three years with the victory of the neo-Islamist party in the general elections of December 3, 2002. First of all, the results of these elections changed almost the entire professional cadres of the country. The victorious Justice and Development Party (AKP or AK Party) had been formed recently by former militants and leaders of the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), the archenemy of the Turkish generals, following its closure by a Constitutional Court decision in 1997.

Nonetheless, this election victory was not a revival of the Turkish Islamist movement. It was rather the outcome of the combined effect of two separate developments: the inevitable transformation of political Islam

that followed the international (or rather regional) trends and the financial crisis of February 2001 that shook Turkish society and the political establishment as a whole. To understand this peculiarity better, it is necessary to dwell on the evolution of the Islamist movement in Turkey in the late 1990s.

Neo-Islamist election victory in 2002: not a rebirth from its ashes

The trajectory of Turkey's Islamist movement of the mid-90s seemed to be presenting one of the best confirmations of Gilles Kepel's argument that political Islam, which had begun its ascendancy with the Iranian revolution of 1979, was now in decline[12].

The Turkish Islamist movement represented by the Refah Partisi at last saw its leader Necmettin Erbakan as prime minister, in 1996, although in a coalition cabinet. Refah emerged as the biggest party in the general elections and its members had already conquered the local governments of the two major cities, Istanbul and Ankara. At that time it would not be an exaggeration to say that Refah, or rather political Islam, would become one of the major political forces of Turkey, a situation which was unthinkable a few years ago given the secular generals' permanent hold on power in Turkish politics. Some even began to think that Turkey might follow the Algerian experience, where the generals declared that they were ready to pay any price not to yield their power and did everything in their force to wipe out the Islamist movement. In fact there were some indications of the possibility of such a "solution".

The Turkish generals considered the Islamist premiership as an insult to "their republic" and gave the impression that they also were prepared to do everything to topple it. They succeeded in obtaining the resignation of the Islamist prime minister within ten months without having resorted to arms. The premier was forced to resign by the military and therefore, this was a sort of bloodless military coup, defined later on by a retired general as a "post-modern coup".

The resignation of Erbakan was not the only setback for political Islam in Turkey. Following this resignation, a new coalition government was formed excluding the Islamists. Moreover, a few months later, the Refah Partisi was closed down by the constitutional court and its leaders were banned for five years from active politics. Times were now difficult for the prominent Islamist leaders who had been excluded from Parliament as well.

The followers of Refah tried to resist this repression by forming the Virtue Party (FP or Fazilet) yet some time later some of them began to realise that nothing would be the same again for the Islamists in Turkey. The most opportunist elements of the movement began to consider whether it would be wise to continue on the same political line. A number of lieutenants of Erbakan, the one time unchallenged leader of the Islamists, began to speak about abandoning the methods of the hard-liners. Factions emerged and several representatives of the young generation decided to break away. Before the general elections of 1999, the Virtue Party was already crippled. Elections were held and the Islamists realised that they were now the fourth party in the parliament with approximately 10% of the vote.

As for the splitters, whose leader Tayyip Erdogan – currently the prime minister - had been imprisoned for eight months and banned from politics for five years, they were planning to found a new political party which would not be accused of "Islamism". They began to claim that they had changed, that they were no longer the militant Islamists of the past and that they should be considered as the equivalence of the Christian Democrats in European politics. As for the public, there were no indicators to suggest that this would be the governing party in a few years time. Quite the contrary, almost every political observer agreed that the heyday of the Islamist movement had already gone. Some even began to think that the Islamists were on their way to marginalization.

A turning point: financial crisis of February 2001

Financial and economic crises are not rare events in Turkey. There have been many such experiences in the last 30 years, the most important of them being the crises of 1970, 1977-80 and 1994. However, the crisis of February 2001 has been the most profound in terms of economic indicators. Yet this is not the sole reason for its uniqueness. It is the most significant crisis of the 80 years of the Turkish Republic's history, for it coincided also with a period during which Turkish society exhausted almost all its major perspectives, projects or visions concerning the future. The left opposition, Kurdish opposition and political Islam, who had challenged the system, were defeated and were no longer capable of leading the people towards new and challenging objectives. On the other hand, the political system formed by the September 12, 1980 regime had been eroded and there was not a social or political force to renovate it. As for the political establishment, their exhaustion was all the more tangible since it had lost all credibility through several economic-financial scandals and cases of political corruption.

In spite of the grievances caused by the brutal effects of the crisis there was no trace of some typical consequences of a deep economic crisis in the Turkish society of 2001. There were no indications of social unrest or serious challenge, no likelihood of the emergence of populist movements, or the radicalisation of different sectors of society and the possibility of the appearance of "Bonapartist" leaders. On the contrary, there existed nothing but a feeling of apathy towards politics, which seemed to affect a great majority of the population.

In these conditions came two surprising developments: suddenly, the public, under the influence of some politicians and the Turkish media, has become almost obsessed with the idea of joining the EU. It is quite certain that some politicians, who no longer had an appealing political project and had exhausted all their credibility, considered "playing the EU card" as a last chance for survival[13] and this manoeuvre had a great impact on large sectors of society, who were in search of new approaches to their difficulties. In quite a short time, EU membership began to be seen as a total solution to all the problems that Turkish society endured. (Looking at the Turkish press in the summer of 2001, one might have thought that the country was on the verge of a referendum, which would seal the country's future relationship with EU.)

In the meantime, the newly founded neo-Islamist party, the AKP, began to appear at the top of all the opinions polls. Elections approaching, people had to choose someone. This was not the revival of political Islam. It was nothing but the ascendancy of a new party that did not have any governmental experience, in other words, did not have any responsibility for the extremely difficult conditions created by the crisis.

The AKP achieved a victory in the December 2002 elections, with a big

majority, to the extent that it was very close to having the power to change the constitution[14]. The newly elected government put EU membership at the top of its agenda. It was well known that those so-called neo-Islamists were, until a few years ago, fiercely opposed to the European Union on the grounds that the EU project was another assault of the crusades on the Muslim world. However, it was also very well known that they were no longer Islamists and that they were now ready to play the role of responsible statesmanship.

A month after the general elections in Turkey, in December 2002, the leaders of the EU countries met in Copenhagen for their historical enlargement process. By not giving Turkey a date for the commencement of the full membership negotiations, the summit did not respond to the common enthusiasm of large sections of the population. As a matter of fact, the large majority of EU leaders seemed a bit anxious about this enthusiasm[15]. There were even hints that they had begun to think of some sort of "intermediary solutions" that would block Turkey's membership of the Union in a way that would not disappoint the Turks.

A few months later came yet another international development that caused the eruption of another surprise in Turkish political life: the Iraq War and Turkey's unthinkable position.

Pacifist champion or strategic US ally?

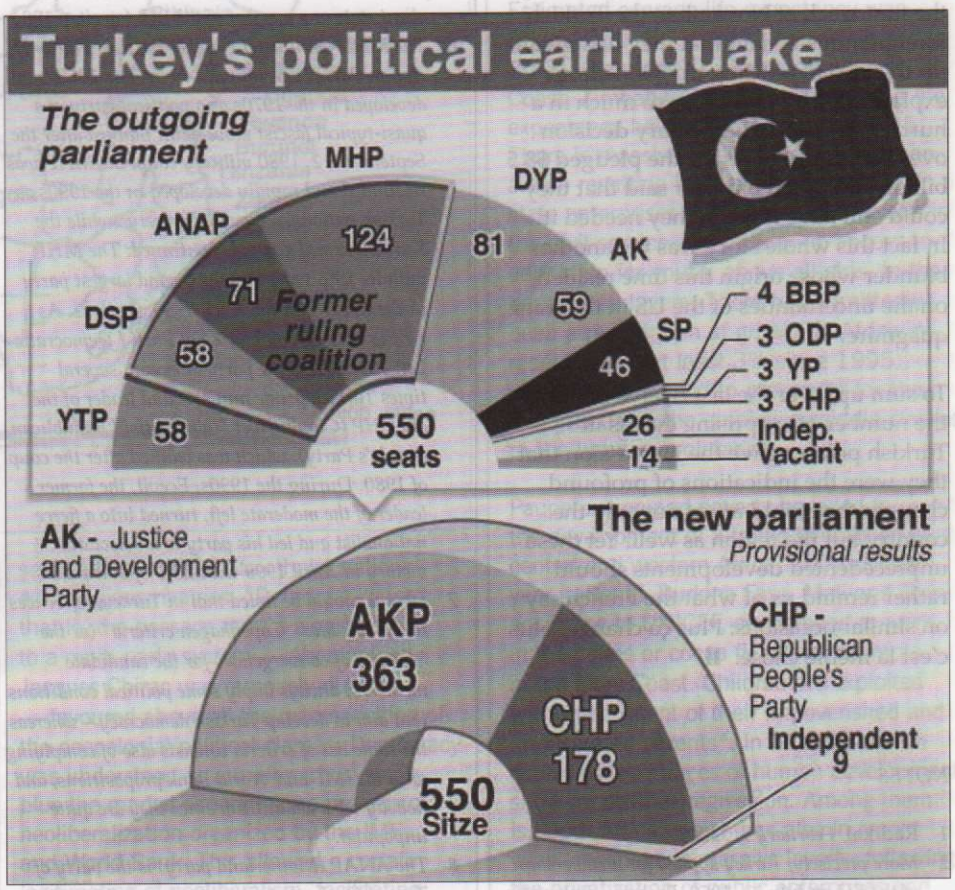
What happened on March 1, 2003 in the Turkish Parliament in Ankara looked at first sight like an earthquake, which shook the half-century-old strategic relationship between US and Turkey. However, though this was an exceptionally surprising event, it is not difficult to see that it was caused by the tensions, not between the Turkish government and the US administration, but rather between the neo-Islamist government and the Turkish armed forces.

Right from the beginning, the US government openly demanded help from Turkey in support of its project of invading Iraq. On the Turkish side, to decide on such an important issue, the two power centres of the country, the government and the armed forces, had to be in agreement. Actually, both sides, for their own reasons, were in favour of the acceptance of the US demand. The leaders of the neo-Islamist government thought that they had the opportunity to prove that they had nothing to do with the Islamic fundamentalists of other times and that they had really changed, as they claimed on every occasion. They also envisaged obtaining some part in the "post-war reconstruction of Iraq", which would facilitate their hold on power given the huge financial benefits that the so-called reconstruction represented. As for the chiefs of staff of the armed forces, they considered (and still do) the US as a strategic ally. To support their position, given the Iraqi Kurds' alliance with the Americans, the generals argued that Turkey should not be left "out of the game".

Though there was total agreement on the evaluation of the question, each side (and particularly the generals) tried to utilise this occasion to wear out its rival. This was quite understandable since the US war project was extremely unpopular in Turkey and it was a good chance to erode popular support for the government. At first the generals delayed disclosing their position. They even let some retired generals give the impression that they were not eager to support the Americans and that the government would be solely responsible for cooperation with the US invasion. The uncertainty was so high that when the government asked for a "recommendation" from the National Security Council (MGK), the constitutional organ in which the generals had considerable power and which held actual power in defence, international and national security questions, the latter, surprisingly, did not take a position on the issue, declaring that the decision-making body was Parliament.

Now Parliament, in other words the neo-Islamist party, would have to shoulder the total responsibility of participating in the US war on Iraq. The AKP deputies felt trapped by the military and this feeling would be a determinant of the Parliamentary vote, which was held in a closed session that required a secret vote. However, this left open the possibility for every deputy to decide according to his/her conscience[16]. In the end, parliament rejected with a marginal majority a motion allowing US troops to attack Iraq from the north.

Though surprising, this was nothing but the unforeseen outcome of the permanent tension between the AKP government and the generals of the armed forces. After the parliamentary vote, both sides tried to be more "responsible" and to give the impression that for the high interests of the state they were ready to cooperate sincerely, yet it was already too late. In the end, US and British forces invaded Iraq without the active support of Turkey. However, this did not mean the end of the so-called strategic alliance. A few months later, the Iraqi case provided another occasion for Turkey to prove its loyalty to its ally. This time



the US administration demanded that Turkish soldiers participate in security duties inside occupied Iraq in exchange for 8.5 billion dollars credit for Turkey. To ease out the neo-Islamists' anxieties, they said that this was not supporting the invasion but for the "reconstruction of Iraq". This time, the government and armed forces declared that they were in favour of it and warned the public and parliament that another tasteless surprise could lead to a divorce from the US and that this was the last thing they desired. In the end, their cooperation worked well and in the first week of October, the Turkish parliament authorised the government to send military forces to Iraq for a period of one year. Oddly enough, a month later the same Americans asked Turkey, first in a disguised manner and later on openly, to halt its preparations for sending troops to Iraq. For not only the Iraqi factions who are openly against the US-UK invasion, but the allies of the occupiers as well, notably the Kurds, said publicly that they were against the presence of Turkish soldiers on Iraqi soil. After a few weeks of uncertainty, during the first week of November, the Turkish foreign minister said that they had given up the idea of sending troops without explaining why they were so much in a hurry to take a parliamentary decision over the question. As for the pledged $8.5 billion credit, the minister said that they could still have it when they needed it! In fact this whole story was yet another blunder whose origin this time resided on the uncertainties of the US in the Iraqi quagmire.

To sum up, over the last twelve months the number of surprising events in Turkish politics gave the impression that they were the indications of profound changes that could affect not only the country but the region as well. Yet these unprecedented developments should rather remind us of what the French say on similar occasions: Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose! ■

NOTES

1 Radikal, *February 11, 2003.*

2 *More precisely, Turkey applied for membership of the EU on July 31, 1959. Probably diplomatic and geostrategic concerns played an important role in this application, since Greece had already applied for entry, probably inciting Turkish leaders to take the same road. (See for a detailed account for this period: Mehmet Ali Birand,* Türkiye'nin Ortak Pazar Macerası *(Turkey's Common Market Adventure), Istanbul, Milliyet Yayınları 1986.*

3 *In a recent book, German social democrat ex-chancellor Helmut Schmidt presented one of the most sincere descriptions of this position, which is quite rare on this topic among European politicians of the left. (Helmut Schmidt,* Selbstbehauptung Europas – Persectiven für das 21 Jahrhunder, *Deutscher Verlag Anstalt/Stuttgart – München, 2000); as a summary review of Schmidt's book's see: Muzaffer Darta, "Avrupa Birligi'nin Genisleme Sürecinde Türk-Alman Iliskileri" (Turkish-German relations in the process of European Union enlargement), "Marmara", "Journal of European Studies", pp 191-214.). For another unambiguous formulation of the positions of European centre or centre-left politicians over Turkey's membership see "Le Monde", 9 Kasım 2002, 'Europe: pour ou contre la Turquie'.*

4 *See Oguz, S, "Globallesme, Avrupa Bütünlesmesi ve Sendikalar" (Globalisation, European Integration and Trade Unions),* Toplum ve Bilim, *1996, vol 69.*

5 *According to Helmut Schmidt, Turkey's acceptance as "candidate member" is the result of two "necessities". Firstly, the EU leaders had to explain their good will towards Turkey, for the former 'European Economic Community' had long relations with this country since the early 1960s. Secondly, there was important pressure from the United States, which wants to see its client state as a member of the EU. (op cit, p 198.)*

6 *The MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi / National Action Party) was founded in the late 1960s and developed in the 1970s as a political party of a quasi-typical fascist movement. Banned after the September 12, 1980 military coup, the MHP was refounded and rapidly developed in the 1990s as Turkish nationalism gained impetus while the Kurdish armed struggle continued. The MHP, with its 19% vote, was the second largest party in the country at the April 1999 elections. As for the DSP (Demokratik Sol Parti / Democratic Left Party), it is the party of Ecevit, several times Turkish prime minister and leader of the old CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi / Republican People's Party), which was banned after the coup of 1980. During the 1990s, Ecevit, the former leader of the moderate left, turned into a fierce nationalist and led his party to an electoral victory in April 1999 with 20% of votes cast.*

7 *Here it should be noted that in Turkey, references to the so-called "Copenhagen criteria" (or the "criteria of convergence" for the candidate members) always imply some political conditions that aim to develop Turkish democracy – whereas the same list of criteria consists also of complying with the IMF and World Bank propositions, and nobody talks about them since they are quite unpopular.*

8 *The ANAP (Motherland party) is the party of Turgut Ozal, one time economy minister after the 1980 military coup, later on prime minister (1983-1988) and president (1988-1993).*

9 *On "9 May, European Day", a number of Turkish intellectuals, businessmen and politicians published a "manifesto" entitled "The place of Turkey is in the European Union... Yes I agree with that". This manifesto was on the billboards and television. In the meantime, an association that works as a think-tank for the Istanbul Chamber of Industrialists organized a joint meeting with other associations, institutions and even with some trade unions to launch a campaign to accelerate the realization of Turkey's full membership of the EU. In their declaration, they claimed that as mass organizations they represented 17 million people – an enormous exaggeration.*

10 *The Erbakan led coalition government had to resign in June 1997, after eight months in office. As a matter of fact, this resignation was nothing more than a likely consequence of the decisions of the National Security Council meeting of 28 February, which was generally considered as an ultimatum by the generals to the Islamist-led coalition government.*

11 *Many things have not been disclosed about this event. Yet in his deposition to the public prosecutor before his trial, Abdullah Ocalan declared that he had been arrested by some people who looked like Kenyans (probably by black American secret service agents) and was delivered to the Turkish security officers who were waiting in the airport.*

12 *Gilles Kepel,* Jihad, expansion et déclin de l'islamisme, *Editions Gallimard, 2000.1*

13 *Mesut Yilmaz, several times prime minister, including during the presidency of Turgut Ozal and leader of the Motherland Party, was first and most active among the politicians who almost substituted the subject of Turkish membership of the EU for the entire political program of his Party in order to regain credibility.*

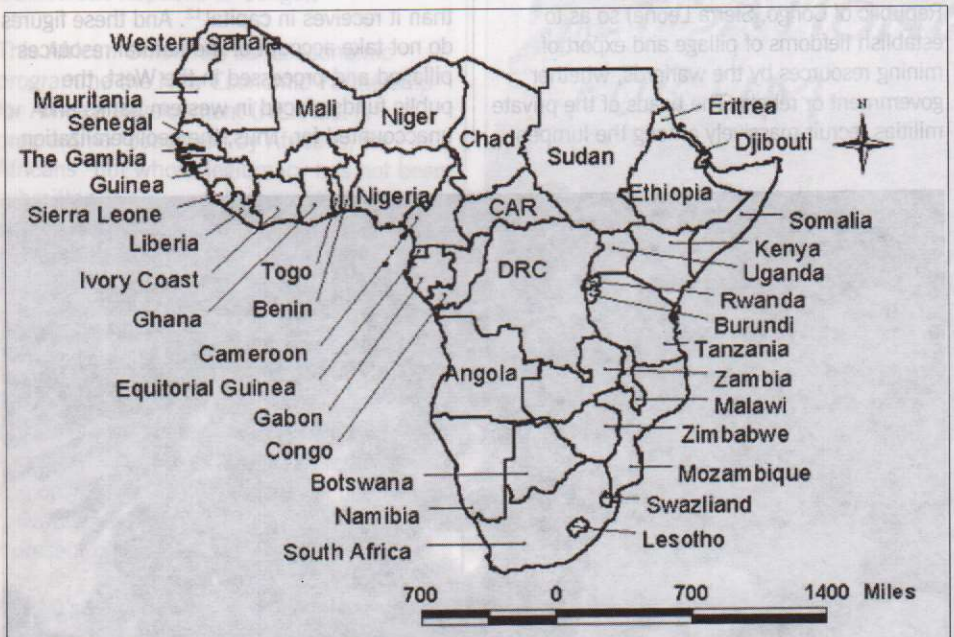
14 *The party that had 35% of the votes gained more than two thirds of the seats thanks to the electoral system that excludes parties who get less than 10%. On the other hand, the 7% of votes obtained by the Genc Party (Young Party) was another surprise of these elections. This party had been founded recently by a young and very rich businessman who succeeded in getting support from almost every section of society thanks to his extremely populist and nationalist discourse and intensive propaganda campaign – in the style of Berlusconi in Italy - through several television channels owned by his family.*

15 *Approximately six months after the summit, many Turkish papers covered a semi-scandal created by a video film taken during the behind the scene discussions of the summit. The film showed, through the words of the protagonists of the summit, such as Rasmussen, Chirac, Schroeder and Joschka Fischer, the implausibly hypocritical attitudes of the EU leaders towards Turkey's full membership.*

16 *The closed session choice was designed to protect AKP deputies personally, who, as loyal believers, were now on the verge of supporting the US military operation against a Muslim country. According to the statutes of the parliament, the votes cast during those sessions cannot be disclosed for ten years. Quite enough time to forget a "sin". According to the newspaper reports of the period, before the parliamentary vote took place, the AKP leader organised a simulated secret vote in the AKP parliamentary group and obtained a majority of "yes" votes. It is quite clear that some deputies who said, "yes" in the simulated vote felt obliged to say "no" during the real one.* ■

Africa: the marginalization of sub-Saharan Africa

JEAN NANGA*



The neoliberal structural adjustment imposed on the sub-Saharan African states from the 1980s onwards, aimed at dismantling the underdeveloped or dependent welfare states established in the first decades of independence, aroused popular opposition in a good number of sub-Saharan countries. The loss of legitimacy of the traditional neocolonial regimes allowed a relative "democratic opening" in the areas of freedom of expression, a multiparty system and change of government by electoral means rather than military coups. Meanwhile, in South Africa, the regime of constitutional apartheid was ended.

In general, this "democratic opening" did not lead to political pluralism, because it was ultimately controlled by the neoliberal elites. These elites are linked in different ways to international capitalist interests, in whose service they manipulate ethnic, national and religious rivalries. "Democratization", that is, the passage from a single party to a multi-party system — about which Jacques Chirac was famously dubious [1] — favoured above all the recomposition of the neocolonial political classes. Democracy was understood as a multiparty system plus the market economy or a process of neoliberalization organized by the IMF and World Bank. This allowed a certain legitimating of neoliberalism, facilitating structural adjustment, which initially met with popular opposition.

Pauperization

The sub-Saharan African economy remains dependent and under imperialist domination, although in a different manner. The vicious circle of the payment of the foreign debt serves as justification for the so-called structural adjustment policies, the privatization of the most profitable state enterprises [2] economic disengagement by the state and liberalization of markets to the benefit of the multinationals and at the expense of small local producers. These policies can only increase pauperization in the rural agricultural milieus, now deprived of state aid and more exposed to the fall in the price of basic products on the world market. They lead to a sharpened deterioration in the terms of trade, brought about by the priority accorded to exports under structural adjustment policies.

Countries like Congo-Brazzaville (rich in oil), the Ivory Coast (the main economy of the West African Economic and Monetary Union), Nigeria (the 6th biggest producer in OPEC and the main economy of the West African Customs and Economic Union) — once classed as "medium income countries" — are now candidates for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, with 70% of their populations living below the poverty threshold. Estimated average life expectancy was 58 in 1950, 56 in 1992 and 51 in 2000. Countries like Kenya, the Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe [3] and Zambia have a life expectancy below 50, indeed below 45. There is massive unemployment in urban areas, resulting from the privatization of state enterprises, job freezes and layoffs in the civil service and little or no access to education for youth, above all girls, in the pauperized layers. There has admittedly been a resumption of growth in Africa in recent years (at least 3% since 1995), but this has not led to prosperity for the majority (from the employed middle classes to the lumpen-proletariat).

Pauperization and poverty have led to the development of a traffic in children in central and western Africa; 200,000 per year in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo according to UNICEF, condemned to work in the coffee or cocoa fields, for example in the Ivory Coast. Children are exploited with the consent of their impoverished and immiserated parents [4]. In 14 sub-Saharan countries the indices of human development show an obvious regression. Among them is South Africa, which has also in recent years experienced massive layoffs, following the privatization of public enterprises and the neoliberal "restructurings" of big private companies like Toyota.

Sub-Saharan African growth (down slightly to 2.6% in 2002 as against 3.2% in 2001) is largely attributable to mining and oil and not to the growth of agricultural production, where falling prices on the world market have in recent years been the rule rather than the exception. This is the consequence of

organized overproduction in the name of giving priority to exports and a fall in household consumption in the importer countries.

Oil production is increasingly important with the discovery of new oilfields (Congo, Gabon, Nigeria), and the entry of new countries into the oil producers club (Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, Chad) has led to a consolidation of the imperialist presence in sub-Saharan Africa. The US in particular, but also Japan and indeed China, are openly displaying their interest in the natural wealth of sub-Saharan Africa. They are assured of making neocolonial super profits, since the return on investment is considered more rapid in Africa than everywhere else, thanks to the Codes of Investment and Labour (free exploitation of very cheap labour and contempt for universal social rights). These Codes have been dictated to the governments by the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO) and the OECD. The "democratically elected" parliaments[5] merely implement the transformation of sub-Saharan Africa into a free trade zone, in accordance with the wishes of European imperialism, within the framework of the agreements between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific states.

Inter-imperialist rivalry

In 1996 the then US secretary of state for trade, Ron Brown, said that: "Countries on the African continent are about to have a strong influence on the world's political and economic climate... My country is challenged to invest its human and economic resources in bringing about Africa's rebirth... Africa offers extraordinary outlets for leaders of American business... In this sense, American business can compete with Africa's usual trading partners like France and Portugal... In the future, the USA will no longer leave business dealings with Africa to European firms...[6] "

Whatever Colin Powell says, it is oil, rather than the war on terror, which explains this new interest in Africa. The US is interested in a greater presence in the oilfields of the Gulf of Guinea, so that it can increase Africa's share of US oil imports from 17% to 25%, thus reducing its dependence on Middle Eastern oil. The Bush team is also anxious to see Nigeria (the US' fifth biggest supplier) leaving OPEC[7].

Rentier elites

Certainly US investment in Africa can be considered insignificant, but it is not negligible; US exports to sub-Saharan Africa rose from $5.6 billion in 2000 to $6.8 billion in 2001, with transport equipment accounting for 42.4% of this, chemical products 11.6%, electronic products 10.4% and machine tools 9.9%. Nor is it negligible that France's economic relations with Africa result in a positive balance of 3.2 billion euros[8].

This inter-imperialist rivalry works to the benefit of the African elites, who find their role in the aggravated reproduction of dependence/domination and in the rentier status of the African states. The struggle for control of this rent — paid even in wartime — and the conservation of certain imperialist privileged positions generates fraudulent elections and new military coups (Central African Republic, Congo, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Niger) and wars (supposedly ethnic or religious) between local neocolonial fractions (Angola, Congo, Ivory Coast, Niger, Sudan)[9]. These elites, in addition to their status as rentiers, link up with the multinational companies in wars for the monopolization of mining resources, carving up countries (Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone) so as to establish fiefdoms of pillage and export of mining resources by the warlords, whether government or rebels. The heads of the private militias recruit massively among the lumpen-proletarianized youth and rely on mercenaries of every stripe who behave barbarically. The increasingly open participation of the rulers of the sub-Saharan countries (Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Angola) in these barbaric enterprises of capitalist accumulation allows them to participate more fully in the neoliberal restructuring of the world capitalist economy[10].

The economically motivated cynicism of the sub-Saharan neocolonial elites has culminated in the murderous carve up of Somalia into oilfields coveted by US imperialism, the genocide of the Tutsis and 'moderate Hutus' — a great human tragedy of the late 20th century, virtually reduced to banality — and the three million victims, direct and indirect, of the wars for diamonds, copper, colombo-tantalite/coltan (used in cellular phones), gold and so on in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The criminality of sub-Saharan lumpen-capitalism, although reminiscent of some aspects of the capitalism of past centuries is nonetheless thoroughly contemporary. Capitalism seems condemned by necessity to be very hideous, very irrational in sub-Saharan Africa[11].

The promise of progress through structural adjustment has proved false. The investment, jobs and prosperity promised have not materialized. According to the official figures, sub-Saharan Africa, not including South Africa, continues to transfer to the West more than it receives in capital[12]. And these figures do not take account of the natural resources pillaged and processed in the West, the public funds placed in western banks and unaccounted for. Thus, the neoliberalization of sub-Saharan Africa has led to a permanent worsening pauperization for the African people.

NEPAD at the service of multinationals

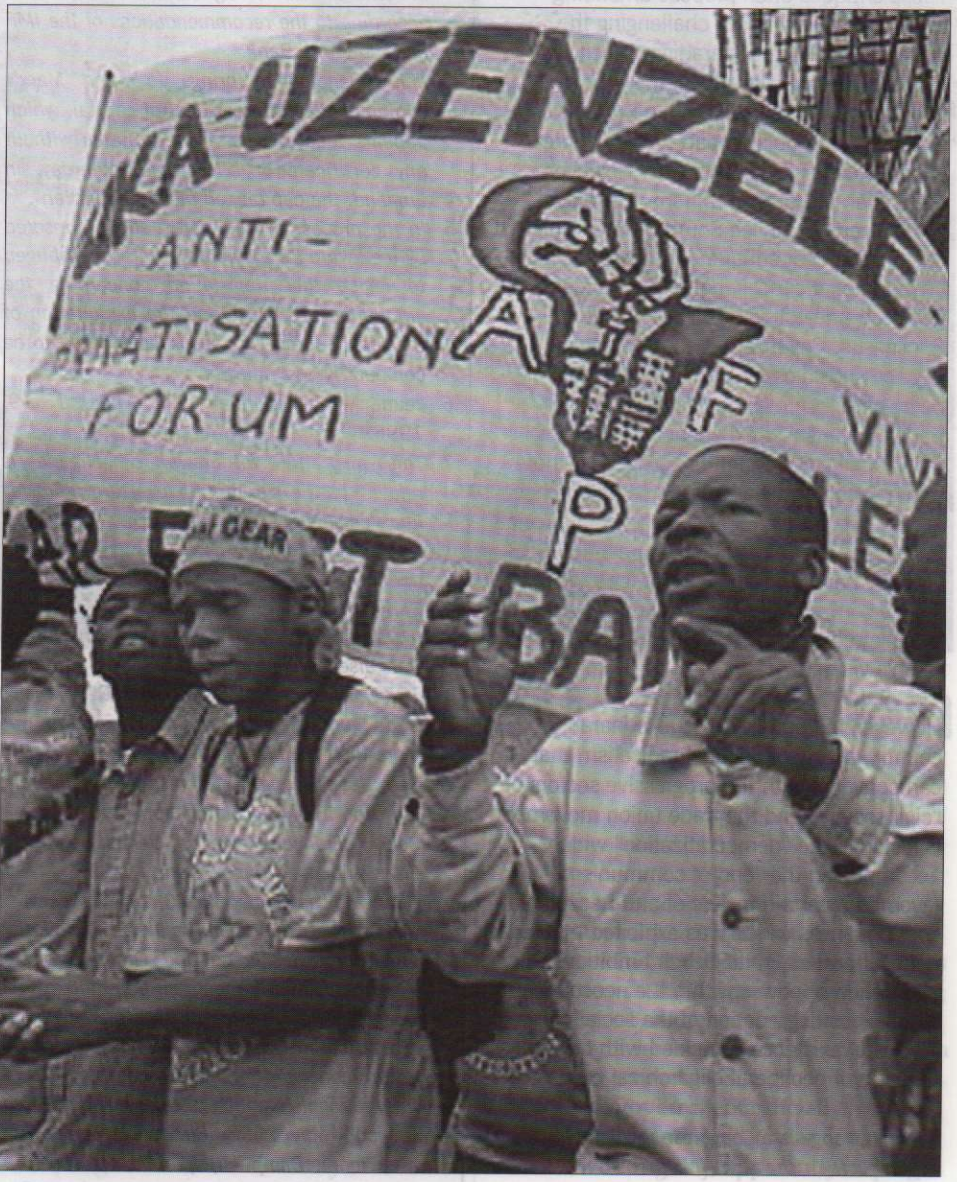
The would-be enlightened fraction of the African neoliberal elite, preoccupied with the "African Renaissance", has set up the African Union (1999), modeled on the European Union[13], created in July 2002 out of the ashes of the neocolonial

Organization of African Unity (OAU). The African Union is supposed to conclude a project of continental integration, from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. However, at the same time the founding states are pursuing xenophobic policies, making immigrants from other sub-Saharan countries scapegoats for the failure of their neoliberal social policies: expulsion and destruction of small fishing villages in Gabon; affirmation of "Ivoryness" against those originating from Burkina, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Mali in the Ivory Coast; violence against sub-Saharan Africans in Libya; national preference against Mozambican immigrant workers (an important labour force under apartheid) and other sub-Saharans in South Africa. Not to mention wars between neighbour states (Ethiopia-Eritrea, Guinea-Liberia, Chad-Central African Republic, Rwanda-Democratic Republic of Congo).

This African Union has as its economic programme the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). A programme "conceived by Africans, for Africans" but whose legitimacy has not been submitted to any popular consultation. It is rather imperialism that has been consulted; multinationals meeting in Dakar (April 2002) and the G8 at Kananaskis (Canada), where the G8 Plan of Action for Africa was adopted. The heads of state of the NEPAD have also adorned the recent summits at Davos and the G8 at Evian. The French state has its own delegate to the NEPAD, former IMF director Michel Camdessus. The only African consultation has been with "private entrepreneurs" who are supposed to represent civil society in Africa.

NEPAD's goal is to establish the bases of an African economic takeoff, with a projected annual average growth in GDP of more than 7% over the next 15 years and the reduction by half of the percentage of people living in extreme poverty over the same period[14].

NEPAD raises no demand for the unconditional and global cancellation of the foreign debt whose repayment is asphyxiating state social budgets. There is no halt planned to the process of privatization of strategic public enterprises. On the contrary, in pursuing "partnership" with private enterprise, the states show increasing zeal in this process of privatization. Thus, in Nigeria, for example, which has received more investment in recent years, the reelection of Obasanjo (2003) has impelled the privatization of the country's most strategic state enterprises. Moreover, responsibility for the economy has been entrusted to a high-ranking Nigerian functionary of the World Bank. Also omitted from the programme are the restoration of universal social rights in general and the rights of wage earners in particular undermined by the new neoliberal Labour Codes, adopted everywhere in the context of structural adjustment. There is no question of restoring the mechanisms of protection for small producers in relation to the multinationals. Investment codes establish equality between multinationals and small local entrepreneurs. The key movers behind the NEPAD (Bouteflika of Algeria, Mbeki of South Africa, Obasanjo of Nigeria, Wade of Senegal) expect a significant participation from the multinationals in the financing of the programme. But support from the multinationals is conditional on guarantees of security and profitability.



Hierarchical submission

It all adds up to a project of neoliberal reproduction of imperialist domination from which fractions of the African bourgeoisie expect a significant profit, conscious that under capitalism partnership can only be hierarchical, even between imperialisms, whose complicities and rivalries will be in this framework more determinant for the future of Africa than the ambitions of this undemocratic African Union. Imperialism, of course, will not finance a programme that would annihilate its grip on Africa's wealth. Thus, South African private capital aspires to a position of mini-power in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, in the whole of Africa in general. The end of apartheid was, for the enlightened part of the South African bourgeoisie, necessary to improve access to the continental market, previously limited because of the OAU's boycott. Since then, South African capital, through privatization of state enterprises and the liberalization of markets, finds itself in competition in certain sectors (port infrastructure, mining and so on) with non-African capital. The "African Renaissance" promised by Thabo Mbeki above all represents this continental expansion of private South African capital.

In fact, under the NEPAD the economy should be essentially private and in the hands of the multinationals. All the talk of

African national economies or the African economy amounts in practice to "western" capital invested in Africa exchanging with "western capital" elsewhere.

Despite its constantly proclaimed "African-ness" there is no popular consensus around NEPAD. The lack of consultation of national civil societies has been heavily criticized by development and human rights NGOs. These critiques often propose amending the programme without challenging the underlying neoliberal paradigm. Such was the case with nearly all the African interventions on NEPAD at the Summit For Another World held as part of the counter-G8 activities at Evian this year. However, there is an as yet very minority current, symbolized by Jubilee South (Africa) which bases its radical critique of the NEPAD on unconditional cancellation of the foreign debt and a rejection of the Washington Consensus. Privatization and the ending of price subsidies for basic staples are being opposed in some countries, while trades unionism is experiencing a kind of reawakening. An example is Nigeria, where in the space of two years the oil unions have staged two general strikes in reaction to price increases. The price hike in June-July 2003 virtually paralyzed the country for a week, until a compromise was struck with the Obasanjo government on the eve of George Bush's visit.

However, in nearly every sub-Saharan country, a pole of political radicalism that can converge with the progressive sectors of "civil society" and the trade union movement is lacking. The "democratization" which accompanied the "end of communism" favoured a certain revival of anti-neocolonial consciousness which was exploited by political parties limiting their ambitions to alternation of power within the neocolonial state. Thus degradation of the social conditions of existence coincided with the proliferation of neoliberal oligarchical parties. ■

* *Jean Nanga is a Congolese revolutionary Marxist.*

NOTES

1 *During his visit to the Ivory Coast in February 1990 – a period of popular mobilizations for a multiparty system and democracy in sub-Saharan Africa in general and its French-speaking countries in particular – Chirac publicly declared his support for the Houphouët-Boigny regime's view that a multiparty system was a luxury for Africa: "I think that the developing countries should concentrate their effort on economic expansion, which is not always easy in a multi-party system. There are multi-party regimes where democracy is not respected and single party regimes where democracy is perfectly respected, for example the Ivory Coast... "* (Le Monde, *February 27, 1990). Thus, it is logical that he continues to support the Togolese dictator Eyadema.*

2 *Privatization, which was and is presented as a source of income for the public treasury, has in fact brought in practically nothing. (Loïc Rivière, "Privatisations: un bilan en demi-teinte",* Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens, *July 18, 2003).*

3 *Nearly all the critics of the detestable regime of Robert Mugabe forget that from 1990 the Zimbabwean state reorganized its economy in general and its agriculture in particular according to the recommendations of the IMF and the World Bank.*

4 *This phenomenon brings to mind Marx's comment that "a great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any certificate of birth, was yesterday, in England, the capitalized blood of children".*

5 *In the process of neoliberalization sponsored by the World Bank and IMF, states are obliged to revise their legislation concerning the circulation of capital and the exploitation of the labour force, which are considered to be comparative advantages.*

6 Jeune Afrique, *number 1836, March 13-19, 1996.*

7 *This push for withdrawal by Nigeria is related to the attempt to overthrow Chavez in Venezuela. The existence of OPEC is considered to be incompatible with neoliberalism in Washington or Houston.*

8 *Rapport 2003 du Conseil Français des Investisseurs en Afrique, "Les entreprises françaises et l'Afrique",* LE MOCI , *number 1579, December 31, 2002. In 2001, France's trade surplus with sub-Saharan Africa was more than 2 billion euros.*

9 *See Jean Nanga, "Ethnisme néo-libéral",* Inprecor *468-469, March-April 2002.*

10 *See François-Xavier Verschave,* La Françafrique, *Stock, Paris, 1998; "Noir Silence", Les Arênes, 2000; UNO, "Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo", April 2002; Human Rights Watch, "Back to the Brink. War Crimes by Liberian government and rebels. A call for Greater International Attention to Liberia and the Sub-Region", May 2002; Pierre Baracyetse, op. cit.; Bonnie Campbell, op.cit.*

11 *See Aimé Césaire, "Discourse on colonialism",* Monthly Review Press, *2000, the work of Belgian journalist Colette Braeckman on Rwanda and Congo (ex-Zaïre) and Marc Ferro (dir.),* Le livre noir du Colonialisme, *Fayard, 2002.*

12 *According to UNCTAD, concerning the inflow and outflow of short term capital in sub-Saharan Africa, without South Africa, the cumulative net outflow for the period 1980-1998 was 38 billion dollars and the cumulative inflow 30 billion dollars.* (Capital Flows and Growth in Africa, *UNCTAD, 2000).*

13 *For example, the executive organ of the African Union is its Commission, structured like the Commission of the European Union.*

14 New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development, *official document, Abuja (Nigeria), October 2001.*

Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez, Plaza de la Constitución, September 11, 2003

When I returned to Chile for the first time in 32 years to attend a weeklong seminar called "30 Years – Allende Lives! Popular Alternatives and the Socialist Perspective in Latin America", I found myself entering the chilling atmosphere of the world's first laboratory for militarily imposed economic neoliberalism. This model had been introduced after the September 11, 1973 US-assisted military coup d'état against President Salvador Allende, a democratically elected parliamentary socialist.

9-11 of the people: Chile 30 years on

JAMES D COCKCROFT*

Engineered by the free-market "Chicago Boys" (economists from the University of Chicago), the Chilean neo-liberal model has been enforced ever since by state-imposed and institutionalized terror. Transnational corporations, their Chilean allies staffing monopolistic "conglomerates" and major political parties, and a radically neo-liberal value system continue to hold sway over Chile's communications media, "popular" culture, electoral campaigns, and all levels of government and the military.

Despite Chile's opening to the world economy through free trade, its people live in a relatively closed society, one largely shut off from the social and political turbulence of the rest of Latin America. The atmosphere in present-day Santiago is one of noisy traffic, minimal human interaction, public fear, and imminent repression, with well-armed Carabineros (the hated national police) visible everywhere.

The replacement in 1990 of the 17-year military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte by the civilian governments of the Christian Democrat/ Socialist Party coalition "Concertación" has not altered the mass media campaign against "communism," "crime in the streets," and "terrorism." Chile's military still declares itself at war with "internal enemies." These Concertación governments have jailed some 250 political dissidents, 89 of whom are still being held in Santiago's Maximum Security Prison, where they have been tortured. This does not include the Mapuche and other Indians killed or jailed.

Chile's mass media trumpet the big lies of Pinochet-ism and civilian administered neo-liberalism. Concerning the country's world-renowned mass murders, disappearances, mass graves, torture, and institutionalized state terrorism, the media drumbeats the government line that "we must put the past behind us," insisting that "we were all responsible" for the crimes of the Pinochet dictatorship -- and therefore no one is responsible!

After the 1973 coup September 11th became an official national holiday, established to "celebrate the victory of democracy and civilization over godless Marxism." But sporadic social movements and scattered leftists have been reclaiming September 11 as their moment to honour Allende and renew the struggle for human rights and economic change. Therefore, in 2000 the government officially converted the national holiday into a normal working day, apparently hoping to reduce the number of demonstrators. Instead, protests escalated. As always, the media blacked out the nationwide popular demonstrations of September 11, 2003. There was almost no news about the more than 10,000 mostly young people (reported as "5,000 without incident") overflowing Santiago's Plaza de la Constitución facing the presidential palace La Moneda to honor not only Allende but also the thousands of other "fallen ones," the 400,000 people tortured during the Pinochet dictatorship, and the hundreds of thousands forced into political refuge abroad. This marked the first time in over 30 years that Chileans were allowed to occupy their traditional meeting place, and they did so with militant songs and

chants, calling their day "The September 11 of the Peoples."

Earlier that morning, for the first time in over 30 years a Chilean president entered La Moneda through the side door preferred by Allende (and through which Allende's bullet-ridden corpse was snuck out in 1973). Television cameras followed a solitary President Ricardo Lagos down the roped-off side street as he hypocritically sought to cloak himself in the mantle of the deceased "compañero Presidente," whom he described as "perhaps the best of the Chilean Left."

Allende was more truly "presente" (alive and present) than Lagos this September 11th. Despite the smear job done by Chile's media and privatized educational system on his period of governance, he has become the cultural hero of many Chileans, young and old. In Chile and throughout the world there is a huge resurgence of the image of "compañero Presidente Salvador Allende," albeit not as commercialized on as many t-shirts as that of Che Guevara. New books with Allende's speeches and interviews, once difficult to publish or circulate, now sell like hotcakes. Allende's rising stature parallels that of another martyred president who sought to nationalize Chile's mineral resources: José Manuel Balmaceda (1886-1891). Even the government has had to accept monuments to Allende, as well as the renaming of the Estadio Chile as the Estadio Victor Jara, after the world-renowned folksinger tortured and killed in the stadium during the 1973 coup d'état. Why?

Because millions of Chileans have joined the "battle of memory" [batalla de la memoria] and are unwilling to forget the positive examples of Allende's dying in defense of democracy and reform and of all those relatives and friends who, like Jara, dreamed of another possible Chile. Feminist writer Pia Barros has observed that "The memory of the vanquished is dangerous for the conquerors," while a young Chilean born in the 1980s has noted "If 30 years of fear are being commemorated, well it's necessary to commemorate the accumulated courage of 30 years."

Most Chilean TV coverage on this September 11th focused on a chuckling, ageing, feisty mass murderer, Gen Pinochet, as he walked with a cane to a podium to deliver his presidential sash to a group of wildly cheering right-wing admirers said to number 2,000. All channels emphasized isolated incidents of "violence" by "delinquents." Cameras panned armoured personnel carriers spraying entire city blocks with teargas or water hoses and Carabineros clubbing fleeing youth.

Chilean Communist Party president Gladys Marín at international seminar "30 Years -- Allende Lives!"

Hebe Bonafini, Madres de Plaza de Mayo, interview at Santiago's Radio Nuevo Mundo

Each September 11th youth in the big urban poblaciones (outlying slums often created from seized lands) set up street barricades and fight back against the police, a tradition dating back to 1982. TV channels now zeroed in on one Santiago slum intersection barricaded with burning tires that presumably caused a blackout affecting 30 percent of the city's population.

Much TV "news coverage" was given over to the nation's "economic progress" in the last 30 years, informing people that they live in Latin America's "best-off economy." In light of the horrifying collapse of the region's other "best-off economy" (Argentina's in 2001), that may not be such a desirable prize. In fact, many economists opine that Chile's super-neo-liberal economic model is approaching its limits of economic sustainability, just as Argentina's did.

In a heavily indebted privatized economy dependent on mineral, forestry, and fruit exports, with a reduced or stagnant manufacturing sector, Chileans work more hours per year than any other people. While some still participate in the plastic credit card world of frenzied consumerism, most are spending their dwindling hourly incomes on the basic necessities of life. Unemployment has more than doubled in recent years. Employment lists favour job candidates according to political party affiliation, echoing the old torture and assassination lists based on party affiliation used by Pinochet during his reign of terror. By World Bank estimates, 45% of Chile's 6-million-strong workforce live below the poverty line.

Relatives of the disappeared at their headquarters, Santiago

The "informal economy" incorporates nearly half the working population. Less than 10% of the workforce belong to Chile's remaining unions. Many workers are reduced to poverty by the fragmentation of modern production methods that leaves them atomized in precarious "flexible labour markets" as "pseudo-independent" or "self-employed" workers in subcontracted or "micro" enterprises. Others are either unemployed, semi-employed, or part of the great mass of proletarianized "professionals" and "technical workers" (eg, super-exploited women data-entry personnel working with computers).

Chile's relatively large "salaried middle classes" are experiencing classic downward mobility. They could find themselves in the same bankrupt position of their Argentine neighbours if there is a run on Chilean banks the way there was in Argentina. Chile's debt-ridden economy, like Argentina's, is mortgaged to US, Canadian, and European bankers and investors.

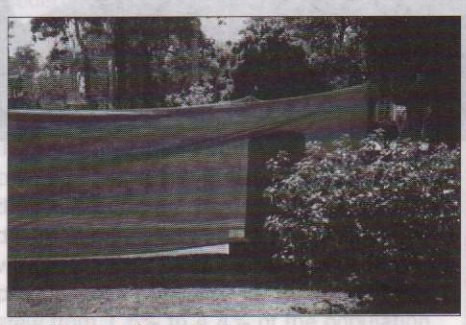
The vast majority of Chile's salaried and wageworkers are poor, especially among the young and among women, who are rotated in and out of the labour market at sub-minimum wages. Many youth, as historian Luis Vitale discovered through recent student-conducted surveys in Santiago's slums, "do nothing, do not work and can't even study." Those youth who do study have unstable, uncertain futures. Women constitute nearly 40 percent of the workforce and are generally, as in the rest of the world, super-exploited. A typical Chilean works more than one job in any given year. A common saying is "vivimos al dia" – "we take it a day at a time."

These underlying economic realities, combined with burgeoning social protest movements, have helped make the Concertación government both divided and afraid. For the week of September 11th, it announced it was stationing on Santiago's streets 10,000 Carabineros, billeting another 27,000, and calling out 30,000 army soldiers. It ordered traffic lights and lampposts removed so that pro-Allende "terrorists and vandals" would not destroy them. The Chilean Communist Party assured the government there would be no violence; it then marshalled special personnel to detect agents provocateurs (of the government or ultra-right) and remove them from demonstrations before they could "create an incident."

Ever since the late 1990s, episodes of public protest have escalated. By the time of the 1997 parliamentary elections,

Emir Sader of Brazil at tomb of Allende, September 11, 2003

40% of a disillusioned electorate failed to register, abstained, annulled their ballots or left them blank. In subsequent years, Mapuche Indians and the National Association of Rural Women and Indians, university and high school students, doctors, dock workers, miners, and members of the national labour confederation CUT launched protests that caused presidential candidates to distance themselves from the neo-liberal economic model. Direct action protests and mutual aid networks surfaced in the provinces. Tiny worker, unemployed, and/or student collectives swung into action, operating like affinity groups and rallying to the nascent organization Colectivos de Trabajadores. Some poblaciones like Santiago's La Victoria established their own "radio popular" (102.9 FM,



Tomb of ex-President Eduardo Frei, who backed 1973 coup – screened because people often trash it

which interviewed me and a Sandinista delegation from Nicaragua on September 7). Groups of young people regularly gathered outside the homes of known torturers in loud protest actions known as "funas," demanding an end to immunity from prosecution. A movement against neo-liberal capitalist globalization began to take shape.

In 2003, an August 13th general strike by tens of thousands of CUT members became the nation's largest protest since the 1990 installation of the post-Pinochet "pacted democracy" (pacted with Pinochet and the military). Five days later three children of the disappeared launched a human rights hunger strike and were joined on September 4th by older women relatives of the disappeared. September became a month of daily events commemorating Allende and other fallen ones, including a concert with Cuban "new song" artists Silvio Rodriguez and Vicente Feliú at the national soccer stadium, attended by nearly 60,000.

The month included the international seminar "30 Years -- Allende Lives!" that helped "open up" Chile's closed society. The seminar brought together a thousand Chileans and foreigners, including 150 Argentines and 150 Brazilians, several Europeans, and one of the invited guests from the United States and Canada, myself (people in US, Canadian, and European cities also organized well-attended events to honour Allende). The seminar held many of its sessions at prisons, poblaciones, and human rights organizations both in Santiago and in the country's interior.

On the evening of September 10th, a bomb went off near Santiago's general cemetery. Apparently members of the ultra-rightist UDI (Independent Democratic Union) carried out the bombing in order to accuse those about to honour Allende the next day of "terrorism." Nonetheless, on the morning of September 11 a large, dignified, and militant march of activists made its way through the cemetery to the flower-bedecked tomb of Salvador Allende, where others and I spoke. On September 12, police violently busted up the well-attended inauguration of the Victor Jara Stadium. Tensions remained high the following days.

I left Chile with a singular impression: this was a new, tightly controlled, and different Chile, but one wrestling with the torments of its past and beginning to show some slits in the 30-year iron curtain of fear and ideological brainwashing. A terrified Concertación government acting in complicity with institutionalized terror faces a shaky political future. On September 26, Nelson Mery, chief of Chile's Investigative Police since 1990, resigned his post, more than a month after being formally accused of torturing

prisoners during the long Pinochet dictatorship. But like so many other known torturers and murderers, he still walks free.

Poet José Emilio Espoz calls the government's fear "the fear of the coward." Others call it the fear of the guilt-ridden, of those to blame for the failure to repeal the Pinochet-imposed amnesty, or state of immunity from prosecution, on behalf of Chile's ex-dictator and his cohorts. The government recently proposed a new "reform" that would recognize the human rights violations but would guarantee impunity for any of the criminals if they hand in information on the crimes.

Chile's fractured and wounded left seems significant in only two cases: the Communist Party, whose widely respected candidate Gladys Marin won 6% in the first round of the last presidential election, and the still small social movements holding high the image of the beloved "compañero Presidente Salvador Allende" and sometimes linking up with the burgeoning Colectivos de Trabajadores. But Marin, a person who has managed to hold together the party's duelling moderate and left wings, had to fly to Sweden in late September to undergo an emergency operation for a brain tumour. And the struggling social movements face both frequent repression and infiltration by government agents, leaving them secretive, fragmented, and without major national coordination.

Ironically, Allende's half-litre of milk a day programme for children is still in place. Moreover, if Chile were to nationalize its copper industry as Allende did, it would have the funding for colossal economic changes, since Chile still accounts for 35% of world copper production. In 1971, no member of parliament dared vote "no" to nationalization. Today, no member dares vote "yes," although 8 voted against the new free trade agreement with the United States and 8 others abstained after a stormy debate interrupted by shouting demonstrators in the gallery.

Marin, who calls for a new constitution, recovery of the nation's copper and workers' rights, and a radical redistribution of income, told one public gathering during my visit: "Change in Chile today cannot be achieved through the electoral road. A better consciousness of the people is necessary, just as one developed during the Allende years, just as one developed during the general strike of last August."

In Chile I glimpsed a developing new consciousness, a true "battle of memory" -- and small but significant signs of hope. **II**

* *This report was written initially for* Alternatives, *a Canadian nongovernmental organization (see* www.alternatives.ca/article889.html*). James D Cockcroft, Fellow at the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam, Netherlands, is the author of 35 books, including* Mexico's Hope *(NY: Monthly Review Press, 1999) and* Latin America *(Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/ International Thomson Publishing, Second edition, 1998), both translated into Spanish and published in 2001 by Mexico City's Siglo Veintiuno Editores. His latest book in Spanish is* Salvador Allende – Textos Escogidos *(assisted by Jane Carolina Canning, with a prologue by Gladys Marín, Buenos Aires: Universidad Popular de Madres de Plaza de Mayo and América Libre, 2003* (alibre@rcc.com.ar), *or in English as* Salvador Allende Reader *from Ocean Press in Melbourne, Australia* (www.oceanbooks.com.au).

Relatives of the disappeared, Plaza de la Constitución, September 11, 2003

China: the transition to capitalism

G BUSTER*

"In the final analysis, the question of training successors for the revolutionary cause of the proletariat is one of whether or not there will be people who can carry on the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary cause started by the older generation of proletarian revolutionaries, whether or not the leadership of our Party and state will remain in the hands of proletarian revolutionaries, whether or not our descendants will continue to march along the correct road laid down by Marxism-Leninism, or, in other words, whether or not we can successfully prevent the emergence of Khrushchev's revisionism in China. In short, it is an extremely important question, a matter of life and death for our Party and our country. It is a question of fundamental importance to the proletarian revolutionary cause for a hundred, a thousand, nay ten thousand years. Basing themselves on the changes in the Soviet Union, the imperialist prophets are pinning their hopes of "peaceful evolution" on the third or fourth generation of the Chinese Party. We must shatter these imperialist prophecies. From our highest organizations down to the grass-roots, we must everywhere give constant attention to the training and upbringing of successors to the revolutionary cause." Mao Zedong, July 14, 1964[1]

The 20th People's National Assembly met in Beijing in March 2003 to approve changes in the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the executive bodies of the People's Republic of China (PRC) which had been decided on four months earlier by the nomenclature of the party at its 16th Congress. The promotion of the "fifth generation" of leaders, with Hu Jintao at their head, has been accompanied by the dissolution of the State Commission for Planning and Development, responsible for the five year plans. The last symbol of a planned economy has thus disappeared with the definitive installation of the market as regulatory mechanism.

But when and how did China become capitalist?

1976-1989 : the rise and defeat of "market socialism" reforms

Rehabilitated in 1976, Deng Xiaoping announced in 1978 the policy of the "four modernizations": the establishment of a state controlled agricultural market and the dissolution of the people's Communes, the creation of special economic zones orientated towards exports with foreign investment in mixed enterprises, and a partial liberalization of foreign trade. After the resignation of Hua Guofeng – Mao's designated heir – in 1980, this policy was generalized, and allowed a significant consolidation of the bureaucracy (which grew from 1.5% to 4.4% of the population in less than ten years) and the appearance of a reformist wing inside it. In 1985 the 3rd Plenum of the 12th central committee extended the reforms to the urban industrial sector, generalizing the autonomy of management of the enterprises, recourse to market mechanisms, horizontal relations between enterprises, the strengthening of the financial and banking system as coordinating axes of the Plan as well as the combination of all forms of ownership in a "market socialism" combining elements of the reforms which had been experimented with in eastern Europe.

In 1987 nonetheless the reforms entered a significant triple supply crisis – a growth of aggregate consumption higher than economic growth and high inflation; a "scissors crisis" stemming from the insufficiency of the industrial products produced by the public sector to satisfy the demands of the peasants in the new agricultural market; a crisis of food security brought about by the insufficiency of basic food products (rice, corn) despite an excellent harvest in that year.

This economic crisis was transformed into a political crisis after a year and a half of deep factional struggles inside the CCP and the reforming general secretary, Hu Yaobang, was dismissed. The 13th Congress, meeting in October of that year, adopted the theoretical framework of "market socialism" reforms, together with a tough plan of adjustment under the leadership of the new secretary general, Zhao Ziyang, also originating from the reform-minded sector. The political and economic crisis remained uncontrollable.

It culminated in June 1989 in the revolt of Tienanmen Square, a split in the CCP and the detention of Zhao Ziyang. The massacre at Tienanmen square marked the final crisis of the "market socialist" reforms and the defeat of the reform-minded sector of the CCP bureaucracy.

However, the conservative fraction had no economic alternative, even if it put an immediate end, with the reaffirmation of the "Four Principles", to any possibility of political reform that would put in question the dictatorship of the CCP. At the same time there was the fall of the Berlin wall, the defeat of the Soviet coup in September 1990 and the final break-up of the USSR in 1991, the introduction of "shock therapy" policies and the restoration of capitalism in the former "socialist bloc". In January 1992 an old and half-paralysed Deng

Xiaoping visited the special economic zone of Shenzen, presenting it as the example of the economic reforms that should be undertaken and launching the slogan of "Enrich yourselves!"

1992-1997: the restoration of capitalism

In October 1992 the 14th Congress of the CCP met. While a very tough adjustment programme dreamed up with the help of the IMF and the World Bank was applied, the market economy and the law of value were generalized, as were the special economic zones. The central authorities and the Plan lost influence to the provincial authorities that developed their markets in competition with those of the other provinces. Equilibrium between the CCP's factions was preserved, but the final decision rested with Jiang Zemin and favoured the predominance of the reform-minded faction. The reference was no longer to "market socialism" but a "socialist market economy" and this change marked the beginning of the transformation in the class nature of the state, while the public sector began to plunge in the waters of the commodity economy. The phase of negotiations on China's membership of the World Trade Organisation – initially applied for in 1988 – began. The state sector of the economy accounted for 73% of industrial production in 1988 – by 1992 it was 35%.

Between 1992 and 1997 – when the 15th Congress of the CCP met, shortly after the death of Deng Xiaoping – the public sector was besieged by the dizzying growth of the rural industrial sector, special economic zones and new urban private enterprises. It was also consciously pillaged by the provincial bureaucracies who, in a climate of rampant corruption, helped themselves to social funds and the assets of the public enterprises dependent on the central budget to maintain investments in the private sector in their provinces. The provincial bureaucracies could only tax their private sectors to support their budgets, whereas the needs of the provincial governments grew as central transfers fell. The central bureaucracy saw its capacity for extraction of the social surplus product of the public sector fall, and had to negotiate with the local bureaucracies over their contributions to the central budget. The regional disequilibrium was enormous, social inequality exploded, the privatization of agriculture led to unemployment for 250 million peasants and emigration to the cities for 100 million others - the so-called "floating population". If poverty fell in the countryside, in the towns 117 million new poor appeared, 80% of them in the central and western regions. The health and education system, which had become private, progressively disintegrated.

Following the international recession of 1990-1991, China became the second-largest recipient of foreign capital investment (behind the United States), its share of foreign investment in Asia rapidly passing from 20% to some 80% - hoovering up thus 52% of all foreign investment in developing countries. During this period the average growth of the Chinese economy reached 9.7% per year (against 7.5% for the "Asian tigers") and exports grew by 19% per year. Foreign investment accounted for more than 22% of all investment. 60% of workers in the export-oriented free trade zones in the world are Chinese, or 18 million people. According to an IMF study, if the accumulation of capital was the most significant factor in growth up until 1994, from this date onwards it was growth in productivity (with an average per year of 4% as against 2% for the "Asian tigers").

It is not surprising that the 15th congress of the CCP attempted to adapt the ideology to the facts and to the new social interests. A bourgeoisie developed – some 5%, that is 60 million people, declaring incomes higher than 12,000 dollars per head – and new urban middle layers appeared. This bourgeoisie is intimately linked by family ties to the bureaucracy, to the Chinese capitalists in the émigré circles and to foreign investors. Wu Jinglian, adviser to Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, proposed a new definition of socialism in the statutes of the CCP: "social justice and the market economy". Meanwhile, the vice-president of the Academy of Social Sciences Liu Ji summed up Marxism in two principles: "The interest of the people are what is most important and the party must serve the people with all its heart". In the initial drafts the reference to the proletariat as "the vanguard of the revolution" gave way to the "waged employees" although finally the option adopted was more scientific, mentioning "labour as commodity". The CCP said its farewell to the working class in October 1997 when it announced the privatisation of public sector enterprises, with the dismissal of 200 million workers in five years. Capitalist restoration was already an irreversible fact.

1997-2001: Integration in the world economy, crisis of overproduction and neo-Keynesianism

Despite this, the heritage of the management apparatuses of the old bureaucratically-deformed workers' state of the People's Republic rendered a substantial service to the Chinese nomenclature. It allowed them to emerge almost unscathed from the Asian crisis of 1997-1998, with the exception of the bankruptcy of the International Trade Company and some investments in Guangdong. The big national banks were supported by the state, which guaranteed company debts; state controls prevented the penetration of speculative short term capital, limiting foreign credits – although the foreign debt rose from 5.2% of GDP in 1985 to 13.8% in 1998 – and speculative operations on the national currency, the renminbi, which was not convertible. The impact of the crisis led to an appreciation in the value of the renminbi of 60% in relation to the currencies of South-east Asia and a 20% fall in relation to the Japanese yen, leading to a fall in relative competitiveness which reduced the growth of exports – it was only 0.5% in 1998 and 6.1% in 1999. Foreign investment fell by 11% in the course of the same year.

The Chinese government applied a typically neo-Keynesian policy to support demand, concentrated especially in the central and western regions, whose bureaucracies had demanded a change in policy during the 15th Congress because of their inability to reap the benefits of the market. Public expenditure rose from 12% of GDP in 1997 to 16% in 1999, while the budget deficit increased from 1.8% to 3.1% over the same period. The wages of civil servants rose by 20% and treasury bonds were issued for a total of 160,000 million renminbi. Nonetheless these measures proved insufficient and the crisis of overproduction continued, leading to deflation. Interprovincial customs barriers were lifted and the internal market became unified.

In 1999 the index of consumer prices fell by 1.4%. Unused productive capacity rose to 40% of GDP. China experienced fully, for the first time, the consequences of a capitalist economic cycle. In this crisis scenario the Chinese government decided to launch the final phase of the restructuring of the public sector and the privatizations decided on at the 15th Congress of the CCP.

2001-2003: entering the WTO, the limits of Keynesian policies, and the 16th Congress of the CCP

The Chinese authorities continued their policy of Keynesian stimulants in the course of the years 2000, 2001 and 2002, without ending deflation. The international recession reduced exports to the US and Japan to the level of 7.5% of GDP, which made macro-economic management more complex. Although the public debt never was higher than 15% of GDP, it had multiplied by 80 since 1981, going from 870 million to 40,000 million renminbi.

The basic reason for this growth was a fiscal crisis of the central authorities – while in 1978 they levied 29.5% of GDP in taxes, it was only 13.3% in 1999, which reduced their capacity for pseudo-Keynesian regulation, maintained thanks to the continual issuing of treasury bonds in growing quantity, in a vicious circle which it will be difficult to emerge from.

In December 2001 the People's Republic of China officially became a member of the World Trade Organization. Five final years of negotiations ended with significant concessions from China, which threaten 60% of the country's car industry and 50% of its food industry.

The reason for these concessions relates to the change in the social nature of the state. The submerged bureaucracy, the chaos of private interests and generalized corruption can count on no other force than the world capitalist market to contain the explosion of regional inequalities and provincial protectionism. Only the discipline of an imposed restructuring from outside by international capitalism appears able to contain the autonomization of the provincial authorities. The gigantic Three Gorges dam on the Yangtze has become the symbol of this process; conceived as a "socialist" solution to China's eternal evils, its construction ending in a climate of dizzying corruption.

In October 2002 the Chinese economy began to slightly recover its tendency to growth. Profits in the private sector grew by 10%, although those in the state sector continued to fall (- 4.1%). More slowly, private consumption and investment have according to the IMF, begun to overtake public expenditure as motor of growth, which at the end of 2002 reached 9%, or one point better than the 8% necessary to absorb demographic growth and contain the growth of unemployment.

With a certain irony, when the 16th Congress of the CCP was held in Beijing on November 8, 2002, it seemed to realise Mao's prophecy as to the danger of a restoration of capitalism in China. In the course of this Congress the third generation, represented by Jiang Zemin, has given direct executive power to the fourth generation of Hu Jintao, while conserving its influence in the shadows. The main ideological contribution of the third generation of the CCP was the "theory" of the "three representations", according to which the CCP represented not the workers and peasants of China, nor even the "cadres" of its nomenclature, but the "advanced productive forces, innovatory culture and the interests of the broad masses". The Congress launched an appeal for the recruitment of capitalists to the CCP, envisaging for the latter a special membership rate of 1% of their annual salary. Xiang Shaoling, owner of the Baopu Garments Company, complained publicly: "To be in the party is a glory, but the membership rate is very high".

Conclusion

From the human, social, economic and ecological point of view, the cost of capitalist restoration in China has been gigantic. Yet it is today the most shining example of a "transitional economy" that the World Bank proposes to developing countries, This quarter century of reforms, in particular since 1992, has been crowned with success only thanks to the conjuncture of several factors: the terrible repression of the democratic movement in 1979 and 1989, the modification of the international relationship of forces created by the collapse of post-Stalinism in eastern Europe and the USSR, neoliberal globalization through the WTO, IMF and World Bank and the cruel crushing of any attempt to demand more humane living conditions for the working class, who are subjected to Dantesque primitive capitalist accumulation, possible only under the protection of the CCP's bureaucratic dictatorship.

The CCP has managed to survive all its internal crises, in particular the serious splits and purges of 1976, 1980 and 1988-1989, thanks to an internal pact nourished by the "Cultural Revolution syndrome". It has sold its political soul first to Deng Xiaoping, then to Jiang Zemin, guarantors of the social and economic stability of the bureaucracy.

Fearing above all the autonomous activity of the masses; the CCP hopes to guarantee stability through the dictatorship of the single party and the discipline of the capitalist market. References to Marxism have given way to a chauvinist and conservative nationalism, if not to the superstitions of the Falun Gong and other sects.

The worst effects of this capitalist restoration are still to come.

Following the most classic models of the crises of the "mandate of heaven", they will take the form of a crisis in food – given the weakness of agricultural productivity and the necessity of massive food imports – and an ecological crisis brought about by deforestation and floodings. The crisis of overproduction cannot be contained by the growth of exports founded on a constant reduction of production costs. Despite the total absence of workers' rights and the pitiless competition for the sale of labour power between the "floating population" expelled from the countryside and the new unemployed produced by the restructuring of the public sector, industrial conflicts and local social explosions have multiplied by 14 in the course of the 1990s according to the official figures, leading to an accumulation of experiences – slow, unequal, but continuous – for the working class. China is a weak link of capitalism and as Mao put it, "it is right to revolt". ■

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NOTES

* *G Buster is a member of the editorial board of the Spanish review* Viento Sur.

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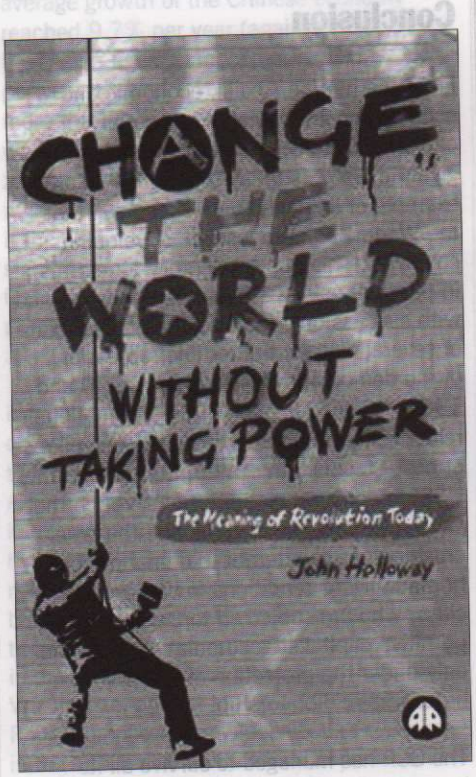
Change the world – without taking power?

Change the World Without Taking Power, The Meaning of Revolution Today: John Holloway, Pluto Press 2002 (p/bk).

REVIEWED BY PHIL HEARSE



Discussing the ideas in this book is useful, not because John Holloway has legions of devoted followers, but because many of the ideas he advances about fundamental social change are widespread in the global justice movement and anti-war movement internationally.

The idea of refusing to take power was popularized recently by Subcommandante Marcos, leader of the Zapatistas. Like much of what the Subcommandante says, this was very ambiguous, because in any case the EZLN, representing indigenous people in a small corner of Mexico, cannot possibly take power – at least on its own *(p 11)*. However, the basic idea of revolutionizing social relations without conquering power has been around a long time.

Although Holloway has some critical things to say about Tronti and Antonio Negri, intellectual parents of the Italian autonomia currents, his main arguments come directly from them: don't confront the power of the bosses in the world of work, withdraw from it. Create autonomous spaces – autonomous from the bosses, autonomous from the capitalist state. Of course this means struggle, but not the elaborate apparatuses of political parties or taking state power.

Some of the things that Holloway says in the course of his argument are very widespread in today's radical movements; they go to the heart of revolutionary strategy and, explicitly, Holloway's main polemical target is revolutionary Marxism.

Reviewing a book like this means lengthy quotes so readers can judge the argument for themselves: but to anticipate, key Holloway arguments are:

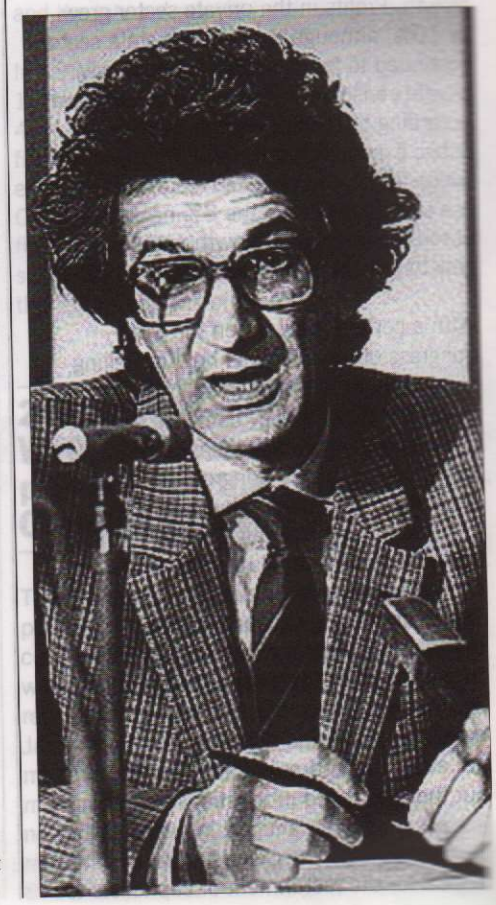
1 Reformism and revolutionary Marxism both have as their strategic objective capturing state or governmental power; but this is a trap, since the state is inevitably an authoritarian structure. (Bog standard anarchism, that one).

2 The state is not the locus of power; capitalist social relations are where power lies. Orthodox Marxists don't see that the state is firmly embedded in capitalist social relations and that merely capturing it changes little, since authoritarian social relations remain in place.

3 Capitalist social relations can only be changed by alternative social practices that are generated by the oppressed themselves, in the course of resistance and struggle.

4 The theoretical basis of this argument is the category of (commodity) fetishism and its reproduction. Social relations are not a structure or a "thing", but a relationship

Antonio Negri



which is daily reproduced in the process of "fetishization". But this reproduction is not automatic and can be disrupted by alternative social practices of resistance.

5 The claim by Engels and others that Marxism is a "science" automatically

Rosa Luxemburg

generates an authoritarian practice; the oppressed are divided into those who "know" (the vanguard, the party) and those who have false consciousness (the masses). A manipulative and substitutionist practice automatically results from this idea. Even Lukacs and Gramsci couldn't break out of this false problematic.

6 There are no guarantees of a happy ending; all that is possible is negative critique and resistance, and we shall see the outcome.

The state: "assassin of hope"

"What can we do to put an end to all the misery and exploitation?...There is an answer ready at hand. Do it through the state. Join a political party, help it to win governmental power, change the country in that way. Or, if you are more impatient, more angry, more doubtful about what can be achieved through parliamentary means, join a revolutionary organization, help conquer state power by violent or non-violent means, and then use the revolutionary state to change society.

"Change the world through the state: this is the paradigm that has dominated revolutionary thought for more than a century. The debate between Rosa Luxemburg and Eduard Bernstein a hundred years ago on 'reform or revolution' established the terms which were to dominate thinking about revolution for most of the 20th century...The intensity of the disagreements concealed a basic point of agreement: both approaches focus on the state as the vantage point from which society can be changed..." (Holloway, p 12)

But this has been a trap, because:

"If the state paradigm was the vehicle of hope for much of the century, it became more and more an assassin of hope as the century progressed....For over a hundred years the revolutionary enthusiasm of young people has been channeled into building the party or into learning to shoot guns; for over a hundred years the dreams of those who wanted a world fit for humanity have been bureaucratized and militarized, all for the winning of state power by a government that could then be accused of 'betraying' the movement that put it there....Rather than look to so many betrayals as an explanation, perhaps we need to look at the very notion that society can be changed through winning state power." (p 12)

What theoretical error lies behind this trap?

" [Revolutionary movements inspired by Marxism] have often had an instrumental view of the capitalist nature of the state. They have typically seen the state as being the instrument of the capitalist class. The notion of an 'instrument' implies the relation between the state and the capitalist class is an external one; like a hammer the state is wielded by the capitalist class in its own interests, while after the revolution it will be wielded by the working class in their interests. Such a view reproduces, unconsciously perhaps, the isolation or autonomization of the state from its social environment, the critique of which is the starting point of revolutionary politics...this view fetishizes the state: it abstracts from the web of power relations in which it is embedded...The mistake of the Marxist revolutionary movement has been, not to deny the capitalist nature of the state, but to misunderstand the degree of integration of the state into the networks of capitalist social relations." (p 15)

This leads to disastrous consequences for the movement:

"What was something initially negative (the rejection of capitalism) is converted into something positive (institution building, power-building). The induction into the conquest of power inevitably becomes an induction into power itself. The initiates learn the language, logic and calculations of power; they learn to wield the categories of a social science which has been entirely shaped by its obsession with power." (p 153)

This far from exhausts Holloway's line of reasoning about the state, and we go into subsidiary aspects below. However the critique of revolutionary Marxism so far is very radical and raises many questions about the nature of capitalist society and how to change it. The following might be some initial points of reflection about Holloway's case.

First, Holloway knows, but does not emphasize, that revolutionary Marxists do not fight to capture the capitalist state, but to smash it. For him, the state is the state is the state, an unchanging category within which strictly limited sets of social relations can exist. His critique reads as if Lenin's *The State and Revolution* had never been written. But the Marxist concept of revolution is not that the working class smashes the state and simply replaces it with a workers' state, through which social change can be effected. Our concept of the workers', socialist "state" is the democratic self-organization of the masses, not the dictatorship of the party. Indeed we are not (or should not be) in favour of a monopoly by any one party.

Illogically, Holloway several times refers positively to the example of the Paris Commune. This of course was what inspired Lenin in *State and Revolution*. Lenin argues for the "Commune State"; that was the basis of his thinking on the subject. In this conception, social relations are changed, or begin to be changed, directly and immediately through the process of socialist revolution, not just through the change in the nature of the state, but in the changing social relations which accompany this process. In advanced capitalist countries at least, it is impossible to imagine the scale of social mobilization required to overwhelm the capitalist state, without at the same time – or in very short order – the popular masses seizing democratic control of the factories, offices and companies. Our concept of revolution is not simply "capturing" the state and wielding it in the interests of the masses – that is the (old) social democratic idea; our alternative is the masses smashing the state in a huge social uprising and democratizing power, governing through their own institutions of power.

Holloway's argument about the state being "embedded" in capitalist social relations is correct as far as it goes, but is unidirectional. The state is not just buried in the web of capitalist social relations, it is vital for the functioning of capitalism. It is where much of the essential and strategic decision-making is centred. It is the crucial defence mechanism against social relations being fundamentally changed.

Holloway's argument is basically that if you have any kind of state, you have oppression and capitalism. It is easy to see the illogicality of this argument. Let us change, for the sake of argument,

the revolutionary Marxist traditional phraseology. Let's abandon the idea of a workers' state, and say we want the direct administration of social affairs by the democratically organized masses. Naturally, they will have to elect recallable officials, have meetings in enterprises, offices and schools and vote on what to do. They may need some kind of national assembly and elected officials of that assembly to carry out executive functions. If all that is rejected, it is difficult to imagine how the basic functioning of society could be decided and effected. Strangely (or perhaps wisely from his viewpoint) Holloway just does not discuss any element of post-revolutionary society, its decision-making or mechanisms of administration. Because, if you do discuss that, you end up talking about something that sounds very like some kind of state.

This leads to a strange paradox in his argument that Holloway is blind to. For the sake of argument, let's say that the Zapatista base communities are a good model of changed social relations and self-government. Let's say we want to "Zapatistize" the whole of Mexico. But in Holloway's schema you cannot – because you would build, in this process, a state – a "Zapatista state". So you evacuate national (and international) terrains of struggle, concentrate on the local and the particular. Which can only lead to the capitalist class saying "thank you very much".

The reproduction of capitalist social relations

Holloway invents his own phraseology to describe capitalist social relations. Capitalist power is "power over" which confronts "power to", and subjugates the "social flow of doing". This need not bother us too much, because "power over" turns out to be "the power of the done", ie the power of accumulated capital against the creativity of living labour. "Power to", sometimes described as "anti-power", can confront "power over".

"It is the movement of power-to, the struggle to emancipate human potential, that provides the perspective of breaking the circle of domination. It is only through the practice of emancipation, of power-to, that power-over can be overcome (my emphasis PH). Work, then, remains central to any discussion of revolution, but only if the starting point of that is not labour, not fetishized work, but rather work as doing, as the creativity or power-to that exists as, but also against-and-beyond labour." (p 159)

This can take place within the following perspective:-

"In the process of struggle-against, relations are formed which are not the mirror image of the relations of power against which the struggle is directed: relations of comradeship, of solidarity, of love, relations which prefigure the sort of society we are struggling for....[The struggle against capitalism] and the struggle for emancipation cannot be separated, even when those in struggle are not conscious of the link. The most liberating struggles, however, are surely those in which the two are consciously linked, as in those struggles which are consciously prefigurative, in which the struggle aims, in its forms, not to reproduce the structures and practices of that which it struggles against, but rather to create the sort of social relations which are desired." (p 156)

In this context Holloway mentions, for example, factory occupations which are not just acts of resistance, but in which production is continued under workers control, for socially desirable ends. But Holloway contests what he sees as the narrowness of the left's view of what is "political" and what is the exercise of "anti-power":-

"Anti-power is in the dignity of everyday existence. Anti-power is in the relations we form all the time, relations of love, friendship, comradeship, community, cooperation. Obviously such relations are traversed by power because of the nature of the society in which we live, yet the element of love, friendship, comradeship, lies in the constant struggle we wage against power, to establish those relations on the basis of mutual recognition, the mutual recognition of one another's dignity... To think of opposition to capitalism only in terms of overt militancy is to see only the smoke rising from the volcano. Dignity (anti-power) exists wherever humans live. Oppression implies the opposite, the struggle to live as humans. In all that we live every day, illness, the educational system, sex, children, friendship, poverty, whatever, there is the struggle to do things with dignity, to do things right." (p 108)

A lot could be said about these ideas. Holloway is surely right in seeing a constant resentment against the effects of capitalism, a constant struggle against the effects of capitalist power in small as well as big things, and a constant struggle among large sections of the oppressed to create relations of mutual support with friends, family and workmates. But that's just one side of it. Lots of pettiness, meanness, jealousy, competition, violence, racism, sexism, criminality that targets other sections of the oppressed etc exists among the oppressed as well. The precise balance we can discuss. The issue, the strategic question, is whether alternative (stable and permanent) social relations can be generated by alternative daily practices of resistance. Holloway attempts to justify his view that they can by his adroit theoretical move on the question of fetishization. According to him fetishized social relations are a process and not a structure:-

"The understanding of fetishization as a process is key to thinking about changing the world without taking power. If we abandon fetishization-as-process, we abandon revolution as self-emancipation. The understanding of fetishism as hard fetishism can lead to an understanding of revolution as changing the world on behalf of the oppressed, and this inevitably means a focus on taking power. Taking power is a political goal that makes sense of the idea of taking power 'on behalf of': a revolution which is not 'on behalf of' but self-moving has no need to even think of 'taking power'." (p 156)

At the root of this argument is a giant non-sequitur. The premise of fetishization-as-process does not lead to the strategic conclusions that Holloway asserts. Let's look at the argument in more detail.

First, are fetishized social relations a structure or a process? Capitalist social relations have to be constantly reproduced and to that extent they are certainly a process. But they also pre-exist; they have been definitely constituted and are not subject to daily disruption and collapse (which is why Holloway's notion of the permanent crisis and instability of capitalism is wrong – see below). Every time workers turn up for work, the social relations of capitalist exploitation do not have to be re-made or re-invented; of course they are reproduced, if you want they are reiterated – but that is the normal process of capitalist reproduction. Looked at from the reverse angle, capitalist social relations are not daily challenged, threatened or put in question. That only begins to happen at times of acute political crisis, of revolutionary or pre-revolutionary upsurge. Because he lacks any notion of the political, Holloway must remain literally speechless in front of such events.

But it is these moments of crisis that the issue of "power" is put on the table. What would Holloway have said, for example, to the revolutionary workers in Catalonia in 1936-7? Create alternative social relations, on a non-capitalist basis? But that is exactly what they did start to do, as anyone with a passing familiarity with those events will know. Firms were collectivized, land was seized by the peasants, the basis of an alternative, popular system of administration based on the committees and collectives could be seen in outline. Ditto in Chile 1971-3. Ditto in Portugal 1974-5, and many other examples could be quoted. But what happened? In each of those cases

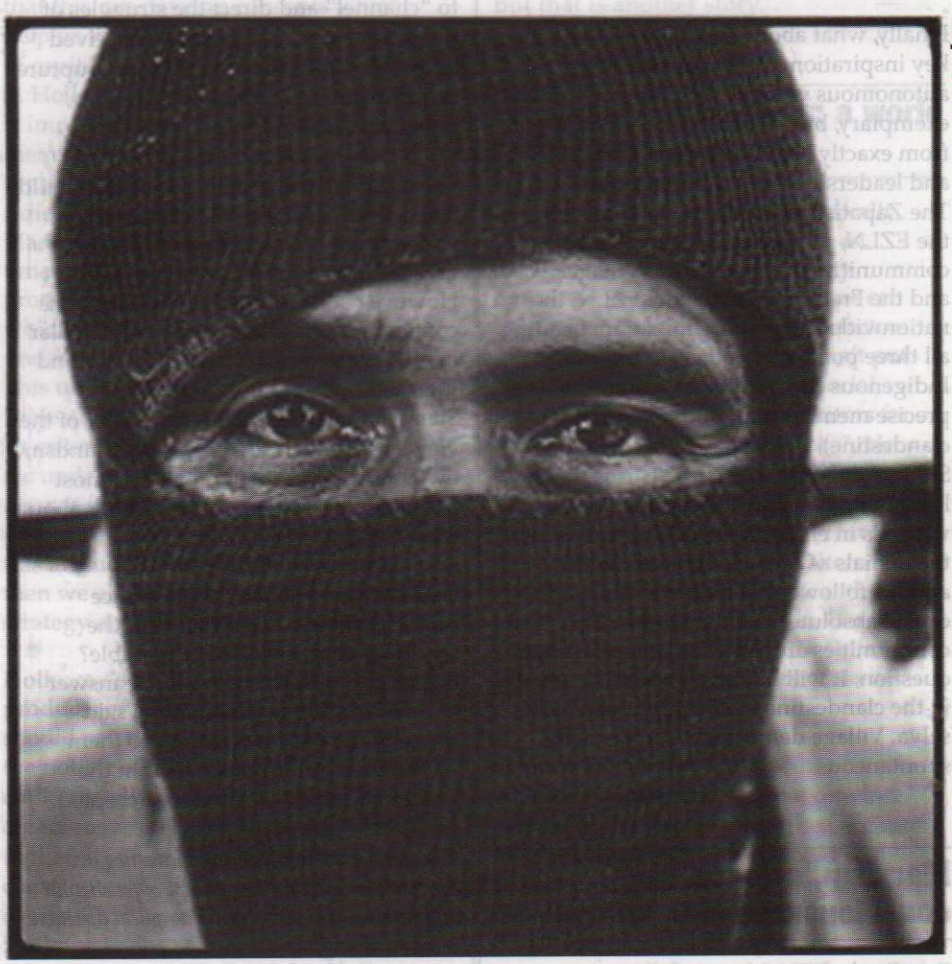
the revolutionary mass "vanguard"' was unable to seize or consolidate national political (state) power, and they were defeated, isolated, crushed – in Spain and Chile with terrifying and bloody consequences. By abandoning the terrain of the political and the strategic, Holloway's ideas leave the decisive arena of struggle to capitalist or pro-capitalist forces who will inevitably occupy it, preventing revolutionary change.

Now I am going to parade some evidence strongly in favour of Holloway's position and against what has been said above. A recent article in the London Observer gave a fascinating insight into the struggles in the poor barrios of Caracas, focus of the Bolivarian "revolution" in Hugo Chavez's Venezuela. Local people are taking over the running of their own lives on a gigantic scale. Water and electricity, schools, food aid for the poorest – every aspect of local administration is being taken over by the people themselves. One local activist is quoted as saying "We don't want a government – we want to be the government". Surely this kind of activity is exactly what Holloway is talking about?

The statement by the local activist encapsulates an entirely positive and progressive attitude, a revolutionary attitude, to capitalism and the capitalist state. But then how can "we", the people, the poor, the excluded, "be the government". That's the crux of the matter. Anyone who says to these activists "do exactly what you are doing, period" is doing them a big disservice. Their ability to begin to change social relations at a local level depends on the national political process, the whole "Bolivarian" process and the existence of the Chavez government. If Chavez is brought down by local reaction and American imperialism, these local experiments in people's power will be crushed. That is the weakness of not integrating local process of power-changing with the national struggle for an alternative national state.

The article referred to above has interesting hints of conflict between the Bolivarian committees and some local activists, with the latter expressing resentment at local "politicos" trying to intrude on their struggles. Such conflicts – which also occurred in Argentina – are a normal and inevitable part of revolutionary change. They are in reality a debate over perspectives. And it's natural that for some activists the whole huge project of changing the government and the state sometimes seems abstract and utopian, contrasted with the eminently practical tasks of solving people's needs here and now. Such attitudes are reinforced by the real manipulative and bureaucratic practices found in some organizations of the revolutionary and not-so-revolutionary left. But in the end they are wrong and self-defeating.

In accepting that social relations can be directly transformed simply by the social



Zapatista

practices of the oppressed, Holloway abandons the terrain of strategy, and indeed of politics altogether. Marxists are bound to say to him that revolutionaries must, in one sense, be "initiates" in power, learning the tricks and tactics of the very sordid business of politics. There are indeed negative consequences from this. It would be very nice indeed to proceed straight to alternative social relations without going through all this disgusting, murky business of building parties and fighting for power. As Ernest Mandel would have said, this is unfortunately impossible in "this wicked world of ours".

Holloway's pure naivety on this is revealed in a very interesting section on the struggles of "anti-power":-

"Look at the world around us, look beyond the newspapers, beyond the institutions of the labour movement and you can see a world of struggle: the autonomous municipalities in Chiapas, the students at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, the Liverpool dockers, the wave of international demonstrations against the power of money capital, the struggle of migrant workers…There is a whole world of struggle that does not aim at winning power, a whole world of struggle against power-over…There is a whole world of struggle that…develops forms of self-determination and develops an alternative conceptions of how the world should be." (p 118)

Well, true, sort of. But if we scratch the surface of the three particular struggles Holloway mentions, then we get a slightly different story. First, the Liverpool dockers. A struggle by a smallish group of workers, which was internationalized in an exemplary way, with solidarity actions from dockers and seafarers on several continents. Behind the scenes, however, several British Marxist organizations devoted considerable time and energy to building that struggle and creating the international links. That struggle would not have proceeded in the way it did without that intervention. Holloway does not know the facts perhaps, but I can give him the names and phone numbers of key revolutionary full-timers involved.

Second, the UNAM students' one-year struggle against the imposition of student fees (1998-9). John Holloway should know more about that because much of his time is spent in Mexico. That struggle was led (I would say in some ways mis-led) by a coalition of rather ultra-left Marxist

groups. For better or worse, they were able to rely on the support of up to five or six thousand of the most determined strikers, who could lead the others. It was not a struggle without political leadership; that leadership does indeed want to gain power, but given their ultra-left semi-Stalinist character, have no chance of succeeding – anyway, let's hope so.

Finally, what about the Holloway's key inspiration, the Zapatistas? The autonomous village assemblies are indeed exemplary, but what are they autonomous from exactly? Not political organization and leadership, for absolute certainty. The Zapatista movement has three wings: the EZLN, the armed fighters; the base communities in the highland villages; and the Frente Zapatista, the FZLN, the nationwide support organization. Leading all three politically is the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee, precise membership unknown (ie it is clandestine), with a key figure being Subcommandante Marcos. This is the leadership of a political organization, which is in effect an ersatz political party, the denials of the Subcommandante and his followers notwithstanding. You can be absolutely sure that if the base communities are debating an important question, it will have first been discussed in the clandestine leadership based in the selva. Village democracy is not exactly spontaneous.

Marxism, science, consciousness

Equally, the FZLN do not do a single thing without it being authorized by the Subcommandante personally. The democracy of the FZLN is not exactly transparent. If it has not become a nationwide party it is partly because Marcos did not want it to escape his control.

To anticipate a little, John Holloway's case against the idea that Marxism is some kind of science consists of the following key points.

1 Marxists after Engels have held the view that science in general and Marxism in particular seeks objective knowledge of the real world. Revolutionary theory by contrast is critical and negative; objective knowledge is impossible.

2 Engels and subsequent Marxist made Marxism a teleology – ie history is a process with an inevitable outcome, socialism. This downplays and eliminates the role of struggle.

3 By seeing the party (or the proletarian vanguard) as possessing knowledge which the masses do not posses, orthodox Marxists set up an authoritarian and manipulative relationship between the party and the masses. The category of false consciousness must be rejected, we are all victims of fetishization, Marxist militants included. Gramsci's notion of hegemony is thus wrong.

4 By posing an end-point or goal for the struggle (ie socialism or communism), orthodox Marxists inevitably attempt to "channel" and direct the struggles of the masses towards their preconceived ends. The notion of revolutionary rupture is imposed on the struggle from "the outside".

To answer all these points in detail would take a long book, but the main answer which revolutionary Marxists should give to this charge sheet is "not guilty". However, some of the individual points contain an element of truth, in particular in relation to the Marxism of the Second International, and the "Marxism" of Stalinism internationally. But many of the views ascribed to revolutionary Marxism by Holloway are just not held by most people in the movement who think about these things.

Is Marxism a science? Does science provide objective knowledge of the world? Is such knowledge possible? Before giving some provisional answer to those questions, it should be said that Holloway's own answer to them – a bowdlerization of ideas from the Frankfurt School – cannot be accepted:

"The concept of fetishism implies a negative concept of science…The concept of fetishism implies therefore that there is a radical distinction between 'bourgeois' science and critical or revolutionary science. The former assumes the permanence of capitalist social relations and takes identity for granted, treating contradiction as a mark of logical inconsistency. Science in this view is an attempt to understand reality. In the latter case, science can only be negative, a critique of the untruth of existing reality. The aim is not to understand reality, but to understand (and, by understanding, to intensify) its contradictions as part of the struggle to change the world. The more all-pervasive we understand reification to be, the more absolutely negative science becomes. If everything is permeated by reification, then absolutely everything is a site of struggle between the imposition of the rupture of doing and the critical-practical struggle for recuperation of doing. No category is neutral." (p 122)

A first thing that is obvious about this passage is the idea that science which wants to understand the world cannot tolerate contradiction, because this is a sign of logical inconsistency. Any Marxist will tell you that our view is that contradiction in reality (not just thought) is a fundamental epistemological proposition of any real science.

In general Holloway's arguments pose completely false alternatives. One reading of it could postulate an absolute break between "revolutionary" science and "bourgeois" science; the worst consequences of that idea were the bizarre products of the Soviet academy. If followed logically, Holloway's idea of science would lead to a rejection of Nils Bohr or Albert Einstein on the grounds that their insights into wave and particle theory, or relativity, were not part of the struggle to change the world.

Most Marxists would argue that science has to be critical and "dialectical" to produce knowledge, attempting to understand the contradictions in reality, social as well as physical. This "dialectical" approach has been massively aided by the advent of chaos theory, which has struck a tremendous blow against the false dichotomies which bourgeois philosophy opened up between determinism and indeterminism. Chaos theory has shown that events can be determined, ie have causes that can be established, but also have indeterminate, unpredictable outcomes. Far from being a rejection of dialectical thought, this insight is a confirmation of it, or rather a deepening of it. (An extended discussion of these themes can be found in Daniel Bensaid's book Marx for Our Times). But it is true that the insights of chaos theory are incompatible with the view of scientific predictability advanced by Engels in his famous "parallelogram of forces".

A number of consequences for our ideas about science follow. To say that science can produce knowledge of the real world is not the same thing as saying that the outcomes of all events can be predicted, not because we lack sufficient knowledge about causes, but by definition. Chaos theory has shown the limits of prediction, but they are not absolute. The range of possible outcomes of many physical and social processes can be known and predicted in advance. If this was not so, all science would be useless. We could never build a bridge, invent a new medicine or walk down the street.

John Holloway establishes a false polarity between positive and negative science, between knowledge and critique. It is possible to produce real knowledge of the world without that being part of the revolutionary struggle. It is also possible to produce real knowledge of social processes, without that leading to the view that social reality is governed by impermeable "objective laws" with an inevitable outcome.

Thus, few Marxists today would argue that socialism is "inevitable", that history has a preconceived end or outcome. Socialism is an objective, a goal we fight for, it is the product of theoretical reflection. But not just that. That theoretical reflection is itself a reflection of contradictions in reality, ie the class struggle in capitalist society. To misquote Marx, theory tends towards reality and (hopefully) reality towards theory.

John Holloway claims Marxists think they possess objective knowledge that the masses do not:

"The notion of Marxism as science implies a distinction between those who know and those who do not know, a distinction between those who have true consciousness and those who have false consciousness... Political debate become focused on the question of 'correctness' and the 'correct line'. But how do we know (and how do they know) that the knowledge of those who know is correct? How can the knowers (party, intellectuals, or whatever) be said to transcend the conditions of their social time and place in such a way to have gained a privileged knowledge of historical movement. Perhaps even more important politically: if a distinction is made between those who know and those who do not, and if understanding or knowledge is seen as important in guiding the political struggle, then what is the organizational relation between the knowers and the others (the masses)? Are those in the know to lead and educate the masses (as in the concept of the vanguard party) or is a communist revolution necessarily the work of the masses themselves (as 'left communists' such as Pannekoek maintained)?

"...The notion of objective laws opens up a separation between structure and struggle. Whereas the notion of fetishism suggests that everything is struggle, that nothing exists separately from the antagonisms of social relations, the notion of 'objective laws' suggests a duality between an objective structural movement independent of people's will, on the one hand, and the subjective struggles for a better world on the other." (p 122)

When Marxists say that a certain view, or suggested course of action, is "correct" they do not thereby ascribe the status of absolute, objective knowledge to this category – or at least they shouldn't. All knowledge is provisional and subject to falsification. When discussing a course of action, "correct" usually is a short-hand for "the most appropriate in the situation". On the other hand, when Marxists say things like "the invasion of Iraq is an example of imperialism" they are indeed suggesting the existence of a category in social reality which is knowable and revealed by theoretical abstraction. Holloway must agree that such a process is possible, otherwise he wouldn't have written his book.

Marxists do not claim they have "true consciousness" (whatever that might be) against the false consciousness of the masses. But they do claim that critical social theory is possible, and that this can develop concepts which help us to understand the development of capitalism and the struggle against it. Holloway's suggestion that this is impossible, because Marxists are themselves products of particular times and social situations, is plainly ridiculous. Of course they are, and Marxism is the product of particular times and circumstances. Its concepts are provisional (not absolute knowledge) which provide a framework for understanding and acting on the world. This understanding is not absolute or "objective", it is partial and fragmentary. Its criterion has to be whether it is useful for understanding the world and acting upon it. Its falsification has to be in practice and struggle. If we don't have this attitude to revolutionary theory, then we abandon not just the terrain of strategy and politics, but theory as well.

Holloway's notion that we are all products of fetishization and reification should not necessarily lead him to reject the notion of false consciousness; he could equally well say we all have false consciousness. There is a kernel of truth to that. It is just that some people have a consciousness which is more false than others. That may sound like a joke, but if Holloway rejects it we really do get into ridiculous territory. Can John Holloway really say that the views of someone who is a racist and nationalist are as equally valid as those who are revolutionary internationalists? Marxist theory may be partial and conditional, but surely it approximates to an understanding of the world which is critical of the existing social order, and provides insights into its contradictions and the possibilities for changing it.

There are big dangers in Holloway's view. By effectively rejecting the idea of false consciousness, he rejects the notion of ideology as something separate from (but linked to) reification and fetishism. Underestimating ideology leads to a lack of understanding of the ideological apparatuses of modern capitalism, which are massively powerful in generating and reiterating fetishized, pro-capitalist views. A possible consequence of this, logically, is a lack of understanding of the centrality of ideological struggle, of the necessity for a ceaseless fight – in propaganda and agitation as well as "theory" – against the "false" ideas pumped out by the pro-capitalist media (and academia) on a daily basis. This counter-struggle does not emerge spontaneously on any effective national basis. It has to be organized. This was something that Lenin was trying to say in a much-misrepresented text he wrote in 1902. But that is another story.

Strategic conclusions: a world without left parties

John Holloway has – unapologetically – no strategic conclusions. There is, he says, "no guarantee of a happy outcome". Here, unfortunately, we can only agree. But unlike recent detractors of revolutionary parties, he doesn't put up alternative organizations – social movements, NGOs – as competitors for the crown of the "modern prince". He doesn't deny the need for co-ordinations for particular purposes and struggles, or the need for political militants. However, he is not interested in new or alternative organizations. We should look at the movement not as organization, but – inspired by the cycle of anti-capitalist demonstrations – as "a series of events". And that's it, full stop.

Happily Holloway's ideas, some of which are widespread, will not convince everybody. If by some unforeseen accident they did, the consequences would be catastrophic. Disband the left organizations and parties and disband the trade unions. Forget elections and the fight over government. All that remains is the struggle of "power-to" against "power over".

Not only will these ideas not become hegemonic on the left, it is structurally impossible for them to do so, as a moment's thought will reveal. Imagine that, in a party-less world, five or six friends in different parts of any country, involved in anti-war coalitions, get together and discuss politics. They find they agree on many things – not just war, but racism, poverty and capitalist power. They decide to hold regular meetings and invite others. Next, they produce a small newsletter to sell to comrades in the anti-war coalitions. In six months they discover a hundred people are coming to their meetings, and decide to hold a conference. In effect, they have formed a political party. And – obviously – if nobody else on the left forms an alternative, they'll have hundreds of members in a year. Revolutionary parties cannot be done away with, not until the work they have to do is done away with as well. The sooner the better. ■

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